

CONFINTEA



**ADULT EDUCATION**

**THE HAMBURG DECLARATION  
THE AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE**

Fifth International Conference on  
Adult Education 14 - 18 July 1997



## **THE HAMBURG DECLARATION ON ADULT LEARNING**

1. **W**e, the participants in the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, meeting in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, reaffirm that only human-centred development and a participatory society based on the full respect of human rights will lead to sustainable and equitable development. The informed and effective participation of men and women in every sphere of life is needed if humanity is to survive and to meet the challenges of the future.
2. **A**dult education thus becomes more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century. It is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice. Adult learning can shape identity and give meaning to life. Learning throughout life implies a rethinking of content to reflect such factors as age, gender equality, disability, language, culture and economic disparities.
3. **A**dult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society. Adult learning encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multicultural learning society, where theory- and practice-based approaches are recognized.
4. **T**hough the content of adult learning and of education for children and adolescents will vary according to the economic, social, environmental and cultural context, and the needs of the people in the societies in which they take place, both are necessary elements of a

new vision of education in which learning becomes truly lifelong. The perspective of learning throughout life commands such complementarity and continuity. The potential contribution of adult and continuing education to the creation of an informed and tolerant citizenry, economic and social development, the promotion of literacy, the alleviation of poverty and the preservation of the environment is enormous and should, therefore, be built upon.

5. **T**he objectives of youth and adult education, viewed as a lifelong process, are to develop the autonomy and the sense of responsibility of people and communities, to reinforce the capacity to deal with the transformations taking place in the economy, in culture and in society as a whole, and to promote coexistence, tolerance and the informed and creative participation of citizens in their communities, in short to enable people and communities to take control of their destiny and society in order to face the challenges ahead. It is essential that approaches to adult learning be based on people's own heritage, culture, values and prior experiences and that the diverse ways in which these approaches are implemented enable and encourage every citizen to be actively involved and to have a voice.
6. **T**his Conference recognizes the diversity of political, economic and social systems and governmental structures among Member States. In accordance with that diversity and to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, this Conference acknowledges that the particular circumstances of Member States will determine the measures governments may introduce to further the spirit of our objectives.
7. **T**he representatives of governments and organizations participating in the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education have decided to explore together the potential and the future of adult learning, broadly and dynamically conceived within a framework of lifelong learning.
8. **D**uring the present decade, adult learning has undergone substantial changes and experienced enormous growth in scope and scale. In the knowledge-based societies that are emerging around the world, adult and continuing education have become an imperative in the community and at the workplace. New demands from society and

working life raise expectations requiring each and every individual to continue renewing knowledge and skills throughout the whole of his or her life. At the heart of this transformation is a new role for the state and the emergence of expanded partnerships devoted to adult learning within civil society. The state remains the essential vehicle for ensuring the right to education for all, particularly for the most vulnerable groups of society, such as minorities and indigenous peoples, and for providing an overall policy framework. Within the new partnership emerging between the public, the private and the community sectors, the role of the state is shifting. It is not only a provider of adult education services but also an adviser, a funder, and a monitoring and evaluation agency. Governments and social partners must take the necessary measures to support individuals in expressing their educational needs and aspirations, and in gaining access to educational opportunities throughout their lives. Within governments, adult education is not confined to ministries of education; all ministries are engaged in promoting adult learning, and interministerial co-operation is essential. Moreover, employers, unions, non-governmental and community organizations, and indigenous people's and women's groups are involved and have a responsibility to interact and create opportunities for lifelong learning, with provision for recognition and accreditation.

9. **B**asic education for all means that people, whatever their age, have an opportunity, individually and collectively, to realize their potential. It is not only a right, it is also a duty and a responsibility both to others and to society as a whole. It is essential that the recognition of the right to education throughout life should be accompanied by measures to create the conditions required to exercise this right. The challenges of the twenty-first century cannot be met by governments, organizations or institutions alone; the energy, imagination and genius of people and their full, free and vigorous participation in every aspect of life are also needed. Youth and adult learning is one of the principal means of significantly increasing creativity and productivity, in the widest sense of those terms, and these in turn are indispensable to meeting the complex and interrelated problems of a world beset by accelerating change and growing complexity and risk.
10. **T**he new concept of youth and adult education presents a challenge to existing practices because it calls for effective networking within the formal and non-formal systems, and for innovation and more

creativity and flexibility. Such challenges should be met by new approaches to adult education within the concept of learning throughout life. Promoting learning, using mass media and local publicity, and offering impartial guidance are responsibilities for governments, social partners and providers. The ultimate goal should be the creation of a learning society committed to social justice and general well-being.

11. **Adult literacy.** Literacy, broadly conceived as the basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing world, is a fundamental human right. In every society literacy is a necessary skill in itself and one of the foundations of other life skills. There are millions, the majority of whom are women, who lack opportunities to learn or who have insufficient skills to be able to assert this right. The challenge is to enable them to do so. This will often imply the creation of preconditions for learning through awareness-raising and empowerment. Literacy is also a catalyst for participation in social, cultural, political and economic activities, and for learning throughout life. We therefore commit ourselves to ensuring opportunities for all to acquire and maintain literacy skills, and to create in all Member States a literate environment to support oral culture. The provision of learning opportunities for all, including the unreached and the excluded, is the most urgent concern. The Conference welcomes the initiative for a literacy decade in honour of Paulo Freire, to begin in 1998.
12. **R**ecognition of *the right to education and the right to learn* throughout life is more than ever a necessity; it is the right to read and write, the right to question and analyse, the right to have access to resources, and to develop and practise individual and collective skills and competences.
13. **Women's integration and empowerment.** Women have a right to equal opportunities; society, in turn, depends on their full contribution in all fields of work and aspects of life. Youth and adult learning policies should be responsive to local cultures and give priority to expanding educational opportunities for all women, while respecting their diversity and eliminating prejudices and stereotypes that both limit their access to youth and adult education and restrict the benefits they derive from them. Any attempts to restrict women's right to

literacy, education and training must be considered unacceptable. Practices and measures should be taken to counter them.

