

*Fifth Conference  
of Ministers of Education and those Responsible  
for Economic Planning in the Arab States*

*Organized by UNESCO  
in co-operation with ALECSO and ISESCO*

*Cairo, 11-14 June 1994*

# **Final Report**

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and  
those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States

(MINEDARAB V)

**FINAL REPORT**

Cairo, 11-14 June 1994

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Organization and objectives of the Conference**

1. The Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States (MINEDARAB V) - hereinafter referred to as 'the Conference' was held in Cairo, Egypt, from 11 to 14 June 1994 in accordance with resolution 1.1 adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at its twenty-seventh session. It was organized by UNESCO with the co-operation of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), with the Government of Egypt acting as the generous host.

2. The purpose of the Conference was to give an overview of the achievements in the development of education in the Arab States since the Fourth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States (Abu Dhabi, 1977), and of the obstacles and difficulties impeding that development with a view to universalising basic education and improving its quality and relevance to the twenty-first century. The Conference also aimed to strengthen regional commitment to the goals of the Jomtien Conference and to explore new methods and means of regional and international co-operation for the development of education in the Arab States.

3. In accordance with UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget for 1994-1995 (27 C/5, para. 01108), the Director-General invited the Arab Member States, together with international, regional, governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned with education in the Arab region, to attend the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States (MINEDARAB V). Responses were received from 180 participants. There were 19 delegations, comprising 97 participants, led by ministers or ministerial representatives from the Arab States. A further 83 participants attended the Conference as observers from Palestine and Member States of UNESCO, and from international, regional, governmental and non-governmental organisations. The participants are listed in Annex VII.

### **Preparations for the Conference**

4. The Conference complemented a series of earlier Conferences of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States. The first Conference (Beirut, 1960) was concerned with educational planning; the second Conference (Tripoli, 1966) examined the goals of education in relation to socio-economic development priorities, with special emphasis on the eradication of illiteracy and on ensuring the quality of education; the third Conference (Marrakesh, 1970) concentrated on the problem of integrating educational plans into economic and social development plans, as well as on ensuring an appropriate mix between the different components of the education system; the fourth Conference (Abu Dhabi, 1977) reviewed the trends in and strategies for educational development since the first Conference, with particular emphasis on the role of education in providing opportunities for full and productive employment, the provision of education for rural development, the re-examination of education systems and the democratisation of education. Education for Palestinian children was a recurrent theme in all four conferences.

5. The UNESCO Secretariat prepared a set of special documents to assist the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the

Arab States (MINEDARAB V) in its deliberations and in the formulation of its recommendations. Those documents included the following:

the Final Report of the Second Session of the Advisory Committee of the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL) (Cairo, 5-8 June 1994);

'Education for Development: Meeting Challenges of the Twenty-First Century' (ED-94/MINEDARAB/3);

Work Plan of the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL) 1994-2000 (ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.1);

Development of Education in the Arab States: A Statistical Review and Projections (ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.2);

UNESCO's Plan of Action for the Eradication of Illiteracy by the Year 2000 (ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.3);

Educational Innovation Programme for Development in the Arab States (EIPDAS): A Framework for Regional and International Co-operation (ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.4);

ALECSO's Activities in the Light of the Recommendations of MINEDARAB IV (Abu Dhabi, 1977) (ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.5).

6. The documents prepared for the Conference were informed by the recommendations of meetings and conferences recently organized by UNESCO in co-operation with various related bodies, in particular:

the Meeting of Senior Officials Responsible for Education in the Arab States (Amman, 1987);

the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990);

the 42nd Session of the International Conference on Education (Geneva, 1990);

the First Session of the Advisory Committee of the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL) (Cairo, 1992);

the International Congress on Population Education and Development (Istanbul, 1993);

the International Forum on Scientific and Technological Literacy for All - 'Project 2000+' (Paris, 1993);

the Twenty-Seventh Session of the General Conference of UNESCO (Paris, 1993);

the Education for All Summit of Nine High-Population Countries (New Delhi, 1993); and

various other conferences and meetings sponsored by ALECSO, ISESCO and the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS).

### **Opening of the Conference**

7. The Conference was inaugurated at 9 a.m. on Saturday, 11 June 1994, at the International Conference Centre in Cairo by His Excellency Mr. Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Minister of Education of Egypt, in the presence of Mr Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO and Mr Ahmed Sayyad, President of the twenty-seventh session of the General Conference of UNESCO. At the opening meeting, a number of statements were made thanking Egypt for hosting the Conference and providing the necessary facilities, which were greatly appreciated by the participants. (The statements delivered on this occasion are contained in Annex IV.)

8. Mr Mohamed Abdulla Fares, Under-Secretary for Educational Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, the host country of MINEDARAB IV, made a statement reviewing the major achievements in the field of education since that Conference and underscoring the importance of the MINEDARAB series of conferences. He drew attention to current changes on the international scene and the need for the Arab States to benefit from progress in education in order to prepare for the twenty-first century.

9. Mr Ali Bin Mohamad Al-Towagry, Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), made a statement stressing the importance of the renewal of educational thinking and the need to develop methods of co-operation in the region in order to meet growing needs. He underscored the need to strengthen existing co-operation between ABEGS and UNESCO and with other regional and international organizations.

10. He was followed by Mr Abdul Aziz Othman Al-Twajjri, Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), who stressed aspects of international co-operation and its importance for education, as well as the need to redouble efforts to universalize primary education in order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

11. Mr Mohamad Ibrahim El-Mili, Director-General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), stressed the need to strike a balance between the humanities and the sciences and to uphold the worth of the human person. He reviewed the efforts of ALECSO and its projects in the field of education and stressed the importance of co-operation among regional and international organizations.

12. Mr Sabah Bakjaji, representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), drew attention to the role of the United Nations in economic and social development and the role of education in addressing the problems and difficulties confronting the region, as well as the need to strengthen international and regional co-operation and co-ordination.

13. Mr Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, made a statement in which he thanked the President, Government and people of Egypt for hosting an important conference, and drew attention to Egypt's role at the Jomtien Conference, as well as its efforts to universalize basic education, achieve literacy and address the difficulties and problems confronting the progress and development of education.

14. The Director-General of UNESCO drew attention to the role played by the Organization, its sister United Nations agencies and regional organizations both in ensuring that education played a prominent role in the region's economic and social development and in supporting the contribution of education to equality, peace, justice and human rights.

15. Furthermore, he stressed the role played by UNESCO in the building of an educational system for the Palestinians in co-ordination with the relevant authorities. He spoke of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century through international co-operation and understanding as a means of achieving educational goals and aspirations. The Director-General of UNESCO concluded his statement by quoting from the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish:

There is yet blood in your hearts,  
Spill it not, O Fathers  
For you bear within you  
The germ of future life.

16. Finally, H.E. Mr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Minister of Education of Egypt, made a statement in which he stressed the need to develop joint Arab action to achieve social and economic progress for the countries of the region and the importance of establishing centres of excellence with a regional role for the development of various aspects of the education process, adding that such centres should be given assistance by international and regional organisations.

17. He indicated that education had become a national project in Egypt which would run until the end of the century. He stressed the need to benefit from international experience and expertise and to promote the transfer of modern sciences and the exchange of information and innovations to boost the economies of the Arab States. He also underscored the importance of the universalization and renewal of primary education, and the need to introduce environment, population and international education into the curricula of the Arab States and to strive to eradicate illiteracy among women in the Arab region.

18. Following the opening speeches, the participants watched a documentary film on the efforts being made to reform and universalise education in Egypt.

### **Organization of work**

19. The head of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates proposed H.E. Mr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Minister of Education and head of the Egyptian delegation, as President of the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States (MINEDARAB V). The proposal was accepted by acclamation.

20. After the President assumed his functions, the following proposals were accepted by acclamation:

Adoption of the Rules of Procedure (ED-94/MINEDARAB/2);

Election of the following participants as Vice-Presidents:

H.E. Ali Mohamed Fakhro, Minister of Education, Bahrain;

H.E. Mohamed Ghassan Al-Halabi, Minister of Education, Syrian Arab Republic;

H.E. Abdul Aziz Turki, Minister of Education, Qatar;

H.E. Ahmad Al-Rabai, Minister of Education, Kuwait;

H.E. Matug M. Matug, Secretary of the Popular General Committee on Education and Scientific Research, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

21. Mr Shoeib Younis El-Mansury, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, was elected as Rapporteur General of the Conference.

22. The Provisional Agenda (ED-94/MINEDARAB/1) was discussed and adopted as shown in Annex III.

23. At the beginning of the first working session, Mr Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO made a statement entitled 'Education for Development: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century', in which he reviewed the fundamentals, constants and future prospects relating to the work and tasks of the Conference. Mr Ahmed Sayyad, President of the twenty-seventh session of the General Conference of UNESCO, also made a statement in which he drew attention to the challenges facing the Arab region and the responsibilities arising therefrom. The texts of both statements are contained in Annex IV.

24. All the deliberations of the Conference took place in plenary sessions. A summary of the discussions will be found below in paragraphs 34 to 42.

### **Closing of the Conference**

25. The President of the Conference presented the draft final report, placing particular emphasis on its three main sections: (a) the draft Cairo declaration; (b) the summary of the discussions; (c) the draft recommendations. The President proposed that the participants should adopt the document as submitted to the officers of the Conference. The participants agreed unanimously to the adoption of the draft final report, after making certain observations thereon and requesting that the UNESCO Secretariat prepare the final version of the report by inserting the necessary changes in accordance with those observations.

26. The Chairpersons of the three round tables that were held during the Conference each made a short oral presentation of the discussions of those round tables and the conclusions reached, as follows:

Ms In'am Al Mufti (Jordan): Educational Challenges for the Twenty-First Century;

Ms Eideh Mutlaq (Jordan): Provision of Basic Education for Girls and Women;

Mr Bashir Bakri (Sudan): Roles and Responsibilities of the Donor Community in Supporting Basic Education.

27. Mr Colin Power, representative of the Director-General of UNESCO, Assistant Director-General for Education, made a statement at the closing session of the Conference thanking the President of the Conference, Mr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Minister of Education of Egypt, for his efforts in guiding the Conference and providing the prerequisites for the success of its meetings and work. He also thanked the Vice-Presidents and the Rapporteur-General for their effective contributions and for organising the work of the Conference.

28. Mr Power drew attention to the excellent contributions of the heads of delegations and the participants in the Conference in addressing education issues in the region in the light of the

challenges of the twenty-first century. The text of the statement of the Assistant Director-General for Education is contained in Annex V.

29. H.E. Mr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, president of the Conference, made a statement thanking the Director-General of UNESCO and his representative, the Assistant Director-General for Education, their excellencies the ministers and heads of delegations, and all the participants for their efforts. He stressed the importance that the Cairo Declaration and the recommendations of the Conference would have in providing a framework within which to achieve the principle of Education for All. He also stressed the need to benefit from existing centres of excellence, which should provide a nucleus for the new centres of excellence which the States hoped to establish.

30. The President of the Conference reviewed various educational issues and stressed the importance of the recommendations of the Conference, including the supplementary resolutions of the Advisory Committee (ARABUPEAL), in providing appropriate solutions to those issues. He expressed the hope that those responsible in the Arab countries and in UNESCO would implement the resolutions with the requisite speed, and was confident that they would be of help to UNESCO in its preparation of the forthcoming Medium-Term Plan.

31. At the end of the Conference, thanks were addressed to the President, Government and people of Egypt for their hospitality, and to H.E. Mr Hussein Kamel Bahaa Ed Din, President of the Conference, for guiding the work of the Conference and for providing it with the facilities necessary for its success.

32. Thanks were also addressed to the UNESCO Secretariat, the Arab regional organisations and the Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO for their combined efforts in organizing the work of the Conference.

33. Finally, H.E. Mr Abdulla Bin Hamad Al-Busaidi, Ambassador of Oman to Egypt, Permanent Delegate of Oman to the League of Arab States, head of the Omani delegation, requested the officers of the Conference to address a telegramme of thanks to His Excellency the President of Egypt and sponsor of the Conference for the efforts of the Government and people of Egypt in hosting the Conference and for the particular attention he devoted to education in Egypt.

## THE CAIRO DECLARATION

The Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States, meeting in Cairo from 11 to 14 June 1994, considered a range of issues connected with the ways in which education can contribute to development in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century.

A number of very substantial achievements have been registered in the region as a whole. Among the most significant is the dramatic rise in school enrolments at all levels since the previous conference held in Abu Dhabi in 1977, which is characterised, in particular, by a marked increase in the rate of female participation.

The Arab Region, made up of 21 countries, is unlike any other region of the world in that it shares a largely common language and culture which, together, provide a solid basis for the establishment of educational targets and reliable bench-marks against which to measure achievements.

The Conference expressed its determination to frame educational programmes that would bring the region into a position of world prominence in the next century. The work ahead is undeniably substantial since, in a world increasingly characterised by stunning advances in science and technology, many of the Arab States continue to be confronted by tremendous challenges which thwart the achievement of the Jomtien Conference goals of the universalisation and enhancement of primary education and the eradication of illiteracy.

The Conference examined a range of pressing issues but concluded that three areas commended themselves to the attention of the region's policy-makers, standing out from all others as urgent imperatives demanding concerted action:

### **I. The problem of illiteracy**

It is impossible to imagine the development and resurgence of the Arab world without putting an end to the problem of illiteracy in the Arab countries. Relying solely on the efforts of official bodies will not solve this problem; there is therefore an urgent need to involve all individuals and associations in society, including official and popular organisations, voluntary associations, national universities, religious figures, the media and other bodies in the universalisation and enhancement of primary education and the eradication of illiteracy at an accelerating pace which should reach 10 per cent per year of the total proportion of illiterates.

Attention must also be devoted to methods of distance learning, enlisting its potential for contact with all those who are difficult to reach, in particular, women, girls and the inhabitants of remote rural and desert areas, in order to achieve the goal of lifelong learning. In addition, the progress of girls and women in the field of learning should be closely monitored on a continuous basis.

### **II. Quality of education**

The challenges of the twenty-first century oblige us to make the enhancement of education a strategic goal that is the focus of concerted efforts by the Arab States and regional and international organizations.

