

# Communiqué

2009 World Conference on Higher Education:  
The New Dynamics of Higher Education and  
Research For Societal Change and  
Development

(UNESCO, Paris, 5 - 8 July 2009)



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



World  
Conference on  
Higher Education 2009

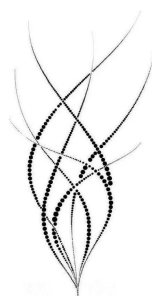
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COMMUNIQUE

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## Preamble

We, the participants of the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, held from 5 to 8 July 2009 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, recognising the abiding relevance of the outcomes and Declaration of the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education and taking into account the outcomes and recommendations of the six regional conferences (Cartagena de Indias, Macau, Dakar, New Delhi, Bucharest and Cairo) as well as the debates and outcomes of this world conference, 'The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development', adopt the present communiqué.

As a public good and a strategic imperative for all levels of education and as the basis for research, innovation and creativity, higher education must be a matter of responsibility and economic support of all governments. As emphasised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 'higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit' (Article 26, paragraph 1).

The current economic downturn may widen the gap in access and quality between developed and developing countries as well as within countries, presenting additional challenges to countries where access is already restricted.

At no time in history has it been more important to invest in higher education as a major force in building an inclusive and diverse knowledge society and to advance research, innovation and creativity.

The past decade provides evidence that higher education and research contribute to the eradication of poverty, to sustainable development and to progress towards reaching the internationally agreed upon development goals, which include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). The global education agenda should reflect these realities.

## Social Responsibility of Higher Education

1. Higher Education as a public good is the responsibility of all stakeholders, especially governments.

2. Faced with the complexity of current and future global challenges, higher education has the social responsibility to advance our understanding of multifaceted issues, which involve social, economic, scientific and cultural dimensions and our ability to respond to them. It should lead society in generating global knowledge to address global challenges, inter alia food security, climate change, water management, intercultural dialogue, renewable energy and public health.
3. Higher education institutions, through their core functions (research, teaching and service to the community) carried out in the context of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, should increase their interdisciplinary focus and promote critical thinking and active citizenship. This would contribute to sustainable development, peace, wellbeing and the realization of human rights, including gender equity.
4. Higher education must not only give solid skills for the present and future world but must also contribute to the education of ethical citizens committed to the construction of peace, the defence of human rights and the values of democracy.
5. There is need for greater information, openness and transparency regarding the different missions and performance of individual institutions.
6. Autonomy is a necessary requirement for fulfilling institutional missions through quality, relevance, efficiency, transparency and social responsibility.

## Acces, Equity and Quality

7. In the past ten years, tremendous efforts have been made to improve access and ensure equity. This effort must continue. Access alone is, however, not enough. Much more needs to be done. Efforts must be made to ensure the success of learners.
8. Expanding access has become a priority in the majority of Member States and increasing participation rates in higher education are a major global trend. Nevertheless, great disparities persist, constituting a major source of inequality. Governments and institutions must encourage women's access, participation and success at all levels of education.
9. In expanding access, higher education must pursue the goals of equity, relevance and quality simultaneously. Equity is not simply a matter of access - the objective must be successful participation and completion while at the same time assuring student welfare. This must include appropriate financial and educational support to those from poor and marginalized communities.

10. The knowledge society needs diversity in higher education systems, with a range of institutions having a variety of mandates and addressing different types of learners. In addition to public institutions, private higher education pursuing public objectives has an important role to play.
11. Our ability to realize the goals of EFA is dependent upon our ability to address the worldwide shortage of teachers. Higher education must scale up teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, with curricula that equip teachers to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills they need in the twenty-first century. This will require new approaches, including open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communications technologies (ICTs).
12. Preparing education planners and conducting research to improve pedagogical approaches also contributes to EFA goals.
13. ODL approaches and ICTs present opportunities to widen access to quality education, particularly when Open Educational Resources are readily shared by many countries and higher education institutions.
14. The application of ICTs to teaching and learning has great potential to increase access, quality and success. In order to ensure that the introduction of ICTs adds value, institutions and governments should work together to pool experience, develop policies and strengthen infrastructure, especially bandwidth.
15. Higher education institutions must invest in the training of faculty and staff to fulfil new functions in evolving teaching and learning systems.
16. Greater emphasis on the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics as well as Social and Human Sciences is vital for all our societies.
17. The results of scientific research should be made more available through ICTs in addition to open access to scientific literature.
18. The training offered by institutions of higher education should both respond to and anticipate societal needs. This includes promoting research for the development and use of new technologies and ensuring the provision of technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship education and programmes for lifelong learning.
19. Expanding access poses challenges to the quality of higher education. Quality assurance is a vital function in contemporary higher education and must involve all stakeholders. Quality requires both establishing quality assurance systems and patterns of evaluation as well as promoting a quality culture within institutions.

