

# **WORLD CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century**

### **Vision and Action**

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## **VOLUME V – PLENARY**

### **Jordan**

Note1: To meet UNESCO publishing standards, some editing of papers has been required.

Note2: Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in signed articles and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

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**Speech of His Excellency Dr Fawzi Gharaiba  
Minister of Education**

By the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

H.E. Mr President of the Conference  
Your Excellencies, Heads and Members of Participating Delegations  
May Peace, Mercy and Grace of God be upon you,

I would like at the outset to extend my congratulations to the President and his colleagues, the members of the conference Bureau who have been elected wishing them all the success in their management of this conference towards attaining its set objectives.

I would like also to greet the UNESCO Director General, Mr. Federico Mayor and the concerned French authorities, for their fruitful efforts that have led to the convening of this conference within a successful framework.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The main goal of this conference is to work hand in hand to develop higher education. During the past three days, we discussed several topics and a variety of means to reach a unified declaration and a plan of action to improve higher education according to common bases that would help us, upon the end of this conference, to work towards achieving a quantum jump and important shifts to develop higher education.

On this occasion, I take the pleasure to present my country's experience with regard to the steps that have been adopted towards the aim of improving higher education in this era leading us to the third millennium.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The higher education sector in Jordan has been subject to highly challenging conditions that have become more difficult in recent years. These conditions have been affecting the educational system: its message, administration, processes and outputs. The main challenge among all is that most of the higher education programmes have failed to cope with emerging changes and evolution of the labour market let alone the surplus numbers of students in the higher education establishments, which makes it impossible for such markets to accommodate graduates when seeking jobs. Thus, the quality of higher education has been negatively affected and numbers of graduates have far exceeded the labour market needs. In addition, resources available for the support of higher education institutions are rare and the management of human and financial resources has been poor and has led to a low degree of internal and external competence in this field.

We have, in my country, been aware of the importance to proceed further in the momentum of developments in the higher education field since the end of the eighties. In response to the increasing social demand for all levels and all forms of higher education and in order to enforce the aspired changes while handling the scientific, economic, technological and social challenges, a five year plan is now underway to develop higher education at all levels and in all fields. The plan has incorporated a group of governmental policies and strategies: namely, enforcing the legislative and administrative reforms in order to achieve independence of the higher education institutions and achieve a distinguished level of graduates. These policies and strategies have also stressed the importance of high competence in the higher education discipline in the domains of teaching, scientific research and community service. Special attention has been given to the programmes aimed at developing the production sectors. Moreover, the higher education institutions must have a varied set of financial resources that they can develop, and they must be urged to set their own financial resources. Work must be done to produce a means of bridging the gap among the several levels of university teaching.

A new policy has been adopted in this respect. It calls on encouraging, expanding and raising the competence level of the private sector in the domains of planning, execution, and finance related to the development of human resources. The same policy seeks to urge the private sector to invest in the field of higher education with an eye of strengthening the position of Jordan as a centre of attraction in higher education in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to point out the three major parts of the afore-mentioned five-year plan as I believe in the importance of networking among us in this meeting:

**Firstly**, the plan investigates the level of higher education. In this part, the plan stresses the importance of developing competence and quality by means of developing and passing the required legislations. Recently, the Higher Education Council has been established to assume the responsibility of formulating the supreme policies of higher education in Jordan. The Council has a General Secretariat with a functional unit to produce studies, reports and indicators as well as developing the alternative policies in the field to help the Council draw up plans and policies with special attention to the follow up of the plan.

In addition, every university has its own board of trustees who would maintain the independence and distinguished reputation of the university. The Board is responsible for managing the sources of finance and following up the implementation of the university works as well.

Assuring the quality of higher education, the Accreditation Council has been set to assume the responsibilities of accreditation and evaluation of the private and governmental universities along with their accredited programmes. Moreover, an efficient discipline is being set now for the allocation of resources by means of developing an objective criterion to allocate governmental funds for current expenditures. This criterion would take into consideration the factors related to the nature of specialization, numbers of students, university fees and the actual cost. Meanwhile, the several universities in my country have been keen on developing and improving the administrative and planning capabilities at the universities through the finance of training programmes, provision of technical assistance and necessary equipment to improve the level of managerial and planning processes with the aim of coping with the national level developments and in harmony with the emerging responsibilities of these institutions.

In the present, however, it has become an imperative need to establish a centre of vocational development at each university and to improve the information networks as well as developing the electronic connections at the intra and inter-university levels. This latter point can be achieved by virtue of an effective infrastructure of information technology that allows fast and competent communication.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Secondly**, the Plan has stressed the importance of providing financial and technical support for the undergraduate and postgraduate phases as well as research on the level of each university. This can be achieved by means of a competitive mechanism to guarantee quality, distinguished levels, and response to the national requirements. Accordingly, the scholarships and visiting programmes of the teaching staff will be subsidized. Laboratories and scientific equipment will be developed, new programmes will be given several knowledge objectives to meet the national development requirements. Each university will be maintaining effective relations with the production and economic sector by supporting it with consultancies, technical services, applied research, training and the establishment of incubators.

**Thirdly**, the plan has included the "Development of Community College Discipline" with regard to programmes to cope with the elements and requirements of the local and regional labour market. The existing specializations are to be reformed by means of integration and cancellation in line with the needs of development and the labour market. The content of study programs will be stressed in relation with varied technical and academic skills, communication skills, adaptation and cooperative work. Thus, students will be oriented in a way that helps them work in several jobs. Mechanisms of partnership with the civil sector will be enforced in order to directly assist in drawing plans, tailoring training programmes and defining the training needs necessary to develop the human resources of this sector in cooperation with these colleges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The indicators of this five-year plan that I have already presented must form a solid plan to improve the level of higher education in my own country. It also comes in harmony with the plans set by the UNESCO and the conclusions to be reached on this conference. However, we are very enthusiastic and highly motivated to achieve the goals of this plan in the year 2003 and inspired by the ambitious wish of our political leadership to improve the level of higher education. We wish that the brethren, friend and international organizations especially UNESCO will make every effort possible to provide the technical and financial support to achieve the goals set in this plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last but not least, I would like to thank you all, especially the President of the conference and the Bureau of the conference for their persistent and fruitful work they have been doing to implement this conference. I would like to thank Mr. Federico Mayor, Director General of the Organization and his assistants again and again for their efforts of preparation and organization as well as providing all means for the success of our meetings.

I hope to reach a balanced international declaration at the end of this conference and a plan of action that would fulfil the requirements of our communities to develop the quality of higher education in response to the coming century's developments.

May peace be upon you.