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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

**Remarks by Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
to the Forum**

“Quality Education through Effective Teacher Development”

Sri Lanka, 17 August 2016

Honourable Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education,

Professor Maithree Wickremesinghe, University of Kelaniya,

Mr W. M. Bandusena, Secretary to the Ministry of Education,

Dr Jayanthi Gunasekara, Director General of the *National Institute of Education*,

Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO Mr Tilak Ranaviraja,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this kind invitation to speak at the *South Asian Centre for Teacher Development*, under the auspices of UNESCO/

I am honoured to share this platform with Honourable Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education, as well as with Professor Maithree Wickremesinghe from the University of Kelaniya, who just gave us an extremely information presentation on gender mainstreaming in education.

I know the importance Sri Lanka attributes to education, to empowering girls and boys, women and men.

This has deep roots in Sri Lankan society, in every family, with every mother and father.

We see this in the will guiding the unity Government, to ensure every child receives quality education.

We see this embodied here, at the *South Asian Centre for Teacher Development*, the first of its kind in the region, in the determination to support teacher training across South Asia.

We see this taken forward by Sri Lanka's *National Institute of Education*, whose 'Open School Programme' was awarded the *UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize* on *International Literacy Day* last year, for offering alternative paths to learning to out-of-school youth and adults.

We saw this in the *National Actions Plans for Education for Peace and Sustainable Development*, launched in 2012, working across all relevant ministries.

We see it in the Sri Lanka's commitment to empower girls and women through quality education, including as part of the UNESCO project supported by China/HNA – and I know, Professor Maithree Wickremesinghe, your personal commitment here, for which I am deeply grateful.

The results are there for all to see.

Sri Lanka's holds a leading place in education across South Asia.

The country's literacy rates and levels of schooling are impressive at every level.

All of this is essential for inclusive and sustainable development – it is vital for social resilience – it is crucial to advance dialogue and respect, reconciliation and peace.

This is why quality education stands at the heart of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

This is an agenda for poverty eradication and sustainability – fundamentally, this is an agenda for human rights and dignity.

Teachers are essential to the success of this agenda.

This is the spirit of Target (4c), which reads:

By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small-island developing States.

Our starting point is clear.

Nothing can substitute for a good teacher.

No new technology, no books.

Teachers hold the key to quality education.

Putting education first means putting teachers first.

Across the world, countries are making progress, to recruit, train and retain quality teachers.

But we remain far from the mark.

We face challenges at many levels.

The challenge, first, of numbers.

Between 2015 and 2030, demand for teachers in low- and lower-middle income countries is projected to rise by 60 percent, from 22 million to 37 million.

Demand for preschool teachers is projected to quadruple, from 1 million to 4 million -- while demand for secondary teachers will rise 50 percent, from 9 million to 13 million.

Quality is the second challenge.

In recruiting and in retaining teachers, we need to improve the quality of learning and teaching, and outcomes -- through enhanced teacher training, sharper teaching methods, stronger gender-sensitive approaches.

This must include a new focus on education for human rights, education for global citizenship -- to strengthen skills for dialogue around diversity, to bolster new forms of global solidarity.

In this respect, UNESCO's *International Bureau of Education* established a global curriculum network in 2015, now bringing together over 130 countries, to reconceptualize and reposition curricula to reflect 21st century challenges and complexities -- the Institute is also taking forward a dialogue on the integration of universally agreed values in national curricula, as part of action to prevent the rise of violent extremism.

Empowering girls and women must be a special focus throughout education systems -- through law and policy reviews, in teacher training and pedagogy, in learning conditions, to ensure safe schools for all learners.

Last year, we published a *Guide for Gender Equality in Teacher Education Policy and Practices*, to help transform institutional cultures.

This means working beyond education ministries, across sectors -- this is the spirit guiding the UNESCO, United Nations Women and UN Population Fund (UNFPA) for *Empowering Adolescent Girls and Women through Education*.

Bolstering teacher support is essential -- we must do more to value the essential role played by teachers for all society, to back them with the resources, conditions and management they deserve.

This requires stronger monitoring and accountability, to cut absenteeism, especially in rural, remote, and poor areas, which carries such a high price for children and society.

This means making the most of new information and communication technologies, to support teachers in training, in resources, for tracking and reporting.

At every level, I am convinced we need to widen teacher participation and voice.

For UNESCO, therefore, we need reform across the board – in recruitment, in initial and ongoing training, mentoring and support, in the deployment of teachers where needs are highest, in retention, in overall governance.

Together with Sri Lanka, we are acting at every level, to support the development and review of teacher policies and strategies, to bolster the evidence base to reach the new education targets, to build capacity.

This includes support to curriculum design.

This means promoting implementation of the 1966 *ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers* and the 1997 *UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel*.

This take the shape of awareness-raising and global advocacy -- through *World Teachers' Day*, on 5 October, with ILO, Education International, UNICEF and UNDP, through the *UNESCO-Hamdani bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers*.

This means stronger partnerships across the board – through the *International Task Force on Teachers*, for which UNESCO is the secretariat, as well as with *Education International*, supported by the *Global Partnership for Education*, to enhance the capacity of teachers and their organizations in social dialogues with governments.

I would underline also our work to embed gender equality in technical and vocational education and training, namely in the framework of the new *UNESCO TVET Strategy*.

I know the commitment of the Government of Sri Lanka to increasing the numbers of teachers and their quality – through professional development programmes, through innovative new schemes to recruit some 50,000 teacher assistants in rural areas.

There is powerful experience here to share across the region – and I see this as the importance of the *South Asian Centre for Teacher Development*.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics projects that South and West Asia will need 3.9 million teachers by 2030 to universalise primary education and 3.8 million for replacement of attrition.

The challenges are steep.

Tackling them is key to success *across* the 2030 Agenda.

Last September, at the United Nations, His Excellency President Sirisena made the stakes clear:

Development should result in the empowerment of women and youth and assure security for children. Frustration in youth usually leads to conflict. Nevertheless, youth is the driving force for sustainable development.

This is the position we share.

Education is a human right essential to dignity and empowerment.

Education is a multiplier for more inclusive and sustainable development.

Education is a strong force for gender equality, poverty eradication, sustainability.

Education is, fundamentally, the most lasting foundation for dialogue and reconciliation, for peace.

In all this, teachers play a role that is irreplaceable, for healthy, open and just societies.

In this spirit, I thank Sri Lanka once again for its leadership, and I look forward to deepening ever more our partnership, to support teachers, to nurture the power of education to craft a better future for all.

Thank you.