

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
Mr Koïchiro Matsuura

Director-General
of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

at the second meeting of the Working Group on EFA

UNESCO, 10 September 2001

Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the second meeting of the Working Group on Education for All. As you know, the Working Group is conceived as an informal advisory arrangement, not as an element within a permanent, rigid, formal EFA structure. The composition of the Working Group is made up of leading professionals drawn from a representative range of EFA partners. Above all, the Working Group must be a place where we can talk seriously about serious issues and seek to identify positive steps forward that will take us closer to fulfilling the EFA goals. From UNESCO's perspective, moreover, the Working Group is an important mechanism for cultivating and developing partnership, a theme which I will take up further in my presentation today.

Some of you were here in November last year when we convened the first meeting of the Working Group. That meeting was both timely and productive. Last year's meeting concluded by highlighting a number of pressing issues and offering several recommendations to UNESCO, notably on the national EFA plans, the financing of education, the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and cooperation with civil society. The meeting also deliberated on UNESCO's role in the EFA process; it was stressed that UNESCO should act as a 'broker of knowledge' and as a 'facilitator and coordinator' for EFA.

The broad discussion that was launched last year now needs to be brought more sharply into focus. Our attention needs to be centred on more task-oriented topics. This meeting, therefore, will endeavour to advance further towards an agreed global strategy for the EFA movement, a strategy which will include the global initiative on resource mobilization and will help to clarify the roles that the various EFA partners must play. This meeting of the Working Group will also consider the progress made by countries in planning for EFA, especially in the perspective of the 2002 deadline set in Dakar; in this regard, the identification of resource gaps, country-by-country, is especially important.

Last but not least, we will examine the draft monitoring report in preparation for the High-Level Group, which will meet here at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 29-30 October 2001 during the 31st Session of UNESCO's General Conference. The preparation of the monitoring report, which is being orchestrated by UNESCO's Dakar Follow-up Unit, is itself a commendable example of collaboration with major EFA partners. Further collaboration among EFA partners will be engendered through our meeting this week. I would like to emphasize the importance of this task for the Working Group. Its consideration of the outline of the monitoring report is vital in order that the High-Level Group can receive the best possible guidance in its search for solutions. The monitoring report, after all, will serve as the key reference point for assessing EFA progress, identifying the difficulties being faced generally and in specific countries, and proposing the most suitable forms of support that meet known needs. It should be noted that another important task for the Working Group is its careful scrutiny of the draft of the communiqué that the High-Level Group is expected to issue.

To orient the activities of the Working Group during the days ahead, I would like to outline certain key developments that have taken place since the inaugural meeting last November. I will first address the changes that have taken place within UNESCO in order to show how UNESCO has tried to organize and position itself so that it is able to perform its EFA roles effectively and to the benefit of its EFA partners. Second, I will outline the main ways through which EFA partnership and collaboration have been strengthened. Third, I will conclude with some thoughts about certain dimensions of EFA that, to my mind, have yet to receive the attention they deserve.

Turning first to **the changes occurring within UNESCO**, it is clear that, at the time of the last meeting, much remained to be done. Many aspects of the reform process were in motion but had yet to be completed. Today, however, I am pleased to say that the main elements are now securely in place. As a result, UNESCO is a more stable, cohesive and purposive organization. I will not go into details. Suffice it to say that the processes of structural change, managerial reorganization, decentralization, and human resources planning have been finalized and are being implemented. My new senior management team is now in position, including the new Assistant-Director General for Education, Sir John Daniel, who has joined us from the United Kingdom's Open University. The structure of the Education Sector has been re-designed with EFA in mind and corresponding personnel changes have been effected, including the appointment of Mr Abhimanyu Singh as the Lead Manager of the Dakar Follow-up Unit.

To improve internal coordination, an **intersectoral Strategic Group** meets regularly to ensure that all sectors and institutes address EFA priorities and goals in a well-coordinated way and that interdisciplinary approaches are particularly attuned to the EFA agenda.

