**INTRODUCTION**

Good morning, colleagues.

The Quadrennial Report is a summary of what we have done, together, to carry out the decisions of our last Congress. And I am happy to say that our collective efforts, show considerable progress on advocacy, capacity building, research, communications, and solidarity.

As there is not yet a “standardized test” for international organizations, you will have to grade us based on common sense. Towards the end of the written report, we have included some of the “metrics”, if you will, which give you a fair overview of the scope and volume of our work.

Growth and membership participation is one way of determining progress. Let us welcome the 39 organisations from 28 countries that were admitted as members of Education International since 2011. Their membership means that we have surpassed the 32 million members’ mark as of 1 April 2015.

In Cape Town, we re-affirmed that we are the voice of the profession and should sit at all tables where the future of our sector is being discussed. If one picture is worth a thousand words, please have a look at the photograph on the first page of the quadrennial report that shows Susan with the heads of all UN agencies involved in global education matters. Although I do not want to over-estimate the significance of such meetings, we do know that when you do not sit at the table you run the risk of ending up on the menu. In Cape Town we also recognised that change, ultimately, would come through political pressure by mobilizing and organizing at national and local levels.

The Unite for Quality Education Campaign, launched on 6 October 2013, exceeded our expectations, both in terms of your engagement and the influence on the international education agenda. 319 campaign programmes and events were organized in sixty-one countries involving one third of our membership.

Two years ago, the UN had no intention of including education as a stand-alone goal in its post-2015 development agenda. But now they do. It is one of the concrete results of our Unite for Quality Education Campaign. Now we need to move national governments to support that goal when a final decision is taken by the UN General Assembly this September. That decision will imply greater international education funding - domestically and in terms of assistance - in the coming decade. I strongly encourage each organization represented in this room to take action to ensure that your government supports the inclusion of an education goal with a specific target on teachers in the new UN framework.

We have also stepped up our work in support of Education Support Personnel. They are a fast growing sector that is at the point of the lance in terms of out-sourcing and casualization and play a crucial role in the delivery of quality education for the whole child, which is not sufficiently recognised. There are other achievements of direct benefit to our affiliates that we are able to report to Congress:

• The establishment of national, bi-lateral dialogues (on education policies) between EI affiliates and Education Ministers of countries that are part of the Global Partnership for Education. In some cases, member unions had never met with their own Education Ministers. We were able to change that.

• The creation of an EI/OECD multilateral mechanism for consultation and dialogue on the future of the teaching profession between our member unions and education ministers in OECD member states.

• The adoption of ILO policy guidelines on qualifications, working conditions and the professional status of Early Childhood Education personnel, was another significant breakthrough. These guidelines can be used by EI affiliates for organising, but also to improve the conditions for ECE personnel already represented.

• We also launched in 2013 an International Protocol on the Introduction and use of ICT in Education for public authorities and technology corporations which was subscribed to by Intel Corp, (one of the largest corporations in this field). This is an important step in an ongoing dialogue on the best uses of ICT to support rather than undermine the profession of teaching.

**PROTECTING OUR SCHOOL SYSTEMS**

But despite those achievements, there have also been serious setbacks. Let me mention three:

**One** - We are now discussing the development goals for the next 15 years while the current UN Millennium Development Goal - Universal Primary Education For All Children by the end of 2015 - has not yet been accomplished. Only four months away from that deadline, there are still 58 million children out of school, while over 200 million go to school but do not learn. Those who still remain excluded are the poor, girls, disabled children, and children in rural, conflict and post-conflict situations and migrants, among others. Almost one-third of countries still have not achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education.

**Two** - Across the world, we are seeing a tide of conservative policies; policies that are placing our public services under attack. Education is caught squarely in the crosshairs. Austerity measures, imposed after the severe damage inflicted on the economy by financial markets, are being touted as the solution to economies’ fiscal problems – problems that began far from the classroom and that were not subject to democratic governance.

It is tempting to give examples of the destructive effects of education cut backs over the past four years. I will give you only one: Greece, where schools have been closed, education programmes have been slashed, where many of our colleagues have been laid off or have suffered draconic salary cuts. A couple of months ago a young teacher who had taken a job on one of the Greek islands told me: “It is not possible to get by on a teachers’ salary. So they have advised me I better also learn how to fish!”

We have, where possible, challenged the conditions imposed by the EU, the European Central Bank and the IMF. Greece requires real debt relief and it is a shame that European Governments did not put the Greek people before their short-sighted domestic politics and agree on something that will enable, not kill, economic recovery. Colleagues, we will stand with our Greek colleagues until both justice and common sense have prevailed!

