

# US Hints on Possible Return to UNESCO

Dakar - Mr. Gene Sperling, Economic Advisor to US President Bill Clinton, met Friday morning with the Director-General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, in Dakar and declared after the meeting that his country might return to the organisation at the appropriate time.

"Our financial contributions to

UNESCO will be re-established as soon as we get back; President Clinton sent me here to express his support for what the institution is doing," Mr. Sperling said at a press conference Friday. He pointed out that the United States was urging donors to increase aid for basic education.

"This issue, he said, will be on the agenda of the next G7 meeting in Okinawa." The slogan "Trade and not aid" so dear to President Clinton is, according to Mr. Sperling's expression, turning into "Trade and aid".

According to the head of the American delegation at the Dakar

Forum, the official position of the United States is now to combine trade partnerships with public aid for development, especially in Africa. On that subject, Mr. Sperling indicated that Clinton is very optimistic that the American congress will pass a Bill on Growth Opportunities in Africa. The project includes a 30 to 40 percent in the volume of African exports to the United States.

American development aid policy is to encourage debt relief to promote the constitution of funds that beneficiary countries should direct towards health and education policies and poverty-reduction programmes.

"A country like Senegal, indica-



ted Mr. Sperling, has already benefited from this formula, along with 4 other countries in the framework of a sharp reduction of the debt to promote economic and social development".

The United States spent 100 million dollars to fund basic education through USAID programmes. The American authorities expect that bilateral aid this year will reach 150 million dollars. Mr. Sperling declared that, "the American government's support for ILO to prevent child labour jumped from 3 million dollars last year to 30 million dollars this year. It will increase to 45 million dollars next year if the Clinton administration's projections are confirmed". He expects that total foreign financing for Education for All will exceed the 4 billion dollars demanded by the NGO community.

"In the upcoming years, the American government intends to be particularly active in training people from developing countries in new information technologies so that the world will not be divided into victims and beneficiaries of globalisation," promised the head of the American delegation.

## The Decisions of Dakar

In a late evening meeting of "all group members who could be traced (50 percent)" after the plenary on Thursday, the Group decided the "implementation of the goals and strategies will require national, regional and international mechanisms to be galvanised immediately. To be most effective these mechanisms will be participatory and, wherever possible, build on what already exists".

The proposal to create a 'Global Education for All Council' was dropped. Instead the Futures Group decided "UNESCO will continue its mandated role in co-ordinating EFA partners and maintaining their collaborative momentum. In line with this, the UNESCO Director-General will convene annually a high-level small and flexible group."

This group of the "highest-level leaders from the government and civil society from both the developed and developing world" will serve to "leverage political commitment and technical and financial resource mobilisation". The annual meetings will also be an "opportunity to hold the global community to account for commitments made in Dakar".

Achieving the EFA goal of quality basic education in the next 15 years will require an additional funding support of an estimated 8 billion dollars annually. The Futures Group says "it is therefore essential that new, concrete financial commitments be made by national governments and also by multilateral donors including the World Bank, and the regional development banks, civil society and foundations."

Meanwhile, National EFA Forums will need to be strengthened or established to speed up progress to the EFA goal. Countries are required to prepare comprehensive National EFAP plans by 2002 "at the latest", according to the Futures Group. Countries with "significant challenges, such as complex crises or natural disasters" are assured special technical support by the international community.

And once these plans are in place, partner members of the international community are committed to contributing to ensure "that resource gaps are filled". Also working closely with the

National EFA Forums will be a Regional EFA Forum. These are "linked organically with, and ... accountable to" the country-level forums, which the Futures Group identifies as the "heart of EFA activity".

The function of the Regional Forums will be among others co-ordination with all relevant networks; setting and monitoring regional/sub-regional targets; advocacy; sharing of

best practices; and monitoring and reporting for accountability.

Operational plans for implementing these decisions of the Futures Group will be made by UNESCO guided by the recommendations of the final meeting of the Steering Committee on April 29, the day after the World Education Forum, and "subsequently by wide and representative consultation."

## Donors Reject proposal for a Global Education Fund

*Ms. Eveline Herfkens, Netherlands Minister of Development Co-operation, Ms. Clare Short, United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Development and Mr. Jean-Claude Faure, Chairman of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, gave a joint press conference Thursday morning. On behalf of the donor countries, they presented their new approach to public aid for development. However, they turned down a proposal for the establishment of a 4 billion dollar international development fund for basic education.*

Mr. Faure of the OECD considered the approach outdated and said his organisation would not support it. He explained that developing countries experiencing difficulties with the implementation and management of appropriate programmes could not be put in the same boat with others that have made significant advances in the area of basic education.

Ms. Short of the United Kingdom and Ms. Herfkens of the Netherlands both indicated that developing countries should allocate larger funds for basic education to set the tone for donors. "We are ready to help those who are ready", declared Ms. Short.

She cited the examples of Ghana, Uganda and Malawi, which, according to her, "are examples that should be followed by other developing countries, for their extraordinary efforts in allo-

cating funds to basic education and programme management".

The three officials were clear they wanted to help certain countries improve their basic education skills rather than increase the flow of funding without making sure it was well used.

In response to a question on whether Dakar was just a rerun of Jomtien, Mr. Faure explained that the donors had not come to Dakar to renew commitments already made at Jomtien.

Mr. Victor M. Ordonez of UNESCO, who attended the press conference, added, "one of Dakar's innovations will be the establishment of a monitoring commit-

tee on the financial commitments undertaken by donors and UN agencies". "However," added Ms. Short, "the donor countries do not consider money to be a sine qua non condition for achieving education for all".



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