

## **5<sup>th</sup> E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting in Egypt (Cairo, 19-21 December 2003) Cairo Declaration of the E-9 Countries**

We, the Ministers and representatives of the nine high-population countries, have come together in Cairo to review the progress made in Education for All (EFA) in our countries in follow-up to the recommendation of the fourth E-9 Meeting in Beijing that Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) be the specific theme of the fifth meeting. We also discussed future strategies for the E-9 Initiative in the perspective of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4* and in light of our experiences during the past decade since the launch of the E-9 Initiative (Delhi, 1993). We thank the Government of Egypt for hosting the meeting and for its generous hospitality. The leadership and support of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt have been crucial in the successful organization of this historic tenth anniversary meeting. Our deliberations have been enriched by the inspiring address of Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, the First Lady of Egypt.

We strongly reaffirm our commitment to the goals set by the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, March 1990), the Delhi Declaration (December 1993) and the Dakar Framework for Action (April 2000) to meet the basic learning needs of all our peoples. We restate our commitment to the Jomtien vision of ECCE that learning begins at birth and to the first Dakar Goal to expand and improve comprehensive ECCE services for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

### **Progress towards EFA Goals**

We are encouraged by the evident progress in EFA in the E-9 countries during the past decade:

1. All nine countries have clearly demonstrated the need to integrate ECCE within government policy and legislative frameworks.
2. Access to ECCE has been expanded through formal, non-formal and informal services, involving parents, communities, NGOs, private institutions and government.
3. E-9 countries have experienced visible improvements in their enrolment ratios in pre-primary education from 1990 to date.
4. E-9 countries have reported the capacity to accommodate all school-age children in basic education in 2000 and most have recorded significant increases in the enrolment ratios over the past decade.
5. Enrolment in secondary and tertiary education has increased over the past decade in almost all countries.
6. Adult literacy rates have increased, especially for women.
7. E-9 countries are experiencing encouraging demographic trends that should positively influence the progress towards EFA.

8. According to internationally available data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) for 2000/2001, four countries of this group have achieved gender parity in gross enrolment at primary level and two have nearly achieved this; four of these countries have achieved gender parity in secondary education.
9. Several E-9 countries have initiated fruitful collaboration with one another on EFA issues, notably bilateral cooperation between Egypt/China and Nigeria/Brazil and the South Asia Forum of Ministers on EFA.
10. Several E-9 countries started successful efforts towards achieving quality education for all.

## **Challenges**

Despite these positive trends, we still face a number of challenges:

1. Our countries account for more than 40 per cent of the world's out-of-school children, 70 per cent of the world's illiterate adults and more than half of the children below six years of age.
2. Poverty and inequity continue to impede the achievements made by the E-9 countries in EFA.
3. Inadequate awareness of the importance of ECCE among all stakeholders continues to impede the integration of ECCE into basic education in all our countries.
4. Inequitable access to quality services and the distribution of resources in education for disadvantaged children, particularly girls, continues to prevail.
5. The size of the current gender gap in adult literacy in most countries and the pace at which it has been narrowing needs particular attention and calls for concrete actions.
6. In some countries, repetition, dropout, low attendance and poor school performance are undermining progress towards achieving EFA objectives.
7. Mechanisms are inadequate for ensuring timely and accurate data for planning purposes in EFA, particularly ECCE.
8. Despite increased budgetary allocations by governments to basic education, funding constraints affecting EFA progress continue to be a challenge.
9. Lack of integrated planning and inter-sectoral coordination in ECCE continues to adversely affect EFA progress.
10. Lack of qualified and experienced professionals in ECCE imposes constraints upon the expansion and quality of ECCE services including the non-formal sector.