14. ***Culture of peace and education for citizenship and democracy.*** One of the foremost challenges of our age is to eliminate the culture of violence and to construct a culture of peace based on justice and tolerance within which dialogue, mutual recognition and negotiation will replace violence, in homes and communities, within nations and between countries.
15. ***Diversity and equality.*** Adult learning should reflect the richness of cultural diversity and respect traditional and indigenous peoples' knowledge and systems of learning; the right to learn in the mother tongue should be respected and implemented. Adult education faces an acute challenge in preserving and documenting the oral wisdom of minority groups, indigenous peoples and nomadic peoples. In turn, intercultural education should encourage learning between and about different cultures in support of peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, justice, liberty, coexistence and diversity.
16. ***Health.*** Health is a basic human right. Investments in education are investments in health. Lifelong learning can contribute substantially to the promotion of health and the prevention of disease. Adult education offers significant opportunities to provide relevant, equitable and sustainable access to health knowledge.
17. ***Environmental sustainability.*** Education for environmental sustainability should be a lifelong learning process which recognizes that ecological problems exist within a socio-economic, political and cultural context. A sustainable future cannot be achieved without addressing the relationship between environmental problems and current development paradigms. Adult environmental education can play an important role in sensitizing and mobilizing communities and decision-makers towards sustained environmental action.
18. ***Indigenous education and culture.*** Indigenous peoples and nomadic peoples have the right of access to all levels and forms of education provided by the state. However, they are not to be denied the right to enjoy their own culture, or to use their own languages. Education for indigenous peoples and nomadic peoples should be linguistically and culturally appropriate to their needs and should facilitate access to further education and training.

19. ***Transformation of the economy.*** Globalization, changes in production patterns, rising unemployment and the difficulty of ensuring secure livelihoods call for more active labour policies and increased investment in developing the necessary skills to enable men and women to participate in the labour market and income-generating activities.
20. ***Access to information.*** The development of the new information and communication technologies brings with it new risks of social and occupational exclusion for groups of individuals and even businesses which are unable to adapt to this context. One of the roles of adult education in the future should therefore be to limit these risks of exclusion so that the information society does not lose sight of the human dimension.
21. ***The ageing population.*** There are now more older people in the world in relation to the total population than ever before, and the proportion is still rising. These older adults have much to contribute to the development of society. Therefore, it is important that they have the opportunity to learn on equal terms and in appropriate ways. Their skills and abilities should be recognized, valued and made use of.
22. ***I***n line with the Salamanca Statement, integration and access for people with disabilities should be promoted. Disabled persons have the right to equitable learning opportunities which recognize and respond to their educational needs and goals, and in which appropriate learning technology matches their special learning needs.
23. ***W***e must act with the utmost urgency to increase and guarantee national and international investment in youth and adult learning, and the commitment of private and community resources to them. The Agenda for the Future which we have adopted here is designed to achieve this end.
24. ***W***e call upon UNESCO as the United Nations lead agency in the field of education to play the leading role in promoting adult education as an integral part of a system of learning and to mobilize the support of all partners, particularly those within the United Nations system, in order to give priority to implementing the Agenda for the Future and to

facilitating provision of the services needed for reinforcing international co-ordination and co-operation.

25. **W**e urge UNESCO to encourage Member States to adopt policies and legislation that are favourable to and accommodate people with disabilities in educational programmes, as well as being sensitive to cultural, linguistic, gender and economic diversity.
26. **W**e solemnly declare that all parties will closely follow up the implementation of this Declaration and the Agenda for the Future, clearly distinguishing their respective responsibilities and complementing and co-operating with one another. We are determined to ensure that lifelong learning will become a more significant reality in the early twenty-first century. To that end, we commit ourselves to promoting the culture of learning through the “one hour a day for learning” movement and the development of a United Nations Week of Adult Learning.
27. **W**e, gathered together in Hamburg, convinced of the necessity of adult learning, pledge that all men and women shall be provided with the opportunity to learn throughout their lives. To that end, we will forge extended alliances to mobilize and share resources in order to make adult learning a joy, a tool, a right and a shared responsibility.

## THE AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

1. This *Agenda for the Future* sets out in detail the new commitment to the development of adult learning called for by the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning.
2. The *Agenda* focuses on common concerns facing humanity on the eve of the twenty-first century and on the vital role that adult learning has to play in enabling women and men of all ages to face these most urgent challenges with knowledge, courage and creativity.
3. The development of adult learning requires partnership between government departments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, employers and trade unions, universities and research centres, the media, civil and community-level associations, facilitators of adult learning and the adult learners themselves.
4. Profound changes are taking place both globally and locally. They can be seen in a globalization of economic systems, in the rapid development of science and technology, in the age structure and mobility of populations, and in the emergence of an information-based and knowledge-based society. The world is also experiencing major changes in patterns of work and unemployment, a growing ecological crisis, and tensions between social groups based on culture, ethnicity, gender roles, religion and income. These trends are reflected in education, where those responsible for complex education systems are struggling to cope with new opportunities and demands, often with declining resources at their disposal.
5. In the course of the present decade, a series of conferences has focused world attention on key international problems. Beginning with the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990), they have included the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II, Istanbul, 1996)

and the most recent, the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996). At all these conferences world leaders looked to education to release the competence and creativity of citizens. Education was seen as a vital element in a strategy to nurture the sustainable development processes.

