



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

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Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the Annual Ministerial-level Substantive
Review of ECOSOC

Geneva, 4 July 2007

Ministers,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO's most important contribution to efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger is through education. UNESCO was chosen at the World Economic Forum in Dakar as the global coordinator of international efforts to achieve Education for All by 2015. Since then, helping countries reach the six Dakar goals has been the Organization's principal priority, and my main objective as Director-General.

As you know, two of the Dakar goals have also been adopted as Millennium Development Goals – that is, achieving universal primary education and eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education. While these are central to the vision of EFA, the latter remains much broader, encompassing early childhood education, quality, lifelong learning and literacy. Such a broad and holistic approach is essential to providing quality education for all.

UNESCO is also working to address education needs at the secondary and higher levels, which is critical to the sustainability of education development and vital to the creation of a skilled workforce. Education must be addressed through an integrated and sector-wide approach

As global coordinator of EFA, UNESCO is responsible for a series of mechanisms aimed at mobilizing political and financial support for EFA, identifying key policy issues, and monitoring progress. At the centre of these is the EFA High-Level Group, which meets at the end of every year to provide strategic leadership to the EFA movement, and comprises the four main EFA constituencies: developing countries, donors, multilateral agencies and civil society and the private sector.

The High-Level Group can draw in its deliberations on the findings of the EFA Global Monitoring Report, which is published annually using data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, as well as on the outcomes of the EFA Working Group, one of whose core functions is to distil these findings into firm policy orientations.

This year's High-Level Group will convene in December in Dakar – a symbolic location for a meeting that takes place at the mid-way point for reaching the EFA goals. The 2008 GMR will also be officially launched in Dakar. This will be a very important report, providing an overall review of EFA progress and examining the nature of the challenges up to 2015.

At the centre of UNESCO's role as global coordinator is the task of achieving more coherent and effective multilateral support to country efforts in EFA. In this respect, we

have developed along with the other four Dakar agencies – UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank – the EFA Global Action Plan. Contributing to broader efforts within the UN system “to deliver as One”, the Plan defines “one country – one education sector plan” as the pivot for better coordination.

Beyond global coordination, UNESCO also provides direct assistance to countries to develop and implement sound education policies. We are focusing in particular on sub-Saharan Africa, LDCs and small island developing states – that is those countries that face the greatest education needs.

Our action is centred on three core initiatives: the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE); the Teacher Training Initiative for sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA); and the Global Initiative on Education and HIV and AIDS (EDUCAIDS).

The EFA Global Monitoring Report, drawing on the data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, is monitoring the progress we are making in this area, demonstrating the real difference advances in education can make in the battle against poverty.

But stepping up international support is only part of the equation. Strong national commitment to, and investment in, education is the key to success. Developing countries must take the lead.

Models of development have evolved significantly and continue to evolve. Too often, the contribution of culture and the role of cultural heritage – tangible and intangible alike – is not recognized, especially as regards their potential for poverty alleviation. Cultural and creative industries are capable of yielding real results both socially and economically, and need to be integrated into international and local development strategies.

Science is also fundamental to poverty eradication. This can be seen, for example, in the management of freshwater, where UNESCO plays a lead role. Of critical importance to the longer term evolution of environment policy, the Organization's own action is of immediate impact for those countries, in Africa and elsewhere, where the management of water resources is genuinely a question of life and death. UNESCO promotes a holistic approach, drawing together science, education and culture, which helps guide governments to adopt the right technological approaches for conserving a resource that is essential for livelihoods and poverty eradication.

Before I end, let me emphasize the importance UNESCO places on building partnerships for development. UNESCO has a very specific vocation within the United Nations system, to act as a “networker”, that is to say to bring together a variety of partners: governmental and nongovernmental, national and multilateral, public and private. UNESCO has developed particularly fruitful partnerships with civil society organizations, especially in the field of EFA. We are also working actively to expand our collaboration with the private sector, a vital source not only of additional finance, but also advocacy, expertise and innovation.

This multi-stakeholder approach is essential to eradicating world poverty and hunger, a task so complex and immense that it can only be met by concerted action across the international community. Partnership is the very key to success.

Thank you very much.