## **Actions by E-9 countries**

Taking into account lessons from experience, the deliberations of the meeting and ongoing evaluation processes, we hereby commit to the following actions:

1. Revitalize and realign the E-9 Initiative in light of post-Dakar developments so that the E-9 group plays a lead role within the EFA movement.
2. Reaffirm the indivisibility of the six Dakar goals within the context of international agreements, frameworks and strategies.
3. In keeping with wider EFA practice, the E-9 Initiative should broaden its partnership to include key international actors, civil society and the corporate/private sector within the framework of the E-9 Initiative.
4. Take concrete measures to promote technical cooperation among the E-9 countries and other developing countries in areas such as rural education, open and distance learning, ICTs, research and knowledge transfers, inter-institutional linkages and exchanges of students as well as teachers, and establish a databank of successful innovations (such as the family allowance programmes in Brazil that endeavour to keep children in school).
5. Raise and maintain the profile of EFA within the E-9 countries through culturally sensitive advocacy, regular high-level meetings, technical workshops, joint publications, the sharing of best practices and exchange visits between EFA practitioners at national and international levels.
6. Strengthen the existing E-9 website maintained by UNESCO with links to national EFA websites.
7. Strengthen administrative arrangements in each E-9 country by setting up an E-9 focal point that would orchestrate follow-up action, provide continuity and monitor implementation regarding issues highlighted at biennial ministerial meetings.
8. Establish a rotational secretariat located within the host E-9 country (Egypt in 2004 and in 2005-2006 Mexico, which will be the host of the sixth Ministerial Review Meeting). The secretariat will be supported by the UNESCO EFA International Coordination Unit and the national E-9 Focal Points. This Secretariat should have the mandate to effect follow-up, to provide continuity and to monitor implementation of issues highlighted at biennial ministerial review meetings of the E-9.
9. Establish a pattern of annual meetings of officials in years intervening between E-9 ministerial meetings.
10. Utilize opportunities for E-9 ministers to meet at international events (e.g. UNESCO General Conference, International Conference on Education).
11. Enhance effective linkages with, and representation in, EFA mechanisms (e.g. High-Level Group, Working Group on EFA, Fast Track Initiative, EFA Flagships such as UNGEI and relevant regional and subregional bodies).

12. Ensure participation of the E-9 Chair at high-level meetings of the international development partners, including the annual FTI donors' meeting.
13. Develop and strengthen policy frameworks in ECCE, particularly in regard to care services for younger children and the education of parents.
14. At national level, establish the lead responsibility for ECCE in order to effectively mobilize key stakeholders and ensure appropriate inter-ministerial coordination.
15. Build genuine partnership with the private sector and civil society in ECCE in order to expand access and improve quality (AGFUND provided a useful example of this).
16. Promote quality and excellence in education through a balanced approach to expanding access and improving learning outcomes.
17. Improve the timeliness and quality of disaggregated data at national level by strengthening EMIS processes, augment the capacity of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in the collection, analysis and collation of statistical data and improve the interface between E-9 countries and UIS.

### **The role of international development partners**

1. EFA is a common and shared responsibility of the developing as well as the industrialized countries. Building a genuine and sustainable partnership is therefore crucial in our joint endeavour to achieve the Dakar EFA goals and Millennium Development Goals. This ultimately is the best investment for ensuring peace and harmony.
2. Considering the pledge made in Dakar by the international community to closing the EFA funding gap, we urge bilateral and multilateral agencies to make concerted and practical steps to support the efforts made in Oslo on improving the scope and functioning of FTI. Nevertheless, we note with concern that the E-9 countries are yet to benefit from additional resource flows from the Initiative. The international community is urged to revisit the question of debt swaps for education to support country efforts for resource mobilization for EFA. There is a need for UNESCO to increase its advocacy role for securing increased funding for EFA, especially the E-9 countries. UNESCO should facilitate the monitoring and tracking of resources for EFA from national and international sources.
3. UNESCO needs to address its coordination role in a more proactive manner and ensure proper integration of the E-9 initiative with international coordination mechanisms for EFA. The E-9 countries welcome UNESCO's commitment to strengthen field offices and its leadership role in EFA.
4. External agencies need to support and respect country development agendas and education reform processes toward the delivery of EFA.
5. The support and cooperation of international development partners are of utmost importance for accelerating progress towards the EFA goals set at Dakar and the Millennium Development Goals.

**Next meeting**

Mexico generously offered to host the sixth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting. The theme will reflect the EFA agenda and the meeting will be held in two years' time.