In connection with this goal the following measures should be taken as a matter of urgency:

1. The establishment of centres of excellence in the Arab region in the following fields:
  - (a) language teaching, and first and foremost, the teaching of Arabic;
  - (b) teacher training;
  - (c) the teaching of science and mathematics;
  - (d) informatics; D
  - (e) distance teaching.
2. Curriculum development, the enhancement of curriculum content and the introduction of the concepts of democracy, equality and peace based on justice, while stressing at the same time the importance of nurturing the cultural identity of the Arab nation and intercultural tolerance and understanding.
3. Professionalization of the teaching profession by devoting attention to ensuring good quality teacher training, ongoing upgrading and in-service training, and the improvement of service conditions with a view to encouraging the efforts of teachers and to strengthening their role and promoting their position in society.
4. The adoption of advanced national human resources development strategies which ensure a close, flexible and comprehensive link between educational planning on the one hand and economic and social development planning on the other hand.

### **III. Regional and international co-operation**

Co-operation should be strengthened among the Arab States and also between existing regional organisations, such as ALECSO, ISESCO and ABEGS, and UNESCO and other international organisations, with a view to achieving the goals set out in this Declaration and in the decisions and recommendations of the Conference.

## DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. Summary of the discussions

34. The Conference took note of and endorsed the resolutions and recommendations of the previous conferences, particularly those related to the development of education in the Arab States aimed at achieving the great objectives of the Arab nation.

35. The Conference also examined the recommendations of the Second Session of the Advisory Committee of the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL) and adopted them as a document of the Conference, with the exception of those which were contrary to the main recommendations of the Conference and the summary of the discussions, specifically those referred to in paragraph 42 below.

36. The discussions centred on the need to consider the following fields as priorities that have a profound impact on education, both now and in the future, particularly in addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century:

- (a) the eradication of illiteracy;
- (b) the education of girls and women
- (c) the enhancement of education;
- (d) the provision of the resources needed for education;
- (e) the use of distance education;
- (f) the strengthening of regional and international co-operation.

37. The deliberations also affirmed the utmost importance attached by Arab States to the education of the Palestinian people and the Arab inhabitants of other occupied Arab territories.

38. The discussions covered the issue of education for peace and the establishment of the culture of peace. They emphasised the link between such concepts and those of justice, democracy and human rights, as well as the need to highlight the contributions which the Islamic faith and other divine revealed religions can provide in order to define and apply those concepts.

39. The Conference established the major priorities in those fields by adopting the Declaration and the recommendations in their regard.

40. The discussions dealt in general terms with the following issues in view of their significance for the development of Arab education and their link with present-day requirements:

- (a) emphasising the enduring elements of the Arab nation in the form of its language, religion and heritage;
- (b) emphasizing the link between education policies and development requirements;

- (c) devoting attention to education planning and the training of staff competent to undertake such planning in the context of overall development;
- (d) devoting more attention to the management, supervision and direction of education;
- (e) recognising the need for education systems to benefit from recent developments in communications systems and informatics;
- (f) emphasizing the importance of developing the professional and technical aspects of training for young people;
- (g) emphasising professional, functional and cultural aspects in literacy and adult education programmes;
- (h) using the growth of Koranic schools to advantage by allowing them to make a greater contribution to the universalisation of basic education;
- (i) devoting attention to education establishments in rural and remote areas;
- (k) devoting attention to colleges of education and their development in view of their strategic role in helping to pioneer the development of education;
- (l) establishing a special mechanism to follow up the implementation of recommendations made by conferences of ministers of education and those responsible for economic planning in the Arab States.

41. The participants in the Conference commended those delegations which had included economic planning specialists, and expressed the hope that ministers responsible for economic planning would themselves participate in the next conference, in view of the close link between the requirements of planning and those of human resources development through education.

42. Finally, a number of representatives of participating States voiced reservations regarding paragraphs 66 and 67 of the recommendations of the second session of the Advisory Committee of the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL) relating to the establishment of a special fund for ARABUPEAL and a special fund for the education of girls and women.

## **II. Recommendations**

The Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States,

*Realizing* the nature of the challenges facing the Arab nation with the advent of the twenty-first century,

*Appreciating* the decisive role of knowledge in moulding the civilisation of the future,

*Realizing* that education is a vital factor in present-day national security in the Arab nation and that it is the basic means through which it can address the future, and that the quality of education is irreplaceable as a means of bestowing on the Arab people the expertise and abilities required for a new era in which only the most able and knowledgeable will survive,

*Aware* of the enormous achievements of the Arab States in providing and developing education in the last few decades,

*Realizing* that a wide discrepancy remains between the goals espoused and what has been achieved,

*Affirming* the importance of the following fields as key elements in the universalization and development of education in the Arab countries with a view to addressing the challenges of the future:

1. the eradication of illiteracy;
2. the education of girls and women;
3. the enhancement of education;
4. the provision of the resources needed for education;
5. the use of distance education;
6. the strengthening of regional and international co-operation,

*Affirming* the utmost importance of providing education for the Palestinians and the Arab inhabitants of the other occupied Arab territories,

## **I. Eradication of illiteracy**

*A. Recommends that the Arab States:*

1. Renew their commitment to the eradication of illiteracy as a strategic requirement for the security of the Arab nation and in order to ensure its resurgence;
2. Develop plans and strategies guaranteeing the successful eradication of illiteracy;
3. Provide the necessary financial resources;
4. Provide first-rate vocational training for the human resources needed to play a part in eliminating illiteracy;
5. Ensure the participation of all official and civil sectors of society, including universities, voluntary organisations and the private sector;
6. Link literacy programmes with development requirements, emphasizing the functional, professional and cultural dimensions;
7. Put modern educational methods and techniques, including distance education, to good use in literacy programmes;

8. Regard the eradication of illiteracy as a necessary step towards the achievement of lifelong learning, also devoting attention to the post-literacy stage and creating the appropriate educational climate that will enable those freed from illiteracy to continue learning;
9. Devote attention to deprived groups, particularly women, the inhabitants of isolated and remote areas and those with special needs;
10. Devote particular attention to providing welfare and education for victims of poverty and conflict and for refugees and displaced persons;
11. Use to advantage existing educational and social institutions, such as Koranic schools, places of worship and so forth with a view to eliminating illiteracy;
12. Strengthen support for the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL);

B. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

13. Increase its technical support for the efforts of the Arab States in their endeavours to eradicate illiteracy and universalize basic education within the framework of achieving the goals of the Jomtien Conference and of their national plans;
14. Assist the Arab States, and in particular those States with large numbers of illiterates or high rates of illiteracy, in obtaining the necessary funding from donor organisations and bodies and other sources;

C. *Recommends* that the Director-General:

15. Submit a recommendation to the General Conference of UNESCO at its next session requesting that the next Medium-Term Plan of the Organization assign high priority to the eradication of illiteracy in the Arab States;
16. Give the necessary support to ARABUPEAL to enable it to achieve its goals;

D. *Recommends* that the Arab donor organisations:

17. Allocate a portion of their resources to the support of literacy programmes in the Arab countries;

## **II. Education for girls and women**

A. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

18. Realize the principle of equal opportunity of access to education, remove obstacles to the enrolment of girls and women in general, technical and vocational education and in the labour market, and increase their involvement in economic and social development;
19. Draw up plans of action for education for girls and women, follow up such plans and provide financial support for their implementation;

B. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

20. Provide technical support to the Arab States and afford them the opportunity to benefit from international expertise in the field of education for girls and women;

### **III. Enhancement of education**

A. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

21. Strive to enhance education by devoting particular attention to the following matters:

the proper training of teachers and the improvement of their working and living conditions;

the development of curricula and educational methods which keep pace with the cognitive development and the needs of learners;

the establishment of centres of excellence devoted to various aspects directly affecting the quality of education and teacher-training methods, such as: curricula, language teaching methods, methods of teaching science and mathematics, distance education;

the teaching of Arabic and the raising of standards in Arabic in the various stages of education;

educational renewal, the measurement of its results and the endeavour to universalise such results as are useful;

support for the Regional Programme for Educational Renewal in the Arab States;

the development of educational management systems and data bases in order to facilitate the rationalization of decision-making processes;

B. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

22. Provide the necessary technical support to the Arab States through allocations under the regular programme and under extra-budgetary programmes in order to ensure the enhancement of education;

### **IV. Provision of the necessary resources to education**

A. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

23. Increase the proportion of funds allocated to all stages and fields of education,
24. Diversify the sources of education funding in order to ensure the participation of the private sector by enacting the necessary legislation to achieve that goal;
25. Strengthen the contribution of the various sections of society to the funding of education;
26. Rationalize spending on education in order to ensure that a maximum share is directed to the education process;

B. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

27. Provide international expertise and technical advice to the Arab States with regard to the diversification of sources of funding for education;
28. Assist in organizing workshops with the participation of the Arab States and organisations concerned for the study of mechanisms to achieve an effective contribution of the private sector to the funding of education;

**V. Use of distance learning**

A. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

29. Use the distance learning approach in all types and fields of education, and in particular in order to universalise, enhance and renew basic education for children and adults;

B. *Recommends* that the Director-General of UNESCO:

30. Give the Arab States the opportunity to benefit from UNESCO schemes to develop the distance learning approach in the Member States;

**VI. Regional and international co-operation**

A. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

31. Strengthen co-operative links between themselves in all fields of education, and in particular with regard to the implementation of the recommendations of this Conference;
32. Increase material and moral support to the regional organizations concerned with education in the Arab countries;
33. Include subjects which help to inculcate the culture of peace based on justice, tolerance, democracy and human rights in the various curricula in a manner consonant with the cultural specificities of the Arab region, and highlight the contributions which Islam and the other revealed religions may make to the definition and application of these concepts;

B. *Recommends* that UNESCO and regional Arab and international organisations:

34. Strengthen bonds of co-operation between themselves so as to achieve sufficient support for educational plans and programmes in the Arab States and to ensure the greater efficiency of existing mechanisms;

C. *Recommends* that the Director-General of UNESCO:

35. Assist the Arab States, and in particular those States which are experiencing difficulties regarding the universalisation of education, in obtaining technical and financial support from the international organizations which participated in the Jomtien Conference and from donor countries and funds in order for the Arab region to obtain its fair share of international co-operation with a view to achieving its educational goals, and in particular those relating to the goals of the Jomtien Conference and the recommendations of MINE-DARAB V;

36. Take steps to increase the effectiveness of UNESCO in the Arab region, including the possibility of concentrating technical capabilities in large, integrated units;

**VII. Education for the Palestinian people and the Arab inhabitants of the other occupied Arab territories**

A. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

37. Assign high priority to the building of the infrastructure of Palestinian educational institutions and the provision of educational services to the Palestinian people and the Arab inhabitants of the other occupied Arab territories;
38. Launch an urgent appeal to the Member States and donor agencies asking them to contribute to a fund for study grants for Palestinian students in higher education and to fund the projects adopted under the Memorandum of Co-operation between UNESCO and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

## ANNEXES

- I. Recommendations of the Advisory Committee of the Regional Programme for the Universalisation and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL)
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## ANNEX I

### **Recommendations of the Advisory Committee of the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL)**

#### **I. Education for all**

Renewed commitment to education for all (EFA)

Education for women and girls

Education for rural and nomadic populations

Education for victims of poverty and conflict and for refugees and displaced persons

Education for the Palestinians and Arab inhabitants of other occupied Arab territories

Special education

Pre-school education

Adult education

#### **II. Quality and relevance in education**

Policy, planning and management

Curriculum and instructional materials development

Educational research and innovation

Secondary education

Technical and vocational education

Higher education

Teachers

#### **III. Co-operation for the development of education in the Arab region**

National co-ordination and partnerships

Regional co-operation

International co-operation

**Recommendations of the Advisory Committee  
of the Regional Programme for the Universalisation  
and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication  
of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States  
(ARABUPEAL)**

Preamble

The Committee,

*Noting with satisfaction* that, thanks to the determination of many countries in the Arab region, the estimated percentage of illiterates aged 15 years and above will drop from 49 per cent of the population in 1990 to 38 per cent in the year 2000,

*Recalling*, however, that despite the increase in primary enrolment from an estimated 17 million in 1975 to an estimated 31 million in 1991, the estimated total number of illiterates has increased from 61 to 66 million in the same period,

*Concerned* that despite an appreciable increase in the primary enrolment of girls, females nevertheless constitute the majority of the illiterate population (62 per cent in 1990) and are under-represented at secondary schools and universities,

*Concerned* further that, for the region, public expenditure on education is presently only 5.5 per cent of GNP,

*Emphasizing* that the acquisition by Arab young people of scientific, technological and cultural literacy is a prerequisite to meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century,

*Considering* that the achievement of the Jomtien goals requires a strong commitment of Member States, the allocation of adequate resources, the elaboration and implementation of well-conceived national plans, and the co-ordination of efforts at the national, regional and international levels,

*Recalling* that, under Islam, the individual has twin obligations in respect to education, the first being to educate himself/herself and the second being to participate in the education of others,

**I. Education for all**

A. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

**Renewed commitment to education for all (EFA)**

1. Redouble their efforts in respect to the achievement of the Jomtien goals through increased levels of expenditure for formal and non-formal education and the provision of free compulsory basic education;
2. Reinforce ARABUPEAL as a regional programme for co-ordinating the efforts of all the States in the region with a view to meeting the needs of the Arab States;

3. Enhance educational research and expand and improve the database needed for realistic planning and decision-making in respect to EFA goals through the greater use of education technology and staff development;
4. Increase community involvement in the planning and implementation of EFA programmes by means of consultation and direct involvement;
5. Analyse the major causes of wastage (reduced participation, drop-outs and repetition) and poor quality and introduce measures to curb this major obstacle to the achievement of the Jomtien goals;

### **Education for women and girls**

6. Prepare a Regional Declaration and Framework of Action for the Provision of Basic Education for Girls and Women in the Arab States as a contribution to the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women;
7. Review the extent to which national educational legislation and policies advantage girls and women and, in the event of shortcomings, introduce elements which strengthen their participation in education;
8. In order to ensure equity in the provision of education, increase levels of public expenditure on the education of women and girls and provide incentives to facilitate their enrolment in basic education and literacy programmes;
9. Within the national policy-and-programme framework for EFA targets, create or strengthen national task forces to provide education policy guidelines and necessary information to decision-makers and also promote issue-awareness among the public in order to achieve gender equality;
10. Undertake appropriate adjustments, wherever needed, to the content and methods of education to address the special needs of women and girls;
11. Increase the involvement of women in national and international decision-making, particularly in relation to education;

