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MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE**“EDUCATION FOR ALL”**

UNESCO, Paris, 7-8 October 2005

Communiqué

**Communiqué
of the Ministerial Round Table on EFA**

7-8 October 2005

**on the occasion of the 33rd session
of the General Conference of UNESCO**

UNESCO, Paris

1. We, the Ministers responsible for Education and for Development Cooperation respectively, meeting in Paris at the invitation of UNESCO on 7 and 8 October 2005,
2. *Reaffirming* education as a fundamental human right and our collective commitment to achieving the EFA goals of the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goals,
3. *Convinced* that education is an essential condition for equitable and sustainable social and economic development,
4. *Noting with alarm* the effects of poverty, hunger, conflict, instability, HIV and AIDS, maternal mortality and morbidity, illiteracy, teacher migration and natural disasters (such as earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis) on the chance to learn for millions of children, young people and adults, and the consequent stagnation of progress towards or retrogression from EFA goals,
5. *Recognizing* that educational reforms necessary for the achievement of EFA and the MDGs can only be accomplished through larger, global reforms aimed at security, peace and democracy,
6. *Encouraged* that this meeting is an expression of strong political will on the part of all participating countries to invest in the education of all persons – men, women and children alike,
7. *Expressing concern* that there continues to be a substantial shortfall in ODA in relation to the agreements of the Monterrey Consensus, which has impeded the implementation of EFA and the MDGs by the resource-poor countries,
8. *Welcoming* the new commitments in 2005 of the donor community to increase development aid by \$50 billion annually by 2010 and the decision at the 2005 G8 Summit held in Gleneagles, United Kingdom to increase and accelerate debt relief, and the resolve of the 2005 World Summit of September 2005 to promote and support the EFA agenda as an integral part of renewed international development efforts,
9. *Encouraging* the development of innovative financing mechanisms, including debt swaps for education and the International Finance Facility (IFF),
10. *Welcoming* the expanded and strengthened partnerships in EFA, in particular the success of the EFA convening partners (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, UNDP and UNFPA) in widening the partnership circle to include a range of bilateral donor and civil society partners,

11. *Welcoming also* the notable progress towards the 2015 EFA targets evident in many countries, such as the sharp increases in primary school enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia,
12. *Recognizing* the urgent need to further expand education at the secondary and tertiary levels and improve its quality, in order to satisfy growing demand and meet the needs of competitive economies,
13. *We agree together* on the principles of:
 - (a) National ownership, clearly formulated in Poverty Reduction Strategies and education sector plans, by which EFA processes from planning to evaluation are driven by priorities established by the competent authorities in each country, and fully integrated into national and international development frameworks;
 - (b) Transparent and inclusive partnerships, in which all the stakeholders of EFA participate in the planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EFA, as appropriate;
 - (c) International cooperation, as manifested in the improved working practices, both technical and financial and in partnerships such as the EFA Fast-Track Initiative, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative and other flagship programmes, and the Global Campaign for Education;
 - (d) Evidence-based policy-making, by which the lessons of good practice and of research inspire national policies on EFA and international action in support of countries;
 - (e) Attention to disadvantaged groups, found in every country of the world and for whom focused learning opportunities, which are often alternative or non-formal in character, must be designed and implemented;
 - (f) UNESCO's central role in championing, promoting and coordinating EFA;
14. *We commit ourselves* to:
 - (a) Continue to promote the EFA agenda in its broadest conception and at all levels, and in that perspective to:
 - (i) Ensure that all school age children enrol, remain and complete the desired level of education;
 - (ii) Invest in the quality of basic education, convinced that children and adults will only enjoy genuine life chances through a quality education;
 - (iii) Remove obstacles and strengthen efforts to ensure without delay equal access to school and learning opportunities for girls and women, recognizing that we have missed the first EFA target, also an MDG, of achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005;
 - (iv) Give greater emphasis to policies and funding for adult literacy, given the continuing high numbers of non-literate adults and the extremely low average percentage of national education budgets allocated to adult literacy, and to promote the maintenance of literacy competencies through fostering dynamic literate environments;

