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Director, Division for Gender Equality,

Office of the Director-General

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Key policy initiatives and capacity-building on gender mainstreaming: Focus on education and training

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Saniye Gülser Corat

Director, Division for Gender Equality, UNESCO

Lighting Candles in the Dark: Financing Quality Education for All

Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Irina Bokova, allow me to begin by saying that I am delighted to have been invited here today specifically to talk about financing in education. This issue cuts across two issues at the top of UNESCO's agenda: gender equality which is one of two global priorities of the Organization and education for all and particularly of girls and women. Guaranteeing the funding necessary to ensure that all girls and boys can have a quality education is something UNESCO is passionate about. We know that the necessary changes cannot be brought about without the right investments and the right resources. And - as I shall endeavor to explain - this will not be possible unless we start lighting candles in the dark.

These resources are – for the time being – lacking. Currently, education is primarily financed by domestic resources, that is, by governments and households. The budgets of both have been put under strain by the global financial crisis. As ever, girls lose out: when poor families are forced to choose which children to educate, it seems that more often they choose boys.¹ Gender disparities again rear their ugly head. However, I cannot help but ask: should any family have to make such a choice?

¹ Seguina, Stephanie, The Global Economic Crisis and its Gender Implications, Speech at the Commission on the Status of Women, 53rd Session, March 2009, Interactive Experts Panel on the gender perspectives of the Financial Crisis.

On the national level, although UNESCO has been campaigning for countries to avoid cutting education budgets – what we see as a false economy– this has nonetheless happened in some countries. Developing countries typically spend 4% of GDP on education – of which a massive 85%-95% consists of teacher salaries. Even if all the poorest countries made this effort; even if work was done to reduce inefficiencies, they could not pay for Education For All without external help.

Traditionally, this external help has arrived in the form of Official Development Assistance. Currently, for the group of the poorest countries mentioned, this amounts to \$3 billion annually. Even if donors and governments keep the aid promises they made at Gleneagles – adding \$2 billion to aid (and which seems unlikely in the current economic climate) – this would still not be enough to pay for Education for All. Not even for basic, primary education. We are currently a long way from keeping the promise given to the children of the world in Dakar in 2000, when we said, and I quote ‘no country seriously committed to education for all would be thwarted in their achievement of these goals by a lack of resources.’

UNESCO’s 2010 Global Monitoring Report – which focused on how we can bring education to the most marginalized – estimated the cost of basic education in poor countries at \$ 36 billion per annum. This leaves a funding gap of \$16 billion, once existing funding has been taken into account. To put this seemingly huge amount into perspective, it is helpful to compare it to worldwide military expenditure, which was \$1.5 *trillion* in 2009 – 100 times more than the amount we need.

It is in this context of the awareness that traditional sources of financing do not suffice, that complementary forms of ‘innovative financing’ have increasingly entered the development arena. The culture of development aid is shifting – as can be seen in the use of terms like ‘investment’. Although innovative financing has been with us for 15 years, it has taken course since the turn of the 21st century, notably with the Monterrey Consensus on the topic in 2002. More recently, it has been gathering force and won support at the Seoul G20 and the MDG summit of last September. Innovative financing comes in too many guises for me to do justice to it in this presentation. It can involve a plethora of actors, whether international or domestic, from a range of backgrounds. It includes public-private partnerships (PPPs) and multi-stakeholder partnerships for education. Its benefits can be primarily financial; or it can primarily serve to raise the profile of a cause internationally – as the Product RED campaign has done for HIV/ AIDS prevention. In the written text of my presentation, which will be made available on the CSW website, there is an Annex which provides a list of selected mechanisms.

Instead, I want to focus on the perhaps less obvious issues which underlie discussions about innovative financing and how these may yield hidden potential for advancing the issues under debate here today.

Innovative financing is about innovating far more than just finance. It is about innovating education itself, about innovating international development and innovating global governance for the 21st century.

Innovative financing demands clear communication. It demands that we light candles in the dark: that we focus not on the doom and gloom of the situation we are in, but rather on the creative solutions we have found that bring light to the world. The financing flows as a result of creating conviction that the goal is worthy and confidence that the solution is achievable – and communicating these messages widely to decision-makers and the general public. This forces us to be clear about what the money must be invested in. It encourages us to create new strategies and best practices and to be vocal about the efficacy of these. In a results-based culture, success breeds success – or perhaps better put, more support for investment and more resources to repeat the successful results.

We have an open invitation to be creative and to share our work with a much wider audience. I believe that we must seize this invitation; it is an opportunity to place gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of the debate on global development.

Let me now suggest a few starting points, light a few candles, if you to ensure that education and the specific needs of girls and women – including in the domains of science and technology – are not left in obscurity.

The first message is that we must invest in reaching the marginalized so that all children have access to education.

