



PRESS RELEASE

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UN Secretary General's New Initiative Secures over US\$1.5 billion for Education ahead of 2015 target

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, 26 September 2012 – United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon today secured over US\$1.5 billion in commitments for a new initiative to make education a top global priority and boost progress towards the Millennium Development Goal on education.

"I am encouraged and grateful for all the generous commitments made today, which gives Education First a boost towards achieving its goals," said Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon. "Our shared goals are simple. We want children to attend primary school and to progress toward higher education that will help them to succeed in life."

Education First seeks to make a breakthrough to mobilize all partners –both traditional and new – to achieve universal primary education ahead of the 2015 target date for the MDGs. An additional \$24 billion is needed annually to cover the shortfall for children out of primary and lower secondary school.

Australia, Bangladesh, South Africa, Timor-Leste and Denmark were among countries that pledged to intensify their support to the new global partnership called 'Education First.' In addition, dozens of top companies and private foundations have mobilized over US\$1.5 billion in new financing to ensure all children and young people have a quality, relevant and transformative education.

Western Union Foundation and the MasterCard Foundation were among the first to solidify their support for the initiative. Western Union has pledged to directly move over US\$1 billion for education globally, providing US\$10,000 per day in grants for 1 million days of school. Under MasterCard's 'Scholars Program', the US\$500 million education initiative will allow 15,000 talented, yet economically disadvantaged students, particularly from the African region, to access and complete their secondary and university education.

Education First was launched on the margins of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly. Participants included Heads of State and Ministers from countries, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, heads of UN agencies, young people, civil society representatives and Chief Executive Officers of major corporations.

In the next five years, Education First will focus on three priorities: putting every child in school, improving the quality of learning and fostering global citizenship.

"We must not deny the promise of quality education to any child. The stakes are too high. When we put education first, we can end wasted potential – and foresee stronger and better societies for all," Secretary-General BAN said.

At the end of the 1990s, 108 million children of primary school age were not enrolled in schools. That number has fallen to 61 million today, according to UNESCO's forthcoming Global Monitoring Report. The gap between boy and girl enrolment has also been greatly reduced. These are significant achievements, largely due to national and international resolve to act on shared goals for education.

The launch was followed by a discussion of the goals of initiative and the critical need to put education on top of the global agenda. The panel discussion was chaired by UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and panelists were Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan, DawAung Sang SuuKyri of Myanmar, teacher representative TeopistaBirungiMayanja of Uganda and youth representative Charles Young of Jamaica.

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For details on the high-level launch event and evening reception:

<http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/664.htm>

For details on commitments to Education First:

<http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/commitments.html>

The event will be webcast live at webtv.un.org

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