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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON ACHIEVING GLOBAL EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA) BY 2015, INCLUDING THE FOLLOW-UP TO AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETINGS ON EDUCATION IN DAKAR, GENEVA AND OSLO AND THE IMPACT OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS ON THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THE EFA GOALS

SUMMARY

By 180 EX/Decision 7, the Executive Board requested the Director-General to submit to it at its 182nd session an analytical report on the main obstacles and their causes to attaining the Dakar EFA goals by 2015 and alternative ways of improving UNESCO's efforts to achieve the EFA objectives. Furthermore, by 181 EX/Decision 57, the Board requested the Director-General to present at the same session a preliminary report on the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the efforts of developing countries to achieve the EFA goals. Also, by 181 EX/Decision 58, the Board invited the Director-General to present to it at its 182nd session an analytical report on the follow-up to and implementation of the recommendations of the meetings on education held in Dakar, Geneva and Oslo at the national, regional and international levels.

There are no additional policy implications of a financial or administrative nature.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 28.

1. Since the World Education Forum (2000) in Dakar, Senegal, stronger political commitment on the part of governments and the international community has resulted in remarkable progress towards the achievement of Education for All (EFA). Globally, an additional 40 million children are enrolled in primary schools and progress towards gender parity has been made in nearly all countries. The most prominent advances are observed in those regions furthest from achieving EFA – notably sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.

2. The deep financial crisis threatens to undermine this progress, particularly for countries that experienced steady economic development in the last decade. The economic downturn is likely to

limit the capacity of a large number of low- and middle-income countries and have a direct impact on education budgets and – more broadly – on all human development goals, from reducing poverty and fighting hunger to improving child and maternal health and sanitation. Simply put, the hard-won gains in education will not be preserved without a strategic and targeted focus on the most vulnerable populations.

This document provides an overview of UNESCO's actions to further the EFA agenda at both global and national levels in the light of the current economic downturn, illustrating in particular efforts to enhance quality, advance inclusive education, strengthen education systems and promote a holistic vision of EFA within a broader education and development context. Preliminary information on the impact of the financial crisis on developing countries is outlined in this document, with more detailed findings included in an information document submitted to the Executive Board at its 182nd session.

Global coordination – aligning of priorities

3. Every international meeting during the past year has stressed the importance of protecting the most vulnerable and investing in social sectors as a response to the crisis. The G-20 London Leaders' Communiqué (2 April 2009), the Chief Executives Board Communiqué (5 April 2009), the Thematic Debate of the 181st session of UNESCO's Executive Board (25 April 2009) and the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development (June 2009) all underscored this.

4. UNESCO continues to reaffirm the centrality of education for development and crisis recovery, calling for sustained and counter-cyclical investments in education in the context of the global economic downturn. These opportunities have included the United Nations General Assembly Thematic Debate on Education in Emergencies (New York, March 2009), the Forum for Arab Parliamentarians for Education (Cairo, April 2009), the Forum of African Parliamentarians for Education (Dakar, May 2009) and the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (Kuala Lumpur, June 2009). In the first half of the year, the Organization also collaborated with the Italian Chair of the G-8 within the framework of preparations for the 2009 G-8 meeting (L'Aquila, July 2009). Moreover, UNESCO hosted a meeting of the G-8 Education Expert Group (Paris, March 2009) in order to press for a stronger message on education's crucial role in development during the G-8 Summit.

5. As the United Nations agency charged with coordinating the drive to achieve education for all, UNESCO has stepped up its international policy coordination in the context of today's global crises. This coordination requires a common understanding of challenges, a shared vision of how to confront them, and trust between all partners involved in the process. As such, UNESCO took the lead in drafting a joint letter on behalf of the heads of the five EFA convening agencies (UNESCO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank). The letter was sent in April to all United Nations resident coordinators and country representatives, calling for enhanced inter-agency collaboration in support of national EFA efforts. The influential role of education for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was reiterated and steps for further collaboration at country level outlined. Dialogue was also initiated to develop a joint global advocacy plan of action and to improve coordination of advocacy efforts. UNESCO is also continuing to be a very active player in the EFA-Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) processes.

6. Several UNESCO offices have already expressed their interest in building on existing inter-agency cooperation and have begun to translate the joint letter into action. In the Central Asian region, for example, the UNESCO Cluster Office in Almaty, UNICEF Astana, UNDP and the World Bank are conducting a joint survey on the Impact of the Economic Crisis on social services, including education, to use in revising national plans and strategies.

7. Coordination was also key for this year's Global Action Week (20-26 April 2009), an annual global advocacy campaign led by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and supported by UNESCO and other EFA stakeholders. This year's campaign, focusing on "Youth and adult literacy and lifelong learning", was marked by thousands of activities organized in all five regions and mobilization of nearly 13 million people worldwide.

