

# The Mexico Declaration

The Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and Those Responsible for Economic Planning of Member States in Latin America and the Caribbean, convened by Unesco and held in Mexico City from 4 to 13 December 1979, met in a highly encouraging spirit of consensus regarding the crucial importance of the current period of history for the countries of the region in relation to the general world situation, with clear awareness of the fact that a new stage had been reached, calling for solidarity in the affirmation of the culture unique to that part of the globe, and readiness on the part of its peoples to assume responsibility for their own destiny.

A lofty tone and a marked sense of responsibility were the key-notes of the Conference in the discussions concerning the decisive role to be assigned to education within a new style of development, that is, balanced development that would help to redirect economic activities towards greater social homogeneity and towards the production of goods and services that were genuine social and national necessities. It was therefore one of the tasks of education to give a human dimension to development by recognizing its own basic potential to build a future marked by greater cultural autonomy, greater harmony and justice in social and economic conditions, and by fulfilment of those values essential to human dignity that the peoples of the region deserved and demanded.

The Conference, having acknowledged the sustained effort that had been made by the countries of the region in the past decade to develop education, and the very noteworthy achievements in the quantitative expansion of systems and in the improvement of educational content and processes, nevertheless recognized that serious shortcomings still persisted, such as the extreme poverty of vast sectors of the population in most of the countries, and continuing low enrolment rates in some of them; the existence in the region of 45 million illiterates out of an adult population of 159 million; an unduly high drop-out rate in the early years of schooling; educational systems and content that were very often ill-suited to the population for which they were intended; maladjustments in the relationship between education and work; the poor linking of education with economic, social and cultural development and in some cases faulty organization and administration of education systems, which still bore the stamp of heavy centralization from a normative and functional point of view. In the light of the foregoing, the Conference adopted the following Declaration:

**The Conference declares:**

That a developed nation is one whose people are well-informed, cultured, efficient, productive, responsible and possess a sense of solidarity;

That no country can extend its development beyond the stage reached by its education;

That development is measured not merely by the goods or resources that a community can command, but essentially by the quality of the individuals who produce or use them;

That being, not having, should predominate in the framing and shaping of the overall development policies of the various countries;

That education is an essential tool for the release of man's highest potential to create a more just and balanced society, and that political and economic independence cannot be fully attained unless the population is educated, has a firm grasp of reality and assumes responsibility for its destiny;

That there is an urgent need to intensify educational action as a necessary condition for the achievement of authentic development and to bring educational systems into line with the governing principles of social justice, so that they strengthen awareness, participation, solidarity and organizing ability, especially among underprivileged groups;

That the forging of adequate structural links between formal and non-formal education will make a major contribution to the achievement of development in the region;

That education should give pride of place to the transmission of moral values, the dignity of human life and the development of the individual, in a world increasingly torn by conflict and violence against which background those values should be recognized and respected;

That the relationship between education and culture is being increasingly affected by the impact of the mass media, which have expanded very rapidly in the region and are exerting a powerful influence over the daily lives of all sectors of society, an influence which should make a positive contribution to education;

That the success that is sought in transforming curricula will depend on how such transformations interact with the specific needs, interests and problems of the social groups of the community;

That the effort entailed by the development of the region will have to assume an integrated form in such a way that education, science, technology,

culture, communication, the removal of linguistic barriers, the relationship to work, social and political organization and economic progress will all tend to work towards the fundamental goal of the well-being of mankind;

That there is a need to strengthen scientific development, which, through activities of research, reflection, observation and creative experience and intuition, is conducive to the generation of new knowledge;

That uninterrupted development and progress in all fields of knowledge, and especially in science and technology, and economic and social transformations require that education systems be designed and operate within the context of lifelong education, that a close relationship be established between school and out-of-school education and that appropriate use be made of the scope offered by the mass media;

That the training of people who are capable of accepting the implications of their own culture and of building scientific progress into it is essential if they are to create, develop and adapt appropriate technologies, as required by the differing contexts of the region;

That education, without prejudice to its universal scope, must essentially promote knowledge of the realities of the country, neighbouring countries and the region as objectively as possible if the past is to be retrieved, substance to be given to the present and guidelines to be laid down for the future;

That there is a need to establish a new international economic order as a basic prerequisite if the countries of the region are to carry out their national projects and consequently move on to higher levels of development that will satisfy their legitimate national needs, particularly in the fields of education, employment and productive work;

That international, intra-regional and bilateral co-operation should be instrumental in developing a renewed respect for the national goals and interests of all peoples and in ensuring that progress is made towards a new international economic order that will take account of the needs, features and aspirations of our peoples, with a view to contributing to the strengthening of co-operation among the States of the region, while fostering joint activities that will bring about greater social justice.

