

2. Communiqué from the High-Level

We affirm that no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources

1 We, the participants in the first meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All (EFA), call upon all EFA partners to redouble their efforts to meet the goals and targets of Education for All. The world has changed considerably since the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000 and the challenge ahead remains daunting but not insurmountable. The events of 11 September 2001 have further emphasized the absolute importance of universal basic education of good quality as an essential, if not sufficient, condition for a healthier, more democratic and more tolerant world.

2 We understand and stress the importance of EFA in the context of the other Millennium Development Goals. We recommit ourselves to the six Dakar goals which represent the expanded vision of basic education in the World Declaration on Education for All. In fulfilment of our mandate – to monitor and assess the extent to which progress is being made on the Dakar commitments; to advocate for more extensive and better coordinated action at the international and national levels; and to promote the expansion of resources (financial, human, technical and material) to meet each country's requirements to achieve the Dakar goals – we call upon all partners to move forward in this endeavour, motivated by a greater sense of urgency and supported by accelerated efforts.

Priorities for action

3 All partners must act decisively on a number of serious issues: the persistent gender and other disparities; the neglect of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including individuals with disabilities; the high number of non-literates; the need for understanding and acceptance of diversity; the undermining of education systems and institutions by the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and the critical situation in countries in emergency, crisis, post-conflict and other risk situations. There is an urgent need to define educational quality, its content and outcomes including life-skills education. As a dynamic force in social and economic development, the education of girls and women should receive special attention. EFA must be accelerated in

sub-Saharan Africa – with due consideration to the plan entitled the New Partnership for Africa Development – South Asia and the least developed countries, where needs continue to be the greatest.

4 We realize the importance of building on the strength of each partner in the movement, learning from successful experiences, and applying systemic reforms and innovative approaches to the attainment of each Dakar goal, including capacity-building and harnessing new communication and information technologies in the delivery of basic education and teacher training and upgrading. We emphasize the importance of taking into account individual country contexts.

Partnership

5 We underline the core responsibility of governments for education, and especially to provide free and compulsory quality basic education for all. All partners of the EFA movement should endeavour to coordinate their efforts under the leadership of governments within the framework of cross-sectoral poverty reduction strategies and education sector planning. We encourage governments to establish as broad-based a partnership as possible, in particular to ensure the full inclusion of teachers' organizations, and other non-governmental and civil society organizations in EFA policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. The full participation of local communities is equally important.

6 We appreciate the steps already taken to recognize the role of non-governmental and other civil society organizations in the EFA movement as partners at the global level. EFA partners must, however, play their broker role at the national level in order that the potential of NGOs and local communities can be fully utilized. This includes appropriate capacity-building of NGOs and others to fulfil their role. Furthermore, the private sector needs to be called upon to contribute to the thinking and actions of the EFA movement, and must be adequately represented in relevant forums.

7 We consider it to be vital that our shared efforts be fully coordinated among all partners of the EFA movement. Existing and new initiatives on EFA in the funds and programmes of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), bilateral agencies, the Task Force of senior G-8 officials on Dakar Follow-up,

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OECD/DAC and the European Commission, must be well integrated, mutually reinforcing and built on the comparative advantage of each organization.

☞ We are encouraged by the partnerships, innovative approaches and potential impact of a range of coordinated activities responding directly to specific Dakar goals and special focus areas, including flagships. Such multi-partner initiatives and programmes must be carefully synchronized with national priorities, form part of national EFA action plans, be properly coordinated by governments and pay special attention to the educational needs of out-of-school children.

The global initiative

☞ We need to establish an urgent consensus on all six elements of the global initiative, as described in the Dakar Framework for Action. Each element of the global initiative, individually and collectively, must be supportive of national EFA efforts. EFA is critically important for poverty reduction and sustainable development. EFA goals must be pursued as part and parcel of national poverty reduction strategies, and education plans developed and implemented in the context of macro-economic frameworks and policy reform. Strategic alliances with the World Bank and IMF are crucial in this regard.

☞ We acknowledge the importance of non-financial constraints to the development of EFA and support the broader understanding of resources, not just as financial, but as human, material and organizational as well. Increased resource mobilization must go hand in hand with effective resource utilization and management by all governments and organizations. Nationally, governments must reinforce national resolve, increase their budget allocations for EFA, address efficiency and capacity constraints, and use international assistance strategically. Internationally, all potential financial sources must be exploited and new creative ways of funding EFA be found, for example through increased South-South collaboration and partnership with the private sector. We continue to be alarmed by the insignificant proportion of overall bilateral and multilateral assistance provided for basic education. The fulfilment of the Dakar commitment also requires a reversal of the decline in overall ODA, particularly for the least developed countries, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Recommendations

We propose that the following immediate actions be taken:

- ▷ Countries must, within poverty reduction strategies, accelerate progress towards sector plans that encompass all EFA goals and take into due consideration both content and process. The plans, which would be the basis for national and international coordinated efforts, must be in place by 2002. They must reflect the gaps – results, capacity, policy and financing (domestic and external) – related to the achievement of EFA goals.
- ▷ Building on existing structures, partners at the country level must develop criteria and mechanisms for reviewing and mobilizing resources for the plans. The Dakar resource commitment should be part of all processes to develop Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Many countries will have their plans agreed to and funded, through domestic and external resources, at the country level. Where this is not the case, the World Bank should, where feasible, take the lead in identifying the resource gaps. Where the World Bank cannot do so, the task will be taken forward by the United Nations Agencies. All partners should find new and creative ways to fill the resource gaps.
- ▷ A strategy to operationalize the Dakar Framework must be developed by March 2002 by a Task Force constituted by representatives of all partners. The strategy would identify: major actions to be taken within specified time-lines; general roles and responsibilities of partners; linkages among activities, including a clear description of how flagships are integrated into country-level activities; and a consensus on the global initiative. Once the content and scope of a global initiative are agreed, it should be implemented with immediate effect and progress presented to and reviewed by the High-Level Group.
- ▷ An authoritative, analytical, annual EFA *Monitoring Report* should be produced drawing upon national data – quantitative and qualitative – and assessing the extent to which both countries and the international community are meeting their Dakar commitments. As a matter of urgency, UNESCO should convene key partners to discuss how the report can best be prepared, managed and resourced. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics has an important role in the development of the report.
- ▷ Taking into account the experiences of the first meeting of the High-Level Group, we call upon UNESCO to ensure focused and operational discussions and continuity in the important work of the Group. □