**Three** - Worldwide inequity and poverty are on the rise. We are told over and over again, that the “miracle” solution is to come from the private sector. Well that is definitely not the case when it comes to paying their taxes. In the autumn of 2011, we completed a study on corporate taxation in the real economy showing how global corporations avoid and evade paying taxes through various internal and external practices. Huge sums are lost to the public coffers; at least 100s of billions of dollars. At the G20 summit in 2012 in Mexico I confronted Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF, with these staggering figures and suggested that IMF should start helping governments close these fiscal loopholes and collect hidden revenues rather than pressing them to slash education budgets. She promised to look into it. Well, they have not yet called back. (They must have been) too busy bullying Greece.

At the same time that Global Capital is discredited for having given birth to a series of crises and for having avoided massive tax payments, trust in those market actors continues among many politicians of nearly all political persuasions. As much as it is difficult for a professional educator to admit, there may, in fact, be some people who are simply uneducable.

In this climate, we have seen a surge of private sector initiatives to get hold of the education “market”. Much to our dismay, organisations such as the World Bank have claimed that low fee; for profit education will help poor countries achieve their EFA targets. Last year, the African Development Bank joined the call for private sector involvement in primary education. Well, we strongly disagree, and asked them whether they were suggesting that poor parents must choose between feeding their children, giving them proper healthcare or sending them to school.

Listen to this: A nine year old girl in Ghana tells me how happy she is to go to school. Every other day she is able to attend class; Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I ask her: What are you doing on Tuesday, Thursday and on the weekend. She points at the traffic lights down the road. That is her favourite spot. She is a street vendor. She sells water. During the rush hour, she earns just enough to afford one day at school.

This girl is one of a fast growing group of children who follow “pay as you learn” programmes; the latest hoax, rip off, if you wish, in the race to achieve education for all, or more accurately, to create a new market: the poverty market.

Let us be very clear: We reject the “pay as you learn” concept. Not only because it may force students into child labour. We have also found that edu-businesses such as Omega and Bridge (Write down those two names!) try to increase their profit margins by using teaching templates and scripts while employing unqualified personnel paid at a fraction of a teachers' salary. Suffice it to say that we need to help those teachers organize, become true professionals, and establish a dialogue with their employers.

We are not against the market. We do not oppose businesses that build schools or produce learning materials either. They have done this since the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century. Where we draw the line is where corporations run our schools like businesses on a for- profit basis and increase social inequity, where they set up supply chains, or where they invade teachers’ professional space and dictate what and how to teach.

We know from our research that the simplistic transfer of ideas from the corporate world will not advance the quality of our school systems. The idea that you can somehow improve quality by introducing standardized testing, league tables and performance pay, by ranking schools, by measurement, is wishful thinking. It does not work. What it will do, however, is generate angry teachers, stressed students, frustrated principals and lots of paper work.

And we are not alone. In 2012 the OECD issued a study concluding that competitive school markets may lead to greater segregation of students with severe effects on education outcomes. The evidence is clear; to make quality teaching and learning a reality for educators and students, equity must be a priority. Creating quality and equity is the responsibility of all governments. They are not and never will be the natural tendencies of markets.

Chile has taught us a lesson. When the authorities started viewing and handling education as a market, subsidizing schools with education vouchers, it resulted in an education system with the highest segregation in the world. I salute our Latin American region for having taken such a strong stance against the neo-liberal frenzies hitting some of their countries.

Colleagues, our public school systems are the most successful public enterprises ever. We must resist any attempt to weaken them. That is also why the Executive Board decided to launch – within the framework of the Unite for Quality Education campaign – a new program to counter privatization and commercialization and to challenge those public authorities that allow or invite our sector to be invaded by profit seekers, and to directly confront the involved enterprises.

There is another and directly related concern. Some of you may remember the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) that was adopted in 1994. Education International was one of the first and certainly, the strongest organization mobilizing against the inclusion of “education services” in that trade agreement. I thought we had defeated the beast. Well, I was wrong. It has risen from the dead, a zombie to haunt us again. But this time, the beast has a different name: Trade in Services Agreement or TISA - a name that sounds like a hurricane developing in the tropics, and may be just as destructive. Unlike GATS, however, TISA is being negotiated in secret. One of our major sources of information on TISA is WikiLeaks.

Only recently, we learned that four nations, Australia, Norway, New Zealand and Colombia, are secretly promoting the inclusion of “education services” in this new treaty. We have exposed their conduct and insisted that they stop auctioning off our school systems. Clearly, when governments close deals secretly, and when there is no consultation with labour unions and civil society; these agreements have no democratic legitimacy whatsoever.