### **Education for rural and nomadic populations**

12. Draw up plans and formulate methods aimed at providing education and enhancing its quality in rural, nomadic and pastoral areas; at encouraging graduates to enrol in teacher-training institutions and to work in such areas; and at urging adults to enrol in literacy programmes;
13. Improve the quality and relevance of education in these areas by developing curricula which meet the need to acquire life skills;
14. Investigate the cost-effectiveness of new methods for enhancing education for rural and nomadic populations, such as multi-channel packages (a mix of radio and correspondence), mobile teams and programmed instruction kits;

15. Provide incentives and opportunities for in-service training and professional support to teachers posted in rural and nomadic areas to encourage them to stay on in their jobs;

16. Introduce flexible scheduling to accommodate the needs of rural and nomadic children who must help their families during the harvest, planting and grazing seasons;

B. *Recommends* that UNESCO and the Arab States:

**Education for victims of poverty and conflict  
and for refugees and displaced persons**

17. Examine ways of ensuring the welfare of those suffering from extreme poverty (the homeless and street children) and from violence (refugees and displaced persons), and of introducing the necessary measures to alleviate their physical and psychological suffering through a suitable mix of vocational with psycho-social education;

18. Provide educational services to refugees and displaced persons in the receiving countries;

19. Forge partnerships with NGOs at the national and international levels and with representatives of the target groups concerned with a view to establishing sustained programmes of emergency assistance to such groups;

C. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

**Education for the Palestinians and the Arab inhabitants  
of other occupied Arab territories**

20. Assign a high priority to the building of infrastructures for Palestinian educational institutions and the provision of educational services to the Palestinian people and the Arab inhabitants of the other occupied Arab territories;

21. Launch an urgent appeal to Member States and donors for contributions towards a fund for higher education scholarships for Palestinian students and for the financing of projects adopted within the framework of the Memorandum of Co-operation between UNESCO and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO);

D. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

**Special education**

22. Develop policies, draw up appropriate national plans and allocate adequate resources for the education and training of those with special educational needs, including gifted and talented children;

23. Introduce appropriate changes to educational facilities and adopt more effective teaching methods to enable the disabled to participate, as far as possible, with their age-group in conventional schools;

24. Strengthen special education interest groups and promote the vigorous involvement therein of parents, the community and non-governmental organisations;

### **Pre-school education**

25. Develop appropriate national policies and plans and allocate adequate resources to expand and improve the quality of early childhood care and pre-school education wherever possible;

26. Promote participation in pre-school programmes through support to health and nutrition needs;

27. Encourage the use of the family and community as a cost-effective and relevant source for content and for instructional materials;

### **Adult education**

28. Frame more incisive adult education policies and programmes in order to raise the human and financial resource levels currently available for the promotion of ad forms and levels of adult education in- the context of lifelong learning;

29. Devise viable national and local mechanisms and develop strategies, through formal and non-formal structures, for providing post-literacy education and training for school drop-outs, and encourage senior administrators, head teachers and teaching staff to make available, to the extent possible, the full range of their resources, material and pedagogical, to further the goals of adult education;

## **II. Quality and relevance in education**

A. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

### **Policy, planning and management**

30. Assist Member States, particularly those most challenged by the Jomtien goals, in carrying out needs assessments, educational policy analysis and reconstruction of their educational systems;

31. Provide support for developing a system of effective indicators for monitoring the performance and quality of education and the assessment of school achievement;

32. Assist Member States in the establishment or strengthening of computer-based educational management information systems through the training of the various categories of staff required to make the system function;

33. Provide support for the improvement of the environment, the efficiency and the effectiveness of the primary school, through improved management and the strengthening of its links with its local environment;

34. Improve national assessment systems by ensuring that they are competency-based, valid and reliable, and improve the training of in-service teachers in classroom diagnostic testing and formative and summative evaluation methods;

### **Curriculum and instructional materials development**

35. Support national efforts to develop basic education curricula which strike a suitable balance between traditional core skills (language, mathematics and science) and what are termed 'life skills' e.g. leadership, problem-solving, values education, health, population, environment, technology, arts and crafts, traditional and modern social skills and civic and national education, and to revise these curricula periodically;

36. Assist in efforts to speed the production and improve the quality of textbooks and other instructional materials through training of curriculum specialists and teacher-authors in the techniques of desktop publishing (DTP),

37. Foster improved teaching and learning by attaching greater emphasis to problem-solving approaches and to helping students acquire strategies for 'learning how to learn' and for accessing information sources;

B. *Recommends* that the Arab States and UNESCO:

### **Educational research and innovation**

38. Support the Educational Innovation Programme for Development in the Arab States (EIP-DAS) with particular emphasis on the following areas:

sector information management systems development;

pro- and in-service teacher education, particularly as regards the skills needed to be effective in pre-school programmes, classroom support of distance education, diagnosis of special learning needs and strategies to cater to them, environment, health and population education, multi-grade classes and using the classroom as a vehicle for teaching about tolerance and the acceptance of difference;

development of a prototype '4000 hour' curriculum (i.e. the first four years of schooling) containing a mix of 'core' and indispensable 'life skill' subjects;

production of instructional modules and training packages on such topics as classroom supervision, school management and the use of educational technology;

examination of promising educational strategies (content and methods) which promote associative attitudes towards work, the community and State, democracy, human rights, tolerance, peaceful resolution of conflicts, international understanding and highlighting the contribution which the Islamic faith and other divinely inspired religions can make to the definition and application of these concepts;

assessment of legislation and policy with respect to private (non-governmental) education, cost-sharing and structural adjustment policies in conformity with national policies and strategies;

C. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

### **Secondary education**

39. Undertake a national consultation on the goals of secondary education with particular reference to the preparation of young people either for further studies or for the world of work;

40. Introduce curricular modifications together with an assessment mechanism which facilitates the transfer, in both directions, between secondary academic and technical programmes and institutions;

41. Develop national plans which reflect the need for the increased participation of girls in secondary education and for greater use of multi-channel strategies including the use of computer-based networking, radio instruction and correspondence;

42. Develop competency-based criteria to be applied to teacher recruitment and student entry and leaving qualifications;

### **Technical and vocational education**

43. Consolidate links between general and technical and vocational education (TVE), and between TVE and the world of work through the greater diversification of TVE content and of the related delivery systems;

44. Ensure, in co-operation with business and industry, the mutual recognition of TVE qualifications in the region;

45. Promote the use of the print and electronic media to deliver TVE programmes to areas and populations where access is difficult;

46. Provide equal opportunities in TVE programmes for women and girls;

47. Derive benefit from the International Project on Technical and Vocational Education (UNEVOC) through the enhanced participation of the Arab States TVE Associated Centres and institutions;

D. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

### **Higher education**

48. Urge the Arab States to encourage post-graduate study and further basic and applied research as well as 'future' studies;

49. Increase the level of resources available to the Arab region for the UNITWIN/UNESCO chairs programme;

50. Through UNITWIN networks and the UNESCO chairs programme, promote co-operation and co-ordination of efforts between authorities responsible for basic education and higher education institutions;
51. Encourage the diversification of national higher education structures and programmes, and the reinforcement of open-learning efforts through multi-channel strategies;
52. Assist Member States to achieve a better numerical balance between those enrolled in Arts and Humanities courses and those studying the Basic and Applied Sciences, and also between institutions located in or serving rural and urban areas;
53. Provide technical advice on setting up effective university extension programmes to enable universities to participate more effectively in community education;

### **Teachers**

54. Support national teacher development plans by:
  - undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the full range of academic, pedagogical and managerial skills needed for a teacher to perform his/her tasks effectively, irrespective of the level and type of education;
  - adopting a competency-based approach to teacher education with an emphasis on improving diagnostic and pedagogical skills including those having particular relevance to the teaching of children with special needs;
  - drawing up staff development programmes designed to prepare teachers for work in remote and isolated postings;
  - providing teachers in designated areas with the necessary skills to enable them to teach both children and adults;
- E. *Recommends* that the Arab States:
  55. Give due recognition to the key role of teachers in the attainment of EFA goals by:
    - raising the level of teacher qualifications and setting the certification level at that of the equivalent of a Bachelor's degree;
    - participating actively in the definition of basic learning needs, content, appropriate instructional strategies, entrance profiles and classroom diagnostic, formative and summative evaluation methods and procedures;
    - providing a salary which reflects the level of their training, their professional experience and which provides them with a respectable livelihood and an attractive professional future;
    - providing teachers with proper professional support and guidance, as well as opportunities for upgrading their knowledge and skills;

devoting attention to the pre-service training, upgrading and in-service training of support staff within the school, educational guidance and counselling specialists, laboratory technicians, and management and services staff;

### **III. Co-operation for the development of education in the Arab region**

A. *Recommends* that UNESCO support the efforts of Member States to:

#### **National co-ordination and partnerships**

56. Promote broad-based partnerships that involve local communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in support of EFA, and in the renewal of educational objectives, plans and curricula in the context of the work of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century;

57. Strengthen co-operation among themselves and with the modern and traditional communication channels in support of EFA new curricula and innovations, and with regard to education for peace based on justice, democracy, human rights and international understanding, in a manner that is consonant with the socio-cultural specificities of the Arab region;

58. Enhance the role of various forms of education, including pre-school and out-of-school education, and develop physical environments suitable for life-long learning by making use of existing conventional and Quranic schools and other social and cultural centres and institutions such as the family and community;

B. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

#### **Regional co-operation**

59. Give further support to EIPDAS and ARABUPEAL to enable them to fulfil their objectives relating to the quantitative and qualitative improvement of basic education;

60. Further develop ARABUPEAL by establishing a suitably staffed Regional Co-ordinating Unit within UNEDBAS;

61. Reinforce the staff and budget of UNEDBAS and other field offices in the Arab region to enable them better to implement regional programmes;

62. Revise the mandate of the present Advisory Committee for ARABUPEAL to include both ARABUPEAL and EIPDAS in order to achieve greater efficiency in the planning and implementation of their respective activities and to reduce the cost involved in maintaining two advisory bodies;

63. Establish or strengthen national and regional mechanisms for the follow-up of the recommendations adopted by Regional Conferences of Ministers;

64. Continue supporting the existing co-operation between UNESCO and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and its Specialized Agencies, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the UNICEF Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa, all of which play a fundamental role in the development of Arab education, especially in the fields of primary education, literacy and adult education;

C. *Recommends* that the Arab States:

65. Increase the level of their voluntary financial contributions to EIPDAS to enable it to respond to the requests of Member States;

66. Set up a special fund for ARABUPEAL to enable it to provide the necessary support to Member States in the fields of primary education, literacy and adult education;

67. Set up a special fund for the education of girls and women in the region with special emphasis on the needs of poor and rural women;

68. Examine the feasibility of the establishment of specialised regional centres in some of the priority areas of education of common interest (e.g. the development of curricula in the fields of mathematics, science, technology and language instruction as well as the development of distance education) distributed in various regions of the Arab States according to interest and the available means and supported by Arab and international organisations;

D. *Recommends* that UNESCO:

### **International co-operation**

69. Seek financial support from the international community and from Member States to the programmes aiming at the reconstitution and development of the education system in Palestine, and reinforce the co-operative activities of UNRWA and UNESCO within and outside the occupied Arab territories, in the context of the Jomtien recommendations and in co-operation with UNICEF and the other sponsors of the World Conference on Education for All;

70. Intensify its co-operative efforts with other United Nations agencies and bilateral donors to support EFA programmes in the region, giving particular attention to countries with large populations, high illiteracy rates, social turmoil, and the least-developed countries;

71. Establish a mechanism which fosters co-operation and co-ordination between donors, Specialized Agencies and regional non-governmental organizations.

## **ANNEX II**

### **Summary of round tables**

Educational challenges for the twenty-first century

Provision of basic education for girls and women in the MENA region

Roles and responsibilities of the donor community in supporting basic education

**Round table organized by the  
International Commission on Education  
for the Twenty-First Century (UNESCO)**

**Educational challenges for the twenty-first century**  
(chaired by Ms In'am Al Mufti, member of the Commission)

**Summary record**

One of three round tables that took place within the framework of MINEDARAB V, the round table on educational challenges for the twenty-first century was intended to complement the debates in plenary and in the other seminars on, respectively, education for women and girls, and the role of donors in improving basic education in the Arab States. It was convened as part of the consultative process organized by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century.

Chaired by Ms In'am Al Mufti, member of the Commission, the round table brought together some 65 persons among those participating in an official capacity in MINEDARAB V. It had before it a discussion paper in the form of a series of questions and background information on the aims and purposes of the Commission and its report. The Chair introduced the debate by asking participants to focus on the realities, past and present, of the Arab region and how these could be marshalled and adapted to meet the challenges of the next century. She asked them to focus on a series of key questions and issues framed against the backdrop of the events of the current century: a century that has seen among other dramatic events, two world wars and much war in the Arab region itself, a century that has seen a spectacular explosion in knowledge and information and another explosion in population.

In that context, how could education contribute to making the twenty-first century a century of peace and of prosperity. How could education contribute to sustainable human development, and to educating children and adults to participate in creating a world that is tolerant and free from violence. In the words of Ibn Al-Arabi, one must educate one's children for a time other than one's own time.

The discussion was extremely fruitful and frank. One could group the comments, reflections and suggestions in a few categories relating to the challenges of change to education, the role of education in the development of social and human values, the relationship of education with the rest of society and of the economy, and the functioning of the educational system itself.

**The challenges of change**

The information and communications revolution was at the forefront of many people's interventions. The technological dependence of many parts of the Arab world was another preoccupation. Education had to help equip future generations for the use of contemporary technology (both in the field of communications and in other fields): that should be done by improving the quality of education in the Arab countries, but also by improving co-operation with other regions by better exchange in the field of higher education, by increasing the possibilities for exchanges of students between the Arab countries and other countries, and by enhancing the development of centres of excellence within the Arab world.

### **The role of education in promoting values**

It was pointed out that the role of education in Arab culture has traditionally not been linked to temporary objectives, that it was not intended to impart only specific skills: education's role has always been, in principle, to develop the complete person, one who can be both introspective and understand his or her individual person, and one who can at the same time engage in a constructive dialogue with others. In an interrelated world, education has to reconcile the transmission of cultural heritage with tolerance and understanding of others, with participation in a world where technology and the media are increasing their influence.