Investing in social sectors – global advocacy for protecting public spending on education

8. At the national level, investments in safety net and social protection programmes can protect the poor from the worst effects of the crisis and enable children to pursue education. Evidence from past crises and current research suggests that lower growth will put social sector budgets under fiscal pressure, while reducing households' disposable income for education. Many countries are cutting social expenditure budgets, resulting in freezes on new school constructions and teacher recruitment and salaries. Lessons from the East Asia crisis of the 1990s included, in poorer families, the withdrawal of older children from primary school and delayed entry of the youngest, often coupled with increases in child labour. At the same time, demand for public provision of education rose as parents pulled their children out of private schools. For wealthier populations, lack of employment opportunities led to increased pressure for secondary and tertiary systems as demand for more specialized training increased.

9. In parallel, governments could cut back on aid, as during financial crises of the 1990s (Scandinavian countries and Japan). Research by the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) finds that 43 out of 48 low-income countries lack the capacity to provide a pro-poor fiscal stimulus. For many of these countries, international aid is imperative to enable educational development. The 22% drop in aid to basic education in 2007 is of enormous concern for EFA, especially in the most challenged regions and countries. Steadfast support for achieving the internationally agreed development goals is more vital than ever. There should be no justification for reductions in national spending and international aid to education. It is crucial that fiscal packages with a strong education focus be adhered to in developed countries (the United States has devoted over US \$100 billion to education in its economic stimulus package and the Minister of Education of Singapore predicts that, despite the downturn, education spending in Singapore will increase by 25% by 2013) and facilitated to low-income countries that have limited government capacity.

10. Any cuts in external financing will have direct impact on enrolment. Ahead of the L'Aquila G-8 Summit, the Director-General wrote to G-8 Heads of State and Governments urging them to maintain and increase aid to education. To this end, the EFA-FTI remains an effective delivery mechanism for assisting countries in achieving education for all. The estimated funding gap of the Catalytic Fund of \$1.2 billion for 2009 and 2010 is of great concern.

UNESCO's response at the national level

11. UNESCO is assisting its Member States in better managing national education systems and translating a holistic approach to EFA into policy and practice. The Organization has assisted countries in preparing credible national plans that include pro-poor fiscal adjustments and scaled-up support for protection of education. As such, UNESCO has also facilitated the EFA-FTI process to secure funding in Haiti and the Central African Republic; has led the partner coordination group in formulating the sector strategy and preparing the EFA-FTI proposal in Cameroon; and is active in an increasing number of FTI Local Education Groups.

12. To help the Organization better align its work with country needs and existing initiatives, UNESCO National Education Support Strategy (UNESS) documents, now available at various stages of preparation for approximately 85 countries, provide UNESCO with evidence-based analytical frameworks for education cooperation with Member States.

13. UNESCO's Section for Education Policy Analysis and Strategies launched a survey for field offices to assess the impacts of the crisis on education. An evaluation commissioned by the GMR

is also under way to assess the costing needs and policy gaps in three EFA challenged countries. The evaluation will analyse and review different policy and financing strategies associated with reaching marginalized groups and estimate external financing gaps (please see Addendum for further details).

14. The crisis also presents an opportunity for countries to strengthen governance, address corruption and improve efficiency. The OECD/DAC Working Party on aid effectiveness has called for support to partner countries in preparing action plans that incorporate commitments outlined in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. According to the World Bank, effective national strategies will involve a combination of focused investment, financing for essential recurrent inputs and supportive policy change. Measures to protect the most vulnerable should be part of a systemic effort to develop a broad-based social security system and the overall poverty reduction strategy.

15. UNESCO is acting to strengthen monitoring and analysis of the crisis through close collaboration between the Education Sector and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), as well as with other partners, including the EFA convening agencies, to set up efficient monitoring mechanisms to track developments.

Dakar – Geneva – Oslo. Focus on quality enhancement and inclusive education

16. It is also imperative that the success of education programmes and investments be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively, with an emphasis on learning and development outcomes. In all countries, education quality and relevance are debated and the ability of education systems to adequately equip learners of all ages with the necessary knowledge, values, competencies and skills to face the challenges of today's and tomorrow's world is being questioned.

