

# President Abdoulaye Wade Calls for More Concrete Action

President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal opened the World Education Forum on Wednesday at the plush Meridien President hotel in Dakar, in the presence of UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan and several heads of international institutions active in the field of education.

In a rather frank speech lacking the usual diplomatic niceties common and such meetings, Wade, who was elected president on 19 March, criticised the donors' interventions in Africa saying they have not produced many good results.

"Their interventions are characterised by tremendous waste and delays that preclude quick and positive results." "Foreign aid to Africa also suffers from the huge amounts of money devoted to numerous studies whose conclusions often end up gathering dust" in various archives.

Wade cited the case of a study currently underway on the railway in Senegal, which has already cost 19 billion CFA francs (about 25 million US dollars) and has not yet been concluded.

He said countries in Asia devote less resources to studies and yet achieve better economic results.

On education, Wade called for "fewer studies and more achievements".

In particular, he advocated equal access to education for both sexes. The gap between women and men is due to women's difficult access to school.

"When I was a teacher, I had a class of 85 students, all of them boys", he said, stressing that this has resulted in the unequal representation of men and women in decision-making positions in many institutions of the day. "Even here (Forum), females make up only 0.5 percent of the 1,500 participants. This is what we should correct first of all".

Education in Africa, he said, is beset with the problem insufficient places at the primary school level just as it is difficult for high school graduates to obtain work after their studies. The solution to this phenomenon lies in part in carrying out reforms of the education system. This could involve shortening the secondary cycle and creating a new education cycle comparable to the college system in English-speaking countries.

He said such a system would have the advantage of training larger numbers of students up to a level comparable to the first cycle of higher education and remove the pressure on the universities, which would focus more on graduate postgraduate studies.

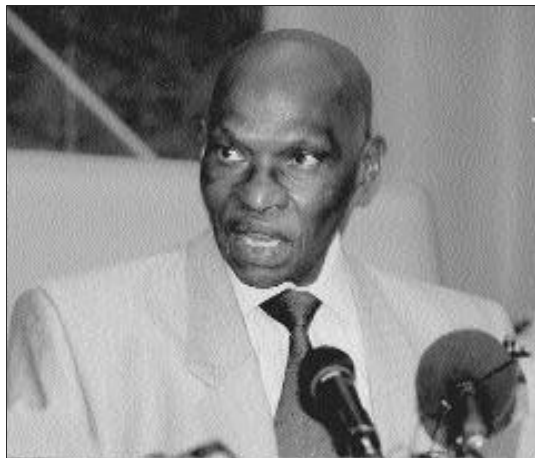
Mr. Wade suggested that adult education should take the form of literacy training in national languages. A literate environment simply needs to be created in these languages by publishing newspapers, books and other reading materials to accompany the literacy programmes.

## EFA Targets Within Reach Now

Dakar -- The global education targets are "more attainable now" than 10 years ago, said Malcolm Skilbeck, during the opening session of the World Education Forum.

Skilbeck's optimism stemmed from the findings of a report he presented to the conference -- the Global Synthesis: Education for All 2000 Assessment.

Seven areas, in particular, revealed the progress that had been achieved since the World Conference on Education for All in 1990. They include among others, substantial



achievements in enrollment targets and in educational information and noticeable reductions in inequalities "notably in the area of gender, disability and ethnic minorities".

Particularly disturbing were two features: in some countries education reform, had either stood still during the 90s or there had been declines:

The report also noted the five "cross-cutting issues" that have emerged since Jomtien. They include the need to overcome barriers or greater access and equity, strengthen-

ing the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of shared responsibility and decision taking:

According to the report, there was "enough here to demonstrate" that the value of the Education for All movement did "inspire confidence in the future".

Such a movement; the report added, has acquired momentum to transform educational values, structures and procedures around the world. "The focus is education and learning; but changes in social and cultural context, in economic and financial conditions and in the ways communities go about their daily lives are also at issue."