Further and Higher education is a particularly vulnerable sector and we have built coalitions with students and civil society groups to raise awareness of the dangers of commodified and privately traded research and higher education. Within the Bologna Process we were able to get a commitment from 48 higher education ministers to improve teaching and learning environments. But we need to take a new step. With student opportunities being sold out, with faculties being closed because they have no market value, with academic freedoms being sacrificed, with precarious work skyrocketing, we need to mobilize resistance as part of our Unite for Quality Education Campaign and invite the international student movement to join us.

**RECLAIMING THE PROFESSION**

In a market driven, competitive world, we are at risk of being transformed from educators into instructors working with templates and “other people’s scripts”. Such systems of production do not require trained professionals and the investment of time and effort into understanding children, their needs, and how they learn. Yes, we risk losing what attracted us to teaching in the first place; the possibility of making a real difference in the lives of our students.

But, in the international community we have been able to win the argument that teaching is a profession, an occupation of highly educated professionals, that education quality first of all depends on quality teaching, that governments need to invest in the initial training and professional development of educators, and that, our education unions are the representative voice of the teaching profession.

In the ILO, where we succeeded to obtain policy guidelines for our ECE colleagues, in UNESCO and the UN, where the profession has taken a front seat in developing the post 2015 education agenda, as well as in the OECD, where our views on teachers’ self-efficacy and leadership were recognized, and with whom, as I have said earlier, we were able to establish an international mechanism for dialogue on the future of our profession. We also made great progress with the Global Partnership for Education, where we were able to influence spending of education development aid on improving quality teaching.

In fact, the World Bank is the only place where we have major difficulties getting our messages understood. They still seem to place their bets on private sector initiatives, on testing children rather than training teachers, and on evading and avoiding teachers’ organizations. They show all the typical signs of a slow learner, to whom we should give some special attention in the years ahead. At the Bank’s meeting this fall, we will take the wind out of their sails with the release of our latest study, a critical review of their teacher policy recommendations in the past two decades entitled: “20 Years of Underestimating Teachers”

As I have written in the introduction to the quadrennial report, winning an argument in the international arena is one thing, having political leaders at national, state and local levels follow that lead, is yet another.

Around the world, with some notable exceptions, teachers are increasingly working on fixed-term contracts, their work load is increasing, their professional space and autonomy is shrinking, their control of their working life is challenged, and their access to professional development limited. They often earn salaries that are below the average wage, and in some countries they are deprived of the qualifications, skills, support, and learning materials to teach well. The current generation of teachers is ageing and alarming numbers of new teachers are leaving the profession within the first years of employment.

We have surveyed teachers in 123 countries about their working conditions. 58% feel they are not at all consulted on measures taken by public authorities to reform education. And if they are, 33% say that their views are completely ignored.

Governments need to start listening to teachers. Teachers know what students need to succeed and they have a pretty good, balanced view of what constitutes “success”. Listening to teachers and education support personnel means listening to the classroom teacher, to the lecturer, to the librarian at their workplaces, but it also means listening to their education unions at all levels where education policy is developed. One education minister explained to me not long ago that a dialogue with union representatives was not really necessary as he was in direct contact with most of his teachers… on twitter.

In too many countries, meaningful dialogue on our professional challenges does not exist. Sometimes because of (let us call it) a misunderstanding about our role to solely defend our members terms and employment conditions. For example, in some national delegations to the annual OECD/EI summits, governments include teachers of the year and other handpicked colleagues as if to say that the elected union leaders are not really representing the profession. In some countries, governments would rather consult with self-pronounced education experts and private agencies than with the organized teaching profession.

This raises a fundamental challenge not only to the profession of teaching, but also to representative organisations in general and their democratic policy-making processes.

Would anybody imagine replacing elections with opinion polls?

If we want education that corresponds to public needs and democratic values, the challenge is not to re-define democracy or a public good to fit the demands of the market or short-term political needs, but rather to rectify and re-build respect for the values that have always inspired quality education and decent societies.

The first step in re-claiming the profession is to assert ourselves at all tables at which professional standards are set and education policy is made. This also means that our organizations take the lead in the teachers’ councils, registers, chambers, and whatever other names are being given to the agencies or bodies where parameters and standards are set for certifying our members.

This is not to be left to public authorities and employers, let alone to consultancies that pop-up everywhere, the education tumbleweeds, as I would call them, blowing from one town to another, living off an ever growing portion of our education budget. It is our profession. The combined expertise that education unions represent is our professional capital, our professional investment, as well as a responsibility that we have towards class room teachers and their students.