6. There have been parallel changes in education as well. Since its foundation, UNESCO has played a pioneering role in the conception of adult education as an essential part of any education system and of human-centred development. There are now numerous agencies active in the field, many of which have taken part in the Hamburg conference.
7. The first International Conference on Adult Education (Elsinore, Denmark, 1949) was followed by conferences in Montreal (1960), Tokyo (1972) and Paris (1985). Other important milestones include the 1972 Report of the International Commission on the Development of Education chaired by Edgar Faure, *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, and the influential 1976 UNESCO Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education which set out the vital role of adult education 'as forming part of lifelong education and learning'.
8. During the twelve years that have elapsed since the Paris Declaration, humanity has been affected by profound changes resulting from the processes of globalization and technological advance, together with a new international order, all of which have led to far-reaching transformations in the political, cultural and economic fields.
9. A quarter of a century after *Learning to Be*, the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors, said that, 'The concept of learning throughout life is the key that gives access to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinctions between initial and continuing education. It links up with another concept, that of the learning society, in which everything affords an opportunity for learning and fulfilling one's potential'. The Commission's report, *Learning: The Treasure Within*, emphasized the importance of the four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. As indicated in the Hamburg Declaration, adult learning has grown in depth and scale, and has become an imperative at the workplace, in the home and in the community, as men and women struggle to create new realities at every stage of life. Adult education plays an essential and distinct role in equipping women and men to respond productively to the constantly

changing world and in providing learning which acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of the adult and the community.

10. In Hamburg the broad and complex spectrum of adult learning was considered under ten thematic headings:
- *Adult learning and democracy: the challenges of the twenty-first century*
  - *Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning*
  - *Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education*
  - *Adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women*
  - *Adult learning and the changing world of work*
  - *Adult learning in relation to environment, health and population*
  - *Adult learning, culture, media and new information technologies*
  - *Adult learning for all: the rights and aspirations of different groups*
  - *The economics of adult learning*
  - *Enhancing international co-operation and solidarity*

### **Theme 1: Adult learning and democracy: the challenges of the twenty-first century**

11. *The challenges of the twenty-first century require the creativity and competence of citizens of all ages in alleviating poverty, consolidating democratic processes, strengthening and protecting human rights, promoting a culture of peace, encouraging active citizenship, strengthening the role of civil society, ensuring gender equality and equity, enhancing the empowerment of women, recognizing cultural diversity (including the use of language, and promoting justice and equality for minorities and indigenous peoples) and a new partnership between state and civil society. Indeed, to reinforce democracy, it is essential to strengthen learning environments, to reinforce the participation of citizens, and to create contexts where the productivity of people will be enhanced and where a culture of equity and peace can take root.*

We commit ourselves to:

12. **Creating greater community participation:**
- (a) by promoting active citizenship and improving participatory democracy in order to create learning communities;

- (b) by encouraging and developing leadership capabilities among the adult population and especially among women, enabling them to participate in institutions of the state, the market and civil society.
13. **Raising awareness about prejudice and discrimination in society:**
- (a) by ensuring the legitimate right of people to self-determination and to the free exercise of their way of life;
  - (b) by taking measures to eliminate discrimination in education at all levels based on gender, race, language, religion, national or ethnic origin, disability, or any other form of discrimination;
  - (c) by developing education programmes that enable men and women to understand gender relations and human sexuality in all their dimensions;
  - (d) by recognizing and affirming the rights to education of women, of indigenous peoples and nomadic peoples, and of minorities by ensuring equitable representation in decision-making processes and provision, and by supporting the publication of local and indigenous learning materials;
  - (e) by recognizing that all indigenous peoples and nomadic peoples have the right of access to all levels and forms of state education, and the right to enjoy their own cultures and to use their own languages. Their education should be linguistically and culturally appropriate to their needs and should facilitate access to further education and training by working together, and learning to respect and appreciate each other's differences in order to ensure a shared future for all members of society.
14. **Encouraging greater recognition, participation and accountability of non-governmental organizations and local community groups:**
- (a) by recognizing the role non-governmental organizations play in awareness-raising and empowerment of people, which are of vital importance for democracy, peace and development;
  - (b) by recognizing and appropriately funding the growing role of non-governmental organizations and local community groups in providing educational opportunities for adults in all sectors, in reaching the most needy and in contributing to an active civil society.
15. **Promoting a culture of peace, intercultural dialogue and human rights:**
- (a) by enabling citizens to approach conflicts in an empathic, non-violent and creative manner, with peace education for all, peace journalism and peace culture as important components;

- (b) by strengthening the educational dimensions of human rights activities in formal and non-formal adult learning provisions at community, national, regional and global levels.