The movement had also contributed immensely to create an international knowledge base, evident from the efforts made by countries previously lacking necessary structures and techniques in providing stable useable data to do so:

This, the report considers another achievement: "A global education indicator system has been produced despite the many difficulties encountered in gathering and verifying data.

The consequence of such achievements, it pointed out; will be helpful to set goals for the second decade of the EFA movement.

## NGOs Deliver Strong Message to Forum

Spokesperson for a group of sixty NGOs from around the world meeting in an international consultation for two days before the forum castigated governments and bilateral and international cooperation organizations at the forum opening on Wednesday, saying they had, "not kept the promises made" at the meeting in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990.

The Jomtien vision has been betrayed because the goals of Education For All are not only far from being achieved, but moreover, 125 million children around the world are left out of school. Inequalities and disparities are growing, especially in Africa South of the Sahara, which is not equipped to decolonise people's mindsets", said the NGO spokesperson, Ms. Bregwa Jomo, President of the African Education Network, in Kenya.

In a declaration read on Wednesday morning to all the delegations attending the forum, the NGOs estimated that the price of achieving Education For All would come to 8 billion dollars per year. That sum, they indicated, is the equivalent of four days' worldwide military spending.

They then called on African public authorities to allocate 6% of their gross national product (GNP) to the education

sector in order to achieve the goal of Education For All in 2015 and reduce adult illiteracy by 50%.

The process of evaluating progress and problems undertaken by NGOs in a number of countries has led to the establishment of the Global Campaign for Education, which recommends that governments and donors review the ways aid is granted by the year 2002. Otherwise, the three hundred delegates at the international consultation, whose message was passed on to the forum, estimate that the rights of 125 million children will be infringed on a daily basis.

2/3 of those not enrolled in school are girls, and one adult in three is illiterate in Africa. "Governments and donors must demonstrate greater political will in the fight against illiteracy, which would already be on its way to being won if basic education were provided freely", said Ms. Bregwa Jomo.

The NGOs told the forum that partnership could help bring solutions to education problems. They advocated the establishment of bridges between so-called formal and informal education. Because, they said, disparities continue to grow, especially in Africa South of the Sahara.



Mrs Jennifer Chinwela, NGO spokesperson

Editorial by  
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## Rethinking Education

What more ideal place than Dakar for the World Education Forum? What a happy coincidence! Indeed, the capital of Senegal was recently the theatre of events that were a credit to the whole African continent and sent out a strong signal to the rest of the world: free and orderly elections followed by a civilised change of government. A genuine example of the good governance highly cherished by the United Nations. The recently published UNDP Report on Poverty 2000 made it clear: "For democracy to yield good results, the population must be well informed". Information, the key to knowledge, is the alpha and omega of education. By facilitating access to knowledge, new technological progress obliges us to rethink our approaches to development. That is the aim of this Forum.

As Victor Ordonez, Director of UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Office, emphasised, "Schools must adapt to change and the responsibility lies more with the teachers than with the students.

Educators should recognise that today's students learn differently and use new technologies to learn directly. In order to continue to provide guidance, teachers should also upgrade themselves." It must be recognised that with the rapid dissemination of information through Internet, television and the media, teachers can no longer consider themselves the sole sources of knowledge. This applies in the North as well as the South, but with one difference: the South lacks access to knowledge, which is one of the most striking characteristics of poverty. It is therefore urgent to reduce socio-educational inequalities by reducing the North-South technological imbalance and making leaders realise that basic education should be available to everyone everywhere. For, education is the basis for ending conflict, respecting the environment, eliminating poverty and fighting discrimination. It is the foundation on which development is built. If the Dakar Forum takes that into account, a crucial step forward will be made on the road to human development.

UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown, who is in favour of providing Internet access for the poor, shows a clear vision: the importance of new technologies for education and economic progress. Malloch Brown is convinced the South is quite capable of finding its own answers to the challenges of change.