There are two main reasons for the meeting in Seoul: i) the opening of the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (ACEIU); ii) wide discussion on issues concerning conception of International understanding and ACEIU activities as a tool for realization of this conception.

The subject for discussion is too complicated and diverse, so it is quite difficult to make a choice - which aspects are the most important and the most timely, taking into consideration regional, historical and traditional uniqueness of participating countries. Because of geographical, historical and cultural reasons the Russian Federation could be presented as a part of the European region, including more specific areas like Baltic, Barents or Black Sea Regions and, at the same time, we are a part of the biggest and the fastest developed Asia-Pacific Region.

The number of top level meetings and conferences in the field of education were held in 2000 with participation of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation - from Ministerial meeting in the Baltic Sea Region, G8 and APEC Ministerial meetings, till the World Forum on Education for all in Dakar.

Review of main topics and subjects discussed at these meetings shows that issues on international understanding, particularly through educational aspects, are not specific only for the Asia-Pacific Region.

Global access to basic education, equal rights, the necessary quality of education with understanding of national, cultural and religious diversity, possibilities of education for prevention of international conflicts – there are the most important questions for
teachers, educators and officials all over the world. These questions are topical not only for some countries, there are basic positions, which could influence on development of global society.

We all are really differ, but as it was mentioned in Joint Statement from the second APEC Education Ministerial Meeting, “the world is now truly the global village it was once envisages to be” and we have to find ways for mutual understanding.

**So, globalization is the first reason for discussion on international understanding.**

Globalization – the word that is used very often for the last time in different contexts – economics, finances, markets, industries and so on. But neither scientific nor industrial progress could be achieved and supported without correspondent level of human resource development.

The challenge every country faces is how to become a learning society and to ensure that its citizens are equipped with the knowledge, skills and qualifications they will need in the next century. Education and skills are indispensable to achieving economic success, civic responsibility and social cohesion. How successful our societies can cope with globalization will depend on how our educational systems respond to it.

Globalization offers both significant opportunities and real risk. It presents possibilities for education to be a key tool for development of international cooperation in 21st century and requires fundamental changes in learning and teaching approaches, new appreciations of learners’ intellectual and social needs.

As a response on new trends and processes in the world, including the process of globalization, dramatic political and economic changes within country, the Russian Education System is currently in the process of transforming from Soviet system to a model, which is more on-line with international standards, including following areas:

- reforming of secondary general education and transition to 12-years secondary (complete) education (not earlier than in 2005);
- introducing of the multi-level system of higher education;
- establishing of municipal and non-state educational institutes;
- decentralization;
- reforming of education management system;
- developing of new teaching methods and pedagogical approaches, as well as support for pluralistic character of educational services;
- supporting of international cooperation.

Situation in the world including sphere of education is far from desirable and globalization could increase the gap between countries with different level of social and economic development as well between different social groups within one country. It could provoke internal and international conflicts and it could be a real threat to stability in the world.

In accordance with decision adopted at the World Forum on Education in Dakar, international community has to support national strategies in the field of education particularly in countries really need this support and it has to be a real partnership, not only “charity”.

In present time Russian Education System includes more than 143 thousands of educational institutions, includes 3940 institutions of initial vocational education, 2648 municipal and federal institutions of secondary professional education and 595 state higher education establishments. And this is not only quantitative indicator.

The Russian Federation is a country with outstanding experience that allowed to overcome general illiteracy and to build the country of comprehensive secondary and accessible higher education. And this process was realized in multinational society with a real social and economic misbalance between regions and different groups during the short period of time. Special teaching methods and technologies for activating of children potential as well as methodological materials were developed and used in many schools and institutions

We are proud that there is no problem in the Russian Federation dealing with literacy, access to initial education, realization of equal rights on education. We will be glad to shear our experience in that field with any economy interested in it.

Not only the access to education, but the content of education as well requires a special attention. From the position of multicultural education, it is necessary to stress that understanding of other cultures and traditions starts from the respect and knowledge in own language, history and culture.

In accordance with the Federal Law “On education”, studying of the Russian language (as a state language) in all state education institutions is obligatory, but all citizens have a right to get basic education on their mother tongue.

At the same time, it is evident that knowledge in foreign language is a real demand for 21st century.