UNESCO is clear about where this money must be invested. There is a real threat that *more* children than now will be out of school in 2015. Ensuring that education for all means precisely that and reaching the marginalized is necessarily more difficult and more expensive. Many live in rural or conflict-affected areas. This affects many girls who are doubly marginalized by intersecting factors of discrimination. This also affects girls' access to education and to science and technology. In most regions of the world, women are more likely than men to be uneducated or undereducated, especially in science and technology.² Statistics show the persistently low participation of girls in these areas through all levels of schooling.³

Gender disparities – which have been reducing overall – can be improved, via scholarships, community campaigns, sending female teachers to rural areas or simply by installing separate sanitation facilities in schools. These generalized examples show that there are best practices that can be replicated. Progress is attainable. There is light in the dark.

² UNESCO, 2007.

³ UNESCO, 2010d.

The second message is that we must invest in quality so that all children – girls and boys –and women and men have the skills they need to make a difference in their lives and communities.

Basic education – sound literacy and numeracy skills - are a fundamental pre-requisite for women to access science and technology and careers in these domains. Yet, UNESCO fears the creation of a ‘quality divide’, as millions of children leave school without these essential skills. In sub-Saharan Africa, in some countries young adults with 5 years of education have a 40% chance of being illiterate.

We need to invest in access to education and in guaranteeing quality. Pupils need and deserve well-qualified, motivated teachers; we must invest in their training and incentives – including additional incentives to deploy talented teachers to teach marginalized children. We must invest in urgently training the 1.9 million extra teachers that will be needed to achieve EFA. Drawing on international solidarity, Education International – the international teacher’s union – has suggested that a 1% voluntary levy could be applied to teacher union dues in rich countries to help with these costs. We must invest in the learning environment. 6.2 million extra classrooms will be needed in primary and pre-primary education alone.

The third message is that innovative solutions and innovative partnerships can help us attain Education for All - and boost the quality of that education.

Allow me to share with you one example from UNESCO’s work. A partnership between UNESCO, a private sector mobile phone company and a local NGO in Pakistan trialled a project to expand the literacy of adolescent girls. The girls were sent an interesting and informative daily text message that they had to respond to. Assessments of the girls’ knowledge and learning made before and after the project saw tangible improvements; by the end, the majority achieved an A grade. They also showed a marked improvement in their literacy skills and confidence. The results were so encouraging that, the pilot project has been expanded to benefit a further 1250 girls. Here we see that quality and innovation unite – as an innovative solution has led to an improvement in the quality of the girls’ learning.

This project - showing the potential for harnessing modern technologies to promote EFA and gender equality – makes me particularly excited about UNESCO’s recent partnership with Nokia. Nokia will invest \$ 5-10 million in researching how mobile technologies can support EFA and to support new educational applications. This kind of partnership again shows that innovative financing is about much more than finance: it can be as much about sharing knowledge and expertise.

‘Quality’ and ‘Innovation’ have been key words running through these debates on education and the future of financing. As we progress, we must be guided by optimism – that success is achievable and tangibly so, and by creativity – to expand the range of possible solutions to help

educate the world's children. This is our chance to light our own candles. It will be necessary to highlight specific messages that are likely to have a wide impact; the marginalization of women and girls in science and technology - a message that is so compelling to all of us here - could easily be one of these messages.

Our responsibility to ensure that girls and women are placed at the heart of the debate is twofold. First, to make sure that their needs are served by the solutions that are created. Second, given that getting girls into school and into science and technology requires breaking down cultural barriers, as well as building schools - to raise the profile of these issues on an international level.

Let me leave you with a Quaker proverb that evokes the spirit of optimism and hope that must guide us in the task ahead. The proverb simply reminds us that: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

Annex

Investing in Education: Quality Funding for Quality Education

“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”

Benjamin Franklin.

The need to engage new donors implies a new culture that is emerging around development aid. Benjamin Franklin, who in the above quote espoused the virtues of education in the 18th Century, was undoubtedly pointing to the cross-cutting benefits of education as a sound human investment. Read today, this quote elucidates a shift in how development aid is likely to operate as the 21st century unfolds. Debates surrounding funding, using terms such as ‘investment’ and ‘interest’, hint at a business-like mentality according to which investors want to see clear returns on their investments and tangible results. Values of transparency and accountability must be further underlined to achieve this.

Innovative Financing: Key Features and Best Practices

Given the urgent need to explore alternatives, it is unsurprising that, although it has been on the agenda for 15 years,⁴ innovative financing has been increasingly entering the mainstream of the development debate. This was notably encouraged by the 2002 Monterrey Consensus on the topic, and was reinforced at last September’s MDG Summit and by the successes in the domain of health. To provide only two examples of success in the health sector, UNITAID, which benefits from taxes on airline tickets, has raised \$ 700 million towards the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.⁵ The International Finance Facility for Immunization has generated \$ 1.5 billion. The current challenge is to adapt these benchmark initiatives to the specific requirements of the education sector and also to the specific educational needs of girls and women, including in domains such as science and technology where they remain under-represented.