20. Regulatory and quality assurance mechanisms that promote access and create conditions for the completion of studies should be put in place for the entire higher education sector.
21. Quality criteria must reflect the overall objectives of higher education, notably the aim of cultivating in students critical and independent thought and the capacity of learning throughout life. They should encourage innovation and diversity. Assuring quality in higher education requires recognition of the importance of attracting and retaining qualified, talented and committed teaching and research staff.
22. Policies and investments must support a broad diversity of tertiary/post-secondary education and research - including but not limited to universities - and must respond to the rapidly changing needs of new and diverse learners.
23. The knowledge society requires a growing differentiation of roles within higher education systems and institutions, with poles and networks of research excellence, innovations in teaching/learning and new approaches to community service.

## Internationalisation, Regionalisation and Globalisation

24. International cooperation in higher education should be based on solidarity and mutual respect and the promotion of humanistic values and intercultural dialogue. As such, it should be encouraged despite the economic downturn.
25. Institutions of higher education worldwide have a social responsibility to help bridge the development gap by increasing the transfer of knowledge across borders, especially towards developing countries, and working to find common solutions to foster brain circulation and alleviate the negative impact of brain drain.
26. International university networks and partnerships are a part of this solution and help to enhance mutual understanding and a culture of peace.
27. Partnerships for research and staff and student exchanges promote international cooperation. The encouragement of more broadly based and balanced academic mobility should be integrated into mechanisms that guarantee genuine multilateral and multicultural collaboration.
28. Partnerships should nurture the creation of national knowledge capabilities in all involved countries, thus ensuring more diversified sources of high quality research peers and knowledge production, on regional and global scales.

29. For globalisation of higher education to benefit all, it is critical to ensure equity in access and success, to promote quality and to respect cultural diversity as well as national sovereignty.
30. Globalisation has highlighted the need for the establishment of national accreditation and quality assurance systems along with promotion of networking among them.
31. Cross-border provision of higher education can make a significant contribution to higher education provided it offers quality education, promotes academic values, maintains relevance and respects the basic principles of dialogue and cooperation, mutual recognition and respect for human rights, diversity and national sovereignty.
32. Cross-border higher education can also create opportunities for fraudulent and low-quality providers of higher education that need to be counteracted. Spurious providers ('degree mills') are a serious problem. Combating 'degree mills' requires multi-pronged efforts at national and international levels.
33. New dynamics are transforming the landscape of higher education and research. They call for partnerships and concerted action at national, regional and international levels to assure the quality and sustainability of higher education systems worldwide - particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, Small Island Developing States (SIDs) and other Least Developed Countries (LDCs). This should also include South-South and North-South-South cooperation.
34. Greater regional cooperation is desirable in areas such as the recognition of qualifications, quality assurance, governance, and research and innovation. Higher education should reflect the international, regional and national dimensions in both teaching and research.

## Learning Research and Innovation

35. Given the need for increased funding for research and development in many countries, institutions should seek new ways of increasing research and innovation through multi-stakeholder public-private partnerships that include small and medium enterprises.
36. It is increasingly difficult to maintain a healthy balance between basic and applied research due to the high levels of investment needed for basic research as well as the challenge of linking global knowledge to local problems. Research systems should be organised more flexibly to promote science and interdisciplinarity in the service of society.