Perhaps, it would be interesting to develop a joint international program aims to link together institutions of training of language teachers in different participating
countries for the purpose of enhancing the professional skills of future and current foreign language teachers by extending their linguistic knowledge, increasing their communicative competence, extending their understanding of the cultural environment of the language and refining their methodological expertise.

The interaction of people and ideas is at the heart of education. ICT hold out the promise of enriching the contents and changing the mode of delivery of education, potentially allowing societies to extend access to lifelong learning and deepen students’ ability to understand and innovate.

Taking into account opportunities presented by IC technologies for the aim of international education, perhaps, the most perspective direction in that field is development of joint curricula or harmonization of existing courses and curricula in so specific area like distance learning.

UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education was established in Moscow in 1998. It was created with the purpose of creation and dissemination of new courses, adaptation of existing courses and curricula for distant forms of education and it could be involved in institutional cooperation within Asia-Pacific Region.

In spite of wide possibilities of IC technologies, communication via e-mail and INTERNET, nothing could change direct contacts between people, in particularly, from the point of view of mutual understanding.

**Mobility – the main demand for the next century.**

As it was mentioned in Koln Charter “Today a passport and a ticket allow people to travel anywhere in the world. In future, the passport to mobility will be education and lifelong learning. This passport to mobility must be offered to everyone”.

The Russian Federation is deeply involved in that process and the Ministry of Education sets this direction – development of student and academic mobility – as one of the main priorities under the new State Educational Strategy.

In accordance with official list of professions, Russian Institutions turn out of specialists on 275 specialization in the field of secondary vocational education and on 92 directions (for bachelor degree) and 443 specialization (for specialist and master degrees) in the field of higher education.

Annually, Russian Government established 4000 scholarships for foreign students’ study in Russian higher education establishments. It means that every year 4000
foreign students could enter in Russia under the same conditions as Russian students do. And about 10% of these scholarships are presented for students from Asia-Pacific Region.

The quality of fundamental Education in Russian Universities is well known and will be kept in future. Nowadays more than 350000 graduates from Former Soviet Union Universities work in 150 countries. In present time more than 57000 foreign students trained at Russian HEE, including 52000 on contractual basis.

Mobility in the field of education doesn’t mean only complete (5-6 years) study course. The most effective and flexible way – to provide a possibility for continues study in any university abroad with recognition of these periods in the host university. Unfortunately, this possibility couldn’t be realized without complicated and long-term process of developing mechanisms, procedures and conditions for its realization.

When we speak about mobility, in particularly about international mobility, within the context of education, we have to stress several positions the most important from the organizational point of view:

- governmental strategies and policies supporting mobility;
- schemes and structures for realizing exchange;
- official comparative studies of different education systems;
- recognition of documents, qualifications and study periods abroad;
- teaching and learning in foreign languages;
- financial aspects of mobility.

Russian universities participate in many bilateral programs on mobility, in transeuropean program TEMPUS, plan to develop their participation in UMAP Program. The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation in the process of negotiations with Canadian Bureau of International Education on a joint mobility program.

Not only the possibility of international contacts could provide the better understanding. Children, students, teachers participated in mobility have to be ready to these contacts, have to be educated with respect to cultural, national and religious diversity.

As an examples of “best practice” in that field in the Russian Federation, it could be interesting to present a brief information about two programs realized with participation of the Ministry of Education.
Implementation of the governmental program “Tolerance and Prevention of extremism in Russian Society” (POTPEX).

The Program was initiated at the end of 1999, in the context of a larger national strategy for civil society development. POTPEX targets the re-establishment and re-enforcement of Russia’s major cultural, historic and moral values as well as remedy of such negative trends as ethnic intolerance, xenophobia and fanaticism. 14 Ministries and governmental bodies are involved in this Program and the Ministry of Education was appointed as a main coordinator for its implementation. The long-term objective of POTPEX is to contribute to the formation and assimilation of norms, values and principles of tolerance and non-violence in a democratic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. It is expected that realization of POTPEX will allow to create a governmental strategy ascertaining tolerance as the platform for national unity between different social, political and ethnic groups in an open society, international practice and dialog among nation-states.

The main subjects under POTPEX – personality, family and society. And education is a “red line” that crosses Program’s levels, directions and targets.