## **Theme 2: Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning**

16. *While there is a growing demand for adult education and an explosion of information, the disparities between those who have access and those who do not are also growing. There is therefore a need to counter this polarity, which reinforces existing inequalities, by creating adult learning structures and lifelong learning environments that can help to correct the prevalent trend. How can the conditions of adult learning be improved? How can we overcome inadequacies in its provision? What kind of measures and reforms should be undertaken in order to achieve greater accessibility, relevance, quality, respect for diversity and recognition of prior learning?*

We commit ourselves to:

17. **Creating conditions for the expression of people's demand for learning:**
- (a) by adopting legislation and other appropriate means recognizing the right to learn of all adults, proposing an enlarged vision of adult learning and facilitating co-ordination between agencies;
  - (b) by facilitating the expression of the learning demand of people within their own culture and language;
  - (c) by creating public information and counselling services and developing methods for the recognition of experiential and prior learning;
  - (d) by developing strategies to extend the benefits of adult learning to those currently excluded and to help adults make informed choices concerning the learning routes best suited to their aspirations;
  - (e) by promoting a culture of learning through the 'one hour a day for learning' movement;
  - (f) by underlining the importance of observing International Women's Day (8 March) and International Literacy Day (8 September) and of using the International Literacy Prizes for the promotion of adult learning, and by developing a United Nations Week of Adult Learning.

18. **Ensuring accessibility and quality:**
- (a) by adopting legislation, policies and co-operation mechanisms with all partners to make access easier, to facilitate the participation of adults in formal education and education at the workplace and in the community, and to support and extend programmes for rural and isolated areas;
  - (b) by developing a comprehensive policy, taking into account the critical role of the learning environment;
  - (c) by improving the quality and ensuring the relevance of adult education through the participation of learners in designing programmes;
  - (d) by facilitating co-operation among adult learning initiatives related to different institutions and sectors of activity.
19. **Opening schools, colleges and universities to adult learners:**
- (a) by requiring institutions of formal education from primary level onwards to be prepared to open their doors to adult learners, both women and men, adapting their programmes and learning conditions to meet their needs;
  - (b) by developing coherent mechanisms to recognize the outcomes of learning undertaken in different contexts, and to ensure that credit is transferable within and between institutions, sectors and states;
  - (c) by establishing joint university/community research and training partnerships, and by bringing the services of universities to outside groups;
  - (d) by carrying out interdisciplinary research in all aspects of adult education and learning with the participation of adult learners themselves;
  - (e) by creating opportunities for adult learning in flexible, open and creative ways, taking into account the specificities of women's and men's lives;
  - (f) by providing systematic continuing education for adult educators;
  - (g) by calling upon the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, 1998) to promote the transformation of post-secondary institutions into lifelong learning institutions, and to define the role of universities accordingly.
20. **Improving the conditions for the professional development of adult educators and facilitators:**
- (a) by elaborating policies and taking measures for better recruitment, initial training and in-service training, working conditions and remuneration of the personnel engaged in youth and adult education programmes and activities in order to ensure

- their quality and sustainability, including the contents and methodology of training;
- (b) by developing in the area of continuing education innovative methods of teaching and learning, including interactive technologies and inductive methods involving close co-ordination between working experience and training;
  - (c) by promoting information and documentation services, ensuring general access and reflecting cultural diversity.
21. **Improving the relevance of initial education within a lifelong learning perspective:**  
by eliminating barriers between non-formal and formal education, and ensuring that young adults have opportunities to pursue their education beyond their initial formal schooling.
22. **Promoting policy-driven and action-oriented research and studies on adult learning:**
- (a) by promoting national and cross-national studies on learners, teachers, programmes, methods and institutions of adult education, and supporting the evaluation of adult education provision and participation, especially in relation to the needs of all groups of society;
  - (b) by regularly providing UNESCO and other multilateral agencies with adult education indicators and monitoring the whole spectrum of adult education and participation, calling upon UNESCO to support Member States in such activities;
  - (c) by developing an enhanced capacity for research and knowledge dissemination by encouraging national and international exchanges of information, innovative models and best practices.
23. **Recognizing the new role of the state and social partners:**
- (a) by ensuring that all partners recognize their mutual responsibility for establishing supportive statutory frameworks, for ensuring accessibility and equity, for setting up monitoring and co-ordination mechanisms, and for providing professional back-up for policy-makers, researchers and learners through networking resources;
  - (b) by creating the necessary financial, administrative and management support, by reinforcing mechanisms for intersectoral and interdepartmental linkages, and by ensuring the participation of civil society organizations to complement the response of governments, providing them with appropriate funding to support their activities;
  - (c) by calling upon UNESCO to continue its policy of building partnerships among all actors in the field of adult education.

### **Theme 3: Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education**

24. *Today, there are nearly 1,000 million people who have not acquired literacy skills and there are millions who have been unable to sustain them, even within the most prosperous countries. Everywhere in the world, literacy should be a gateway to fuller participation in social, cultural, political and economic life. Literacy must be relevant to people's socio-economic and cultural contexts. Literacy enables individuals to function effectively in their societies and to fashion and shape them. It is a process in which communities effect their own cultural and social transformations. It must address the needs of both women and men, to enable them to understand the interconnections between personal, local and global realities.*

We commit ourselves to:

25. **Linking literacy to the social, cultural and economic development aspirations of learners:**
- (a) by emphasizing the importance of literacy for human rights, participatory citizenship, social, political and economic equity, and cultural identity;
  - (b) by reducing the female illiteracy rate by the year 2000 to at least half of the 1990 levels, with emphasis on rural, migrant, refugee and displaced persons, indigenous peoples, minorities, women, and women with disabilities;
  - (c) by encouraging the creative uses of literacy;
  - (d) by replacing the narrow vision of literacy by learning that meets social, economic and political needs and gives expression to a new form of citizenship;
  - (e) by integrating literacy and other forms of learning and basic skills into all appropriate development projects, particularly those related to health and the environment, and by encouraging grass-roots organizations and social movements to promote their own learning and development initiatives;
  - (f) by launching the Paulo Freire African Decade on Literacy for All beginning in 1998 in order to create literate societies responsive to the different cultural traditions. To that end, special funds should be created by both public and private sources.