⁴ 2010b: 23

⁵ WISE

UNESCO's Partnerships for Education for All

UNESCO actively promotes partnerships with a wide range of partners in favor of EFA and currently works with hundreds of partners ranging from multinational companies, small and medium sized enterprises and philanthropic trusts to economic and business associations and individuals.⁶

The Partnerships for Education Initiative (Pfe) led jointly by UNESCO and the World Economic Forum encourages the creation of development-led global partnerships, supporting EFA goals by enhancing cooperation between governments and private firms.

Examples of Partnerships between UNESCO and private partners include:

Nokia:⁷ UNESCO are partnering with Nokia to promote the use of mobile technologies to further the objectives of Education for All. Nokia will invest \$ 5-10 million in researching how mobile technologies can support EFA and to develop new applications with an educational potential. Mobile technologies will also be used to support teacher training and school management.

Microsoft:⁸ This partnership, formed in 2004, aims to support the use of technology in transforming education with a primary focus on the EFA goals. One example of the many projects elaborated co-jointly is the Innovative Teachers Program that aims to improve teacher's practice.⁹

Innovative Financing for Education

A full discussion of the varied mechanisms which have been proposed under the rubric 'innovative finance' is beyond the scope of this paper.¹⁰ However, to demonstrate the breadth of possibility and creative thinking, it is useful to provide some selected examples, which were identified in UNESCO's recent Future Forum on Innovative Financing for Education as having the most potential:¹¹

Soccer (FIFA)-Levy: UNESCO's 2010 Global Monitoring Report has proposed a small levy (0.4%) on the revenue of some of Europe's premier league football clubs. This would be estimated to raise around \$ 48 million

⁶ Genevois: 5

⁷ http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_and_nokia_sign_partnership_to_use_mobile_technologies_to_further_goals_of_education_for_all/

⁸ <http://www.microsoft.com/education/leadership/partnerships/default.aspx>

⁹ http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=22997&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

¹⁰ For an exhaustive inventory and discussion of innovative financing mechanisms see: UNESCO, Future Seminar on 'Innovative Financing for Education,' 14 September 2010 and Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development, '2+3=8 Innovating in Financing Education: Report of the Writing Committee to the Task Force on Innovative Financing for Education,' September 2010.

¹¹ These examples were abridged from UNESCO, 2010b: 42-43. Due to space limitations only proposals for raising international resources were included here. Please refer to the document for the equally important discussion on how domestic resources may be better mobilized.

per year. The association with the sport would also help to raise the profile of education.

World Cup Legacy Fund: A fund established by the host country to help education at home and in poor countries.

Teachers for Education for All Fund: Education International, an international teachers union, have proposed a 1% voluntary levy on teacher union dues in rich countries.

Levy on financial transactions: the proposed tax destined for global development could benefit education. Oxfam have estimated that this levy could raise \$ 400 billion for development every year.¹²

A remittance levy for schools: a voluntary 0.1% levy on remittance could raise \$ 300 million per year. If transaction costs are reduced, this could save money for remitters compared to present arrangements.

Debt Swaps for Education: UNESCO has been advocating for the use of this instrument to alleviate the financial burdens of the least developed countries.

Buying down International Development Association (IDA) debt for education: similar mechanisms already exist, but the scheme has not yet been extended to education.

An endowment fund for education funded by sovereign wealth funds

Linking climate change financing to education: both general and specific education is essential to deal effectively with climate change and transition towards a green economy.

¹² Oxfam.

Annex

Recommendations: Gendering innovative financing for education

- **Targeting the marginalized:** as reflections progress and plans to trial initiatives bear fruit over the next year, particular attention should be paid to how innovations in financing and education can benefit the marginalized in general and women and girls specifically. One such example of the need to redress gender balance to provide positive role models for girls is the shortage of female teachers, especially in the sciences and maths.¹³
- **Clear messages of optimism:** the message that working on gender equality and EFA - MDG 2 and MDG 3 - can benefit all international development goals is a powerful one. Efforts should be increased to communicate this message more widely to capture the imagination of potential funders - whether private sector partners or governments - and to engage the general public's support behind this cause.
- **Clear communications:** Innovative financing in the health sector has been backed up by communication campaigns to promote the message that development aid works; one such example is the Living Proof campaign in support of GAVI.¹⁴ Goodwill ambassadors have also proven effective at communicating these messages to decision-makers and the general public.
- **Gender-responsive ICTs:** Sound policy is grounded on reliable data and information. Gender-disaggregated data should be built into the ICT systems of Education Ministries to allow for gender-responsive budgeting and results-measurement as education systems are tailored to serve the marginalized.

¹³ UNESCO, 2010d.

¹⁴ See: <http://www.one.org/international/livingproof/education/>

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