I am the Director of the APMRN Secretariat and have been involved with the network since its inception in 1995. I plan to give a little history and outline what I see as the major achievements of the network.

The broad aim of the APMRN when it started in 1995 was to build an international research network to carry out interdisciplinary research on social and political aspects of international migration. The UNESCO-MOST Programme provided the basis for an intellectual framework, concerning the links between economic globalization and social and political change. As Castles, one of the founders of the APMRN said, “We were able to adapt this to apply to migration, as a key form of global and regional integration.”

Another reason for forming the network was the growing realization among Asian and Pacific academics that official perceptions of migration as a purely economic phenomenon were ideologically-driven and short-sighted. In contrast, many people saw the need to
look at long-term social and political effects of migration. The APMRN provided a way of doing this.

The central focus of APMRN was the long-term role of migration and increased ethno-cultural diversity. These we saw as major factors of the social transformations of societies in the Asia Pacific region. Network-building was key to translating the APMRN’s goals into reality.

The APMRN has helped build research capabilities, develop empirical knowledge, further theoretical and methodological work in the social sciences. It has provided broadly-based and reliable information and options for policy-makers at the national and international levels. UNESCO continues to say that the APMRN is one of its most successful networks.

The network has now expanded to include South Asia, Mongolia and Cambodia. By 2007, the APMRN has grown to **17 members**:

- NE Asia (South Korea, Japan, Mongolia, People’s Republic of China and Chinese Taipei – unofficial member);
- SE Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand);
- South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka), and
- the Pacific (Australia, New Zealand and Fiji - covering the whole Pacific).

It is looking to expand further to encompass Nepal and Lao PDR when the time is right.
Coordinators for each member of the APMRN are mainly academic researchers. In recent years the APMRN has sought to actively involve NGOs and International Organizations. I am pleased to say that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is now represented by coordinators in Vietnam and Cambodia. The APMRN tends to be driven from the bottom up. We generate our own research topics — though we are sometimes influenced by funding agencies’ agendas. Some people work directly with governments and have close collaboration through regular meetings and projects. Others work at arm’s length but we always try to keep in mind the policy relevance of what we are doing.

Research projects have been conducted within countries, as part of multi-country comparative studies and across migration systems, i.e. in source and destination regions. The topics have covered return migration, women and migration, HIV/AIDS and migration, the effects of migration on children, the relationships between migration research and migration policy, obstacles to ratification of the 1990 UN Convention in eight countries in the Asia Pacific region, etc. So far we have produced 17 Working Papers and the more recent ones are available on the APMRN’s website. Hard copies of earlier WPs are still available from the Secretariat.

Coordinators are asked to fulfil a variety of functions, including organising workshops and conferences like this one. This is our 8th international conference and it is one of our largest. It involves people from broader fields and two other major networks, the
Mekong Migration Network (MMN) which is hosted by the Asian Migrant Center (AMC) in Hong Kong and UNESCO’s Science and Technology Policy Asian Network (STEPAN) which is currently being chaired by the Philippines with the Secretariat in Jakarta.

I am delighted that this collaboration has occurred and that the conference will encompass papers from a broad spectrum of people and agencies. We chose the conference title, ‘Migration, Poverty Reduction and Development’, so that we could focus on major issues facing China and the GMS region, in particular. Thanks to the Rockefeller Foundation we have been able to bring together many people in the GMS who otherwise would not have been able to attend.

Much of this is due to the hard work and tenacity of Professor Yu Zhu. He has worked tirelessly to get funding and help organise this conference. Without his efforts this conference would not be happening.

I would also like to acknowledge the exceedingly generous financial and other support provided by Fujian Normal University towards this conference. They have covered the land costs of APMRN participants and some others and provided Yu Zhu with ongoing assistance. We greatly appreciate this, as the Secretariat does not have any funding for conferences.

In the absence of core funding the APMRN relies on the generosity of coordinators and their networks/employers to host conferences.
such as this. In this way we can meet and exchange views, hear about recent research projects and their findings, identify gaps in research and policy and generally maintain momentum to keep the network functioning.

After 12 years I am planning to rotate the ‘Secretariat’ to another member of the APMRN and therefore this will be my swan song. In Australia we say ‘So long, It’s been good to know you’. But the Chinese say Zaijian (goodbye) and Xiwang yihou zai jiandao ni (I hope to see you again sometime). This is what I hope will happen as I have made so many friends through the network.

I am looking forward to this extremely interesting conference and set of papers. But more than that I am looking forward to the conviviality that I know we will share. We will all go away richer and happier for having spent this time together.

Let’s hope the conference helps to move migration research to another level in the region. Much remains to be done — for example, in terms of individual migrants, the protection of their rights, policy gaps, and how regional and global processes are impacting on countries in this region and enabling/encouraging more migration. Even more, the links between migration and how it can positively impact on development and poverty alleviation need to be investigated.