With regard to **decentralization**, a new network of field offices has been designed, with a careful balance of regional, cluster and country offices. UNESCO's field office network is fully mobilized towards EFA goals and activities; to serve this purpose, each field office will work closely with EFA partners and other organizations within its operating environment, particularly with reference to the United Nations frameworks of development strategy and anti-poverty programmes. Many efforts are being made to improve UNESCO's field-level effectiveness in support of EFA, mainly through better networking and communication. With a view to securing these improvements as rapidly and widely as possible, a working meeting on Dakar Follow-up for UNESCO field offices and institutes was held recently at Headquarters. Particular emphasis has been placed on the adoption by UNESCO field offices of a realistic, flexible approach towards facilitating and coordinating partner relations at country level, where the context for EFA activities is highly variable.

Another significant development has been the design of a new programmatic vision for UNESCO and the related preparation of a new **Medium-Term Strategy** (2002-2007) and Biennial Plan (2002-2003). The Medium-Term Strategy takes as its unifying theme the need for all of UNESCO's programmes to contribute to humanizing

the globalization process. Education has been accorded a key role in this task, above all through the prioritization of EFA within the programme and budget of UNESCO's Education Sector. UNESCO has sought conscientiously to fulfil the requirement in the Dakar Framework for Action that it should "refocus its education programme in order to place the outcomes and priorities of Dakar at the heart of its work" (para 20). The next Biennial Plan includes a 41.7 per cent increase in the budgetary allocation for basic education.

Thus, UNESCO has done much to reform, restructure and revitalize itself. Without question, the main lines of the reform agenda pre-dated the meeting in Dakar but, especially in programmatic terms, the requirements of EFA have been incorporated into the framing and substance of UNESCO's work. Some matters, of course, are still in motion (most notably the transfer to Montreal of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, which hosts the EFA Observatory), and these will temporarily affect the conduct of EFA activities by UNESCO. Moreover, UNESCO's decentralization and field office policy will be enacted over a period of time. In general, however, it is clear that UNESCO's main task is no longer the design of reform but its effective implementation.

I hope that the foregoing remarks are not interpreted as a sign that I conceive of EFA as an inherently UNESCO-centric process. I most categorically do not. UNESCO has been given an important role to play in the EFA movement, and I want it to perform that role as effectively and successfully as possible. The EFA challenge, however, is far too wide, deep and diverse for it to be driven or shaped by one organization or one constituency of opinion. The drive for EFA will stand or fail on the galvanization of effective collaboration among all partners, focused on countries' actual needs and pressing requirements. It was most heartening to see this recognized through the issuance, on the first anniversary of Dakar, of a **Joint Statement** signed by the Heads of UNESCO, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP. The Joint Statement reaffirmed our commitment not only to the Dakar agenda but also to partnership as the way to achieve EFA.

In the light of these remarks, I would like to turn next to my second main concern: **the strengthening of EFA partnership and collaboration**. I understand the term 'partnership' to connote those forms of collaboration which rest upon a deeper, more sustained commitment between specific partners within the global EFA movement. Furthermore, my assumption is that, while deserving equal respect, different partners bring different resources, capacities and emphases to their EFA-related activities. I see two of UNESCO's key tasks to be those of, **first**, facilitating the building and development of EFA partnerships and, **second**, ensuring, to the maximum extent possible, that the activities of all EFA partners are compatible with one another and consistent with the EFA agenda.

Despite the abundant evidence of commitment and goodwill, I am under no illusion that the achievement of these tasks will be easy. Indeed, it is largely due to the difficulties and problems involved that UNESCO has been giving thought to the idea of a **global EFA strategy**. This should be understood not as a prescriptive master plan, which

would have no basis in reality, but as an indicative strategic framework within which the relationships of partnership and collaboration would become clearer and better understood. It would help us to see how all the major elements fit together and what needs to be done, by whom, when and where for that coherence and sense of direction to continue.