Science, it seemed, might be the most promising point of linkage between cultural tradition and the modern world. Teaching children to approach learning with method, to understand the contribution of science to progress and to master the techniques of scientific inquiry, was essential to progress, but also to developing the kinds of understanding and learning that would be crucial in enabling young people to adapt to change.

### **The relationship of education with the rest of society and with the economic sector**

The aims for educational change are lofty: achieving equal participation of girls and women in the educational process, closing the gap in achievement between countries in the region and, collectively, with the rest of the world, expanding the concept of literacy beyond reading and writing to include mastery of technology, culture and complex reasoning. The means available are not adequate and participants launched a number of suggestions for avenues that should be explored: earlier school entry; better systems for the evaluation of achievements; expanding the sources of financing (including the shifting of military budgets into education); more emphasis on secondary schooling and innovative delivery systems that could include distance education and informal education; and continuing the search for improving the efficient use of resources.

### **The functioning and contents of the education system**

All over the world, educational systems are blamed for the impotence of education to solve all the challenges it faces, and the Arab region seems to be no exception in this regard. Schools were described as 'factories', that needed to adapt in order to impart to learners the joy of learning, to become places of pleasure and recreation.

Curricula are a pressing problem: they need to take into account both local and international realities (including teaching specific skills related to agriculture or technology, for example), and to prepare students for a world that we cannot as yet define or see clearly. Thus, a better equilibrium needs to be found between science and social science and between technology and the arts. Children must be made aware of the role of the environment in present and future lives, and of how humans can have both a positive and a negative impact on the environment.

The organization of schools needs to be adapted both to take better account of new realities and to be more flexible in adapting to expanded demand and enabling children and adults who have in the past dropped out to have a second chance.

Teachers are and will remain the foundations of education: they need to be better trained, to receive more support; from the central administration and from communities, and they need access to better materials.

Lastly, one could conclude in saying that in a region where there is a common language, but where differences nevertheless persist, the role and place of language and the mastery of language remain crucial in a complete education.

**Round table organized by:  
UNICEF Educational Office for Middle East and North Africa in co-operation with the  
Section for Primary Education (UNESCO)**

**Provision of basic education for girls and women  
in the MENA region  
(chaired by Dr Eideh Mutlaq)**

**Summary record**

**Introduction**

UNICEF was invited to collaborate with UNESCO in organizing and sponsoring a 90-minute round table on 'provision of basic education for girls and women' in the MENA region on 13 June 1994 during the fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States (MINEDARAB V), that was held in Cairo, 11-14 June 1994.

In the process of organizing and leading this round table, Dr Frank Dall, UNICEF's MENA Regional Education Adviser, worked with Dr Eideh Mutlaq from Yarmouk University who assisted in co-ordinating, leading and moderating the discussions at the round table.

Five professional women from Morocco, Sudan, Egypt and UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, were invited to share their experiences in the field of girls' basic education and deliver the following national case-studies.

**1. Strategies for female education in the MENA region**

Presenter: Dr Eideh Mutlaq, Yarmouk University, Jordan UNICEF/MENARO, Amman, (Round table co-ordinator)

**2. The impact of 1993 structural reform of girls' schooling in Morocco**

Presenter: Dr Aicha Belarbi Mohammad V University, Rabat, Morocco

**3. Community based youth education in Sudan**

Presenters: Ms Leila Bashir Gamil and Ms Naila Etayib Ministry of Education, Sudan

**4. Community schools project in Egypt**

Presenter: Ms Reda Alam Eddin Project Field Supervisor

**5. Response and comments by Ms Winsome Gordon**

Chief a.i., Section for Primary Education, UNESCO, Paris

### **Round table objectives**

1. To promote innovative approaches for the delivery of basic education to girls and women.
2. To facilitate female access to basic educational services.
3. To make senior policy-makers and planners more aware of the obstacles and constraints still impeding the advancement of girls' and women's education in the region.
4. To obtain feedback on the shortcomings and constraints of the different educational systems, to motivate change and to encourage the development of innovative courses of action.
5. To propose strategies, national plans of action and interventions to encourage reform in
6. To create public awareness of the importance of girls' education in national development and the overall social and economic well-being of the Arab nation.
7. To establish a task force of selected women leaders to assist in mobilizing resources both material and human, towards achieving the girls' education goals for the MENA region.

### **Round table outcomes**

The round table's conclusions were as follows: (1) for basic education for all goals to be attained, they must address the specific requirements of each country and each community; (2) regardless of the type of country, local community women's organisations have a critical role and responsibility in the planning, management and resource mobilisation of the educational endeavours of their societies, and a shared responsibility to be effective educators and agents of social and economic development.

#### **I. Specifically, women's and girls' basic education requires:**

creating the right political climate and a supportive environment;

enhancing the physical environment;

improving the teaching/learning process;

rendering the teaching/learning process more future relevant;

supporting education through innovative channels of communication;

enhancing female adult literacy.

#### **II. Institutions must improve their understanding and knowledge of the educational, economic and socio-cultural conditions of women from all levels of society and incorporate this into the institutional processes related to women's education, training and capacity building projects.**

- III. The participation of women in training, educational programmes and access to fiscal and other resources, is essential for engaging and integrating women in the democratic processes of their countries, in order to help alleviate women's poverty levels.
- IV. Escalating population growth levels, military conflicts, economic crises and economic restructuring programmes threaten the capacity of all educational delivery systems.
- V. For countries, national and international institutions to effectively implement the provisions of international charters, declarations, agreements and resolutions of all relevant agencies concerning human, children's and women's rights, they must develop mechanisms for meeting the needs of girls and women within their respective socio-cultural contexts.

### **Round table recommendations**

- I. Governments as well as non-governmental institutions should adopt coherent and co-ordinated policies and practices which:

respond to their national needs;

promote partnerships and co-operation;

encourage innovative approaches; and

adopt strategies that help in:

improving primary gross enrolment rates;

reduce the gender gap; :

raise girls' persistence rates at the primary level;

improve secondary gross enrolment rates; and

raise women's literacy rates.

Such policies should also foster co-operation among women, development agencies and non-governmental organizations at the national and community/grass roots levels.

- II. Co-operative efforts must be initiated on a pilot basis by selected United Nations agencies, governmental institutions and national non-governmental organisations to enable these institutions and organisations to raise their capacities to work at the grass roots/community level to underage integrated development and training (i.e. UNICEF's co-sponsored Adolescent Education Project in Sudan, and the Community Schools Initiative in Egypt).

- III. The round table recommended that the following steps be taken:

develop national plans of action for improving girls' education;

re-evaluate the use of media and other technologies to promote the achievement of our universal basic education goals;

collect more data, disaggregated by gender, on a regular basis;

create the political will and supportive environment needed for long-term programme success;

make girls' education the responsibility of the entire community.

- IV. Partner agencies should support capacity building through workshops, training, forums, seminars and similar initiatives especially designed to engage and encourage new levels of co-operation between men and women, particularly in support of girls' and women's education.
- V. Task/working groups composed of leading women and men activists in the fields of education, democracy, human rights, women and children rights, social and economic planning and human resources, must be encouraged to facilitate co-operation in achieving goals of education for all.

## **Conclusion**

The discussions and case-studies on female education confirmed that:

1. Girls' education will require modern approaches, materials, innovations and facilities, but it may also need village level participation.
2. The universalisation of basic education leading to sustained development, democracy and peace can be enhanced within partnerships.
3. Women should be key actors in the cultural and educational transmission of values.
4. Finding ways to reach the unreached is a priority if we want to achieve equity and justice.

## **Finally**

UNICEF benefited greatly from listening to descriptions of the pioneering efforts of participants and non-governmental organisations communities. Their experiences and knowledge made this round table an outstanding success in improving understanding of major obstacles and constraints impeding girls' basic education in the region. This understanding, hopefully, will help to solidify commitment and forge a new partnership for advancing girls' and women's basic education.

UNICEF recognizes the critical importance of fully integrating women and local communities into the education mainstream if we are to advance national and international efforts to achieve (EFA) targets by the year 2000.

UNICEF is also convinced of the importance of mobilizing all possible resources: governmental and non-governmental, and those of donor agencies at both the national and international levels, for attaining these targets and goals.

UNICEF strongly endorses the major findings of this round table, and is committed to strengthening its own efforts and to joining with other partners in providing education and health for every community and individual irrespective of creed, race or gender.

**Round table organized by the  
Section for Inter-Agency Co-operation in Basic Education (UNESCO)**

**Roles and responsibilities of the donor community  
in supporting basic education**  
(chaired by Dr Bashir Bakri)

**Summary record**

This round table assembled technical and donor agencies representing a very broad spectrum of mandates, strategies and experiences. They included UNDP, the World Bank, ALECSO, ISESCO, ESCWA, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), AGFUND, Noor Al Hussein Foundation, France as a major bilateral donor and UNICEF.

There was strong agreement amongst the Arab governments and the agencies that very considerable financial efforts will be required in order to reach the goals of Education for All and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab region.

H.E. Dr Ali Fakhro notably called for co-ordinated donor mobilization in support of a broad-based Arab action plan to achieve universal basic education and literacy in Arab countries, based on new approaches -including distance education, and counting on contributions from all sectors of Arab society.>

The round table discussions, led to the conclusion that stronger and more effective partnerships will be needed in five domains: i 9

1. Stronger partnerships between the donor community and governments, through an active dialogue based on national priorities.
2. Partnership and effective co-ordination amongst donors and technical agencies themselves, in order to avoid duplication and achieve optimal synergy of donor inputs.
3. Continued and intensive partnerships between countries of the Arab region, involving regional co-operation and joint programmes to meet common education priorities.
4. reinforced and broadened partnerships for education within each country, particularly amongst governments, local communities, the economic sector and civil society at large.
5. A stronger partnership between the educational system and the sectors of employment, industry and agriculture, in order to overcome the problems of unemployment for the educated, to restore parents' belief in the value of education, and to give the children of the Arab world a future through education.

All participants in this round table encouraged UNESCO to ensure even closer contacts, co-ordination and information exchange with the donor community in the future, and to make round tables such -as this a regular feature of future conferences of ministers.

## **ANNEX III**

### **Agenda**

1. Opening of the Conference
2. Election of the President
3. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure
4. Election of the Vice-Presidents and the Rapporteur-General of the Conference and the Chairperson of the Commission
5. Adoption of the agenda
6. Organization of the work of the Conference
7. Presentation of the report of the second session of the Advisory Committee (ARABU-PEAL II)
8. Development of education in the Arab States region since MINEDARAB IV (Abu Dhabi, 1977) and its future prospects
9. Universalization of basic education and improvement of its quality and relevance
10. Co-operation for the development of education
11. Adoption of the recommendations and the final report
12. Closing of the Conference

## ANNEX IV

### Opening speeches

#### (i) Opening ceremony

Address by Mr Mohamed Abdulla Fares  
Under-Secretary for Educational Affairs of the United Arab Emirates

Address by Mr Ali Bin Mohamad Al-Towagry  
Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS)

Address by Mr Abdul Aziz Othman Al-Twajiri Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)

Address by Mr Mohamed Ibrahim El-Mili Director-General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)

Address by Mr Sabah Bakjaji Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Address by Mr Federico Mayor Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Address by His Excellency Mr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din  
Minister of Education of the Arab Republic of Egypt

#### (ii) First plenary session

Address by Mr Sabah Bakjaji  
Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Address by Mr Ahmed Sayyad  
President of the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-seventh session

Address by Mr Federico Mayor  
Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

**Address by Mr Mohamed Abdulla Fares  
Under-Secretary for Educational Affairs  
of the United Arab Emirates**

In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate

Dr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Minister of Education  
of the Arab Republic of Egypt,  
Mr Director-General of UNESCO,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

First of all, I should like to apologize on behalf of His Excellency the Minister for Educational Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, who is unable to be with us at the Conference owing to exceptional circumstances beyond his control.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, the Fourth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States was held at Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates in 1977. We are pleased that the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in She Arab States is today being convened in Cairo after an interval of 17 years, during which many new issues have arisen in the field of education all over the world. We are confident that this Conference will address these extremely important issues and that, God willing, the results of the Conference will have an impact on the development of Arab education and help us to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. We wish the Conference every success in tile achievement of its objectives.

We should like, on this occasion, to Shank the Arab Republic of Egypt for hosting the Conference and providing all possible facilities to make it a success. At the same time, we Thank their excellencies and all the participants in the Conference and wish you all a pleasant stay.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been the practice for the Presidency of the Conference to be granted to the host country. I, Therefore, suggest that She Presidency of your esteemed Conference should be assumed by His Excellency Dr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Minister of Education of the Arab Republic of Egypt, whom I now call upon to preside over the session.

**Address by Mr Ali Bin Mohamad Al-Towagry  
Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education  
for the Gulf States (A BEGS)**

Mr President of the Conference,  
Distinguished Heads and Members of Delegations,  
Representatives of Organizations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

It is an honour for me, as we meet in the land of Egypt, which has always been a beacon of education and cultural enlightenment, to express in my personal capacity and on behalf of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), my deepest appreciation and thanks to Ass Excellency the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, who has contributed intellectually and materially to numerous Arab and international meetings concerning the younger generation and the enhancement of the cultural development of Egypt and the Arab and Islamic world.

In view of the convening at Cairo of the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States, I am pleased to offer our thanks to the Egyptian Government and officials for their warm welcome and gracious sponsorship and for the keen interest they have taken in E-Conference..

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In my personal capacity, and on behalf of ABEGS, which is linked to UNESCO, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Islamic Educational, -Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) through; agreements for co-operation and the exchange of information and educational partnerships, I should like to express thanks and appreciation to UNESCO, which has organised this Conference in co-operation with ALECSO and ISESCO. UNESCO has made an important contribution to the renewal of educational thought and to devising numerous forms and methods of co-operation, as well as to the ideas which it has disseminated and to efforts aimed at achieving co-ordination and integration in the field of education, culture and development. --

These Arab conferences constitute major turning-points in Arab educational thought and action; indeed the educational historian may link these conferences with the changes, reforms and new orientations which have been introduced in educational systems and administration and with respect to the economic aspects of education. Your conferences have provided great impetus, suggested many ideas and paved the way for numerous forms of national and collective action to achieve this necessary link between education and economic planning.