26. **Improving the quality of literacy programmes by building links with traditional and minority knowledge and cultures:**
- (a) by improving the learning process through learner-centred strategies; sensitivity to diversity of languages and cultures; the involvement of learners in materials development; intergenerational learning processes; and the use of local languages, indigenous knowledge and appropriate technologies;
  - (b) by improving the quality and effectiveness of literacy programmes through stronger links with other fields, such as health, justice, urban and rural development; basic and applied research; evaluation and assessment; the use of appropriate technologies to support both teacher and learner; collection and dissemination of best practices; effective communication of research results to literacy researchers, educators and policy-makers; and the use of existing and/or new literacy resource centres;
  - (c) by improving the training of literacy personnel through increased attention to the personal achievement, working conditions and professional status of literacy educators; ongoing support for personal development; improved awareness and communications within the literacy community; and special attention to the qualification of women who, in many settings, form the majority of adult educators;
  - (d) by designing an international programme for the development of literacy monitoring and evaluation systems and of feedback systems that promote local input and participation by the community in the improvement of the programme at the international, regional and national levels, and by establishing a worldwide information base for promoting policies and management and for improving the quality, efficiency and sustainability of such efforts;
  - (e) by increasing public awareness and support for literacy, paying more attention to the obstacles to literacy for all, and developing better understanding of how literacy is embedded in social practice;
  - (f) by mobilizing sufficient financial and human resources through a strong financial commitment to the advancement of literacy by intergovernmental organizations, bilateral agencies, and national, regional and local governments, as well as partnerships involving formal and non-formal education institutions, volunteers, non-governmental organizations and the private sector;

- (g) by ensuring the use of traditional media and modern technologies for literacy in both industrialized and developing countries.
27. **Enriching the literacy environment:**
- (a) by enhancing the use and retention of literacy through the production and dissemination of locally relevant, gender-sensitive and learner-generated print materials;
  - (b) by collaborating actively with producers and publishers so that they adapt existing texts and materials to make them accessible and comprehensible to new readers (e.g. the press, legal documents, fiction, etc.);
  - (c) by creating networks for the exchange and distribution of locally produced texts that directly reflect the knowledge and practices of communities.

#### **Theme 4: Adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women**

28. *Equal opportunity in all aspects of education is essential to enable women of all ages to make their full contribution to society and to the resolution of the multiple problems confronting humanity. When women are caught in a situation of social isolation and lack of access to knowledge and information, they are alienated from decision-making processes within the family, community and society in general, and have little control over their bodies and lives. For poor women, the sheer business of survival becomes an obstacle to education. Educational processes should therefore address the constraints that prevent women's access to intellectual resources and empower women to become fully active as partners in social transformation. The message of equality and equal access must not be limited to programmes intended for women. Education should ensure that women become aware of the need to organize as women in order to change the situation and to build their capacities so that they can gain access to formal power structures and decision-making processes in both private and public spheres.*

We commit ourselves to:

29. **Promoting the empowerment of women and gender equity through adult learning:**
- (a) by recognizing and correcting the continued marginalization and denial of access and of equal opportunities for quality education that girls and women are still facing at all levels;

- (b) by ensuring that all women and men are provided with the necessary education to meet their basic needs and to exercise their human rights;
- (c) by raising the consciousness of girls and boys, women and men concerning gender inequalities and the need to change these unequal relations;
- (d) by eliminating gender disparities in access to all areas and levels of education;
- (e) by ensuring that policies and practices comply with the principle of equitable representation of both sexes, especially at the managerial and decision-making level of educational programmes;
- (f) by combating domestic and sexual violence through providing appropriate education for men and supplying information and counselling to increase women's ability to protect themselves from such violence;
- (g) by removing barriers to access to formal and non-formal education in the case of pregnant adolescents and young mothers;
- (h) by promoting a gender-sensitive participatory pedagogy which acknowledges the daily life experience of women and recognizes both cognitive and affective outcomes;
- (i) by educating men and women to acknowledge the serious and adverse impacts of globalization and structural adjustment policies in all parts of the world, especially upon women;
- (j) by taking adequate legislative, financial and economic measures and by implementing social policies to ensure women's successful participation in adult education through the removal of obstacles and the provision of supportive learning environments;
- (k) by educating women and men in such a way as to promote the sharing of multiple workloads and responsibilities;
- (l) by encouraging women to organize as women to promote a collective identity and to create women's organizations to bring about change;
- (m) by promoting women's participation in decision-making processes and in formal structures.