37. For the quality and integrity of higher education, it is important that academic staff has opportunities for research and scholarship. Academic freedom is a fundamental value that must be protected in today's evolving and volatile global environment.
38. Higher education institutions should seek out areas of research and teaching that can address issues related to the well-being of the population and establish a strong foundation for locally-relevant science and technology.
39. Indigenous knowledge systems can expand our understanding of emerging challenges; higher education should create mutually beneficial partnerships with communities and civil societies to facilitate the sharing and transmission of appropriate knowledge.
40. In the face of increasingly scarce resources, stakeholders are encouraged to explore and intensify the use of electronic library resources and tools to support teaching, learning and research.

## Higher Education in Africa

41. The 2009 World Conference on Higher Education gave special focus to the challenges and opportunities for the revitalization of higher education in Africa - an important tool for the development of the continent. The issues raised for African higher education are integrated throughout this communiqué.
42. Participants welcomed the recommendations of the Dakar Regional Preparatory Conference of November 2008 and noted the progress recorded since the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education - especially increased enrolments in higher education. Participants underscored the critical need to confront emerging challenges relating to gender and racial inequality, academic freedom, brain drain and the lack of graduates' preparedness for the labour market. They underlined the urgency for the adoption of new dynamics in African higher education that work towards a comprehensive transformation to sharply enhance its relevance and responsiveness to the political, social and economic realities of African countries. This new momentum can provide a trajectory in the fight against under-development and poverty in Africa. This will demand greater attention to higher education and research in Africa than has been given for the last eleven years. Higher education in Africa should foster good governance based on robust accountability and sound financial principles.

43. The evolution of a quality African higher education and research area will be stimulated through institutional, national, regional and international collaboration. There is, therefore, the need for a strategic orientation towards the establishment/strengthening of such collaboration. African countries with well-developed higher education systems should share with those that have less-developed systems. We must commit to making African higher education an instrument for regional integration.
44. The development of the higher education area in Africa will also be catalysed by the establishment of a quality assurance mechanism at the regional level. In this connection, we urge the fast-tracking of the initiative of the African Association of Universities (AAU), with support from UNESCO, to stimulate the setting up of national, sub-regional and regional quality assurance systems. Equally, staff and student mobility within an African higher education area will be fostered through the active implementation of the Arusha Convention on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and degrees. The indispensability of the Pan African University in fostering African integration should be stressed.
45. Access: To meet the rapidly increasing demand for higher education and research in Africa, there is an urgent need for differentiated institution - ranging from research universities to polytechnics and technical colleges, with diversified programmes within each institution - to cater to different types of learners as well as the needs of the country. The increasing demand for higher education will hardly be met by traditional face-to-face delivery alone. Other approaches, such as ODL and online learning, will have to be utilized, especially for areas such as continuing adult education and teacher training.
46. Curriculum relevance: A number of areas of expertise are crucial for the diversification of African economies, yet are not receiving the required attention. These include agriculture, natural resource extraction, the environment, indigenous knowledge systems and energy. A focus on these areas in higher education can contribute to ensuring the competitiveness of African economies.
47. Funding: Education remains a public good, but private financing should be encouraged. While every effort must be made to increase public funding of higher education, it must be recognised that public funds are limited and may not be sufficient for such a rapidly developing sector. Other formulae and sources of funding, especially those drawing on the public-private partnership model, should be found.

48. Students should be given a voice in governance of higher education at all levels.
49. Participants expressed deep appreciation for the ongoing support to the development of African higher education by several countries and organizations. They also welcomed the new pledges made by several new partners, notably China, India and the Republic of Korea. They also applauded the concrete proposals from the African Development Bank, the African Union and associations of universities - notably the African Association of Universities (AAU), the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) - on the issues of governance and higher education delivery models.
50. The participants appreciated the priority that UNESCO accorded to Africa at this conference.

