**International Summit on the Teaching Profession,  
New York 14-15th March 2012  
Introductory Remarks  
by the General Secretary of Education International**

Let me start by conveying on behalf of the international teacher community our heartfelt condolences to the Flemish education minister and to our Belgian colleagues.

Secretary *Duncan*, Deputy Secretary-General *Leterme*, *Tony*, and all our colleagues at this unique event, I want to say thank you for keeping your nerve in putting so much time, effort and patience into making sure that this Summit takes place. And thank you too Ron for organising the sponsorship for this Summit. We would not be here without your hard work.

I say “keeping your nerve”, because, despite the dire economic circumstances in which we find ourselves, you in the US, some of us in the OECD and our teacher union affiliates, we have all decided to make a positive choice in favour of optimism,

* Optimism about the transforming power of education.
* And optimism about the future of all children and young people.

That optimism has already been justified. Not only have the country numbers gone up by a third from last year’s successful Summit, the vast majority of our own affiliates have been as enthusiastic as their governments to attend. That is genuine partnership in action!

I also want to welcome at this Summit our colleagues from South Africa. I’m honoured that in our delegation we could also include Deputy Minister for Basic Education*Enver Surty.*

Everyone realises that we are at a pivotal point. We really do have a choice - optimism for the future of education as a public service *or* pessimism that education can now only operate as a skeletal service largely outsourced and reliant on the vagaries of private subsidy.

I want to congratulate you, Secretary Duncan, for your optimism in investing in the "Respect programme", and my colleagues Dennis Van Roekel and Randi Weingarten for working in partnership with you to make sure it enhances children’s learning and teachers’ own optimism, professionalism and self-confidence. Respect requires trust and integrity.

It is unfortunate that right here in New York the authorities decided to take an entirely different route by breaking down the agreement with the union and posting their teachers’ professional assessments online. Humiliating teachers publically is disrespectful and counterproductive. Rather than help teachers improve, it chases good teachers out of the profession and makes young people think twice before considering teaching as a career. As a parent wrote in the Wall Street Journal: “I was baffled and embarrassed by the decision of the New York City government. When I dropped my kids off at school last week, I had a hard time looking their teachers in the eye.”

I said that I wanted us to be optimistic but to be optimistic you have to recognise the threat Pasi Sahlberg describes in his book on educational change in Finland, the threat of what he identifies as the “Global Educational Reform Movement” – G.E.R.M. (*germ*). A movement, Pasi notes,

* Which distrusts teachers;
* Which maintains the role of the state through imposing punitive evaluation systems but which withdraws from supporting schools and colleges;
* Which believes the principal role of information technology is to replace teachers not support them; and
* Which elevates choice and competition and ignores the strength of schools in their communities.

There can be no doubt: These are the wrong drivers for reform.

Furthermore we are worried that the commitment most governments have shown over the last decade to build and maintain viable public school systems, is eroding, not in the least by budgetary constraints and pressures to make cuts, in some cases (from our point of view) horrendous and irresponsible cuts. Throughout the OECD area, particularly in Southern Europe and in some countries in Central and Eastern Europe, we risk irreparable damage being done to our school systems, and in some cases the destruction of public schooling. The resistance of our member organizations should not be misunderstood. They are fighting to protect their capacity as professionals to deliver what all our students are entitled to: quality education, as well as seeking to protect their pensions and wages.

This is not the place to discuss education budgets. But I want all education ministers here to know that Education International and its entire membership are your strongest allies in your efforts to protect and promote education. We hope you can persuade your colleagues that it will be through the classroom door frame that we get out of the crisis. That doorway is our portal to the future. We need it as wide open as possible, so that nobody will be left behind.

Colleagues, in contrast to these threats, we know that “there are known ‘knowns’”, to quote a past US Defense minister whose name shall not be mentioned. As the OECD says, we know that the teaching profession and its organisations are at the heart of outstanding education systems.