### **Theme 5: Adult learning and the changing world of work**

30. *The changing world of work is a multifaceted issue of enormous concern and relevance to adult learning. Globalization and new*

*technologies are having a powerful and growing impact on all dimensions of the individual and collective lives of women and men. There is increasing concern about the precariousness of employment and the rise of unemployment. In developing countries, the concern is not simply one of employment but also of ensuring secure livelihoods for all. The improvement needed in terms of production and distribution in industry, agriculture and services requires increased competences, the development of new skills and the capacity to adapt productively to the continuously changing demands of employment throughout working life. The right to work, the opportunity for employment and the responsibility to contribute, at all ages of life, to the development and well-being of one's society are issues which adult learning must address.*

We commit ourselves to:

31. **Promoting the right to work and the right to work-related adult learning:**
- (a) by recognizing the right to work and to a sustainable livelihood for all and by fostering, through new solidarities, the diversification of models of employment and recognized productive activities;
  - (b) by ensuring that work-related adult education provides the specific competences and skills for entry into the labour market and occupational mobility, and improves the ability of individuals to take part in diversified models of employment;
  - (c) by promoting partnerships between employers and employees;
  - (d) by ensuring that knowledge and skills informally acquired are fully recognized;
  - (e) by emphasizing the powerful role of vocational adult education in the lifelong learning process;
  - (f) by integrating in informal and non-formal adult education processes an analytical and critical perspective in relation to the economic world and its functioning.
32. **Ensuring access to work-related adult learning for different target groups:**
- (a) by encouraging employers to support and promote workplace literacy;
  - (b) by ensuring that work-related adult education policies address the needs of self-employed workers and workers in the informal economy and facilitate access for women and migrant workers to training in non-traditional jobs and sectors;

- (c) by making sure that work-related adult education programmes consider gender equality, age and cultural differences, safety in the workplace and concerns for workers' health, protection against unfair treatment and harassment, as well as the preservation of the environment and the proper management of natural resources;
  - (d) by enriching the learning environment at the workplace and offering flexible individual and collective learning activities and relevant services for workers.
33. **Diversifying the contents of work-related adult learning:**
- (a) by addressing the issues inherent in agriculture, natural resource management and food security;
  - (b) by including elements relating to agricultural extension services, citizens' rights, organization-building, natural resource management, food security and reproductive health education;
  - (c) by stimulating entrepreneurship through adult education;
  - (d) by promoting gender-sensitive approaches within extension services, answering the needs of women in agriculture, industry and services, and enhancing their capacity to disseminate knowledge on all these fields and issues.

## **Theme 6: Adult learning in relation to environment, health and population**

34. *Environment, health, population, nutrition and food security are intricately linked to one another in sustaining development. Each is a complex issue. Caring for the environment by controlling pollution, preventing soil erosion and prudently managing natural resources has a direct impact on the population's health, nutrition and well-being which, in turn, have implications for population growth and the availability of food. These issues are part of the wider quest for sustainable development, which cannot be attained without a strong emphasis in education on family issues, the reproductive life cycle and population issues such as ageing, migration, urbanization, and intergenerational and family relations.*

We commit ourselves to:

35. **Promoting the competence and involvement of civil society in dealing with environmental and development problems:**
- (a) by making use of adult education activities in order to increase the capacity of citizens from different sectors of society to take

- innovative initiatives and to develop programmes based on ecologically and socially sustainable development;
  - (b) by supporting and implementing adult education programmes designed to give people the chance to learn and interact with decision-makers on environmental and development issues, in particular on the need for changes in production and consumption patterns;
  - (c) by integrating indigenous and traditional knowledge of the interaction between human beings and nature into adult learning programmes, and by recognizing that minority and indigenous communities have special authority and competence in protecting their own environment;
  - (d) by ensuring the accountability of decision-makers in the context of policies relating to the environment, population and development;
  - (e) by integrating environmental and development issues into all sectors of adult learning and developing an ecological approach to lifelong learning.
36. **Promoting adult learning on population-related issues and family life:**
- by enabling people to exercise their human rights, including reproductive and sexual health rights, and to develop responsible and caring attitudes.
37. **Recognizing the decisive role of population education and health promotion in preserving and improving the health of communities and individuals:**
- (a) by developing and reinforcing participatory health education and promotion programmes aimed at empowering people to create healthier environments and to engage in advocacy for improved and accessible health services;
  - (b) by providing access to education which enables reproductive choices that empower women to overcome barriers preventing them from full and equal participation in personal, social and economic development opportunities;
  - (c) by developing health-related learning content, including AIDS and other disease prevention, nutrition, sanitation and mental health;
  - (d) by using adult learning approaches to enrich education-information-communication strategies and to provide opportunities for people to apply their own experience and knowledge in making diagnoses and choosing possible lines of action.
8. **Ensuring cultural and gender-specific learning programmes:**

- (a) by extending health education for women and men in order to share responsibilities and to broaden concerns relating to reproductive health and child care;
- (b) by eliminating cultural practices which are harmful and inhumane, and which result in the violation of women's sexual and reproductive rights.

### **Theme 7: Adult learning, culture, media and new information technologies**

39. *Adult learning provides an essential opportunity for adult learners to participate in all cultural institutions, mass media and new technologies in order to establish effective interactive communication and to build understanding and co-operation between peoples and cultures. Respect for individuals, their cultures and their communities is the foundation for dialogue and confidence-building, as well as relevant and sustainable learning and training. Efforts need to be made to ensure greater access to and participation in the means of communication for all cultures and social groups so that all may share their special visions, cultural artefacts and ways of life and not merely receive the messages of other cultures.*

We commit ourselves to:

40. **Developing greater synergy between the media, the new information technologies and adult learning:**
- (a) by contributing to reinforcing the educational function of the media;
  - (b) by making the media more receptive to adult learning and by encouraging wider participation in the development and evaluation of the media;
  - (c) by recognizing that the media have a key role in access to adult learning opportunities for groups excluded from such opportunities, through promotional campaigns to foster participation;
  - (d) by reviewing the development and dissemination of new technologies from a regional, local and cultural perspective, taking into account the uneven development of infrastructures and availability of equipment;
  - (e) by ensuring equal access to and sustainability of open and distance learning systems, the media, and the new information

- and communication technologies, and by using new technologies to explore alternative ways of learning;
- (f) by promoting media education and media content that will help users to develop critical and discerning attitudes towards the media;
- (g) by providing training for educators and cultural workers to encourage the development and application of appropriate resources for adult learning;
- (h) by promoting the distribution of learning materials at all levels, both regionally and worldwide.