- (v) Work to increase the opportunities for early childhood care and education, acknowledging its critical impact on child development and subsequent primary school performance;
 - (vi) Develop close linkages between basic education and technical and vocational education, thus promoting livelihood opportunities and lifelong learning for economic development;
 - (vii) Emphasize the role of higher education, particularly in the field of teacher education, as essential to achieving all six EFA goals, and recognize the need for teachers to enjoy improved status and conditions;
- (b) Pursue reform and good governance in our educational systems as an ongoing and dynamic process, aiming for best practice and based on constant efforts to improve performance;
 - (c) Strengthen partnerships and a partnership culture at national level by increasing dialogue among EFA stakeholders, particularly with civil society and the private sector, and to explore creatively new dimensions of such partnerships;
 - (d) Continue to provide the national leadership necessary to work effectively with the United Nations Country Teams, donor clusters, civil society networks and private sector partners for more inclusive and sustainable quality Education for All;
 - (e) Give the necessary support to UNESCO in order to strengthen its coordinating role in EFA at international level, and its strategic and supportive role at regional and national levels;
 - (f) Intensify efforts in resource mobilization for education, including the promotion of innovative mechanisms to direct these resources, for instance to the development of the educational capital of communities;
 - (i) In developing countries, by increasing, as soon as possible, the proportion of national budgets allocated to education, and, as adequate funding becomes available, beginning to abolish user fees and other charges in primary education;
 - (ii) In bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, by channelling a greater volume of current and future ODA to education than hitherto;
 - (iii) Through the Fast Track Initiative, by expanding its role as one mechanism in mobilizing funds for EFA and in addressing the EFA goals and priorities articulated in a country-led process;
 - (g) Use aid to EFA more effectively:
 - (i) By implementing in the field of EFA the principles of aid effectiveness and donor harmonization enshrined in the Paris Declaration, exploring specifically the FTI as a mechanism in this regard;
 - (ii) By working towards more predictable, long-term and sustained funding, using 2015 as a planning horizon and recognizing that the development of educational systems is a long-term process;
 - (h) Strengthen our collective and individual capacity and accountability for progress in EFA by undertaking peer assessments and promoting mutual learning among countries;

- (i) Underline that only intensified efforts will break through barriers to EFA in certain regions of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and South Asia, and in other least-developed countries;

15. *We call on UNESCO to:*

- (a) Further develop and implement the Joint Action Plan in close consultation with key EFA partner agencies, with the purposes of improving coordination, coherence of policies, convergence of strategies, complementary action, and country-level results, and with a focus on supporting resource mobilization, aid effectiveness, capacity-building, communication and mutual accountability;
- (b) Advise and assist Member States in developing and implementing their education policies in order to fulfil the EFA goals;
- (c) Ensure better coordination mechanisms at the country level;
- (d) Support capacity-building for EFA particularly in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation, including through support for exchange of experience and peer learning;
- (e) Act as a clearing house for the gathering and exchange of information, and provide support for documenting good practice;
- (f) Further increase the coherence in its coordinating role in the three UNESCO initiatives in EFA – LIFE (Literacy Initiative for Empowerment), TTISSA (Teacher Training in sub-Saharan Africa), EDUCAIDS (Global Initiative for Education and HIV/AIDS) – the United Nations Literacy Decade and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development;
- (g) Continue the reform process that provides for a flexible and efficient Organization able to meet the demands placed on it in order to enhance leadership in the area of education;
- (h) Strengthen and align the capacities of UNESCO and its institutes with the lead role in the EFA process;
- (i) Build on the evidence provided by the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* to inform programmes and activities, including policy advice to Member States;
- (j) Use the forthcoming E-9 meeting in Mexico in 2006 as a key opportunity for building broader South-South cooperation;
- (k) Use the next High-Level Group meeting in Beijing in November 2005 to generate renewed political momentum and stronger leadership at national levels, and more ODA flow for EFA;
- (l) And, we invite the Director-General to report on the results of his efforts to the 34th session of the General Conference.