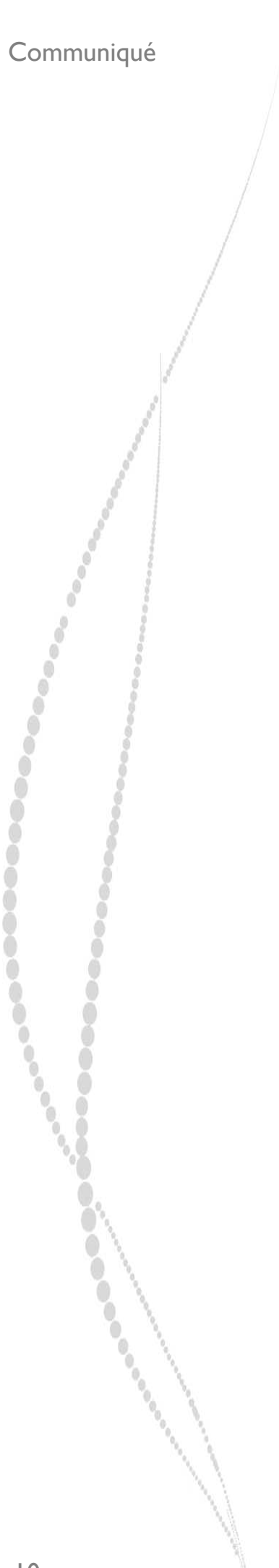
## Call for Action: Member States

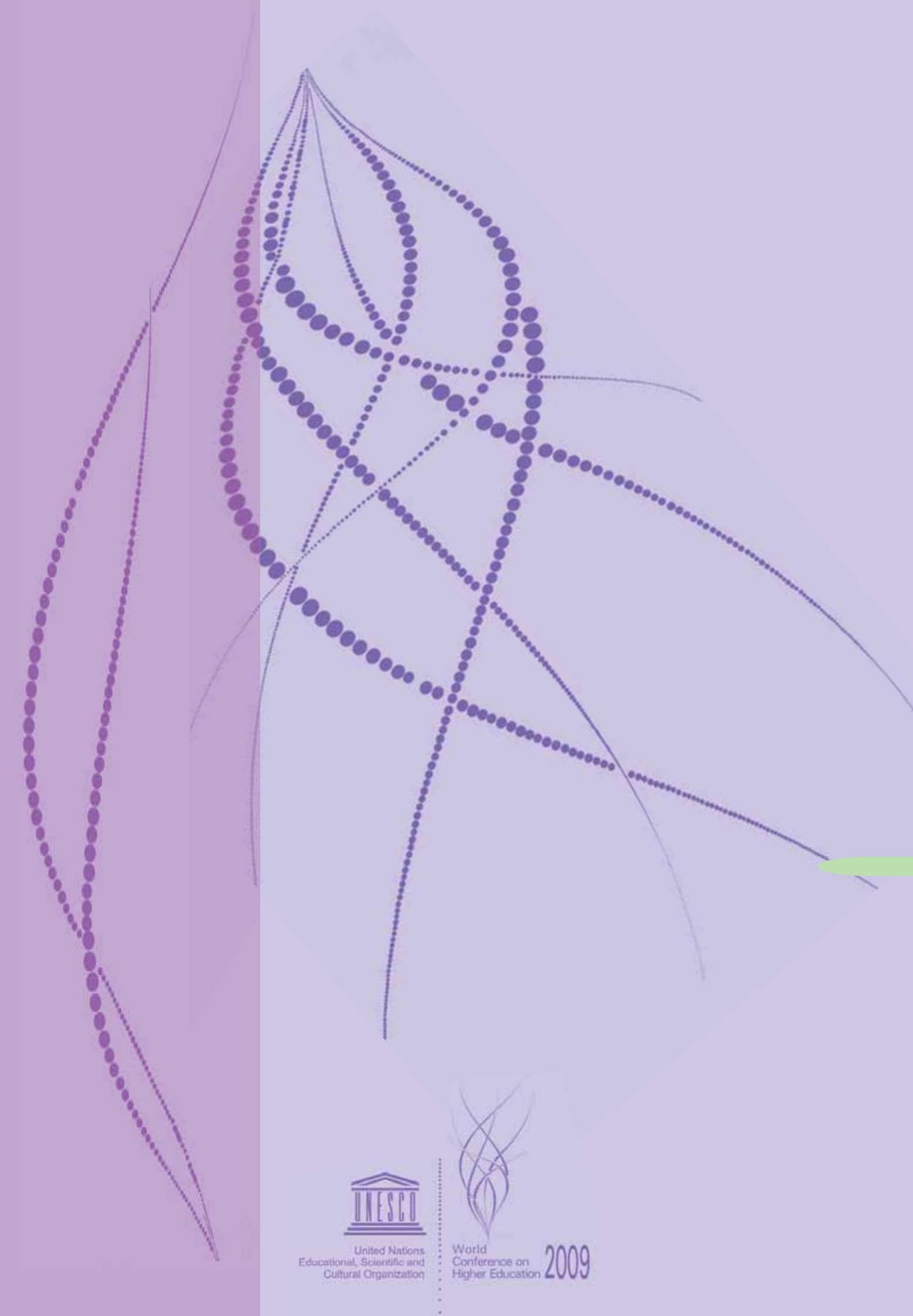
51. Member States, working in collaboration with all stakeholders, should develop policies and strategies at system and institutional levels to:
  - a) Maintain, and if possible, increase investment in higher education in order to sustain quality and equity at all times and foster diversification in both the provision of higher education and the means of funding;
  - b) Ensure adequate investments in higher education and research to reflect growing expectations and societal needs;
  - c) Put in place and strengthen appropriate quality assurance systems and regulatory frameworks with the involvement of all stakeholders;
  - d) Scale up pre-service and in-service teacher training with curricula that equip them to prepare students as responsible citizens;
  - e) Encourage women's access, participation and success in higher education;
  - f) Guarantee equal access to underrepresented groups such as workers, the poor, minorities, the differently abled, migrants, refugees and other vulnerable populations;
  - g) Develop mechanisms to counteract the negative impact of brain drain while encouraging academic, staff and student mobility;
  - h) Support greater regional cooperation in higher education conducive to the establishment and strengthening of regional higher education and research areas;