While Arab and international action has numerous achievements to its credit and has produced excellent and informative documents, we all know that we are still far from achieving our goals of comprehensive education, full enrolment, and overcoming the tragedy of illiteracy which continues to beset us. We thus still need to ask why educational development is lagging behind population increase, and how best to respond to development needs and train the skilled labour force needed to achieve development. We must still ask what is the true reason for the delay in eradicating illiteracy, despite all the budgets, efforts, plans, studies and research. Is this to be attributed to economic factors and insufficient budgets or to insufficient economic

planning and mobilisation of resources? Or is it backwardness in our cultural and educational institutions or a failure to make full use of our traditional and modern institutions in order to achieve these goals?

This Conference of yours will provide a fresh occasion to review our balance sheet, particularly as we stand on the threshold of a new century bringing changes in technology, teaching and working methods that will increase the need for concerted and intensive efforts such as will enable us to proceed further with the construction and regeneration of our Arab and Islamic civilization in order to meet these new challenges.

Our nation pins great hopes on its educational and planning officials who have come together at This Conference. May God grant you success. Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

**Address by Mr Abdul Aziz Othman Al-Twajri  
Director-General of the Islamic Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)**

In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate

In my personal capacity and on behalf of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), I am pleased to convey to you my sincere thanks and appreciation for the generous invitation which has been extended to me to attend this Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States, which is of particular importance to ISESCO, since it brings together half of our Member States, making participation particularly rewarding.

This session of your Conference takes place in the final decade of the twentieth century, at a time when extremely important issues have come to the fore in the fields of education, science and culture, and efforts are being made to create conditions which will enable the peoples of the world to cross the threshold of the twenty-first century in a climate of international peace and security.

There is no doubt that the best way to undertake these great tasks is through international co-operation. In this context, permit me to note that ISESCO is shouldering its responsibility fully by involving itself in international co-operation in all its spheres of activity, whether in the execution of its programmes in Member States, or in its constant efforts to strengthen co-operation and conclude partnerships with Islamic, Arab, regional and international organisations working in these fields.

Your Excellencies,

Permit me to review very briefly for the Conference a number of educational issues which ISESCO believes are of the utmost importance for the present and the near and more distant future of the Arab States. The importance of these issues lies in the fact that they relate to the Arab and Islamic heritage on the one hand and that, on the other hand, they coincide with educational ideas put forward in the international arena; furthermore, they are vital for modern Arab and Islamic society. In my view, these are interlinked and complementary issues which, taken together, provide objectives for this Conference.

The first of these issues is the democracy of education. The democracy of education is a long-standing issue which has gained particular importance since the beginning of this century. At the same time, it is one of the foundations of Islamic civilisation, since education in Islam is both a right and a duty. It is a requirement for both individuals and society. Hence the importance of eliminating obstacles to the democracy of education which, stated clearly, means acceptance of the principle of participation. Thus, the methods and means of communication and interlinkage between the educational system and institutions and individuals in society must be modernised in order that the latter may be partners in educational planning, management and assessment, as well as in the guidance and performance of the tasks of education. In this way, co-ordination and harmonisation can be achieved between educational institutions and the other institutions of society.

The second issue is democratic education, which relates to educational programmes, curricula, teaching and assessment methods and methods of educational administration, and is thus more closely connected to the quality of education. Democratic education is aimed at developing critical thought, freedom of opinion, respect for the freedom of others, responsibility, initiative, a balance between rights and duties, tolerance, participation and co-operation.

The third issue is religious education. While this has always been a fundamental issue, it is now an increasingly urgent one, not only in the Arab countries but worldwide, which means that religious education should be included in education curricula in order to combat the dissolution of morals, the break-up of the family and the spread of violence. It may be that our Arab and Islamic societies are more fortunate in this respect, since most of them have always maintained religious education as a subject, at least at pre-university levels. It is certain that the attention devoted to a sound religious education in our curricula renders a precious service to Arab and Islamic society.

The fourth issue is Education for All. Here ISESCO concurs fully with Article 1 of the World Declaration on Education for All, which states that 'basic education is more than an end in itself. It is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development on which countries may build, systematically, further levels and types of education and training'.

The fifth issue is the need to develop and enhance education. A balance must be struck between the provision of opportunities for education on the one hand and the concern to develop and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of education on the other. In order to achieve this goal, integrated efforts must be exerted to develop the contents of curricula and to improve educational performance.

Your Excellencies,

These are a few ideas which ISESCO believes can be put into practice first and foremost by ensuring the greatest possible degree of joint action between the Arab and Islamic countries, and by taking advantage of everything that international and regional agencies have to offer in this vitally important field.

At the current stage at which the Arab and Islamic nation finds itself, efforts must be redoubled in order to universalise, enhance and develop education so that it may contribute to the success of the overall development process, which is primarily based on the moulding of the Arab Muslim individual, the nation's present and future capital and stock. ISESCO believes that this is the great challenge facing us all, which can only be met in a scientific manner by strengthening co-operation between the Arab and Islamic countries, supporting joint Arab and Islamic action and disseminating a spirit of confidence and trust, against a background of shared Islamic fraternity. May God grant us success in our search for the good of our great nation and its progress.

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

**Address by Mr Mohamed Ibrahim El-Mili  
Director-General of the Arab League Educational,  
Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)**

In the name of God

Mr President of the Conference,  
Distinguished Ministers of Education and Planning,  
Mr Director-General of UNESCO,  
Mr Director-General of ISESCO,  
Mr Director-General of ABEGS,  
Distinguished Ambassadors,  
Heads of Arab and international organizations,  
Experts,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I greet you in my personal capacity and on behalf of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), and express the hope that your Fifth Conference may achieve its objectives. Permit me, first of all, to address sincere thanks to the President, Government and people of Egypt for the care and attention they have given to this Conference, for their warm welcome, and for the devoted assistance and keen support your Organization has always received from them for its national projects and programmes. Thanks are naturally also extended to our friend, Federico Mayor, and his assistants for their generous invitation to us to cooperate closely with them and for the understanding and goodwill they have shown in the organization of this Conference and the preparation of its documents.

Your Excellencies,

There has been an interval of 17 years between the Fourth and Fifth Conferences, which is by no means a short period, particularly in view of the rapid changes sweeping the world, which have also affected the scientific, technological, economic and social fields. There is an urgent need for the developing countries, of which our Arab nation has long been a member, to consider those measures which, as we enter the twenty-first century, will guarantee them a fitting rank among the peoples and countries of the world and enable them to keep pace with the increasingly rapid changes and to alter their circumstances in order to absorb this tremendous quantity of scientific and technological knowledge. There is no need for me to review the efforts of ALECSO in the field of education, since document ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.5 clearly outlines its action since the Fourth Conference.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our conviction that we live in an age of both development and education compels us to link the two. It is education which builds the citadels of peace in our minds and inoculates our souls against recourse to arms. The motor of production that is conducive to well-being is not skill in the manufacture of arms and the race to use them but rather economic growth, the flourishing of thought and the education of man. Therefore, in our endeavour to formulate a strategy for education and plans for its execution for the coming generations, we must beware of the dangerous trend which has arisen during the modern era towards the gradual marginalization of the humanities, which are all seen as being contrary to rationalism and

efficiency. The tendency has thus been to reduce the humanities to a kind of would-be rationalism, such that they have become dry mechanical studies; even the history of art itself has been transformed from the history of the development of the profession, the study of beauty and the inculcation of taste into a scientific theory which describes artistic creativity in terms of mathematical equations. We must therefore preserve the worth of individuals, who must not be transformed by this trend into mere robots of consumption and the means of destruction in unjustified wars.

These are some of the factors which have prompted us to review and assess our progress in the fields of work of ALECSO, to ensure that human resources development is linked to a quality education of human dimensions, and that education programmes are concerned with the issues of democracy, environmental education, informatics and education for peace, while preserving those constants which make us ourselves, so that we are better able to establish sound relations with the culture of others through a mutual dialogue which disposes us to complementarity and solidarity and induces us to turn our backs on confrontation and conflict.

It is on this basis that we have undertaken an assessment of the past work of ALECSO and have prepared a blueprint establishing priorities for our activities and programmes; this document will be submitted to ALECSO's forthcoming General Conference at the end of the year. We have also held numerous meetings and seminars, culminating in an intellectual forum at which a consensus was reached, the essence of which was that ALECSO should work, as already decided by the Ministers of Education, through major programmes and projects derived from a close reading of the needs of the Arab countries and which the various sectors should help to execute, each concentrating on a basic theme to be accorded priority for a particular period.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We base this approach on the need to join in the march of the age and to secure the conditions necessary to ensure that the Arab nation keeps abreast of progress in a rapidly changing world.

Finally, allow me to stress that one of ALECSO's main lines of emphasis in the coming period will be an endeavour to promote co-operation with specialised international and Arab organizations working in the fields of education, culture and science. I draw particular attention to our co-operation with UNESCO, ISESCO, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), the Association of Arab Universities, the International Bureau of Education (IBE) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). In this connection, I should like to draw attention to the spirit of full co-operation shown by our friend Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO; your Conference is an example of the earnest co-operation and co-ordination between our two organizations. ALECSO hopes that such co-operation will continue and be expanded to include a number of joint programmes and activities aimed at pooling efforts, eliminating duplication and preventing a dissipation of potential in order to ensure that the resolutions and recommendations of the Conference are properly implemented.

Thanking you for your attention, I wish you and your Conference every success.

Peace and the mercy and the blessings of God be upon you.

**Address by Mr Sabah Bakjaji  
Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations  
and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission  
for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate

Dr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Minister of Education  
of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and President of the Conference,  
Mr Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO,  
Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegations,  
Distinguished Ambassadors, Esteemed Members of the Delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I convey to you all greetings from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and his wishes for the success of your efforts. I also convey sincere thanks on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and in my personal capacity, to the President, Government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt for hosting this Conference. I must also address thanks to the Director-General of UNESCO for inviting the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to participate in the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A glance at the programme of work of this Conference suffices to demonstrate its great importance. In the next few days we shall address a number of issues which will have a great impact on the future' of development in the countries of the region.

The universalization and enhancement of basic education and the eradication of illiteracy are basic prerequisites for ensuring that the citizens of the Arab countries are effectively involved in development efforts. These are the most effective tools with which to combat the backwardness and economic and social problems which the countries of the region are still facing, even if their gravity varies from one country to another.

It is a source of great' pleasure for me to note the growing interest shown by all the Arab countries in the development of their educational systems and in broadening the scope of their efforts to eradicate illiteracy.

The challenges facing the Arab countries in the field of education necessitate broad co-operation among them and the co-ordination of efforts between those States and the international and regional organizations concerned with education. I sincerely hope that this Conference will provide an opportunity to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination between all the countries and institutions concerned.

Finally, I address sincere thanks to all the organizations that have contributed to the preparation of this Conference, and I wish you all every success;

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

**Address by Mr Federico Mayor**  
**Director-General of the United Nations Educational,**  
**Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

Mr President and dear friend,  
Ministers,  
Mr Representative of the Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to welcome you to MINEDARAB V and to express our appreciation to the Egyptian authorities for their warm and generous hospitality. We are particularly grateful to President Hosni Mubarak for the interest he has taken in the organisation of the Conference and for his close involvement in efforts to promote basic education at the national, regional and global levels. We are most gratified that he should give his personal endorsement to the latest step in the Jomtien process by signing the Declaration of the EFA Summit of Nine High-Population Countries held in Delhi last December, reaffirming a commitment to pursue with utmost zeal and determination the goals of education for all.

The presence here today of so many high-level delegations from the Member States of the region testifies to the importance you and your governments attach to education as the force that will shape the future of your countries and the region. UNESCO for its part is strongly committed to supporting the work being carried out in the region by facilitating the exchange of views and experience between your ministries and by fostering the mobilization of national and regional efforts for educational development. AU together - Member States, the United Nations system, regional organisations such as ALECSO and ISESCO - we can achieve our goals. Therefore we must do so.

Who today can doubt that education is the key to meeting the two supreme challenges of our time - promoting sustainable development and nurturing a culture of peace? Education is vital to building up the critical mass of knowledge and the technical capabilities required for economic and social progress and to reducing the unacceptable asymmetries of wealth and opportunity within and between nations. More importantly perhaps, it is our best hope for fostering those attitudes of respect for our common environment and for each other which ultimately determine whether scientific and technological invention serves to benefit or to blight human existence. There is no more important task for education at the present time - I believe - than to teach those values of solidarity, compassion, tolerance and open-mindedness essential to the pursuit of the human adventure in an ever more interdependent world.

Only if education - lifelong education, education that 'reaches the unreachable' - is declared a matter vital to **national and international security**, only if it is given the budgetary priority it merits, shall we be able to tap the qualified human resources that are necessary; only then shall we be able to curb population growth - a crucial issue of our time that needs to be addressed with far-sightedness and without the imposition of foreign models.

In the Middle East as in other parts of the world, every day brings another dramatic confirmation of the need to root the principles of harmonious living more securely in the minds of young people. Violence and terror are always the worst of arguments with which to advance a cause. But what shall we say of those who practise terrorism in the name of a religion

founded in generosity and love, those who mutilate their own society by targeting intellectuals with their murderous attacks? Such extremism must be condemned and resisted without compromise as a denial of any morality worthy of the name.

Happily, we are ad witness to infinitely more hopeful trends that could prelude the end to a conflict and an injustice that has bedevilled relations in the region and the world at large for half a century. Everything possible must be done to nurture the incipient peace between Israel and Palestine - in particular by investing in peace-building, which is the only effective form of peace-keeping since it lays the foundations of peace in the minds of men and women. UNESCO, with the help of a generous contribution by Saudi Arabia, has already begun to implement a plan of action based on the Memorandum of Co-operation I signed with President Arafat in December last year, and I urge the countries of the region to contribute to the maximum of their ability to the task of establishing the educational and other infrastructures needed to found a modern and democratic Palestinian society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference is a doubly significant occasion. It is not only an opportunity for a long overdue exchange of views but also a symbol of hope. It bears witness to the emerging unity of the region and to the promise of peace and progress that its leaders - President Hosni Mubarak prominent among them - are struggling to achieve. The auspices are favourable for concerted action to address the crucial educational challenges facing the region at the approach of a new millennium, and I am confident that you will respond to this historic opportunity. We are at the dawn of a new era: let us commit ourselves resolutely to promote equity, justice and freedom, the foundations of a culture of peace.

