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

Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

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 Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting: Inclusive,
relevant quality Education for All**

New Delhi, 9-10 November 2012

Excellency Dr Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for Human Resource Development,

Ms Ruqayyatu Rufa'ai, Federal Minister of Education of Nigeria, Chair of the E9

Excellencies Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to attend this *E9 Ministerial Review Meeting*.

It is a special pleasure to be here, in New Delhi.

This was the city where the E9 Initiative was launched nineteen years ago, embodied in a shared determination to achieve Education for All.

Since then, the E-9 has become an essential platform to review challenges, to share practices and to monitor progress.

We need this cooperation more than ever today.

The world has changed dramatically since 1993.

Middle income countries have emerged, and new economic powers have appeared.

In many countries, rising growth rates and wealth coexist with new forms of poverty and deep divides.

Across the world, injustice and inequality remain steep obstacles to sustainable development.

This new reality calls for new policies to marry growth and justice for inclusive development.

We hear sometimes this is a circle that cannot be squared.

The image is not only false, it is misleading.

Quality education is the best way to move forward with justice, dignity and development, and the progress achieved by many E9 countries shows this.

But we have still far to go, in terms of equality, especially gender equality, enrolment and literacy.

Everywhere I go, children and parents are demanding quality education. Even in the most difficult conditions, education is their first concern.

A few weeks ago, in Pakistan, a young girl named Malala was shot because she has the courage to defend the right of every boy and girl to go to school.

Malala's is the voice of millions calling for quality education as the basis for dignity and choice. We are honoured to host the President of Pakistan and other eminent leaders and personalities a major event to strengthen commitment to girls' education to be held at UNESCO on 10 December, Human Rights Day.

We must meet these aspirations.

This is the goal of the global initiative of the United Nations Secretary General, *Education First*, launched this September in New York and which UNESCO is supporting – to ensure every girl and boy gets to school and gets the right education, including the values of global citizenship.

Our position is clear.

We must put education first to reach the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All by 2015, and we are convinced that education must lie at the heart of a new global sustainability agenda.

This is why the focus of the E9 on *Inclusive, Relevant and Quality Education for All* is so important -- combined with additional measures to eradicate illiteracy.

Last month, UNESCO published its benchmark *Global Monitoring Report on Education for All*.

Its conclusions show that, while great progress has been made, we are not on track to meet our goals by 2015.

In 2010, some 61 million children of primary school age remained out of school, and 71 million teenagers are not attending secondary school.

Even when children are in school, the bitter truth is many are not learning what they need to make their way in life and earn a decent livelihood.

Inequalities run deep.

In too many countries, children are taught by poorly qualified teachers, by temporary assistants with no training, often in overcrowded classrooms.

This is gambling with the future of our children. It is gambling with the future of our societies.

Skills are the next global currency -- this is the focus of the 2012 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*.

Skills will determine whether young women and men can sustain the development of their societies and lay the foundations for inclusive growth.

Skills hold the keys to the future of the E9 countries.

Given their size and the scale of challenges, getting education right in the E9 countries means getting education right across the globe.

To this end, I believe we must renew our commitment at three levels.

First, we must strengthen public policies and education systems to deliver quality education and facilitate learning by all.

We can make significant improvements in quality with the right policies -- but efforts must be maintained for progress to be sustained.

The Government of India is launching the *Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development*, under the auspices of UNESCO.

This new Institute will share knowledge on good practices in education, showing what works and how successful programmes can be scaled up or replicated in other countries.

This can be an accelerator for quality education across the E-9 countries, helping to identify gaps and sharpen policies.

For UNESCO, building quality education means building an effective system. This touches on issues of governance, on curricula, on learning and learners, on assessment and teachers.

I am pleased India has adopted such a comprehensive and systemic approach, and we all look forward to the presentation of its results during this meeting.

Second, we need stronger assessments tools.

Most quality analyses have been fragmented and limited in scope.

UNESCO has developed a *General Education Quality/Diagnostic Framework* to enable Member States to diagnose critical impediments preventing them from providing quality education.

Each E-9 country is different – each needs a differentiated approach.

We need targeted quality assurance at the national level and we need to assess performance against other countries.

Third, we must focus on pressure points where success can have a multiplying impact across the board – such as teacher shortages, overburdened curricula and overcrowded classrooms.

Quality education requires a new deal on teachers.

For this, we must leverage also the incredible power of technology, especially mobile phones -- to train teachers and reach marginalized groups.

To take one example, nineteen years ago, almost nobody in Bangladesh had a mobile phone. Today, the country is nearing 100 percent “virtual” mobile penetration. Even in the poorest and most remote village, there will not be one phone to share around, but several.

This is a chance to make a difference that we must seize

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The E9 initiative is today a framework for action nationally and for South-South cooperation globally.

This is a key motor for reaching Education for All -- and this is why the E9 is deeply integrated into the EFA processes and the E-9 representative has been invited to the first Global EFA Meeting to be soon held in Paris.

Standing less than four years away from the 2015 deadline, we must renew our commitment to accelerate our pace, to make the promise of quality education available to every girl and boy, every woman and man.

I wish to thank Excellency Ms. Ruqayyatu A. Rufa'i, Federal Minister of Education of Nigeria for her remarkable leadership since the Abuja meeting last year.

I take this opportunity to thank most sincerely the Government of India for hosting this E9 Ministerial Review Meeting and taking the leadership of this Initiative for the next two years.

Let me finish by recalling the Declaration adopted in 1993:

Realizing the aspirations of the Delhi Declaration will herald a dramatic improvement in global education statistics. History will record this achievement as a significant chapter in human progress and international cooperation. The nine countries and the international community together must make sure that this happens.

Nineteen years later, this remains the spirit of the E9 Initiative – it remains also our common ambition.

Thank you for your commitment to achieving this vision.