



Joint Message on the occasion of the World Teachers' Day

Empowering teachers, building sustainable societies

5 October 2015

Every year on World Teachers' Day, we celebrate educators and the central role they play in providing children everywhere with a quality education. Today, as the global community comes together around the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, the role teachers play has never have been more important.

The new global education goal, SDG 4 which is at the heart of the Education 2030 Agenda, calls for “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Realising this goal is critical to achieving all our global development targets – for strong societies depend on well-educated citizens and a well-trained workforce. But we can only realize this agenda if we invest in recruiting, supporting, and empowering teachers.

Quality teachers are increasingly recognized as the most important factor in children's learning – and thus, in improving educational attainment levels, increasing the ability of young people to participate in society and today's knowledge economies, boosting productivity and prosperity. Especially in poor communities and countries affected by conflict, quality teaching can literally change a child's life – helping children overcome enormous challenges and preparing them for better lives and brighter futures.

But around the world today, far too many teachers are undervalued and disempowered. There is a mounting shortage of quality teachers, unequal distribution of trained teachers, and inadequate or non-existent national standards for the teaching profession. These are all key contributing factors to wide equity

gaps in access and learning. The poorest regions and schools and the earliest grades – those most in need – are often the most affected. This is a deeply troubling gap, as study after study shows that reaching children in the earliest years is critical to their development.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimates that to achieve universal primary education by 2020 countries will need to recruit a total of 10.9 million primary teachers.

This is a global education crisis in the making – unless we act. Recognizing the looming crisis at the 2015 World Education Forum, held in Incheon, South Korea, leaders committed to “ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems”. The 2015 Oslo “Education for Development”, Summit in Norway, further highlighted the imperative of addressing the shortage of qualified teachers and of investing in teacher education.

Now, by committing to the Education 2030 agenda, the UN Member States agree to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

This is an important step – and now we must live up to these commitments. To meet the new education goal and all its targets by 2030, we must intensify efforts to provide sufficiently qualified, well deployed, motivated and supported teachers to every school, every community, and every child.

Governments should redouble efforts to engage in dialogue with teachers and their organizations and devise concrete policy measures and strategies to provide

appropriate incentives, including competitive remuneration and clear career paths to teach in schools located in challenging environments and retain them in the profession.

Teachers should be empowered through the provision of decent working conditions, well-resourced, safe and healthy working environments, trust, professional autonomy and academic freedom.

The ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966), the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel (1997) and the ILO Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel (2014) are essential international standards and benchmarks for the teaching profession.

On the first World Teachers' Day of a new education agenda of global development, we appeal to the international community to value, support, and empower teachers of the world. For it is they who will educate a new generation of children who, in turn, will carry forward all our goals to build a better world for all.

Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO

Guy Ryder, Director-General, ILO

Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF

Helen Clark, Administrator, UNDP

Fred van LEEUWEN, General Secretary, Education International