Allow me to conclude with a quotation from the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwich, which has a message for us all:

mâ zâla fî qulûbikum dimâ'u  
lâ tasfahûhâ 'ayyuhâ l-'abâ'u  
fa-'inna fî 'ahsha'ikum janînu

There is yet blood in your hearts,  
Spill it not, O fathers,  
For you bear within you the germ of future life.

**Address by His Excellency Mr Hussein Kamal Bahaa El Din  
Minister of Education of the Arab Republic of Egypt**

In the name of God the Merciful, She Compassionate

Distinguished Ministers of Education of the Arab Countries,  
Mr Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO,  
Mr Abdul Aziz Odhman Al-Twajiri, Director-General of ISESCO,  
Mr Mohamed Ibrahim El-Mili, Director-General of ALECSO,  
Heads and Members of Delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to Cairo and wish you a pleasant stay as our guests. I hope that your deliberations and work in the Conference will be successful in the interests of the welfare of our peoples. This Conference takes place over a decade and a half after the previous Conference in Abu Dhabi in 1977 and is urgently needed in order to develop joint Arab action in the field of education, which is the corner-stone of all social, economic and political progress. Citizens who have acquired knowledge can make constructive contributions in all fields, particularly in view of the numerous changes taking place in the world: the rapid cultural progress and the tremendous revolutions in science, technology and informatics. If these revolutions pass us by, the gap between us and the rest of the world will widen. In order to narrow it, we must focus on improving the quality of education, for it is through education that our nation can guarantee its national security, and it is education that can provide our people with the opportunity to achieve progress and well-being. Education is the sole passport of the Arab nation to its rightful position as the best nation ever brought forth to mankind.

If the formation of blocs of peoples is the hallmark of our age we are more needy and deserving of such a bloc among ourselves, for our language, history, aspirations and interests are one. The promotion and enhancement of education represent progress for our countries and the rising generations of our people. By agreeing to support joint action in this field we can ensure progress in order to achieve growth in the Arab world, and this requires us to give some thought as to how we can benefit - with the help of international organizations - from the potential of existing centres of excellence in our countries, and can establish, with the help of the international community, our own national centres with regional activities in the fields of planning, curricula, teacher training and assessment, particularly in languages and the sciences of the future which are mathematics and the basic sciences. We must also benefit from the potential available in our countries in the educational industries (a feasibility study has been made on this topic in the Arab region in co-operation with UNESCO and ALECSO, the results of which have not yet been published), as well as in the fields of teacher training, the renovation and universalisation of basic education and the eradication of adult illiteracy, using distance teaching and the satellites available in our region, such as ARABSAT.

We see many experiments all over the world. The European Union is an example to be emulated. Similarly, the Asian 'Tigers' serve as a lesson in how to make rapid progress with endogenous capacities by enhancing an appropriate type of education, focusing on joint co-operation, specializing in appropriate technologies which provide a boost to the national economy, and endeavouring to break out the vicious cycle of backwardness and join the ranks of the advanced industrial countries.

The scope of our Conference should enable us to consider the design of a system which would ensure the transfer of modern sciences to the field of education in the Arab countries at an appropriate speed and an affordable cost. This would require joint action on our part to establish an integrated system for the exchange of information and our involvement in international experiments which would enable education to integrate the various fields of knowledge, diversify contents and adopt innovative and creative methods., so that our schools and institutes could become ships of science carrying our younger generation into the third millennium. While these aspirations that we hold for our countries may seem difficult to attain, we can achieve them through wide-ranging scientific study and productive regional co-operation. If we can do this, the doors of international co-operation and support will open wide to us.

Before concluding my statement, I should like to draw attention to some basic orientations in- our educational planning at present. First and foremost is the need to devote attention to the principle of 'Education for All', since the achievement of basic education through universal primary education? the eradication of adult illiteracy and the availability of lifelong learning are all essential if the educational system is to succeed in achieving its goals. Secondly, there are the modern inputs at all stages of education, which are environmental, population, international and preventive education, as well as the disciplines of the future, such as languages and mathematics, with which we will enable our children, younger and older and male and female alike, to stride confidently into the twenty-first century. We must teach our children how to learn, and how to think about what they learn, using such modern technological means as the computer, which is the 'blackboard of tomorrow'.

I must not forget to mention the problem of illiteracy among women, who account for 62 per cent of illiterates in the Arab countries despite the fact that the prevailing spiritual values and constitutional and legal principles' all over the world call for equality between men and women. As the 'poet of the Nile' [Hâfiz Ibrâhîm] wrote,

The mother is a school; if you prepare her well,  
you will have prepared a people of good stock'.

You have before you today a new experiment in the form of the single-class schools' project, sponsored by Ms Suzanne Mubarak, for the schooling of girls who have dropped out of the educational system; this project is worthy of your attention.

In conclusion, I reiterate my welcome to you as our guests, and address thanks to the Director-General of UNESCO and his assistants, to the President of the General Conference of UNESCO and to the members of the Advisory Committee for their efforts to facilitate the work of the Conference and help it achieve its objectives.

Thank you for your attention.

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

**Address by Mr Sabah Bakjaji  
Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations  
and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission  
for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Mr Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, President of the Conference,  
Your Excellencies,  
Mr Director-General of UNESCO,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to extend greetings to all the participants in the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States. I would very much like to thank the Director-General of UNESCO for kindly inviting me to attend this Conference. I would also like to thank the organisations which contributed to the preparation of the Conference, particularly ALECSO and UNICEF.

Today we have to shoulder enormous responsibilities. The ways we adopt to disseminate education and improve its quality in our countries will have a wide and deep impact on the welfare of our societies in the foreseeable future as well as on the prospects of development for future generations. If we do not succeed in formulating the appropriate approaches for the preparation and training of our children and youth, they will fail to achieve the status we wish for them in the world of tomorrow. If we succeed in guiding their steps, they will be able to overcome the economic, social and environmental problems before them and before mankind as a whole, some of which are now looming on the horizon.

We now recognize that the quantitative progress we have achieved in the various stages of the educational process, though considerable, has not been sufficient to ensure the universalisation of basic education. We also know that the qualitative aspect of the educational process has developed slowly and unevenly in an area. Educational goals continue to fall short of our aspirations. Educational policies in several of our countries are still not clearly defined. Educational planning is still weak, and the requirements of effective implementation have not yet been integrated. Educational management continues to follow traditional methods. There is little if any interaction between the educational system and the production and service sectors, although this should be a corner-stone in building the capabilities that need to be mobilized in order to achieve the goals of economic and social development. This is the situation, although educational institutions and most of the institutions involved in social and economic development in the majority of our countries function within a public framework or under government supervision.

If this situation continues, the twenty-first century will find us and our countries still unable to universalise elementary education, with tens of millions of illiterate people.

Some may attribute the causes of these and other issues to the scarcity of resources. But I feel no hesitation in recalling that our forefathers did not have the potential which we have today when they built the foundations of our civilization. Yet they succeeded in establishing schools which contributed to changing the course of world thought and enriching it. That

heritage, represented by its values and language, continues to form a solid foundation on which we can rely in enriching our modern civilisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Excuse me for having started my talk by presenting a bleak picture of the educational process in our countries at present. However, I believe that the challenges facing all the Arab countries have become extremely urgent. Some of these challenges are local in character. At the local level, we must develop our capabilities quantitatively and qualitatively; we must raise agricultural productivity, enhance industrial development and upgrade the service sector. At the same time, we must develop the prevailing social structures. We must do all this without further harm to the environment. We should do our best to improve the environment in order to absorb population growth and meet the requirements of development.

One of the challenges facing Arab leaders and the Arab people in the area of economic development concerns the changes in the social value system, especially as this relates to work, as a basic element in all development efforts. The economic boom that took place in the region in the 1970s brought with it patterns of consumption and concepts of work that were detrimental to sustainable development in its comprehensive social, economic and environmental aspects. Prevailing economic conditions necessitate a reconsideration of these patterns of consumption and work. Such reconsideration can only be successful if it is carried out within the context of the social value system of the Arab culture. The reinforcement of the value of work, as the only way to achieve economic growth and social well-being, is a serious task, which requires immediate attention in the education and economic sectors.

Another challenge confronting the Arab countries on the world level is the emergence of a new division of labour primarily based on technological capability. Furthermore, the continuing revolution in the technology of telecommunications and the mass media has opened the door wide to cultural and educational influences from the developed countries. This has both a positive and a negative impact. The adoption of a neutral attitude vis-à-vis these influences, whatever they may be, is fraught with risk.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The conflicts and upheavals we are witnessing today in many parts of the world, including the Arab region, have economic and social roots. Therefore, addressing economic and social underdevelopment through the development of the educational process should be the top priority of the countries of the region. As you well know, the technology gap is one of the most important dimensions of underdevelopment.

The significance of the technological dimension at this Conference is twofold. Firstly, the acquisition and utilization of technological expertise are important goals of education. Secondly, technology is at the same time an increasingly important tool for the development of the educational process. Television now supplements radio as a teaching aid, and satellites have entered the field of communications and information, making it possible to develop distance teaching methods. Computers are already in the field. Teaching and training techniques based on informatics are undergoing continuous development. This movement shows no sign of slowing down.

If the educational system is to address the technological dimension in a serious and comprehensive manner, we must be prepared to build and enhance our own technological capabilities in the areas affecting the economy, social structure and environment of the countries in the region. This can be done by pursuing two basic goals.

Firstly, we must use the new technologies that are becoming increasingly important and widely used in the production and service sectors. As you know, a number of new technologies have been introduced in many countries around the world. Young people in the Arab region should be trained to assimilate, adapt and make optimum use of these technologies in order for them to gain a foothold in the fierce international competition.

One sector which requires greater attention and care with regard to its technological component is the education sector itself. Therefore, the introduction of new technologies in this sector should be one of our top priorities. This will require much attention and effort, since modern teaching technologies presuppose as their basis modern methods of education management; such methods also require the training of specialists and the establishment of institutions for the preparation, dissemination and evaluation of teaching materials, as well as follow-up on their development. In the foregoing, we must pay special attention to the use of the Arabic language and to ensuring that educational material and instruments are in harmony with the surrounding environment and social atmosphere.

Secondly, we must train our youth to generate scientific and technological knowledge in areas relating to economic and social development plans. I am calling for more than the mere allocation of resources to research and development in universities and research centres. We must prepare children and young people in a manner consistent with our urgent need for innovative and creative personnel. Many agree that the curricula and the teaching and evaluation methods now in use do not serve this purpose and should therefore be developed and enhanced as appropriate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are pleased to sense in what is being written about the Arab educational system a shift from diagnosis and the presentation of orientations towards the study of mechanisms, curricula and means of implementation to be pursued in order to develop the system and upgrade its performance. One commendable aspect of the working paper presented to our Conference is that most of the questions raised therein concern the ways and means of achieving development goals through the renewal and development of the educational process. I consider these orientations commendable. They should be accompanied by the development of a set of original and practical concepts and ideas in order to ensure:

- (a) integration with the productive and service sectors, not only to meet their need for trained and qualified personnel but also to ensure their direct and effective participation in activities concerned with the provision of skills and training;
- (b) flexibility, which is necessary to enable this sector to keep up with the rapid economic, social and environmental changes in today's world;
- (c) co-operation with professional and vocational associations, producers' associations and the private sector in general at the national and regional level, since many of

our goals cannot be achieved without the continuation and growth of such co-operation.

ALECSO has played a commendable role in formulating a strategy to develop Arab education which contains a number of approaches to joint Arab action. It may now be appropriate to review that strategy to make it more consistent with new developments and, on that basis, to draft precise and integrated implementation plans guided by the past experience of the Arab region and enlightened by the experience of others, using appropriate follow-up and evaluation mechanisms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Amidst the turbulent changes that have buffeted the Arab nation over the past few years, I see signs of hope that should not be disregarded. Despite the frustration generated by the events of the early 1990s, we perceive a true desire to bring about institutional development. There is a feeling that the Arab States individually will not be able to meet the challenges to their national education systems. I believe that the development and strengthening of Arab co-operation are linked to the reappraisal and renovation of concepts, the development of mechanisms, and the restructuring of institutions that govern, control and direct Arab co-operation activities.

Some areas can in afford to wait for the results of the research and experiments needed for the updating of concepts, the design of mechanisms and the comprehensive restructuring required by the Arab education system. It is often necessary to resort to urgent intermediate solutions. Higher education, intermediate vocational education and on-the-job training are ad areas that need such solutions. In all these areas, efforts may have a relatively rapid impact on development sectors, particularly if those responsible for these sectors contribute effectively to the design of the development and renewal mechanisms. I am particularly pleased, therefore, that this Conference, which is concerned primarily with the educational issues of the Arab region, is being attended by ministers responsible for economic planning alongside ministers of education. I hope that this interaction and mutual support win continue in the activities resulting from the Conference and win be-translated into simple and speedy implementation of its resolutions and recommendations.

Mr President of the Conference,  
Your Excellencies,  
Mr Director-General of UNESCO,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The path we must take together is not a smooth one. Great efforts are required to achieve the goals which we have set for ourselves today and which are imposed by the challenges of the present and the future. I would like to affirm the commitment of ESCWA to supporting your efforts, within the confines of its competence and resources, in co-operation with UNESCO and the other international, regional and national organizations concerned with education and development.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Federico Mayor, for his kind invitation. I again thank an those who helped with the preparation of this Conference.

**Address by Mr Ahmed Sayyad  
President of the General Conference of UNESCO  
at its twenty-seventh session**

Mr President,  
Mr Director-General of UNESCO,  
Distinguished Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to greet you and express my pleasure at being with you to participate in the work of this Conference on education, which is being held at a time when the world is witnessing rapid and profound changes in various fields, all of which have an impact on and consequences for the Arab world as a whole and for each individual country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Conference, which will today address the most important problems confronting individuals and societies, the problems of education and development in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century, is being held at a time when the Arab region is at a major turning point in its historical and political course.

