



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the celebration
of World Teachers' Day**

UNESCO, 5 October 2009

Professor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to welcome you to UNESCO on this day dedicated to the cause of teachers worldwide. In particular, I would like to thank colleagues from ILO, UNICEF and Education International, the co-signatories of our joint message, as well as the experts and teachers who have joined us to celebrate World Teachers' Day.

None of us here need to be convinced. Teachers are at the core of the learning process. They play a central role in ensuring that students acquire satisfactory learning outcomes, but also in preparing them for active and responsible participation in life. In short, they have a very special and unique job.

But as our joint message suggests, many demands are placed on the teaching profession in today's globalized world, where knowledge and skills are increasingly vital for integration in society. The 21st century calls for new approaches to learning, innovative thinking, the acquisition of specific knowledge about the environment, health and citizenship, and the promotion of ethical values and attitudes. The ability of education systems to respond effectively to the needs of today's learners depends largely on the action that is taken now to recruit, train and support teachers and to ensure decent work for them.

This challenge is probably the greatest one we face in achieving Education for All.

Participation in primary and secondary education has increased steadily over the past decade in developing countries, a trend that reflects strong political commitment. But the world faces an acute shortage of trained and qualified teachers.

As you have just heard, according to the most recent estimates from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, for the period 2007-2015 around 10.3 million teachers need to be recruited just to provide universal primary education.

In 2006, UNESCO estimated the teacher gap at some 18 million. It was necessary to update this figure to reflect new evidence on teacher attrition rates. The new projection also takes into account the shorter time frame to 2015.

The message, however, is the same. The teacher challenge remains huge and addressing it will require major political and financial investment.

The current economic and financial crisis is putting government budgets under strain. It is our foremost responsibility to ensure that spending on education is protected and to ensure that investments match needs.

To address the teacher gap a balance must be struck between the short-term need to get teachers into classrooms and the longer term goal of building up a high-quality professional teaching force.

Combined with large-scale recruitment and training, this requires country driven strategies, adequate resources and policies which promote professional development, favourable working conditions and greater participation of teachers in decisions which concern them.

Addressing the teacher gap and improving teacher policies is one of UNESCO's top priorities in education.

Teachers were singled out as a key policy concern at the EFA High-Level Group meeting in Oslo last December. This has led to the setting up of an international Task Force on Teachers for EFA, whose Secretariat is based at UNESCO.

UNESCO has increased its budget support to the Teacher Training Initiative for sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) and to the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA). Within the framework of TTISSA, UNESCO has recently developed, in consultation with its Member States and other partners, a policy toolkit to help countries conduct a national diagnosis of their needs and develop comprehensive teacher policies.

Finally, World Teachers' Day commemorates the signing in 1966 of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, which provides comprehensive guidance on a range of teacher policies, rights and responsibilities.

UNESCO gives central importance to monitoring the implementation of this recommendation, together with the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel.

Just last week, the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel – known as CEART – held its tenth session at UNESCO Headquarters. I am very pleased to see CEART's President, Anne-Lise Høstmark Tarrou, amongst us to present the outcomes of the session.

All these activities at international, regional and country level reflect our steady commitment to teachers. Let me take this occasion to give special recognition to the teachers present here today and to thank all participants for their engagement. I trust this event will further strengthen our capacity to expand and improve the teaching profession worldwide.

Thank you.