17. The concept of "inclusive education" is mainstreamed in many UNESCO activities, founded on the rights-based approach to education. Responding to the needs of the underserved and marginalized populations was highlighted in the outcome documents of the Seventh High-Level Group Meeting on EFA (Dakar, December 2007), the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) (Geneva, November 2008) and the Eighth High-Level Group Meeting on EFA (Oslo, December 2008). Discussions and outcomes of the ICE recognized the importance of a broadened concept of inclusive education to address the diverse needs of all learners. The follow-up processes of these major education conferences at global, regional and country levels are framed by UNESCO's existing work on equity and inclusion in both formal and non-formal settings, including through policy advice, technical support, capacity development activities and advocacy to ensure relevance of learning to personal, social and economic needs.

18. Recommendations from all three of these meetings urged policy-makers to make equity a priority in education. The Oslo Declaration encouraged the development of education interventions that target low-performing regions, schools and individuals, focusing on innovative strategies needed to reach the most disadvantaged groups. This built upon the Dakar Communiqué, which notably encouraged countries to undertake a mapping exercise to determine more precisely the characteristics of excluded groups.

19. At the global level, the Organization developed the UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education in early 2009 to support countries in developing and implementing policies, and an Operational Guide on "Six Steps to Abolishing Primary School Fees" was published by UNICEF and the World Bank, after consultations with educational experts, including several from UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning. These guidelines will be complemented by a database of innovative good practices, "inclusion in action", that will be prepared in the coming year in collaboration with the IBE network on curriculum development and external partners. A policy brief on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Inclusion was also

developed in May 2009 that will feed into preparations for the World Conference on ECCE (Moscow, September 2010).

20. Moreover, UNESCO Headquarters, field offices and institutes are promoting policy dialogue and disseminating key messages and outcomes of these conferences to policy-makers, educators, researchers, curriculum specialists and teacher trainers through e-fora, regional seminars and workshops, research papers, online publications, guidelines, training modules, learning resources and evidence-based practices. The “road maps towards inclusion” prepared during the 13 ICE preparatory meetings and conferences provide a solid foundation for this work. Recent initiatives include the following:

- the Basic Education in Africa Programme (BEAP), currently being piloted in the Gambia, Ethiopia and Côte d’Ivoire and soon to be extended to the United Republic of Tanzania, provides a framework to address equity, in particular through the question of competency-based curriculum;
- a workshop for the Arab Region on “a broadened concept of inclusive education” was jointly organized by UNESCO Beirut and UNESCO-IBE (July 2009);
- in the Latin American and Caribbean region, an Observatory was set up by UNESCO, in cooperation with the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), to promote and monitor inclusive education policies and develop guidelines to assist countries in identifying excluded groups and indicators that assess the quality of inclusive practices in schools;
- UNESCO Bangkok and the UIS worked closely together in the Asia and the Pacific region to enhance Member States’ capacity to identify out-of-school children, as well as those who are attending school but not learning, including during the 10th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators (May 2009); and
- UNESCO offices in Moscow, the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia (MOES) and UNESCO-IBE are collaborating to prepare for an ICE follow-up meeting for the CIS region on “EFA, enhancement of quality education and curriculum development” (Yerevan, Armenia, 29-30 September 2009).

21. UNESCO is also actively present in several global initiatives that address issues of inclusion, including the Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education, the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Adolescent Girls, the EFA Flagship Programme on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities and the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education. UNESCO has been working with the members of the Global Task Force on Child Labour to provide coordinated support to 10 selected countries to cope with the impact of the crisis on education and to ensure adequate response measures to child labourers. Likewise, the Organization contributes through the IATF on Adolescent Girls to push for practical action towards fulfilling marginalized girls’ rights as children and as young women.

Investing in teachers – entry point to strengthening education systems

22. Countries that are able to maintain and build up the skills level of their work forces during the recession will be better poised to take advantage of the opportunities that a recovery offers. In this regard, investing in teacher professional development/training and in infrastructure – such as public buildings for education – could represent a major opportunity to address both employment and development challenges. The ILO states that several countries, including China and Saudi Arabia, have already announced significant increases in education spending, including school construction, as part of rural development programmes. Mexico also intends to increase investment in education, especially in labour-intensive infrastructure, as a means of creating jobs and investing resources in economic development.

23. UNESCO supports the development of appropriate teacher policies, with a strong focus on the gaps and needs of sub-Saharan Africa, through UNESCO's Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA). A TTISSA pre-service teacher training review is currently under way, with plans to conduct regional policy research on the perception of teachers with regards to EFA in Africa, particularly with respect to girls' participation in education, and to produce a toolkit that uses a rights-based approach to pre-service teacher training. Similarly, in Asia and the Pacific, pre-service teacher training reviews will be conducted in select countries to analyse rights-based dimensions of policies, curriculum, methodologies and materials. Regional policy research on the quality and status of female teachers and their impact on EFA will be conducted, focusing on girls' participation in education.

