



Joint Message on the occasion of the *World Teachers' Day*

A Call for Teachers!

5 October 2013

Teachers hold the keys to a better future for all. They inspire, challenge and empower innovative and responsible global citizens. They get children into school, keep them there and help them learn. Every day, they help to build the inclusive knowledge societies we need for tomorrow and the century ahead. On this *World Teachers' Day*, we join forces to thank teachers and to call for more, better trained and supported teachers.

Nothing can replace a good teacher. Evidence shows that teachers, their professional knowledge and skills are the most important factor for quality education. This requires stronger training upfront and continual professional development and support, to enhance performance and learning outcomes. We know this and yet, far too often, teachers remain under-qualified and poorly paid, with low status, and excluded from education policy matters and decisions that concern and affect them.

And there are far too few of them today. At the global level, some 5.24 million teachers need to be recruited in order to reach the goal of universal primary education by 2015 -- 1.58 million new recruits and 3.66 million to replace those leaving the profession. The challenge goes beyond numbers – more teachers must mean better quality learning, through appropriate training and support.

This is essential for ensuring every learner's right to quality education – especially, to reach the 57 million children of primary school age currently out of school. At current pace, we estimate that 49 percent of these children will never enter school, while 28 percent will start school late – 54 percent of them are girls. Equally worrying is the low level of learning. An estimated 250 million

children are failing to learn to read and write by the time they reach the age for grade 4. Approximately half of these children are in school. The access and learning crisis must be urgently addressed.

Learning is not possible without professional, well trained, well supported, accountable and valued teachers. Teachers are the central solution to the learning crisis, and yet too many are poorly trained and poorly supported – often disconnected from the policy decisions that affect them. Teachers are central to the provision of safe and supportive learning environments, and yet too many of them are teaching in circumstances of extreme hardship, emergencies and even attacks.

There are however, also bright parts to the picture. We have seen a range of efforts to improve teacher status -- through teacher professionalization and certification schemes, incentives for service in remote or disadvantaged communities, minimum wage laws, career development models, continued professional development, support to female teachers deployed in remote locations, peer-to-peer support and inter-generational mentoring, recognition awards and incentive for teacher progression, raising admission standards for teacher training programmes, public awareness campaigns, free training and recruitment bonuses. All of these practices ensure equality and quality and make a real difference to learning outcomes; they must be scaled up and taken forward.

This is where effective international action is essential, in support of national efforts to bolster teachers and education institutions, and improve the education opportunities of all children. All of this work must ensure that teachers' pay and conditions reflect a commitment to delivering high quality education by a qualified and motivated teaching work force. This is why teachers stand at the heart of the United Nations Secretary-General's *Global Education First Initiative* to make sure every child goes to school, receives a quality education, and develops a new sense of global citizenship.

This is our call for teachers today. Join us in thanking and supporting the teachers we have and in recruiting new women and men, to shape more effective education systems and prepare young people and adults for active and responsible participation in society. There is no stronger foundation for lasting peace and sustainable development than a quality education provided by

well trained, valued, supported and motivated teachers. The education of future generations hangs in the balance unless we can rise to the challenge of putting the best possible teacher in every classroom.

Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO

Guy Ryder, Director-General, ILO

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