- i) Empower Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States to benefit from the opportunities offered by globalisation and foster collaboration between them;
- j) Pursue the goals of equity, quality and success by developing more flexible entry pathways and assuring better recognition of prior learning and work experience;
- k) Enhance the attractiveness of academic careers by ensuring respect for the rights and adequate working conditions of academic staff in accordance with the 1997 Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel;
- l) Ensure active student participation in academic life, with freedom of expression and the right of organisation, and provide adequate student services;
- m) Combat degree mills through multi-pronged action at national and international levels;
- n) Develop more flexible and organised research systems which promote science excellence, interdisciplinarity and serve society;
- o) Support the fuller integration of ICTs and promote ODL to meet increasing demands for higher education.

## Call for Action: UNESCO

52. In the context of significant progress towards achieving Universal Primary Education, UNESCO should reaffirm the priority of higher education in its future Programmes and Budgets. In pursuing this priority UNESCO, within its five functions as laboratory of ideas, catalyst for international cooperation, standard-setter, capacity-builder and clearing house, should:
- a) Assist with the formulation of long term, sustainable strategies for higher education and research in tune with internationally agreed development goals and national/regional needs;
  - b) Provide platforms for dialogue and the sharing of experience and information on higher education and research and assist in building capacity in the formulation of higher education and research policies;

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- c) Help governments and institutions address international issues in higher education by:
    - Continuing to implement its standard-setting instruments, in particular the new generation of regional conventions for the recognition of qualifications; and the 1997 Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel;
    - Pursuing its work in capacity building for quality assurance in higher education in developing countries;
    - Fostering international collaboration in teacher education in all regions, especially in Africa through TTISSA (Teacher Training in Sub-Saharan Africa);
    - Encouraging the transfer of knowledge through UNITWIN Networks and UNESCO Chairs, in collaboration with other agencies, to further capacity development in support of internationally agreed goals such as Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the United Nations Decades.
  - d) Encourage international mobility and exchanges of students and staff, while developing strategies to counteract the negative impact of brain drain.
  - e) Enhance student participation in UNESCO forums and support global student dialogue.
  - f) Ensure follow-up to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education through: the identification of the most important issues and priorities for immediate action; the monitoring of trends, reforms and new developments; and the promotion of regional integration and academic cooperation by supporting the creation and development of regional areas of higher education and research and strengthening the regional UNESCO units in coordination with the existing networks.
  - g) Reinforce and extend the UNESCO-ADEA Task Force for Higher Education in Africa, which includes major partners and donors, to ensure effective follow-up to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education to move from talk to action.



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