On the question of partnership, let me first address the **main EFA partnership mechanisms**. As mentioned earlier, this Working Group is one such mechanism, part of whose function is to support the wider development of EFA partnership at all levels. In this perspective, the timing of our gathering is clearly related to the first meeting in seven weeks' time of the other main global-level partnership mechanism, the **High-Level Group**. Timed to occur during the General Conference of UNESCO, the meeting of the High-Level Group will be a significant moment in the post-Dakar process and will serve as a powerful vehicle for stimulating further collaborative momentum. I have invited 29 leaders of governments, bilateral and United Nations agencies, and civil society organizations. Keynote speakers will include Heads of State, Heads of Agencies, and Heads of civil society organizations. As stated in the Dakar Framework for Action, the High-Level group will act as "a lever for political commitment and technical and financial resource mobilization" (para. 19, DFA). The specific focus of the meeting in late October will be upon three main issues:

First, maintaining high political commitment for EFA internationally, regionally and nationally, including building on civil society in global advocacy action and in the formulation of national EFA strategies.

Second, mobilizing international financial support for EFA, including the role of debt relief and the role of the corporate sector.

Third, defining strategies for progress based on the Monitoring Report.

The preparations for the meeting of the High-Level Group are well-advanced. It promises to be a most interesting and important event, especially for galvanizing further commitment, resources and partnership in support of EFA.

Though not conceived as a meeting or forum as such, another global-level partnership mechanism is the **Global Initiative** for resource mobilization for EFA, which I first outlined last year at the meeting of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of OECD. Since then, a draft paper (entitled *Development Partner Co-operation in Support of Education for All: Rationale and Strategies*) has been elaborated and widely circulated. The Global Initiative was directly addressed at last November's meeting of the Working Group and then at a specially-convened meeting of bilateral and multilateral development agencies and civil society organizations (UNESCO Paris, 28 February – 2 March 2001). In light of these consultations, the paper is being revised and will be the basis for further discussion during our deliberations this week. We need to consider what is the most promising way forward for the Global Initiative and how best the High-Level

Group might be advised for its deliberations concerning resource mobilization and the management and utilization of resources for EFA.

Partnership mechanisms are also being built or strengthened at the **regional and sub-regional levels**, as required by the Dakar Framework for Action. In some cases, it is possible to use existing mechanisms. However, where these are inadequate or do not exist, new mechanisms are being established; this is particularly important in the pursuit of a sub-regional approach to building EFA partnerships. To date, the following mechanisms at these levels are in place or in formation:

- ARABEFA, the EFA Forum for the Arab States.
- The Subregional Forum for East and South-East Asia.
- The utilization of existing regional mechanisms in the Pacific.
- The country-driven subregional forum for South Asia (decided at the South Asia meeting of ministers, Kathmandu, 10-12 April 2001).
- The Central Asia Education Forum, which will be established later this year by UNESCO and UNICEF in the wake of national EFA roundtables in five countries of the sub-region.
- The existing ADEA and MINEDAF frameworks are serving as the main regional EFA mechanisms in sub-Saharan Africa. A sub-regional approach towards EFA among the Sahelian countries has been initiated and may develop further. Additional coordination activities include the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by UNESCO and UNICEF aimed at supporting the generation of national EFA plans, encouraging civil society participation and strengthening donor coordination. In collaboration with education development partners, UNESCO Dakar has convened a meeting of African EFA National Coordinators, which will be held in Paris later this month (17-19 September 2001).
- In February 2001, the Inter-Agency Regional Group on EFA in Latin America and the Caribbean was established. In its capacity as the Regional Group's technical secretariat, UNESCO Santiago has undertaken a mapping of agencies' competencies and activities in order to ensure better DFU coordination; in addition, a website for the Regional Group is being prepared. Other region-wide initiatives are in preparation regarding health-promoting schools and a regional network on educational innovations.

