



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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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

Professor Michael Barber,  
Professor Michael Fullen,  
Mr. Anthony Salcito,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here.

This Global Summit confirms the role that the United Kingdom plays as an education powerhouse and international leader for global educational goals.

This is an important meeting at an important time.

A basic quality education is an essential human right. It is also a motor for economic success. At times of economic constraint, when pressures are high to tighten budgets, we must build on education.

This is UNESCO's key message today.

Investing in education is investing out of the crisis, as stated by the Honourable Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education. Investing in education lays the foundations for sustainable development.

The United Nations Development Programme "2010 Human Development Report" makes the case clear.

**Address by Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO  
to the Education World Forum, Global Summit for  
Education Ministers on "Education for Economic Success"**

**London, 11 January 2011**

Reviewing progress since 1990, the 2010 Report shows the link between education and healthcare and overall growth. The fastest movers of the last twenty years have been countries willing and able to invest in education and health.

At a time of uncertainty, one thing seems certain: education is a smart investment.

It provides individuals with the tools to respond to change and make the most of it. This was recognized at the Millennium Development Goals Summit last September. The G20 Summit in Seoul underlined the importance of education “to increase employment in quality jobs, boost productivity and thereby enhance potential growth.” UNESCO worked hard to achieve this result.

Education is an accelerator for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Studies estimate that one extra year of schooling can increase an individual’s earnings by up to 10 percent and average annual GDP by 0.37 percent.

171 million people could be lifted out of poverty if students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills – an equivalent to a 12 percent cut in world poverty.

There is a tight link between four years of primary education and annual gains in agricultural production. Education is a way to tackle food insecurity.

Education is also a force for equity and equality.

A woman’s level of education impacts not only on her economic and social position, but also on her children’s nutrition, health and education. The impact is community-wide.

In Indonesia, child vaccination rates are 19% when mothers have no education. They increase to 68% when mothers have secondary school education.

A child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent more likely to survive past age 5.

Education is vital for combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Studies show that women with post-primary education are five times more likely than illiterate women to know about HIV/AIDS.

Responding to climate change also starts in the classroom. Education is the way to shape new ways of thinking and forge new, sustainable behaviour. These objectives guide UNESCO in leading the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* (2005-2014).

Fundamentally, education is about values.

It is about fostering respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights. It is the path to good citizenship.

The meaning of all of this is quite clear: the decisions we take today on education will impact long into the future and affect all aspects of our economies and societies.

More than ever, it is critical that we invest in quality learning throughout life.

We stand four years away from 2015 – the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of Education for All.

We have registered strong progress since 2000.

The number of out-of-school children has dropped by almost 37 million. The gender gap in formal education has narrowed. There has been impressive improvement in enrolment in primary education.

But we are not there yet.

There were 69 million children out of primary school in 2007, and about the same number of adolescents out of secondary school.

Being born a girl remains a primary cause for exclusion in the 21st century. Less than 40 percent of countries provide girls and boys with equal access to education. In Africa, disparities have increased at the secondary level over the last decade.

Discrimination is compounded by poverty. In Yemen, 90 percent of young women aged between 17 and 22 years old have less than 4 years of education.

There remain close to 800 million illiterate adults -- two thirds are women.

An additional 1.9 million teachers are needed in classrooms to achieve universal primary education by 2015.

While enrolment has increased, many countries are failing the quality test. Millions of children leave primary school each year without having acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills. Education is not an asset if it is not quality education.

Financing is also falling short.

Aid disbursements to basic education have stopped increasing for the first time since 2000 -- stagnating at US\$ 4.7 billion in 2008. Aid to sub-Saharan Africa actually decreased.

According to UNESCO's 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, we face an annual gap of US\$16 billion.

Donors must meet their commitment to fund Education for All. The situation is ever more challenging. Education budgets are being cut in some countries, while others are deferring financing.

However difficult, governments must protect education budgets and invest in what makes education work --creating stimulating learning environments, providing incentives for quality teaching, reaching out to the vulnerable and adapting curricula and pedagogies to a fast-changing world. The better the learning outcomes, the more attractive education becomes.

To reach the 2015 goals, we must bridge several gaps.

There is, first, the equity gap.

Inequalities linked to wealth, gender, ethnicity, language, location and disability are holding back progress. Education is *not for all* when exclusion prevails.

Despite economic constraints, States must increase access and improve the affordability of education for excluded groups. Schools should be brought closer to marginalised communities. ‘Second chance’ programmes must be developed, along with social protection programmes with a record in improving school retention.

Tackling exclusion starts with early childhood care and education. Effective programmes are highly effective in combating marginalisation, malnutrition and poverty — all of which hamper effective learning and undermine future development.