24. Immense challenges remain to reduce the 18-million teacher gap necessary to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015. Since teacher salaries account for the bulk of education spending in all countries, they are vulnerable to cuts and delays in tight fiscal conditions. To address these issues and more, the Oslo Declaration endorsed the creation of the International Task Force on "Teachers for EFA", a voluntary global alliance of EFA partners working together to address the "teacher gap". UNESCO provided technical support, in line with its EFA mandate, and convened two meetings of the International Task Force in Paris in March and June 2009. These meetings contributed to designing the structure of the International Task Force and its activities. It was agreed that the Task Force's dedicated secretariat would be housed at UNESCO Headquarters, financially supported by several bilateral and multilateral donors, with the aim of implementing the time-bound activities of the Action Plan. Financial arrangements and a recruitment process for the secretariat are under way, and it is expected to be fully operational as of September 2009.

Holistic view of EFA and beyond

25. All six EFA goals are important for raising education standards but the economic crisis heightens the risk of only focusing on a select number of goals, leaving millions of children, youth and adults on the margins. All of the EFA goals, however, are connected, and should be viewed within a broader education and development context. The international community must strive to ensure that education systems encourage equity and inclusion, quality learning, flexibility and innovation – the foundations for providing global education for all. Increasingly, the EFA agenda stresses issues that go beyond UPE such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), sustainable development and capacity development. Reports from field offices indicate that investments in early childhood development and literacy programmes are particularly vulnerable in a period of economic recession. To increase their relevance in the context of current global constraints, adult and youth literacy programmes could be more closely linked to micro-finance, income-generation and life skills. Technical and vocational education and skills training for youth and adults could be upgraded to help stem youth unemployment and to include entrepreneurial education. Participation, research and social responsibility in higher education should also be addressed not only because enrolments at tertiary level are steadily increasing, but also because of this sector's strategic role in meeting global challenges, including education for all.

26. The Oslo Declaration highlights the need for a more intersectoral approach between education, health and nutrition in order to achieve the EFA goals. School feeding programmes enable children to learn better, as well as being incentives to attend school. In this context, UNESCO has been engaging with UNICEF, the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to further explore opportunities to collaborate on integrated initiatives for young children. The 2010 World Conference on ECCE will be a key platform to seek greater international support for this work. As the World Bank states, additional resources can also be channelled to targeted programmes such as food distribution, school meal programmes, provision of free school uniforms, clean water and sanitation facilities in schools to ensure security and privacy, especially for girls.

Looking ahead

27. It is more important than ever to adhere to a global long-term vision characterized by a commitment to reduce poverty and inequalities, advance social justice and better match skills with labour market needs. The time is propitious to reaffirm the right to education, promote cultural understanding, tolerance, peace and sustainable societies. Investments in global poverty reduction and education can support recovery, and further advance progress towards the achievement of EFA. Continued investment in human resources and the development of innovative and technological advances will be crucial for counteracting the crisis and economic recovery. The crisis should be viewed as an opportunity to demonstrate stronger international understanding and cooperation in the field of education. In this regard, it is important to ensure effective monitoring of the impact of the crises on human development goals. This is a time to act and prove that investing in education can lead to recovery and real change.

Action expected of the Executive Board

28. In the light of the foregoing, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 180 EX/Decision 7, 181 EX/Decision 57 and 181 EX/Decision 58,
2. Having examined document 182 EX/10,
3. Reaffirming the importance of sustained and counter-cyclical investments in education in the context of preserving the gains made in education since 2000 and overcoming the current global financial crisis and economic downturn,
4. Welcoming the efforts of the Director-General in stepping up UNESCO's international policy coordination role in favour of education for all through, among other things, enhanced inter-agency collaboration among the five EFA convening agencies at both global and country levels, establishment of the Task Force on "Teachers for EFA" and follow-up to the outcomes of the major education meetings convened by the Organization in Dakar (December 2007), Geneva (November 2008) and Oslo (December 2008),
5. Also welcoming the progress made by UNESCO in supporting countries to prepare national plans for the education sector, in particular by establishing mechanisms that more closely align its work with country needs and existing initiatives and undertaking evaluations to assess the impact of various policy and financing strategies,
6. Taking note of UNESCO's considerable efforts to reaffirm the centrality of education for development and continually advocate for developing strategic, targeted measures that address the needs of the most vulnerable populations,
7. Invites the Director-General to continue his endeavours to promote international understanding of and political commitment to a holistic vision for EFA within a broader education and development context, and to support countries to translate this commitment into feasible, rights-based national policies and plans that encourage equity, inclusion and quality learning;
8. Requests the Director-General to report to it at its 185th session on international progress with regard to Education for All and UNESCO's contributions thereto.