An important area for future development is that of **inter-regional partnership and collaboration**, through which we might secure greater South-South cooperation on

EFA and wider sharing of viable innovations and good practices. Perhaps the closest approximation we currently have of inter-regional partnership is the **E-9 Initiative**. A successful E-9 Ministerial Review meeting has just been held in Beijing (21-24 August 2001) which covers more than half of the world population: 3-2 billion. As well as consolidating the resolve of the E-9 countries to support equal access to quality basic education for all, the Beijing meeting generated two significant new developments. First, the E-9 Ministers recognized the importance of distance education and the appropriate and effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for reinforcing all aspects of basic education. In particular, they called for the creation of a network on the use of ICTs for the purpose of fostering interactions and sharing experiences and resources (human and material) in regard to EFA. Second, the Ministers urged the sponsorship by UNESCO together with other agencies of a special initiative for holistic early childhood care and education programmes, seen as an essential foundation for ensuring that each child realizes his or her full potential. The next E-9 Ministerial Review meeting will take place in Egypt in 2003.

Partnership mechanisms at the **national level** are quite variable in character. National EFA Forums, or their equivalent, are being strengthened or established in many countries and the generation of national EFA plans is stimulating collaboration among key actors, though there is no uniform trend regarding participation. Frankly, it is at the national level where we are most in need of accurate, up-to-date information. To this end, in May 2001 UNESCO launched a questionnaire-based survey aimed at appraising the status of national EFA plans and ascertaining the needs for technical support for the preparation of plans at the country level. To date, over 60 countries and territories have responded. UNESCO is analyzing the responses and is alerting other EFA partners about important findings, especially in regard to countries' expressed needs for technical assistance to help them prepare their national EFA plans.

I am concerned about the patchy and uneven character of the information available from many country contexts, not only regarding the action plans but also the infrastructure of partnership and collaboration at national level. We must remember that each country-level mechanism serving as the national EFA forum is intended to be a mechanism of coordination not only for the preparation of EFA action plans but also for the longer-term processes of implementation and monitoring. Moreover, each forum should foster partnership and consensus focused on the achievement of EFA goals and related information-sharing.

In addition, it is vital that the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national EFA plans are harmonized with such country-level mechanisms as the United Nations Common Country Assessment (CCA), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), and, in the case of countries in emergency or crisis situations, the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals. Such harmonization may prove quite difficult, for many kinds of reasons, but the effort needs to be made not for the sake of formalities but for the practical, beneficial advantages of doing so in terms of increased

resources for basic education and a higher profile for all dimensions of EFA within national strategic planning mechanisms.

The cultivation of EFA partnership and collaboration has not been undertaken only through mechanisms explicitly connected to EFA. To illustrate this, I shall next outline some developments regarding two main categories of EFA partner: civil society organizations and donors or development partners.

One of the strongest recommendations emerging from Dakar was that **civil society** must be integrated into the EFA movement at all levels, but especially at the national level. This was strongly re-emphasized in the *Country Guidelines* published by UNESCO last year. To encourage and facilitate this, a number of initiatives have been taken since the first meeting of the Working Group. The meeting on the Global Initiative held in Paris in February/March 2001 provided an opportunity to consult with a large number of civil society representatives in conjunction with senior officials from bilateral and multilateral development partners and United Nations agencies. For its part, UNESCO has sought to build constructive relations with the Global Campaign and, in March 2001, I visited Oxfam's headquarters in London with a view to reaching a better mutual understanding of certain EFA issues. One outcome of this meeting was the collaboration between UNESCO and Oxfam to influence the agenda of the Spring meeting of the Development Committee of the World Bank. I am pleased to see, by the way, that the follow-up to Dakar will figure on the agenda of the Autumn meeting of the World Bank this September.

An important development of recent months has been the reform of the Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA. UNESCO and the UNESCO/NGO Liaison Committee organized the Annual Meeting of the Collective Consultation, which was held in Bangkok in July 2001. UNESCO and some 100 NGOs from around the world agreed on a new partnership mechanism to facilitate and accelerate dialogue, joint reflection, research and capacity-building as well as monitoring and evaluation. One of main decisions taken was to create a more dynamic regionalized network of NGOs active in education. The need to promote partnerships between national NGOs and governments was one of the key themes of the Bangkok meeting, as was the need to build civil society coalitions for EFA at the national level. Note should also be made of various multi-partner efforts to set up and consolidate regional NGO networks on EFA in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Most recently, UNESCO took the initiative to include a **Special Session on the involvement of civil society in EFA** within the 46th Session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), organized by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE). The ICE was devoted to the theme of 'Education for All for learning to live together'. The Special Session, which took place in Geneva on Saturday, provided a unique opportunity for civil society representatives to have a high-level meeting with Ministers of Education. One purpose of the Special Session was to highlight examples of successful partnership between civil society and government in national contexts,

especially in terms of EFA-related policy formulation, planning and action. I used this occasion to advocate for a new culture of policy dialogue on EFA at the national level and for the building of an enduring national consensus on the goals, strategies and modalities for achieving EFA.