41. **Promoting fair use of intellectual property:**

by revising copyright and patenting regulations to promote the distribution of learning materials while preserving the rights of authors.

42. **Strengthening libraries and cultural institutions:**

- (a) by continuing to fund museums, libraries, theatres, ecological parks and other cultural institutions, and by recognizing these cultural institutions as adult learning centres and resources;
- (b) by promoting the conservation and use of the cultural heritage as a lifelong learning resource and by supporting the development of methods and techniques for strengthening heritage and cultural learning.

### **Theme 8: Adult learning for all: the rights and aspirations of different groups**

43. *The right to education is a universal right of all people. While there is agreement that adult learning must be accessible to all, the reality is that many groups are still excluded, such as the aged, migrants, gypsies and other non-territorial and/or nomadic peoples, refugees, disabled people and prison inmates. These groups should have access to education programmes that accommodate them within an individual-centred pedagogy capable of meeting their needs and facilitating their full participation in society. All members of the community should be invited and, where necessary, assisted in participating in adult learning. This implies meeting a diversity of learning needs.*

We therefore commit ourselves to:

44. **Creating an educational environment supporting all forms of learning for older people:**

- (a) by ensuring access for older people to all the services and provisions that sustain adult learning and training and thereby facilitate their active participation in society;
  - (b) by using the 1999 United Nations Year of Older People to plan activities which illustrate how adult education can support the role of older people in building our societies.
45. **Ensuring the right of migrants, displaced populations, refugees and people with disabilities to participate in adult education:**
- (a) by providing migrants and refugees with comprehensive education and training opportunities that promote their political, economic and social participation, and enhance their competence and their cultural base;
  - (b) by developing and implementing programmes for the host population designed to promote understanding, especially among politicians, media experts, law enforcement agents, educators and social service agents, concerning the rights and conditions of migrants and refugees;
  - (c) by ensuring that adult gypsies and other nomadic groups, taking into account their lifestyles and languages, are able to resume their studies and continue their training in existing institutions;
  - (d) by ensuring that adults with disabilities have full access to adult education programmes and opportunities, by requesting UNESCO and other agencies of the United Nations to provide sign language interpretation and full accessibility to all at their meetings and conferences, and by requesting UNESCO, as lead agency, to convene a conference on lifelong learning for the disabled in 1999, on the eve of the new millennium.
46. **Creating continuing opportunities for persons with disabilities and promoting their integration:**
- (a) by making all forms of learning and training accessible to disabled people and ensuring that the learning and training provided respond to their educational needs and goals;
  - (b) by fostering institutional policies that ensure equal access, services and vocational and employment opportunities for the disabled, under which appropriate learning technology matches their special learning needs.
47. **Recognizing the right to learn of all prison inmates:**
- (a) By providing prison inmates with information on and access to different levels of education and training;
  - (b) By developing and implementing comprehensive education programmes in prisons, with the participation of inmates, to meet their needs and learning aspirations;

- (c) By making it easier for non-governmental organizations, teachers and other providers of educational activities to work in prisons, thereby providing prisoners with access to educational institutions and encouraging initiatives that link courses carried out inside and outside prisons.

## Theme 9: The economics of adult learning

48. *A history of inadequate financing, growing recognition of the long-term benefits of investing in adult learning, the diversification of financial patterns and the number of contributors, the role of multilateral organizations, the impact of structural adjustment programmes and the commercialization of adult learning provision are some of the crucial aspects of the economics of adult learning. The costs of adult learning must be seen in relationship to the benefits that derive from reinforcing the competence of adults. Methods used in cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses should reflect the multiple impact of adult learning on society. The education of adults contributes to their self-reliance and personal autonomy, to the exercise of basic rights and to increased productivity and labour efficiency. It is also positively translated into higher levels of education and well-being of future generations. Adult education, being a human development and productive investment, should be protected from the constraints of structural adjustment.*

We commit ourselves to:

49. **Improving the financing of adult education:**
- (a) by contributing to the funding of adult education by bilateral and multilateral financial institutions within the framework of partnerships between the various ministries and other governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the community and the learners;
  - (b) by seeking to invest, as proposed by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, at least 6 per cent of Member States' gross national product (GNP) in education and by allocating an equitable share of the education budget to adult education;
  - (c) by proposing that each development sector (e.g. agriculture, health, the environment) assign a share of its budget to adult learning, that every development programme in agriculture, health and the environment include an adult learning component and that

- the cost of adult education and training in every enterprise be considered as an investment in productivity;
- (d) by investing an equitable share of resources in women's education to ensure their full participation in all fields of learning and knowledge;
  - (e) by promoting the ratification and application of the International Labour Organization Convention 140 (1974) concerning paid educational leave;
  - (f) by stimulating the social partners to engage in adult education in enterprises, funded for example by allocating a proportion of their total budget to this end;
  - (g) by supporting adult education through a variety of creative community initiatives which will draw on the strengths and capacities of all members of society;
  - (h) by exploring the conversion, on the basis of debt swap proposals, of the current debts of the least developed and developing countries into investment in human development;
  - (I) by studying the proposal for an 'Entitlement to Lifelong Learning' as suggested in *Learning: The Treasure Within*.

