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pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

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 Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the Symposium  
on 'EFA in the Sultanate of Oman: from access to success'**

**UNESCO, 6 December 2006**

Honourable Minister of Education of Oman,  
Mr President of the General Conference,  
Mr Ambassador of Oman to France,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to say a few words at the end of your deliberations. First of all, let me once again congratulate the Sultanate of Oman for organizing this important symposium. May I extend my special thanks to those individuals who made the event possible, and in particular to Mr Yahya Bin Saud Al Sulaimi, the Minister of Education of Oman, Dr Musa Bin Jaafar Bin Hassan, the President of UNESCO's General Conference, and Mr Ambassador of Oman to France.

Let me also commend our Chairs and panellists for their high-quality interventions. You have just adopted a strong Communiqué, which reflects the rich and interesting discussions you have had over the last day and a half.

Events such as these are of the utmost importance in our efforts to achieve EFA. It is crucial that we have the opportunity to learn from each others' experience and to share good practices. In organizing this symposium, Oman has enabled countries that face common challenges to pool their knowledge and expertise and to identify effective solutions. Such South-South cooperation is essential to progress in EFA.

In my concluding remarks, I would like to highlight briefly some of the lessons that we have learned from Oman's progress in EFA. I notice that many of these points are included in the Communiqué. First and foremost, this symposium has pointed to the importance of national leadership. It has shown the rewards of significant and sustained investment in education. It has also demonstrated the importance of developing a coherent sector-wide education plan that is firmly anchored within a nation-wide development strategy. Critical to the success of Oman's EFA initiative was the fact that it was situated within an overall reform and renovation of the education system, and responded to the socio-economic aspirations of the nation.

Important, too, was the full appropriation of the EFA initiative by local communities, and its close identification with the country's rich cultural and historic heritage. Oman has demonstrated how to respond to the challenges of globalization and modernity by building on local and traditional values. These are the real ingredients of success, those that place the individual and the local community at the forefront, while strengthening the nation as a whole.

National leadership and local partnership are clearly key to success in EFA. However, another message of this symposium is the need for enhanced international support to education, especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The major issues here are those of coherence and effectiveness. Donors and multilateral agencies need to better harmonize their support, and align it more closely with country needs.

During this symposium, we have had the opportunity to look at several examples of how UNESCO is already working in this direction, both at the international and at the country level. The UNESCO Education Support Strategy (UNESS) process provides an up to-date assessment of country needs in education, enabling us to target our work much more effectively. In developing the EFA Global Action Plan, UNESCO has also taken the lead in harmonizing multilateral support to EFA, creating a framework for coherent and efficient delivery in country.

Many of these themes are captured in the Communiqué, which sends a strong message of our common resolve to advance the cause of EFA.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me assure you that UNESCO remains committed to providing a forum where national experiences in EFA can be analysed and exchanged. We believe that sharing experiences and good practices is one of the most important ways of accelerating progress in EFA. We also believe in the value – as Oman has shown here – of adopting an intersectoral approach, which looks at education within economic, social and cultural contexts. This symposium has provided a compelling demonstration of education's role in building more prosperous, more inclusive and more sustainable societies.

May I congratulate you on your hard work, and express my hope that the lessons learned during this Symposium provide the basis for renewed and reinvigorated efforts to achieve Education for All.

Thank you.