Increasing enrolment is vital. As importantly, we need to enhance the quality of early childhood care and education. This is the message UNESCO brought to the first World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education held in Moscow last September, which some 60 ministers attended.

Conflict is a major source of inequality. Around one-third of the world’s 69 million out-of-school children live in only 20 conflict-affected countries. UNESCO’s *2011 Global Monitoring Report*, to be launched on 1 March, will examine the damaging consequences of conflict for the Education for All goals.

Quality is the next gap to be bridged.

This is a concern for *all* countries. Assessing test scores is important, but this does not give the full picture. We have to understand the causes for shortfalls that lead to drop out, poor learning outcomes and inequalities.

Working with a range of partners and States, UNESCO is developing a framework to help countries diagnose, analyse and monitor the quality of their education systems.

Our *Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of Quality of Education* is a good example. This initiative conducts comparative studies on learning outcomes in Language, Mathematics and Science for primary students in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The third such assessment – TERCE — is currently underway.

Enhancing quality means revising approaches to teaching, learning and curriculum development. It means improving the learning environment as a whole.

Teachers are vital for the quality equation. Teacher education and training, recruitment and retention have to be national priorities.

UNESCO is working closely with governments in this area – for instance, through the *Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa*. We have established also an *International Task Force on Teachers for Education for All* to overcome the teacher gap.

Innovation is a third gap to be crossed.

Is education responding to the complex demands of globalisation? Are we harnessing the potential of information and communication technology, which is so radically changing how we learn, communicate, work, obtain and share information?

I do not think these questions have been fully answered.

We must make more of the potential of information and communication technology. Teachers are vital. In increasingly information-rich and knowledge-based societies, teachers must use technology effectively. Professional development programmes for practising teachers and programmes for training new teachers must be tailored in this direction.

UNESCO's *Information and Communication Technology Competency Framework for Teachers* is a flagship in this area. Working in partnership with the private sector – Cisco, Intel and Microsoft – we are developing definitions of information and communication technology skills for teachers. This will provide the basis to integrate technology into student learning and to design appropriate teacher training and professional development programmes.

The first phase of the project was completed with the development of Competency Framework Modules and Implementation Guidelines. We have now entered the second phase, with a focus on designing detailed syllabi. This phase will be completed by mid 2011.

UNESCO is seeking also to harness the power of mobile technologies. Public-private partnerships are vital here. UNESCO has launched a joint venture with NOKIA to use mobile technology as a way to increase access to quality learning.

We are also developing an Open Educational Resources Platform to offer selected UNESCO educational products for free use, adaptation and sharing worldwide.

The high-level *Broadband Commission for Development* that UNESCO launched last year with the International Telecommunication Union is another example. Our objective is to support global broadband roll-out in ways that are linked to inclusive education.

I am grateful to the Kingdom of Bahrain for establishing UNESCO / King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Education that is awarded every year in January. I am pleased to announce that one of the awardees for this year, to receive the prize on 12 January, is the *National Institute of Adult Continuing Education* (NIACE), United Kingdom, that helps adults use digital technologies for lifelong learning.

Innovation is needed also in the financing of education.

This was recognized by the Millennium Development Goals Summit last September.

The *Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development's Task Force on Education*, where UNESCO is an active member, has identified ideas for consideration – including multi-stakeholder partnerships and a levy on currency transactions. UNESCO is exploring also pilot cases of debt swaps for education.

To be effective, money must be invested through effective national programmes.

UNESCO is supporting countries to develop comprehensive education sector policies. National planning must include all levels and forms of education -- with a focus on girls, women and marginalized groups. Ensuring everyone's right to education is a national responsibility -- vital for competitiveness and for growth.

Fundamentally, education must answer some of the key questions of our time – how to develop healthy societies of increasing diversity, how to give all a stake in development?

The ultimate test of education is that of citizenship — national and global. This must remain the objective of education and the measure of its success.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have to make a more compelling case for education as the way to invest out of the crisis.

UNESCO will take this message to Davos and to Thailand for the 10th High-Level Group Meeting on Education for All in March. We will bring it to the G8 and G20 Summits, and the Annual Ministerial Review of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All initiative embody a profoundly humanist ambition to overcome inequality and poverty and lay the foundations for balanced growth. In essence, these goals represent a global solidarity compact.

We have seen progress, but we have still far to go to make this solidarity a reality for all.

The stakes are high for economic success, but they are higher still. G. K Chesterton once wrote that “education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.”

Education is vital for growth and development. But it is, indeed, also about the ‘soul’ of society, about values, about living together.

We must rise to this challenge, together.

Thank you for your attention.