Turning now to the role of **development partners or donors** in EFA partnership, I would like to draw particular attention to the importance of the **G-8 meetings**. Building on our success in Okinawa last year, when a strong endorsement of the Dakar Framework for Action, especially the promise of financial support, was secured, the meeting in Genoa in July provided another boost for EFA. The report of the G-7 Finance Ministers included a long passage on education in which education as a human right and as an obligation of all governments was endorsed, as was UNESCO's role in the follow-up to Dakar. In the final communiqué of the Summit in Genoa, the G-8 leaders reaffirmed their support for education and agreed on the need to improve the effectiveness of development assistance in support of locally-owned strategies. The leaders also expressed their support for UNESCO's key role regarding universal education. In addition, they decided to establish a task force of senior G-8 officials to advise the next meeting, to be held in Canada in June 2002, on how best the G-8 countries can support the Dakar goals. It should be noted that the final communiqué gave pointed emphasis to universal primary education and equal access to education at all levels to girls as elements of anti-poverty strategies and development programmes. Also receiving special emphasis for support were assessment systems, teacher training (with particular encouragement of the use of ICTs), private sector engagement with education, and incentives to increase school enrolment (as part of the fight against child labour).

There is every likelihood, therefore, that the next meeting of the G-8, in Canada, will be crucial for the way major development partners will address EFA in the years ahead. Consequently, it is imperative that the EFA movement prepares itself as thoroughly as possible for this occasion. We must ensure that that preparation will be not only a test but also a celebration of EFA partnership.

In the third and concluding part of my presentation, I would like to briefly consider **some dimensions of EFA that merit further attention**. I hope that, during the days ahead, the Working Group will cover these issues and concerns in its deliberations.

First, the role within EFA of the **private or corporate sector** and private foundations is a subject that is long overdue. In particular, what kinds of partnership arrangements might be developed and implemented? I would like to propose that a task team be set up under auspices of the Working Group to review this area and report at its next meeting. It may be useful for position papers to be generated and workshops convened so that our thinking on these matters may advance.

Second, the Dakar Framework for Action contains the pledge that EFA partners will "harness new information and communication technologies to help achieve EFA goals" (para. 8). This question of **ICTs** now requires urgent action and concerted

attention, particularly in light of the pronouncements emanating from the Genoa G-8 Summit and E-9 meeting in Beijing. I would like the Working Group to consider the most appropriate lines of action that might be taken in the matter of ICTs and EFA.

Third, the question of **early childhood care and education** – one of the six EFA goals adopted at Dakar – has been highlighted by the E-9 meeting in Beijing. UNESCO will certainly be giving serious consideration to this recommendation and will be in close communication with relevant EFA partners on this matter. The advice of the Working Group on how best to proceed would be appreciated.

Fourth, you will have noticed that I have not accorded specific attention to the **inter-agency flagship programmes** during my presentation. This should not be construed negatively; it has arisen from my attempt to focus more attention on other issues. I do believe that the flagships are an important dimension of the EFA movement, especially for inter-agency partnership and collaboration. I understand that proposals will be made that additional flagships should be created: for teacher training, for governance, and for disability. It would be useful to hear the views of the Working Group on these proposals.

I hope that my requests are not too demanding. I make them not on behalf of UNESCO alone but as matters of interest and concern to many, if not all, EFA partners. I know that the agenda of the Working Group meeting is already quite full but these matters would benefit from your scrutiny. I wish you to have a highly productive and stimulating meeting and I look forward to its outcomes with keen interest.

Thank you.