Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be presiding today over the opening ceremony for this class at the Fundamental Education Center of Khanh Hau. I am happy to see that the great efforts and sacrifices, which the UNESCO experts and all the responsible persons at the Center have made during the past months, are being crowned with success. But I am particularly happy to read that spark of joy, that ray of hope and confidence in the future which is flashing out of every student's face. They have come here from all parts of the country, in spite of difficulties of all sorts; they have come here to this little spot to learn to adapt their way of life to that of the poorest of our countrymen, so that, later on, they may be able to bring to them—in the most efficient way—material as well as spiritual help.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You all know that the economic and social life in our rural areas, where more than 80 percent of our compatriots live, must need be considerably developed and improved in order for it to catch up with the present state of evolution of the country as a whole.

To attain this goal, we must try and do away—as quickly as we can—with the old-aged evils that have been plaguing our peasantry. Among these evils, I should mention the problems of health deficiency and low productivity as the most important ones, the main causes of the low standard of living in our rural areas, both materially and culturally speaking.

I should not have spoken of cause and effect, however, because these problems are so intimately related to one another that causes and effects dialectically chain up to form a real vicious circle. Thus, a low cultural level, highlighted by the ignorance of hygiene, would favor the development of endemic diseases which, in weakening the population, would lower its productivity and, by extension, its standard of living; a low standard of living, in turn, would be a serious blow to the development of culture. And there you are, the inevitable vicious circle. Now, if we really want to bring to our rural compatriots a better to-morrow, we should make it our duty to help them break that infernal dialectics.
The National Government, which always takes the real needs of the people as a basis for its policy, is doing its very best to try and remedy this state of things. Various projects are being studied or realized which all aim at the betterment of our country life. Doing its share toward the same goal, the Department of National Education has launched a basic reform as to the curriculums and methods of teaching. We hope that, in the near future, we shall have completely finished with the old methods and programs, which are considered too academic and unpractical, to inaugurate a new era of education in which we shall be able to help—in the most efficient way—not only our students at schools, but also our people as a whole to ameliorate their way of life, realizing thus the integration of the school in the community. This is precisely the purpose of the Fundamental Education Center, and also that of the Community Pilot Schools.

It is in the same spirit that the Government has set up a project for the construction of more than 400 primary schools in various rural centers. And the training course for community teachers, of which we are celebrating the opening today, will constitute the first step in the realization of that vast project.

My dear students,

Heavy is your responsibility toward the nation, for you will be the pioneers in the enterprise which I have just outlined. I have great hope that you will not spare any effort in the acquisition of new knowledge, under the wise guidance of your professors and the UNESCO experts; I have confidence in your sense of duty, in your good will, and from the bottom of my heart, I wish you success.

Now I should like to take this opportunity to express my hearty thanks to the UNESCO experts whose competent help has been most precious to us all.

And, last but no least, I should like to thank the Chief of Province, and all the administrative and technical bodies of Tan-An, the Administrative Committee of the village of Khanh-Hau, as well as all those who, directly or indirectly, have helped the Fundamental Education Center to become such a promising enterprise as it is today.

Thank you.