Today we are talking about global education, which– simply put – is a concept of education accessible worldwide and of educational objectives and skills sets reflecting global needs. But tomorrow, that discussion will focus on the teaching standards that these objectives and skills sets will require, and on related teachers’ competency profiles. We should not wait but rather initiate those discussions, consult with key stakeholders, and take the lead in developing standards and profiles; we must and we will re-claim the profession internationally and provide a framework for our affiliates’ professional work at the national level.

**STRENGTHENING OUR UNIONS**

Colleagues, there will be no education systems without an effective teaching profession and there will be no teaching profession without independent education unions. It is too bad that in too many places this irrefutable truth has not yet been recognised.

In the past four years, we have been confronted with too many infringements of international human and trade union rights standards. I do not have to explain to you that behind the long list of countries in section 3 of the quadrennial report there is blood, there is sweat and there are a lot of tears.

But to public authorities that continue to refuse to recognize our right to organize and resort to industrial action I am tempted to speak in Star Trek terms and say “resistance is futile”, meaning that, ultimately, they cannot prevent teachers’ organizations to be formed and to act, illegally if required. History is on our side.

We are outraged at the arrest of Esmail Abdi of the Iranian teachers’ association three weeks ago when he tried to obtain a visa for Canada to attend our Congress. We have demanded his immediate release, and we have asked the Secretary General of the UN and the Directors General of ILO and UNESCO to also intervene with the Iranian authorities. And they have done so.

In Bahrain, Mahdi Abu Dheeb, President of the Bahrain Teachers’ Association is serving a five-year prison term for having organized a teachers’ demonstration against human rights abuses, falsely construed as an attempt to overthrow the regime. With Amnesty International, ITUC and PSI we mounted a global campaign. We talked directly to the Bahraini authorities but, so far, to no avail.

Mahdi is still in jail and his health condition is deteriorating. A couple of weeks ago, he was awarded the Arthur Svensson International Prize for Trade Union Rights together with BTA Vice President Jalila al-Salman who is with us here today. She personifies the brave men and women in Bahrain and in other countries who no longer accept being discriminated against, being denied basic democratic freedoms and being brutally repressed. Could you, Jalila, please stand up?

Four years ago, we celebrated the Arab Spring and we recognised our affiliates for having played such an active role in promoting democracy, social justice and quality education for all in their countries. We established a Cross Regional Structure, organized conferences, provided assistance programs and helped them withstand anti-democratic forces, whether represented by authoritarian regimes, or by militant anti-secular movements that are gaining strength throughout the Middle East and North Africa. It is an uphill battle but one that we cannot afford to lose.

There is an old principle that we need to dust off: “No democracy without trade union rights, and no trade union rights without democracy”.

Some Western nations that claim to fully respect democracy are increasingly ignoring the fundamental international labour standards applicable to our sector. In the name of austerity, some have revoked the right to strike, have broken collective agreements and have taken away check off systems, not only undermining our acquired rights, but also, in effect, legitimizing human rights violations by such countries as Cambodia, Ecuador, Fiji, Honduras, Korea, Swaziland, Turkey, and Uzbekistan, to mention a few notorious offenders.

One of the most important, but not always visible restrictions on bargaining is limits on the scope of bargaining. Those limits often affect professional issues. In 2013, teachers in Denmark were locked out in order to impose rules that left working time to the discretion of principals. In several States in the US, professional and trade union issues have been pulled off the table, including teacher evaluation, performance-based compensation, and working time. In Tennessee, collective bargaining has been replaced with “collaborative conferencing” whatever that means. In Spain, teacher representatives were sent back to school after their union leave had been unilaterally withdrawn. The latest ... is "the union law" proposed by the British government curtailing union rights in England, Wales and Scotland. The ILO is working overtime.

There is some good news as well. We can point to accomplishments in remedying discrimination. Certainly, for example, where it concerns the understanding and respect for LGBT rights by and within our member organizations, in education, in society, even all the way to the US Supreme Court. But in some parts of the world, there is still a long way to go.

Being in Ottawa, and having received an indigenous welcome last night, we were reminded of the long way to go before justice is done to the indigenous peoples - in this country and in many others. Throughout its history EI has consistently advocated the achievement of the indigenous rights convention and the right to indigenous education - at the United Nations, at the ILO and at UNESCO. In the past four years we have focused on Latin America, researching the availability of intercultural and multilingual education in Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, and bringing indigenous education leaders together to develop equality strategies.

