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Welcome Speech

By

Mr. Sorajak Kasemsuvan

MCOT Director-General

at the Reception Dinner

for participants of

The Seminar on "Media & Human Rights Reporting on Asia's Rural Poor"

Bangkok

November 24, 1999

AMIC officials and staff members,

Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome all of you to Thailand to participate in this fruitful seminar on Media and Human Rights Reporting on Asia's Rural Poor organized by the Asian Media Information and Communication Center (AMIC).

Obviously, the topic and the timing of this seminar is very appropriate since the economic crisis that has hit our region for the last two years is leaving our rural poor even far worse-off than ever. I am certain that the gathering of participants comprising of high profile communication professionals, human rights activists, lawyers and academics like this one will serve as an important opportunity to create an effective media network that can bring the mishap and suffering of our underprivileged friends in the rural area to the forefront and call for all the necessary assistance they deserve.

As for ourselves, the MCOT, being state-owned media, our major role is to disseminate news and information to the public, whereas, in compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, our role is also to ensure that all people have equal access to information and knowledge in this so-called "IT Age". The improvement of conventional electronic media, direct satellite broadcast and the ever increasing popularity of the Internet means that a lot of people will have fast and easy access to information. But we must always remember that the majority of our population is not amongst those lot of people. It is entrusted upon us that this majority must not be deprived of their legitimate right of such equal access. We must all endeavour to enable our impoverished rural to reach all the information and knowledge that is available to the other sectors of the society and help *secure* the safeguarding of their human rights and the improvement of the quality of the life.

On behalf of the MCOT, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to AMIC for organising the seminar and also all the work that AMIC has done for the benefit of the peoples in this region. We, the MCOT is very proud to be a part of this gathering.

With your hardworking and active participation throughout the seminar, I am quite convinced that the seminar will be a success and I wish all of you good health and a pleasant stay in Thailand.

Thank you.