The Arab world is today in a state of unparalleled fragmentation and disruption, in which the mainstays of solidarity have been shaken and the foundations for a minimum degree of co-operation between the Arab countries in all fields have collapsed, in particular in education, culture and science.

In order for our Arab nation to emerge from its present crisis, we must endeavour to establish new foundations to bring about true co-operation between the Arab countries so that they may face the cultural challenges and meet the needs of the end of this century and the concerns of the next in a spirit of solidarity and responsibility, drawing on the traditions and grandeur of the past in order to achieve advancement and face the challenges of present and future development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is more that unites the Arab peoples than separates them. History and bitter experience have taught us that political differences cannot obliterate the links between the members of a single people, particularly since these links have deep roots in our history and underpin some of the oldest civilisations in the world. On this basis, and despite political discernity, the Arab cultural front has remained steadfast and constant. No wonder then that Egyptian films are seen in all the Arab countries, Lebanese and Moroccan books are read throughout the Arab world, Kuwaiti plays are followed in every Arab household, and outstanding Arabic songs are listened to from the Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean.

The foundations and objectives of education and science must be recast today so that they serve the Arab public everywhere and meet their aspirations for sustainable development which transcends artificial borders and obstacles. We are called upon today to overcome our fragmentation and disputes; to seek new educational and cultural plans which satisfy the requirements of children, young people and women; to combat illiteracy; to universalise the

various stages of education, and to endeavour to create a scientific and technological base in support of the objectives of economic and social development at both the national and Pan-Arab levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Development and peace are mutually complementary. Today more than at any time in the past, our Arab region, suffering from fragmentation and bloody disputes, is in need of educational and cultural plans based on peace, the dissemination of a culture of peace, and the education of our children and young people in a spirit of tolerance and respect for others with all their rights, whether with regard to individuals or groups, opinions, cultural identities or ideologies. There can be no development, and in particular no cultural, educational or scientific development, if there is no peaceful co-existence between the members of a single people and between that people and all other peoples.

UNESCO today places peace and the dissemination of a culture of peace at the forefront of its objectives and programmes. We are called upon to support this orientation and adopt it at the Arab and international levels. UNESCO is you and you are UNESCO; the culture of peace and the ideals of peace are the present demands and future concerns of all peoples and all individuals.

Thank you.

**Address by Mr Federico Mayor  
Director-General of the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

Distinguished Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Fifth Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and Chose Responsible for Economic Planning in the Arab States is meeting today after an interval of 17 years. The Arab region and the world at large have undergone profound transformations since this Conference was last convened in Abu Dhabi in 1977. Our meeting here in Cairo symbolizes one vital recent development - the emergence of a new dynamic of peace and co-operation in the region. History Tells us that whenever the Arab world has been unified it has contributed significantly to the forward march of humanity Through the splendour of its achievements in the arts, sciences and humanities. The challenge before the Arab world today is that of revitalising and renewing a civilization that represents a precious source of ideas and inspiration for an cultures.

The challenge facing your countries is not only that of capacity-building but also educating for values. This indeed is the wider context of the topic selected for this Conference: **Education for Development: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century**. Two vital questions will therefore be at the heart of our discussions in the days to come: what vision of the future do we hope to create for our children, and how can education contribute to the shaping of that vision? I like to repeat that the world that we leave to our children depends essentially on the children that we will leave to our world.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to renew my greetings to the many high-level delegations attending this meeting and to extend a warm welcome to the observers from non-Member States, sister agencies of the United Nations system, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. You are an part of the necessary 'grande alliance' dedicated to making education for ad a reality. I must also express my sincere appreciation to ALECSO and ISESCO for their valuable collaboration in organising this Conference. It is a pleasure to have their Directors-General, Mr Mohamed El-Mili and Mr Abdul Aziz Al-Twaijri, present with us today.

The agenda before this meeting addresses two sets of issues. The first concerns **the contribution that education must make to society**. In this region as elsewhere, the great challenges that society must address include building peace in freedom, justice and equity; achieving sustainable development; and protecting a fragile environment. A second set of issues relates to **the expansion and reform of the education system itself in order to enable it to meet the hopes and expectations that society has placed in it**.

While the challenges to education are universal, the responses to them must spring from the heart of the cultures of this region. Education must reflect that which is best and most distinctive within ourselves and our societies. The Arab peoples alone can determine what kind of education is needed to prepare the youth of today to embrace the future with a sense of

purpose, a commitment to equity and justice, and feelings of continuity and serenity. The rich traditions of Arab culture will certainly inform your discussions in days ahead and the decisions you will be called upon to make for the advancement of education in your countries in the years to come.

The mission assigned to UNESCO in its Constitution - constructing the foundations of peace in the minds of men - is today even more relevant and urgent than it was half a century ago. Within the Arab region, the last months have witnessed many hopeful signs that the conflicts that have plagued and preoccupied the region for decades may be nearing a solution. The peace process, to be sure, is young and fragile, but it engenders immense hopes.

At the centre of these hopes is, of course, the implementation of the peace agreement between Israel and the PLO signed in Washington in September 1993. UNESCO, which in association with UNRWA and other agencies has been aiding Palestinian refugees for the past 40 years is now addressing the long-term task of helping to establish the human resource base required to found a modern and democratic Palestinian society. In education as in other fields, the needs are enormous: schools have to be built, teachers trained, curricula developed, higher education upgraded, planning and management capabilities improved, training and employment opportunities created. UNESCO is already implementing a number of educational and other projects in accordance with the Memorandum of Co-operation I signed with President Arafat last December. I wish to take this opportunity to renew my appeal to the countries of the region to contribute to the maximum of their ability to the international effort to nurture the roots of peace in Palestine - in particular, by providing hope to hundreds of thousands of young Palestinians to whom educational and other opportunities have so long been denied.

Everywhere and from every standpoint, education is crucial to peace. For peace, as we all know, is more than the absence of conflict and war. It is a culture built upon tolerance and respect for others; it is a spirit of active solidarity among individuals; it is a society built upon expectations of justice and tranquillity. These values have been a precious part of the heritage of this region. Sustaining and promoting them must be one of the foremost duties of education. Our schools must be revered places of learning and none of their lessons are more to be valued than those that teach the wisdom and virtues of peace and the follies and vices of war.

The promotion of democracy and human rights are an essential part of the peace-building process. I would point out in this connection that Tunisia, among other countries in the region, has focused its education upon the strengthening of human rights and democracy. Indeed, the promotion of human rights is an overall national effort in Tunisia with human rights departments established in four government ministries. Recently, this country hosted the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Forty-Fourth Session of the International Conference on Education, which will be on the theme 'Appraisal and Perspectives of Education for International Understanding'. In this regard, I should also note that the Arab Human Rights Institute in Tunis was awarded the 1992 UNESCO Prize for the Teaching of Human Rights.

Let me add a word here about the rights of women. If we really believe in human rights, how can discrimination against women be tolerated? It is a matter for deep regret that so few Arab countries have signed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and that respect for the equal rights of men and women is so frequently disregarded in the Arab world. In practical terms, the cost to development of neglecting the unique talents of women is enormous. Morally, it seems to me inadmissible that, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, limitations should be placed on women's fundamental

freedoms. The problem of women's rights clearly transcends education but it is one with which education systems in the Arab world should be closely concerned.

Education for values is as essential to **the preservation of the environment** as it is to the promotion of peace. There are, to be sure, important scientific and technical elements to be understood and considered in protecting the environment. Yet, the problem is not so much the inadequacy of our knowledge as a weakness of will, responsibility and mutual concern. Paradoxically, in this vital area, altruism is the highest form of self-interest. Preservation of the environment implies respect of our common dwelling place, the earth, of our neighbours and of our children and their children. As with building peace, it calls not only for knowledge, but also for wisdom; not only for understanding, but also for mutual respect and goodness. These are values that must be taught in our schools and learned in our homes.

As in the other developing regions of the world, the major challenge confronting Arab societies is that of ensuring **education for all**. It is evident that enormous efforts are being made by the peoples and States of the region. Enrolment at the primary level expanded from 17 million in 1975 to 31 million in 1991, an increase of 83 per cent. During this same period, enrolment of girls increased from 38 per cent to 44 per cent of total enrolment. Yet the gross enrolment ratio for both sexes in the region was estimated to be only 84 per cent in 1991. This figure, moreover, disguises important differences in educational opportunities between the sexes: the gross enrolment ratio for boys is 92 per cent and that for girls only 75 per cent. This, of course, means that at least one boy in 12 and - more significantly - one girl in four is still not enrolled in primary school. Thus, while one can point to significant progress, the situation in many countries is serious and clearly calls for emergency measures.

Another disturbing trend that the people and States of the region must commit themselves to reversing is the growing number of adult illiterates. Certainly the rate of illiteracy in the adult population is declining in percentage terms. In 1990, an estimated 49 per cent of the adult population was illiterate; in the year 2000, it is projected that the proportion will be 38 per cent. And whereas five out of every eight women were illiterate in 1990, the projected rate for the year 2000 is one in every two. Yet we must set these figures against the fact that in absolute terms the number of illiterates in the region is likely to increase in the final decade of this century by 5 million, from 61 to 66 million. The incidence of illiteracy among women in rural areas - where birth rates are highest - also gives grounds for concern. Thus, while there has been progress in the region in the literacy field, it is clearly insufficient in a sphere so vital to the well-being of society.

There is - it is important to note - a growing body of research that points to the particular importance of women's and girls' education in accelerating development. Much of this research merely confirms the wisdom of the traditional teachings of Islam, which highlight the role of the mother and emphasize her moral and cultural influence in shaping her family and her society. Indeed, to educate a mother is not only to educate a family, but also to replace a potential inheritance of illiteracy with a tradition of education that will be passed from generation to generation. The education of women also has a very powerful impact upon fertility rates.

Let me say a word here on the population question, which is of the utmost seriousness and concern to us all. It is essential that we moderate population growth, but this can only be done if women have the power of choice, the capacity to shape their own destiny. It is not through the imposition of external models that the solution to the problem will be found.

Education - giving people the means to decide for themselves - once again provides the key. In all religious and ideological contexts, an increase in education is directly correlated with a decrease in fertility. The discussions that will take place here in Cairo next fall at the United Nations Conference on Population and Development must not be pre-empted by prescriptions for curbing population growth that obscure the unique responsibilities of every individual in this regard. We must also remember that, as well as reducing the numbers of new inhabitants, we have to provide properly for all those already on board and those destined to join 'spaceship earth' - including the street children, those exposed to hunger, curable disease and neglect. We must be ready to invest in education what we have in the past been prepared to invest in war, we must be ready to pay the **price of peace**.

Through the education for all campaign launched at Jomtien four years ago, UNESCO and its United Nations partners are actively engaged in promoting worldwide improvements - qualitative and quantitative - in the provision of basic education. The EFA Summit for Nine High-Population Countries held in New Delhi last December - the most recent step in the Jomtien process - placed particular stress on providing quality education for girls and women so as to reduce illiteracy and check population growth. One important outcome of the New Delhi Summit - for which the major credit must go to the Egyptian Minister for Education, H.E. Professor Hussein Kamel Bahaa El-Din - has been a joint initiative to explore the possibilities of distance education. Distance education can be a most cost effective learning and teaching device, particularly for the in-service training of teachers in rural areas. Modern but simple technologies are an invaluable means for reaching those who do not normally have access to education, such as girls and women in rural areas, those seeking a second or third chance, and isolated populations. I can assure you that UNESCO will continue to give its full support to the promotion of this promising initiative. I appeal to the donor countries and financial institutions to support Heads of State in the implementation of the Delhi Plan of Action, particularly distance education and education for women and girls. This morning, President Mubarak has indicated how vital he considers this Plan to be for the security and development of Egypt. I call on all countries and institutions to give their rapid backing, as global security depends on this effort.

UNESCO's support to Member States of the region in basic education is carried out mainly through ARABUPEAL, the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States. The Work Plan of the Programme, established in close consultation with governments and specialists in the region, represents a framework for action within which Member States can pursue the programme goals to which they have committed themselves. UNESCO has also worked with many of the States in the region to design national strategies and action plans for pursuing the 'expanded vision' for providing education for all endorsed at Jomtien. -Among the many activities being undertaken, I should like to single out those aimed at improving the status and qualifications of teachers. Teachers are the front-line workers in the struggle to achieve a literate world. Their job is a challenging and difficult one; their salaries and conditions of service are often poor. Yet, the vast majority of teachers are selflessly doing all that they can to educate the citizens of tomorrow. They know how vitally important their task is. We must also remember this and offer teachers the appreciation, honour and respect due them.

In a world in which progress is increasingly dependent on the products of the mind, education is recognized more and more as the force of the future. This has in turn reinforced the importance of international co-operation - which is the vocation of UNESCO. I will not

review the many activities of the Organization within the region, but I should mention two programmes especially designed to encourage the rapid transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries. The first of these is UNITWIN, which links universities in developing countries with those in industrialised nations. The second is the UNESCO Chairs programme which places high-level specialists at the disposal of universities in developing nations. In the current biennium, at least nine additional UNESCO Chairs will be established in the Arab region. The establishment and strengthening of universities is essential to providing the sources of innovation and expertise that the development of the region requires.

In its efforts to promote education and development in the Arab region, UNESCO is working closely with its valued partners ALECSO, ISESCO and the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS). Mention should also be made of our co-operation with funding sources within the region, particularly the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFSED) and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations organizations (AGFUND). With characteristic generosity, AGFUND has supported UNESCO's efforts to assist the least developed countries both within the Arab States and elsewhere in Africa and Asia. Arab culture is inspired by the same ethical principles that guide the mission of UNESCO, which require that priority be given to the poorest members of humanity, those with least access to resources and knowledge and who are therefore most vulnerable and most in danger of succumbing to despair.

Ministers,  
 Excellencies,  
 Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference opens at a time of change, of uncertainty and, above all, of hope. An enormous responsibility rests upon you, the leaders of education in this region so rich in history and tradition and so marked by the conflicts of the past decades. The discussions you will have and decisions you take in the days to come will help to shape the future of the region and the fate of its youth. In truth, this Conference is intended for them. We have all witnessed their spirit of selflessness and sacrifice. Our duty as educators is to focus their energy and idealism upon building a society of peace, progress and prosperity. In all our cultures, we must strengthen the function of peace-building. We must infuse the thought of young people everywhere with a new ethic of sharing and caring. We must prepare the ground for a new civilization in which the word and not the sword will prevail. This, in the final analysis, is the task to which we must now devote ourselves: to build peace in the minds of men, to further the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace, based on justice and equity.

