



Global Education for All Meeting UNESCO, Paris **21 – 23 November 2012**



GEM 2012 Final Statement

Preamble

1. We, Ministers, heads of delegations, leading officials of multilateral and bilateral organizations, and senior representatives of civil society and private sector organizations, have gathered at the invitation of the Director-General of UNESCO in Paris, France, from 21 to 23 November 2012, for the Global Education for All (EFA) Meeting.
2. We take note of the recommendations of the 2012 regional EFA meetings in the African and Arab regions, the Asia and the Pacific High-Level Expert Meeting on Post-2015, the Sixth Meeting of the Collective Consultation of Non-Governmental Organizations on EFA and the Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting.
3. We note that the reformed global EFA architecture has the potential to enhance the effective involvement of all EFA partners.
4. We welcome the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education, with its strong linkage to and synergy with the EFA movement. Its focus on getting every child in school, improving the quality of learning and fostering global citizenship will accelerate the achievement of the EFA goals and contribute to progress towards all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
5. We reaffirm education as a fundamental human right, as enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and as reflected in the 1990 Jomtien Declaration and 2000 Dakar Framework for Action.
6. With less than three years left before the 2015 target date, it is vital to ensure that the collective commitments made in Jomtien and Dakar are met, thus ensuring the realization of the basic learning needs of every child, youth and adult.
7. Despite the significant progress that has been made since 1990 in the global development of Education for All, particularly in expanding access to primary education and promoting gender equality, this year's EFA Global Monitoring Report shows that we are off target for reaching the Education for All goals by 2015 – in some countries by a large margin. We are concerned that progress has slowed down, and that in some countries enrolment and quality are even regressing. In 2010, the number of out-of-school children stagnated at 61 million; 71 million adolescents are not in secondary school; despite great progress in reducing gender disparities,

17 countries still have fewer than nine girls for every ten boys in primary school; and there are still 775 million illiterate adults, a mere 12% reduction since 1990. Social disparities in both attendance and learning outcomes remain stark in and between countries: As many as 250 million of the 650 million children of primary school age today cannot read or count, even if they have spent four years in school. Years of neglecting education means there are now 200 million young people who have not completed primary school. These young people lack the skills to find work that will pay them a decent wage and urgently need a chance to learn the basics.

8. Slow progress in education is holding back the achievement of the development goals and is an obstacle for peace and social cohesion. The achievement of the EFA goals, which are mutually-reinforcing and indivisible, is a prerequisite for the fulfillment of human rights and the achievement of all the development goals. This calls for a holistic approach to quality lifelong learning, in which all education stakeholders should address access, success, quality and equity together.
9. Special efforts are needed to reach the hardest-to-reach, especially those in remote rural areas and the most marginalized groups of children, youth and adults, including girls and young women and those affected by conflict. Past failures have left a legacy of one in five 15- to 24-year-olds in developing countries who have not even completed primary school and urgently need to be provided with another opportunity to learn the necessary skills for secure work and full participation in their societies. Furthermore, learning opportunities must be provided to young people working in the informal and subsistence economy.
10. System-wide reforms are needed to tackle the barriers that prevent disadvantaged children from entering on time and progressing through school and learning. These reforms should address policy, innovation, curriculum, professional development, research, evaluation and assessment, and the pedagogically-effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).
11. Recognizing UNESCO's leading role in inclusive education, we recommend that countries, with the support of UNESCO and other education stakeholders, develop and implement inclusive education policies.

Accelerating progress towards EFA goals by 2015

12. Strong political will, combined with targeted approaches and continued financial investment, can overcome these bottlenecks. Initiatives in some of the E-9 countries, such as school feeding, cash transfer programmes to poor families and legislation on the right to education, demonstrate how rapid progress can be achieved. It is important to identify successful interventions, including the effective use of ICTs, in order to assess their potential for adaptation, replication or scaling-up. Governments should improve the effectiveness of their education systems and policies to reduce grade repetition.
13. Education should provide all learners with foundation skills, technical and vocational skills, and transferable 'twenty-first' century skills such as creativity, communication and problem-solving. Schools and training centres should also link with employers to give young people the work experience they need, such as through apprenticeships. Such efforts will address issues related to human, social and economic development, competitiveness and youth unemployment. This is particularly important if skills development strategies are to extend beyond the formal

education system to address disadvantages faced by poor urban and rural young people and adults, especially young women, many of whom are in insecure work for very low pay. It is important for national government policies and international cooperation to support skills development strategies that address disadvantage, and ensure that these are aligned with each country's needs.