**The Conference further declares that the Member States should:**

— Provide a minimum of 8 to 10 years' general education and establish as their goal to incorporate all children of school age in the system not later than 1999, in accordance with national education policies;

— Adopt a clear-cut policy with a view to eradicating illiteracy before the end of the century and to extending educational services for adults;

— Allocate increasingly substantial budgets to education until not less than 7 or 8 per cent of the gross national product is earmarked for educational purposes, with the aim of making up for the existing

shortfall and of ensuring that education will make a full contribution to development and become the driving force behind it;

— Give highest priority to providing for the least privileged population groups, who mainly live in rural and suburban areas and whose condition calls for urgent action and the provision of a variety of opportunities in keeping with their real-life situations, with the aim of surmounting the considerable differences in living conditions still existing between them and other groups;

- Undertake the necessary reforms which will ensure that education takes into account the features, needs, aspirations and cultural values of every people, and which will give impetus to and renovate science teaching and will be instrumental in forging closer links between education systems and the world of work;
- Use all available means, ranging from the school and the communication media to natural resources, and make a special effort to transform curricula at an early opportunity so as to make them more relevant to the needs of underprivileged groups, while relying for that purpose on the active participation of the population involved;
- Adopt effective measures for renovating systems for the training of teachers, prior to, and following their qualification, in order to provide them with the possibility of adding to and updating their stock of knowledge and teaching capability;
- Assist teachers in economic and social terms by creating working conditions that will ensure that they enjoy a position in keeping with their social importance and professional dignity;

**The Conference appeals:**

To the Member States

To set themselves, for the forthcoming decades, the fundamental and vitally urgent task of combating extreme poverty by using all available resources and means to ensure the general introduction of complete primary or basic education for all children of school age, to eliminate illiteracy and to intensify, gradually and thoroughly, programmes designed to make full provision for children of pre school age who live in conditions of social deprivation;

To continue to promote the exchange of experience and co-operation with a view to facing, together, the present-day challenges of education and to devise courses of action that will lead to full development of their potentialities and the strengthening of national independence.

To all those participating in the task of education in the region:

To associate themselves with the main lines of thrust, reflections and recommendations of this Conference so that, through their day-to-day work, their experience and their critical acumen, they can contribute to the effective implementation of the objectives formulated here of broadening, speeding up and renovating the educational process in all the countries of the region.

To the international, regional and subregional organizations:

To make available all their technical, administrative and financial capacity to the Governments of

- Ensure, by viewing economic growth within the broader context of social development, that educational planning is closely linked to the economic, social and overall planning of each country;

- Give special attention to the formulation of objectives and programmes for the quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement of higher education, reconciling university autonomy with the sovereignty of the State;

- Ensure that educational planning promotes the participation and incorporation of all groups and institutions involved in one way or another in both formal and non-formal educational endeavours;

- Ensure educational organization and administration in keeping with new requirements which, in most countries of the region, demand greater decentralization of decision-making and organizational processes, greater flexibility as a means of ensuring multi-sectoral action and lines of emphasis that will provide an incentive to innovation and change.

the region for the purpose of giving support to their policies and programmes in the field of education.

To Unesco:

To continue to collaborate assiduously in the rapid establishment of a new international economic order;

To take the initiative of putting forward a major project embodying the fundamental features of this Declaration;

To publicize this Mexico Declaration by all possible means.

The Conference expresses, lastly, its deepest gratitude:

To Unesco, for having convened this vitally important Conference and for having endeavoured to ensure that it effectively fulfilled its purpose of working for the further development of the education systems of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and accordingly of promoting the progress and well-being of its peoples;

To the Government and People of Mexico, for their warm hospitality and their fraternal welcome, and for having provided the most appropriate conditions and facilities for ensuring that this appointment with history would take place under the most propitious circumstances.

Mexico, D.F., 13 December 1979