## **ANNEX V**

### **Closing speech**

**Address by Mr Colin N. Power  
Representative of the Director-General of UNESCO  
Assistant Director-General for Education**

Dr Hussein Kamel Bahaa E1 Din, President of MINEDARAB V,  
Honourable Ministers of Education,  
Distinguished Representatives of Regional Organizations and Observers of the United Nations  
Agencies and She Donor Community present here at this Conference,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all let me express, on behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO and on my behalf and that of all of us here at this Conference, our deepest gratitude to Your Excellency, She President of this Conference, Minister of Education for Egypt, to your staff and to the people of Egypt, for your kindness, the warmth that we have now come to expect from your wonderful country. Your hospitality has indeed been very warm and we have truly enjoyed our stay in this culturally rich and ancient land.

In particular, Your Excellency, we owe our deepest thanks to you for the outstanding leadership and clarity of vision that you have provided us throughout this Conference.

Mr President, we began this Conference with 71 recommendations from the Advisory Committee. It is the function of a leader to help focus on what is of the utmost importance, on what is feasible and needs to be done. You, Mr President, insisted that we concentrate on Three, not 71, urgent issues. We are very grateful for your leadership in focusing our attention on what was of the utmost importance to the development of human resources in the Arab world, namely the eradication of illiteracy within the next ten years, the particular stress to be given to the education of women and girls in this region, and the use of distance educational methods, of new technology to reach those beyond reach.

Furthermore, you forced us to focus on the problem of improving the quality of education, of undertaking the necessary reforms to reduce the enormous gap between our dream of a strong and united Arab world and the present reality. It was your insistence, your leadership, your vision of centres of excellence throughout the region that spearheaded collaborative efforts to improve the teaching of languages, to modernize and to include up-to-date science, technology and mathematics teaching in the curriculum, and to use the new technology in information.

Your leadership was appreciated, not only here in this Conference, but also at the Education-for-All Summit for Nine High-Population Countries where progress was made on the use of distance education to extend basic education to all. We reaffirm UNESCO's commitment to work with the governments of the Member States of this region, and our sister agencies, to put these efforts into practice and improve the quality of education in the region.

Thirdly, you insisted and I, too, have insisted again and again on the importance of regional and international co-operation. This Conference itself is a very important step in this direction. It is the first time in 17 long and difficult years that the Arab Ministers of Education have, once again, been brought together. That we have succeeded in doing so after all this time and that you have so efficiently helped us reach a consensus about the critically important points demonstrates that the Arab States are ready to open a new chapter in Arab co-operation

on education. We must not falter in our determination to bring the leaders of education in the Arab world together, to forge partnerships and alliances, to begin co-operative programmes and projects in the areas which have been identified as top priorities during this Conference.

It is important, too, that we regularly assess the extent to which these agreements, targets and goals have been achieved. We must evaluate, we must assess, we must monitor, we must make sure that we are sticking to the tasks we set together. We must, therefore, make the utmost of the opportunities available within the region through ALECSO, ISESCO, ABEGS and other regional bodies, and during the meetings of the Ministers for Education. You, Mr President, suggested that during our International Conference on Education in Geneva in October this year, the Ministers from the Arab region should meet again to look at the recommendations of this Conference, to see what progress has been made, to perhaps review and, I hope, we can, by the time you meet, have some country proposals regarding the centres of excellence. Then you can discuss, and meet the donor community to see how the centres might in fact be supported and funded within the region.

We have foreseen this and indeed during the International Conference on Education I have allowed some time for all the ministers, from the various regions, to meet together and discuss issues of common concern and of common interest.

It would be good too, as I have said if the donors themselves also get together because throughout all of our Member States we have problems of donor co-ordination. Donors sometimes duplicate each other's efforts, and governments go around in different directions depending on the policy and priority of the donor of the day. We have to come together, we have to make sure that we listen to the priorities of the governments representing the people. If we listen and if we respond to these, then, we from the international community and the donor community can support the efforts of the governments and the people to provide education for the children, under your responsibility, and our hope is to help support and not to control.

Certainly in UNESCO we stand ready to do what we can to carry out the recommendations of this Conference according to your wishes and your priorities. Tomorrow when I return to Paris I will certainly discuss the priorities, which you have just identified and just agreed on within the Conference, with the Director-General. We will then discuss ways in which UNESCO can help implement all these proposals.

Mr President, you also wisely directed the Conference delegations towards the issue of eliminating illiteracy and improving the quality of education in this region. I must say that I was deeply impressed by the wisdom, the imaginative solutions and the deep commitment expressed by the Member States in the region during that debate. At the turn of the century, Sir Michael Sadler, who was one of the fathers of comparative education said, and I quote: 'A national system of education is a learning process, it is the outcome of struggles and battles from long ago. It both reflects and seeks to remedy the weaknesses of a national character'. Arab systems of education suffer from two handicaps: they reflect not only the strengths and weaknesses of the Arab world but also the weaknesses of western systems of education developed in the last century.

It is clear that much remains to be done to implement the recommendations of this Conference, to initiate the reforms, to create a distinctive Arab system of education in each country, one which is modern, one which reflects the challenges of today, one which builds on the strength of the past but also helps overcome the weaknesses of the past both in your own

systems and those of the West. So first and foremost, the solutions to the problems of education in the region must be found within the countries of the region itself. When the Arab world was prominent in the world of science, mathematics, technology, art, literature and philosophy, it boasted a learning society; but at that time, Europe stagnated during the dark ages, Europe was not a learning society. So reflect on your past, reflect on the greatness of the Arab world. Think of when you were great, why you were great then.

Can we not learn from our past, from our culture, can we not discover the roots of tradition, the time when there was a respect for learning throughout society?

If the Arab nations are to regain their rightful place in the twenty-first century, you must, again, become learning societies, first by learning from each other. This is why regional and sub-regional co-operation are so important. Secondly, learn from your own past successes and failures, your own history. Thirdly, learn from the experiences of other regions in what has become an increasingly interdependent world.

It would be impossible for me to do justice, Mr President, to all the contributions made by Member States and organisations during this Conference and I will not try to do so, but please forgive me if I mention one or two cases. Firstly, I would like to say that His Excellency, Ali Fakhro, the Minister of Education for Bahrain, like his President, and like you, Mr President, have provided outstanding leadership in the reform and modernisation of education, not only in your own countries but also throughout this region as a whole both in plenary and in important informal meetings outside. Both of you inspired me with the very practical measures you have taken through legislation, and by mobilizing all ministries in all parts of your countries, in support of literacy. And I was particularly interested in what Ali Fakhro had to say about how he is, now, trying to make teaching into a real profession in his country, to improve the quality of teaching through very practical measures of policy and legislation, thereby mobilizing all sectors of the community to this end.

We talked of the practical ways in which governments, private sectors, the media, and non-governmental organisations can provide any incentives or measures needed to ensure that all acquire the knowledge and skills needed to participate in the modern world and to ensure that teachers also become part of that learning society. I will give you one good example, Mr President, which comes from Sweden. Sweden was one of the most literate communities in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The reason for this was very simple. The Church in Sweden, because it was a Protestant community, insisted that if you were to be married, you must first demonstrate your ability to read the Bible. Perhaps in the Arab world, if you, before marriage, had to demonstrate that you could read the Quran, you would soon have a literate Arab world.

I was impressed too with the interventions made by many Member States, particularly by the Syrian Arab Republic, Egypt and others, on the importance of educating girls and women in this region. In China, they say that women hold up half the sky. You cannot develop, within the Arab world, if you do not empower women and girls, if you do not offer them the knowledge and skills they need to contribute to the development of the region. They must be given the opportunity to do so. I was therefore very interested when His Excellency, the Minister of Education for Kuwait, said that the highest rate of participation in ministerial meetings in his country in preparation for MINEDARAB V came from women. I was impressed too with what His Excellency, Mr Al-Rabai, Minister of Education for Kuwait, had to say about the importance of looking at effective ways of meeting the education bill for the

twenty-first century. It will be very costly and far exceed the capacity of a budget or present budgets needed to provide laboratories with the equipment for the future. To this end, he is instituting an improved management of the education system, to reform the universities and colleges, to involve others in the community, to find the necessary resources, to specify what is required and to get other groups in the community to turn these expectations and demands into reality.

Your experience, Mr President, is another example of the importance of ministerial conferences. I must say that, from time to time, the Director-General tells me that we have too many ministers' meetings and we should reduce their number but I have to remind him of how important they are. At the Asian and Pacific Ministers of Education meeting, the ministers told the Director-General that they thought they should meet very frequently. I hope you will meet more frequently than every 17 years and, I think you will see how important these meetings are as an opportunity for ministers to learn from each other.

My experience with ministers is basically that they often have a very lonely and difficult task. Often they are locked into a situation within their country and are the victims of budget cuts. They are pushed around by the finance ministers and the defense ministers, or attacked by the teachers. All very alarming. So I think it is a positive thing for ministers to come together, to share their experiences and, for new ministers, to be able to learn from the experience of others. Here again I must pay tribute to you, Mr President, on the way which you have been able to improve the education system in this country. It is not by accident that President Mubarak has made education the number one national issue in Egypt, or that your government has dramatically increased allocation for basic education to 6.1 per cent and for education as a whole to about 9 per cent. It is not by chance that 115 schools are being built every year in this country. It is not by chance either that your First Lady has headed so many innovative programmes for children and mothers in this country.

I think that all ministers of education can learn from each other on the ways in which strategies can involve politicians and national figures starting with their president, the private sector and the community, and can mobilize teachers to join in the process of reforms that must be undertaken.

The presence of Palestine and particularly His Excellency, Yasser Amro, at this Conference of Arab Ministers for Education has been an historic event. It was an event unimaginable three or four years ago. For more than 40 years UNESCO has worked with UNRWA to provide education for Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories and in Member States of the region.

Today the Peace Accord has been signed but now, for us in education, now for the education systems of the Arab region, is the moment of truth. We must and I repeat, we must, for the sake of peace, justice and development in this region, support our Palestinian brothers and sisters financially, morally, strategically, in every way possible so that now they can redress the injustices and benefit from the right to education which has been denied them so long.

If international co-operation and Arab unity mean anything at all, we must help ensure a smooth and effective transition from occupation to nation building. I call on all our Member States in the region and donors to honour their pledges of support to the Palestinian people at this strategic and historical time. I must, at this juncture, also thank Saudi Arabia for its very strong support for UNESCO's efforts to rebuild the schools in Gaza and in the West Bank.

Today we have started the process and our architects are helping. Now is the time when we must act to help rebuild Palestine, to build its first independent education system.

As you have heard the reports of the three round tables I will not seek to review these, other than to say that each represented a very valuable contribution and a wonderful opportunity, outside the plenary, to share the ideas and experiences of those from the donor community and from the Member States in the region. Three vital issues were discussed: the education of girls and women, the challenges we face in the reforms you must undertake, and the responsibilities and role of the donor community.

President Mobarak, in opening the 13th African Summit in Tunis yesterday, said that the solution to the African continent's problems lies in the hands of the Africans, as they and not others, are responsible for making and maintaining peace. I am sure if you were addressing this Conference today you would say exactly the same thing to the Arab States.

We are convinced then of the importance of regional co-operation in support of sustainable development, of basic education and of distance education, and of the importance of developing regional mechanisms for co-operation, such as regional centres. But we have said this many, many times before. Let us return home tomorrow, that is tomorrow Wednesday not next week or next month, and take the very first steps towards making these dreams of regional co-operation in education a reality.

Mr President, let me thank all those behind the scenes who have done so much to make this Conference a success, your own staff at the Ministry of Education and those from the UNESCO National Commission, my staff, our translators and interpreters, those who worked on, some of them night after night until 3 or 4 in the morning to produce the reports, to make sure that this Conference ran smoothly. They deserve our thanks.

Finally, Mr President, again, let me congratulate you on behalf of the Conference for the wonderful leadership you provided and let me thank the Egyptian people for their warm hospitality.

Thank you.

## ANNEX VI

### List of documents

#### I. Working documents (in Arabic, English and French)

ED-94/MINEDARAB/1	Provisional agenda
ED - 94/MINEDARAB/2	Provisional Rules of Procedure
ED - 94/MINEDARAB/3	Education for development: meeting challenges of the twenty-first century

#### II. Information documents (in Arabic, English and French)

ED-94/MINEDARAB/INF.1	General information
ED-94/MINEDARAB/INF.2	Suggestions concerning the organization of the work of the Conference
ED-94/MINEDARAB/INF.3	List of documents
ED-94/MINEDARAB/INF.4	Provisional list of participants

#### III. Reference documents (in Arabic and English)

ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.1	Work plan of the regional programme for the Universalisation and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Literacy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL) 1994-2000
ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.2	Development of education in the Arab States: A statistical review and projections
ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.3	UNESCO's plan of action for the eradication of illiteracy by the year 2000
ED -94/MINEDARAB/REF.4	Educational Innovation Programme for Development in the Arab States (EIPDAS): A framework for regional and international co-operation
ED-94/MINEDARAB/REF.5	ALECSO's activities in the light of the Recommendations of MINEDARAB IV (Abu Dhabi, 1977) (in Arabic only)

#### IV. Background documents

Final report of the first session of the Advisory Committee of the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the Arab States (ARABUPEAL) (in Arabic and English) The Pan Arab Plan for the Universalization of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab Countries (1990-2000) (in Arabic only)

## **ANNEX VII**

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/ LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS**

Names and titles in the following lists are reproduced as handed to the Secretariat by the delegations concerned. Countries are shown in the English alphabetical order.

Les noms et titres qui figurent dans les listes ci-après sont reproduits dans la forme où ils ont été communiqués au Secretariat par les délégations intéressées. Les pays sont mentionnés dans l'ordre alphabétique anglais.

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## **ROUND TABLES**

### **Educational Challenges for the Twenty-first Century**

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Organizer: Ms A. Draxler, Secretary, ED/EDC

### **Provision for Basic Education for Girls and Women in the MENA Region**

Chairperson: Dr Eideh Mutlaq, Jordan

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### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Donor Community in Supporting Basic Education**

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