For this reason I welcome the OECD’s recent publication on supporting disadvantaged students and schools. It rightly criticises unrestrained parental choice for fuelling segregation and it rightly argues that supporting good teachers in the classroom is the best way schools can tackle the effects of deprivation.

We [also] know that teacher learning and school leadership are vital to success, which is why we welcome the choice of the themes at this Summit. These themes are also addressed in our own policy paper which is available to all of you.

In conclusion a couple of comments on those themes:

* Education reforms cannot be imposed. For education reform to be sustained and embedded, governments have to work with teachers and their unions on reform.
* Authoritarian school leaders are as bad at engaging teachers in successful innovation and reform as authoritarian governments are in engaging their citizens.Our education systems should be focussing on encouraging teachers to take risks and innovate; to find new ways of engaging young people’s enthusiasm for education. Education systems must focus on training school leaders to distribute power rather than on how to gather it for themselves.
* Evaluation and assessment must support student and teacher learning, must support the development of school communities, must enhance creativity and 21st century skills, and should not be designed for punishment.
* If we are to successfully match teacher supply and demand, then teaching has to be attractive as a profession. We will not manage to attract the brightest and the best people from all backgrounds to teaching if they are not going to be trusted as professionals. Teaching professions have to be proper professions, they have to be autonomous and self-regulating.

Colleagues, our optimistic proposals for the teaching profession in the 21 century are about:

One. Shared leadership for equity and excellence.

Two. The profession leading a continuum of high quality preparation, induction, and continuing professional development.

Three. Never accepting the attrition of teachers and their morale as a given state of affairs.

And four. Creating attractive learning and teaching environments which support teachers, children and young people.

Thank you again, Secretary Duncan, for hosting this second Summit.

Let the debate begin!

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Closing Remarks  
by the President of Education International,  
Susan Hopgood**

Secretary Duncan, this has been a remarkable Summit. There was always the danger that it would be the victim of expectations that simply couldn’t be met but we have been proved wrong.

Every contribution has yielded new insights. Those insights are extraordinarily rich and we’ll have to digest them over time but for EI there are some pretty obvious truths which have emerged.

* Teachers matter.
* Teacher policy matters.
* Teachers owning education policy matters.

All this is self-evident from this Summit but there is something more.

There were two key findings from the last Summit in the Asia Society’s excellent report. One has become a truism which everyone can almost repeat without thinking- that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of teachers. The other finding was that-‘equally the quality of teachers cannot exceed the quality of the system’.

That was a more challenging concept.

Far too many governments and political parties believe that their goal should be to run an education system in which powers are totally devolved to principals and there is a ferocious evaluation system for pupils, teachers and schools which keeps track on how the money is being spent.

This Summit has demonstrated just how inadequate this strategy is. A system like that ghettoises schools, locks inequalities into place and makes them worse and above all fails the vast majority of children and young people. It also fractures teaching as a profession and, just as last Summit’s report concludes, undermines the quality of teachers by failing to enhance their capacity.

We know from these last two Summits that it is possible transform a dysfunctional system into one which is successful

* one which involves school communities and the teaching profession as partners
* one which consistently asks how it can support school improvement and how it can spread new knowledge and skills.

We will have our third Summit next year and we are very grateful to the Netherlands for agreeing to host it despite these tough economic times. I want to suggest that we then go on to debate particular policies which flesh out the ability of education systems to enhance the capacity of teachers-not act as barriers to doing their jobs properly. For our part EI will make sure that our affiliates and their members have access to the valuable debate and conversations at this Summit.

Secretary Duncan, I want to conclude by thanking Maureen and her team. My colleagues on the planning group know that they were problem solvers of the highest order. I would suggest that to ensure continuity they are represented on the planning group for next year’s Summit.

Finally I want to thank Arne Duncan for initiating these first two Summits and for his participation and Tony for his heroic efforts to keep everyone involved.

Colleagues, thank you for this Summit.

The debate on the future of the teaching profession is one which must continue. Colleagues, EI looks forward to continuing this debate.