Since 1996 all countries-members of UNESCO celebrate the Day of Tolerance on November 16, and in accordance with official plan of actions under POTPEX, the Russian Federation plans to join this tradition since 2000. As one of the first steps under the Program and with support from UNESCO it was organized the International experts’ meeting to discuss possibilities of partnerships in that field. It was noted a big interest to the program from many national and international organizations. With its neutrality and leading expertise in the field of education for tolerance, human rights and peace, UNESCO is among the main international partners under POTPEX. This Program is at the beginning of realization and we will be happy to use international experience in that field as well as to inform any organizations and countries, interested in it, about our results and achievements.

Implementation of the Program UNESCO “Culture for Peace”.
The year 2000 has been proclaimed the International Year for a culture of peace. Thus, the United Nations on the initiative of UNESCO, has set a beacon for the century to come: “learn to be together” by learning to settle conflicts at any level without using violence.
Activities in Russia started mainly in 1998. By approving of a document on “Russia on its way to a Culture of Peace – year 2000” the National Commission provided a programmatic basis. It is of course very important to work with the intellectual elite, yet the main goal is to draw the population into the Program. This can be achieved by including the system of education at all levels in the efforts to this end.

UNESCO Moscow office – jointly with the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation – organized the conference “Culture of Peace in Upbringing Schoolchildren: the experience of Russian Regions”. The conference aimed, on the one hand, to brief the body of the Russian teachers on the ideas and teaching techniques in the spirit of culture of peace, non-violence and democracy and, on the other hand, to sum up the experience of innovators and spread it to various educational institutions of the country.

For realization of any project or program it is extremely important to use existing experience, contact, networks. More than 100 schools from 20 Russian regions are involved into the project “Associated UNESCO Schools”. On September 14, last year, AUS of Moscow and the Moscow region signed the Manifesto-2000 and on the same day more than 1400 Moscow schools jointed in this action.

Another area of work is retraining teaching personnel, including action on pilot projects to set up courses of peacemaking for teachers in different Russian regions. UNESCO chairs of Mass Media and Democracy, of Human Rights, of Philosophy of Culture of Peace and of Culture of peace set themselves the task to draw up course lectures, teaching materials and manuals in culture of peace for all types of higher education.

There are a lot of other activities and projects within the context of international cooperation in education realized in the Russian Federation and we would be happy to present necessary information both - personally or via INTERNET.

Referring to the main of above mentioned aspects of the international understanding development **ACEIU activities for international understanding could be focused on:**

- the collection, analysis and exchange of information and experience, including information network on education systems and policies in the region is an essential tool for facilitating and cooperation in this area;
- participation in creating of international statistics system in the field of education
- activity that is necessary for all comparative studies not only within region, but for wider international cooperation;
- comparative studies on educational systems in participating countries could provide a real support for decisions dealing with recognition of documents, qualifications and periods of study abroad;
- analysis of regional labor markets' requirements or, at least, collection of information in that aspect is extremely important to carry out some general priorities for professional education, for student mobility and for issues, related to recognition of qualifications;
- institutional cooperation with national centers on international cooperation, centers of comparative studies in the field of education, national academic recognition centers, etc. is a good approach to get concrete and specific information as well as a real way for wide dissemination of information;
- supporting of school partnerships with emphasize on activities for multicultural education and transnational in-service training for teachers and other educational staff;
- realization of international programs with participation of regional economies is useful for practical cooperation, for establishing of new contacts and links between individuals and institutions;
- links with other international organizations working in the field of regional cooperation like APEC, ASEAN as well as with international organizations like UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP would assist more effective coordination, at least, in education area;
- international conferences, round tables and workshops for decision-makers, teachers, administrators and so on, is an ordinary and effective way for dissemination of information and experience.

The list of possible and necessary ACEIU activities is not complete, it could be updated and changed depending on organizational and financial conditions, on regional and national priorities, on world trends and initiatives in international cooperation.

Participation in ACEIU activity for every country is a very good occasion to make a contribution into process of mutual understanding, strengthening of stability and peace process in Asia-Pacific region.
We have to be realistic – achieving of this noble aim will take a lot of time, work and funds. But official representations from so many regional economies at this meeting, support from UNESCO, general understanding of significance of discussed matter for all participating countries and our vital interest in developing of bi- and multinational cooperation in the field of education within Asia-Pacific region – are the real and reasonable issues to be sure in necessity of ACEIU creation as well as in its long-term and successful activity.