Yes, we have been On The Move for Equality. Our Founding President Mary Futrell told us at the second EI World’s Women’s Conference earlier this year that “we are a role model for other organisations around the world”. EI and its affiliated education unions have a particular responsibility in achieving equality objectives – not only to ourselves but also to our students. There is progress, but, as our quadrennial survey has shown, much more is to be done. There is also our Gender Equality Action Plan, but we need to work harder to fully implement it.

We have worked with UNESCO and the UN Girls’ Education Initiative to address gender-based and other violence occurring in and around schools. And who could have thought when we last met in Cape Town four years ago that girls education would become the target of religious extremism, Malala being one of many victims.

In Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Taliban hunted women teachers working in girls' schools. Several were shot in the past two years. At our request, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon took the Pakistan government to task. We launched an advertising campaign in the main Pakistani newspapers urging the people of Pakistan to stand up and support their teachers and students. It did not prevent the assault on a school in Peshawar several months ago, where 141 persons were killed, including teachers trying to save their students.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram assassinated hundreds of teachers in the past five years and abducted teacher’s families; over 200 girls were kidnapped in April 2014 and some still remain missing, and more abductions and killings have taken place since then.

Just yesterday 32 students in Turkey, on their way to build libraries for Syrian refugees, were brutally assassinated.

Colleagues, we shiver, we protest, and we are appalled by the weak and ineffective responses of our public authorities. This in stark contrast to the incredible courage displayed by teachers who tried to protect their students and stop heavily armed men invading their class rooms. They stood up for the rights of their students. They refused to stop teaching and close their schools. But they paid the highest price a person can pay. Let their souls be blessed.

Schools have also become a target of warfare. Let me thank you for standing with our colleagues in Palestine, who suffered under missile attacks last summer, as did our colleagues in Israel and in the Eastern part of the Ukraine; let me also thank you for standing by our colleagues in Iraq, in Syria, in Yemen, where so many colleagues lost their lives in conflicts in which they had no part. Your generous contributions enabled us to provide solidarity support, humanitarian assistance, and hope to affiliates hit by manmade as well as natural disasters.

Our solidarity and development work also entailed a tremendous volume of capacity building programs carried out in all regions, despite limited external funds available for that work. Let me thank all affiliates – listed in the back of the report - that have contributed to these programs. Many focused on boosting membership participation in the Unite For Quality Education Campaign, and many on empowering women and minority groups.

Mobilizing and organizing is the life-blood of any labour union. If we look at EI itself and at the Unite Campaign, membership participation is relatively high. Also, more than one third of 393 member organisations is represented on the Regional Committees and the World Executive Board, and that one third represents more than 60% of our total membership. The Quadrennial Report lists all meetings of our governing and advisory bodies. You may have noticed that while the International is divided into five regions, there are only four regional structures: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America. Because we are increasingly calling for input from regions, we will propose to establish a “light regional structure” for our affiliates in North America and the Caribbean, which will also facilitate better communication with and among them.

Colleagues when you do not take our 393 member unions as a measuring stick for membership participation, but your 32 million members, the figures are not very impressive. Too many classroom teachers and education support personnel are still not familiar with the impact of global education reform on their daily work and the important contributions they could make to our advocacy and to our online discussions and campaigns. Yes, we are an organization of organizations with a strong belief in democratic representation, and no, we will never give up on that. But we are more than a league of education union leaders. Successful international advocacy also and increasingly depends on the ability to build and mobilise audiences on line.

I am asking you – and not for the first time - to give more exposure to Education International - in your publications, on your websites, at your conferences. Help us reach your members. Help us organize, help us “ grow digitally”.

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude colleagues: Protecting our school systems, reclaiming our profession and strengthening our unions is the triangular task which Education International is to accomplish - through advocacy, through research, through legal and solidarity assistance and through capacity building and organizing. We have in the past four years made steps forward.

As we look ahead, EI and its member organisations must be, more than ever, the beacon of light that provides hope in the midst of darkness, that inspires passion to chase away apathy and that seeks truth, social justice, and democracy so intensely and profoundly that there is no room left for manipulation and cynicism.

Colleagues, we can all be proud of Education International and of our collective accomplishments. Our task, now, is to forge, from our trade union and professional experience and from the considerable wisdom that we have gathered, a global instrument or tool that is both powerful and precise; an instrument that we, together, can employ to enhance education systems, restore our profession, advance our trade unions and build fairer, more democratic societies.

And I, for one, am certain that we can and will meet that challenge.