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Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

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Monterrey Declaration

## **Monterrey Declaration of the E-9 countries**

### **Introduction**

1. We, the Ministers of Education of the E-9 countries, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan, met in Monterrey, Mexico, on 14 – 15 February 2006 to accelerate our progress and strengthen our cooperation in Education for All (EFA). We express our sincere and heartfelt thanks to our Mexican hosts for their warm hospitality and excellent logistical arrangements, as well as to UNESCO for facilitating the meeting. We especially appreciated the expression of commitment to Education for All by His Excellency President Vicente Fox Quesada who underscored the importance of quality education and the role of assessment in improving learning outcomes of all children. We recognise the presence of Ms Chen Zhili, State Councillor of the People's Republic of China, as a sign of high-level commitment to EFA.
2. The meeting was especially significant as it built on our shared commitment at the last meeting in Cairo to revitalise the E-9 Initiative as a key element of South-South cooperation and to move from intent to action.

### **Progress and challenges in EFA**

3. We note that E-9 countries are home to more than half the world's population and that progress in E-9 countries is key to achieving the EFA goals.
4. We welcome the advances made in all E-9 countries, but acknowledge wide disparities in achievement, with some countries on track to meet the 2015 goals, while others are unlikely to meet some of them. This diversity is captured by the 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report which shows that primary school net enrolment ratios in E-9 countries range from under 60% to over 90%, and adult literacy rates from just over 40% to over 90%. In particular countries, we are glad to note increases in literacy rates, a narrowing of gender disparities and an expansion of secondary education.
5. The enormity of the EFA challenge in the E-9 countries is illustrated by the following:

- Nearly 70% of the world's 771 million non-literate adults;
  - 45% of the world's out-of-school children;
  - Some of the highest and most persistent gender and urban/rural disparities in schooling and adult literacy; and
  - In two-thirds of the E-9 countries, the Gross Enrolment Ratio in pre-primary education is still below 40%.
6. We are concerned that not all our countries have met the 2005 gender parity target and we commit ourselves to redouble our efforts to achieve progress such as exemplified by some of the E-9 countries.
  7. We are equally concerned to raise the quality of our basic education – the persistence of low primary completion rates, high teacher-pupil ratios and inadequate quality of schooling in some countries are indicators of the enormity and urgency of this issue.

### **Literacy**

8. We recognise the crucial nature of adult literacy in pursuing socio-economic and cultural development and the links between literate adults and enhanced primary school enrolment.
9. We acknowledge the need, on our part, for greater commitment and funding for adult literacy in the E-9 countries. We commit ourselves to stronger support for adult literacy, especially the needs of women, minorities and indigenous peoples, rural people, nomads, and others.

### **Global Action Plan to achieve the EFA Goals**

10. We welcome the development of the Global Action Plan to achieve the EFA goals as a way of increasing the coordination and coherence of international support to action at country level.
11. We urge UNESCO to seek early endorsement of the Plan from the Heads of the five EFA convening agencies to ensure broad ownership of and support for the Plan within the UN system.
12. We encourage UNESCO to further develop ideas in the Plan, particularly linking success in education to productive work and ongoing learning.

13. We expect UNESCO to play an active part in the implementation of the Plan.

### **National policies for the assessment of the quality of education**

14. Taking into account the critical role that assessment plays in monitoring and improving quality, we are pleased to note that it was selected as a major topic for debate, knowledge sharing, and consideration for further cooperation among our countries. We see good assessment as a means to formulate our policy and practice in ways that will enable us to better meet our obligations to provide a quality basic education for all – to provide our citizens with the opportunity to learn so that they can be successful in their lives and contribute positively to the lives of their families, communities and nations.

15. Based on the national reports and the report of the Expert Meeting on National Policies for the Assessment of the Quality of Education (13 February 2006), we commit ourselves to cooperating on assessment in meaningful ways for the following reasons:

- There is an urgent need for us to work together to understand how, why, and the extent to which our education systems meet the purposes for which they are designed;
- In this area, every one of our countries has something to offer to our cooperation and each can gain from the experience of the others; and
- Cooperation and sharing of experience are highly likely to result in improving the quality of education in our countries and beyond.