14. Furthermore, education must foster sustainable development and active and effective global and local citizenship, as well as contribute to strengthening democracy, dialogue, mutual understanding and the peaceful resolution of conflict, while preventing the promotion of all forms of extremism and violence. This is particularly important in conflict and post-conflict situations.
15. We note that progress on literacy has stalled in the past years, and education partners must redouble efforts and increase sharing of best practices to ensure progress, especially for women. We recognize that literacy is a continuum that goes beyond recognizing letters in the alphabet. We commit to national efforts to translate the Paris Communiqué on Scaling up Literacy into action. Focus on adult literacy, women's literacy in particular, will also contribute to increasing enrolment and enhancing learning of children.
16. We recognize that higher education, as a public good, contributes to the achievement of the EFA goals and the MDGs, in accordance with the Communiqué of the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education.

Our commitment for the last “Big Push”

17. The situation calls for urgent action by all partners to scale up efforts in a last “Big Push” to reach the EFA goals by 2015.
18. We urge all education partners to select priority actions, with clear targets, that will contribute to reaching the EFA goals by 2015.
19. Early childhood care and education is in need of urgent and increased investment, because of its immediate and long-term positive impact not only on the holistic development of children, but also on the social and economic development of societies.
20. We reaffirm our commitment to gender equality, moving beyond parity in access. We thus need to adopt affirmative gender-responsive policies and actions within education systems and literacy programmes.
21. Lack of funding is a major bottleneck. We call upon our governments to allocate at least 6% of gross national product or 20% of public expenditure to education, in line with the benchmarks agreed at the 2011 Jomtien High-Level Group Meeting, and to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of fund allocation in education.
22. It is a great concern that aid to education has stagnated. Donors should deliver on their commitments and prioritize countries furthest from the EFA goals, including fragile and conflict-affected countries. The budget allocation to education in humanitarian relief operations should be increased.

23. Reaffirming that the global financial crisis should not be an excuse to evade international commitments on education and meeting the EFA goals, it is also important to maintain existing domestic budgets for education, and explore new and innovative sources of domestic funding for education. The private sector should continue their increased engagement and support to EFA.
24. The quality of a country's educational system cannot surpass the quality of its teachers and their teaching. Therefore, we reaffirm the core role of teachers in achieving all the EFA goals. The global shortage of qualified teachers must be vigorously addressed. At the same time, we must ensure that all schools, whether in rural or urban areas, have qualified teachers. To achieve this, UNESCO must continue to implement its strategy on teachers.
25. National teachers' policies must be developed and regularly evaluated by all Member States, in collaboration with other stakeholders such as local communities and teacher organizations. These policies must include strategies for recruitment, initial training and continuous professional development, improving working conditions conducive to learning, and improving the status of the teaching profession. Efforts should be made by all EFA partners to continue the efforts of the International Task Force on Teachers, as stated at the Oslo High-Level Group Meeting in 2008.
26. We reiterate the importance of promoting South-South and North-South-South cooperation and the exchange of best practices, fostering transnational cooperation through projects and networks for sharing know-how and innovative practices, with a view to the achievement of the EFA goals and the education-related MDGs. Special emphasis must be placed on literacy.

Preparing for the post-2015 agenda

27. We urge UNESCO to take the leadership in facilitating broad-based and innovative consultations on the post-2015 EFA agenda. When considering the post-2015 agenda, we should make full use of the successes as well as tackle the reasons behind stagnation and bottlenecks preventing the achievement of EFA, which have been analysed and documented by the EFA Global Monitoring Report year by year. We emphasize the importance of working towards ambitious and clear post-2015 education goals, of placing education on the post-2015 international development agenda, and of ensuring that EFA and the international development goals are coherent and mutually-reinforcing.
28. We strongly support UNESCO's leading and coordinating role for EFA, with a view to strengthening well-targeted advocacy and campaign activities in cooperation with relevant partners.
29. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to achieve the EFA goals. We also agree on a process of national and regional EFA reviews that will inform a global conference on Education for All in 2015. We urge all UNESCO Member States to actively participate in the process leading up to the global conference in 2015 to establish the post-2015 global education agenda. We express our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea, which has offered to host this conference. Let us join hands and substantially scale up efforts to reach the EFA goals.