## **Theme 10: Enhancing international co-operation and solidarity**

50. *International co-operation and solidarity must strengthen a new vision of adult learning which is both holistic, to embrace all aspects of life, and cross-sectoral, to include all areas of cultural, social and economic activity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be the principal source of guidance in the promotion of international co-operation and solidarity, and the culture of peace. Dialogue, sharing, consultation and the willingness to learn from one another are the basis of this co-operation. It should include respect for diversity.*

We commit ourselves to:

51. **Making adult learning a tool for development and mobilizing resources to that end:**
- (a) by assessing all co-operation projects in terms of both their contributions to adult learning and human development and the priority they give to the strengthening of local expertise;
  - (b) by increasing the resources directly available for adult education within the education sector in developing countries.

52. **Strengthening national, regional and global co-operation, organizations and networks in the field of adult learning:**
- (a) by promoting and strengthening inter-agency and intersectoral co-operation;
  - (b) by supporting existing national, regional and global adult education networks through the sharing of information, skills and capacities, and through the promotion of dialogue at all levels;
  - (c) by encouraging donor agencies to contribute financially to networks for local, regional and global co-operation between adult educators;
  - (d) by monitoring and taking steps to avoid negative impacts of structural adjustment programmes and other policies (fiscal, trade, work, health, industry) on the allocation of resources to the education sector, with special reference to adult education;
  - (e) by preparing national and regional reports and disseminating them among public and private agencies involved in adult education;
  - (f) by involving the multilateral financial institutions in the debate on adult learning and more particularly on educational policies in relation to the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on education.
53. **Creating an environment conducive to international co-operation:**
- (a) by providing greater opportunities for grass-roots workers and learners to meet one another in groups composed on a South-South and North-South basis, and by strengthening training networks across the regions to serve as mechanisms for upgrading adult education;
  - (b) By reinforcing international networks representing different actors and social partners with the mandate to carry out evaluation and monitoring of main education policies;
  - (c) By supporting the creation of a mechanism through which individual and collective rights relating to adult education could be promoted and protected.

## **FOLLOW-UP Strategy**

54. The Agenda for the Future emerging from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education should comply with the recommendations adopted by all major conferences of the United Nations, particularly as regards the gender dimension.

55. Given the highly decentralized nature of adult learning, its growing diversity, and the large and increasing number of partners of many types involved, the strategies and mechanisms used to follow up the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education should be highly flexible. For reasons of both economy and efficiency, they should also be based, to the maximum possible extent, on existing institutions, structures and networks. The aim should be to make existing machinery for action, co-ordination and monitoring more effective, not to duplicate it.
56. It is essential that all partners participating in the Conference play an active role within their particular areas of competence, working through their normal channels to ensure that the potential of adult learning is developed and that programmes are conceived and conducted in ways that contribute to the promotion of democracy, justice, peace and mutual understanding. The Conference has taken note of the Danish initiative to establish an International Academy for Democracy and Education in co-operation with UNESCO and interested national partners.
57. At the international level UNESCO should play a leading and proactive role both within its relevant fields of action and together with other organizations, networks and agencies, including women's organizations and other relevant actors, to advance adult learning. Within UNESCO, the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) in Hamburg should be strengthened in order to become an international reference centre for adult and continuing education. UNESCO should also take the appropriate steps to update the 1976 *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education*. Other international and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should provide similar leadership within their respective spheres of competence.
58. Structures and networks already exist at both the international and regional levels for the promotion of adult learning. In certain cases, particularly in the developing regions, it would, however, be important to reinforce these existing structures and networks, including UNESCO's regional programmes for basic education, and to provide additional resources to enable them to play their roles more effectively and on a larger scale.

### Promoting closer consultation among partners

59. The Conference considers that while the establishment of costly new permanent structures is to be avoided, it would be useful to provide a means or mechanism for communication and regular consultation among major partners in the Fifth International Conference and other organizations actively engaged in the promotion of adult learning. The purpose of such a mechanism would be to develop closer consultation and co-ordination among key partners and a setting for periodic discussion of progress and problems in adult learning, and to serve as a means for monitoring the implementation of the policy and recommendations set forth in this *Agenda*.
60. There should be a forum and a consultation mechanism to secure the implementation of the recommendations and outcomes of this Conference. UNESCO, as the United Nations lead agency in education with its relevant units, institutes and field offices, should play the leading role in taking the initiative and responsibility for promoting adult education as an integral part of a system of learning throughout life, for mobilizing the support of all partners, not only within the United Nations and multilateral systems, but also non-governmental organizations and other organizations in civil society, for giving priority to implementing the *Agenda* and for facilitating provision of the services needed to reinforce international co-ordination and co-operation.
61. Lastly, the Conference requests UNESCO to ensure the wide distribution of the *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning* and the *Agenda for the Future* in as many languages as possible. UNESCO should explore the possibility of an inter-agency review of the *Agenda*, mid-way before the next international conference on adult education.

**To send us information about CONFINTEA follow-up activities in your country or region, or to request documents and information material concerning the follow-up, please contact UIE**

UNESCO-INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION

Feldbrunnenstrasse 58

D - 20148 Hamburg

Tel.: +49 40 44 80 41-0

Fax: +49 40 410 77 23

e-mail: [uie@unesco.org](mailto:uie@unesco.org)

<http://www.education.unesco.org/uie>

Please also consult our CONFINTEA Homepage:

**<http://www.education.unesco.org/confintea>**