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Organización
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Address by Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of the Global Child Forum**

Stockholm, 26 November 2015

Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden,

His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this wonderful platform.

I wish to pay tribute to the trailblazing work of Their Majesties the King and Queen of Sweden in raising the flag for the rights of children.

This has never been so important, for social inclusion, for justice and peace.

We meet two months after the world agreed to the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

We must be very clear.

To move the new agenda forward, our starting point must be the human rights and dignity of every girl and boy.

It will come as no surprise that I will put the emphasis on education today.

This must begin on the benches of schools.

Since 2000, there has been tremendous progress, but we are still far from the mark.

59 million children remain out of primary school today.

Girls are most excluded.

There are 32 million girls out of primary school – and the number of adolescent girls excluded from secondary school is higher.

The world's poorest children carry the heaviest burden.

They are four times more likely *not* to go to school than the world's richest children – five times more likely *not* to complete primary school.

According to findings of our Global Education for All Monitoring Report, on current trends it will take until 2086 for the poorest girls in sub-Saharan Africa to have access to education. We have a responsibility not to let this happen.

The situation is worse in conflict situations, where over half of children out-of-school today live – some 28 million girls and boys.

Refugees and internally displaced children are especially marginalised and excluded as my friend the UN High Commissioner Mr Ra'ad Al Hussein just said.

This situation throws a shadow over entire societies, over the very notion of global progress.

Educating these children is a human rights issue.

It is a development multiplier.

It is also, I believe, a security imperative, to promote peace, to counter violent extremism.

We all know the power of education...

...If all girls had secondary education, there would be 64 percent fewer early marriages and 59 percent fewer early pregnancies.

...If all children left school with basic skills, 171 million could be lifted out of poverty.

...each additional year of schooling is associated with 35 percent higher GDP per capita.

There is simply nothing like education as a transformational force.

This is the force we must nurture...for every child – especially the girl child, especially the most vulnerable.

This is the thrust of Sustainable Development Goal 4, to “*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promote lifelong learning opportunities*”.

This calls for a new emphasis on inclusive, child-friendly schools, working with parents and communities.

This calls for new efforts in early childhood care and education, to counter discrimination as early as possible.

This calls for action beyond education ministries, across Governments, with civil society and the private sector to focus on the weakest points.

This underpins the *Joint Programme for the Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education* UNESCO has launched with UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund, supported by the World Bank.

All of this, Ladies and Gentlemen, calls for new partnerships, especially with the private sector.

There is no better investment than educating children, because this is investing in skills, in competences.

Fundamentally, this is investing in the future.

This is why UNESCO has crafted such wide-ranging partnerships for innovation.

We have joined forces with Samsung Electronics, to give students in the developing world access to better education and to develop resilient societies, through mobile learning and drawing on Samsung's Smart School facilities.

In Vietnam, we have integrated education for sustainable development and disaster risk-reduction into teacher-training, through e-learning modules and support to principals, parents, communities and the media.

Our public-private partnership with Samsung has been singled out as a unique example of a successful, national-level public-private partnership, and I wish to express my appreciation to Mr Seok Pil Kim, Executive Vice President of Global Affairs.

In Nigeria, we are taking forward the Digital Village concept, to increase access to information, knowledge and services to remote and deprived communities.

With Procter & Gamble, UNESCO is mobilising educators, policy-makers, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector, to support puberty education – this is essential to get girls in school and to keep them there.

Through our partnership in Senegal and Nigeria, we are supporting adolescent girls and young women to acquire literacy and life skills through face-to-face and ICT-based training.

With Ericsson and the United Kingdom Department for International Development, we are supporting universities and technology start-ups in Myanmar, to expand access to the internet, improve teacher training, and help students cultivate key skills.

These are just a few examples.

We need far more.

We need to scale them and we need to build them into with wider development efforts.

Businesses are joining forces – through the *UN Global Compact*, through the *Business Backs Education Campaign* co-led with UNESCO and Varkey Gems Foundation, through the *Global Business Coalition for Education* with Special Envoy for Global Education Gordon Brown.

We have to make the most of innovation for education that must be a global public good.

It is about combining experience.

It is about making the most of the innovation of the private sector for an essential public good.

In his Nobel Lecture, I recall Kailash Satyarthi saying:

“It is time for every child to have the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to health, the right to education, the right to safety, the right to dignity, the right to equality, and the right to peace.”

We are all responsible for the rights of our children and for investing in the kind of societies we want to see for them in the future.

Thank you.