16. Assessment is a powerful instrument that should be used with due care. We emphasise and respect the essential nature of its technical independence and integrity. We are committed to developing it into a tool that will provide good information for sound political discussions, policy formulation and decision-making by:

- Engaging in assessment carefully so that the results are valid and reliable, producing accurate information to inform both technical and political decisions;

- Building a culture of assessment – where it is viewed as a positive and constructive tool to support, among others, teaching practice and good learning environments; and
  - Galvanising public interest in education – to build trust and accountability, while developing an informed citizenship that claims ownership of the outcomes of education.
17. Cognizant of the range and complexity of issues that are embedded in assessment, we will build our partnership in the framework of South-South cooperation. We recognise that we have the basis to build a “catalogue of resources” (institutions and expertise, for example), and that our cooperation can strengthen this by:
- Developing a mechanism, with UNESCO’s leadership, to carry forward this important work;
  - Using this mechanism to strengthen our national capacities, particularly through institutional linkages, in all aspects of assessment;
  - Sharing good practices and lessons learnt; and
  - Engaging in joint activities such as shared capacity development.

### **South-South cooperation**

18. We re-affirm the crucial importance of South-South cooperation in pursuit of EFA and emphasise the need to move from intention to action in making the EFA/E-9 partnership a force for leadership and innovation in EFA.
19. We affirm that the E-9 is uniquely placed to pursue greater cooperation and exchange among the E-9 countries in pursuing the six EFA goals, taking into account the wide diversity of needs across the nine countries and bearing in mind the comparative advantage of each country. This cooperation should promote sharing of good practices for accelerating EFA progress.
20. We note that areas of cooperation include planning and programme design, institutional development, capacity-building, financing education, the teaching-learning process, assessment and evaluation systems, management and educational administration.

21. We accept the challenge of deepening our commitment to share our experience and expertise with other countries less well-placed in progress towards the EFA goals.
22. We recognise the importance and potential of triangular modalities of cooperation to match funding from donor countries, with the particular expertise of E-9 countries for the benefit of low-income countries, particularly in capacity-building for innovative approaches. We commit to work for a triangular arrangement involving the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) partners and the International Finance Facility (IFF), based on the recommendations of the 2005 EFA High-Level Group.
23. UNESCO has a key role to play as a facilitator and catalyst of effective support to E-9 initiatives and broader South-South cooperation including at least the following ways:
  - Fostering reciprocal connections among E-9 countries, and between E-9 countries and other developing countries;
  - Mapping and organising a data bank on the successful experiences and good practices provided by our countries;
  - Establishing a website for wider diffusion of such experiences; and
  - Networking with UN agencies, as well as mobilising financing institutions and international agencies for generation of additional resources.

### **Resource mobilisation**

24. We recognise the pressing need to review, and to endeavour to increase, our national budget allocations to education in order to move progressively towards the internationally accepted norm of 6% of GDP, with basic education receiving more funds.
25. We continue to support the early abolition of all user fees and charges for public primary education, where these still exist, and request the full support of donors, where necessary, to address the consequences of such a decision.

26. We welcome the further development of mechanisms, such as debt cancellation, debt restructuring and debt swaps as ways of funding EFA; moreover, we will actively explore the potential of public-private partnerships in support of EFA goals.
27. We welcome the increased pledges of aid made during 2005 and the new commitments to increase substantially aid to basic education. We will monitor and vigorously pursue the implementation of these pledges.

### **Strengthening institutional mechanisms**

28. We will maintain a rotating secretariat hosted in turn by each E-9 country, as well as an E-9 focal point.
29. We propose that UNESCO establish a unit within the Secretariat to play a coordinating role in all matters of South-South cooperation, liaising with the rotating E-9 secretariat.
30. We urge UNESCO to strengthen the Secretariat's involvement in the E-9 Initiative as a key means of fulfilling its mandate to work for the fulfilment of the Dakar goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
31. We ask our Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives to UNESCO to meet periodically in order to strengthen support to E-9 by UNESCO, in cooperation with regional groups, and report to us.
32. We also ask UNESCO to hold meetings, as necessary, of E-9 officials during 2006-2007 to review and support the implementation of this Declaration, prior to our next Ministerial Review Meeting in 2008.

### **Next meeting**

33. We welcome and accept the offer of Indonesia to host our next Ministerial Review Meeting in March 2008 and express our thanks for such a generous and hospitable gesture. Based on the analysis of the global EFA review (2007-2008), the meeting will address strategies to achieve EFA by 2015

15 February 2006