

**The International Summit on the Teaching Profession
New York, 16-17 March 2011**

“Where do we go from here?”

Susan Hopgood, President, Education International

We began yesterday saying this was a unique occasion, the first time education ministers and teacher union leaders had come together internationally to address as partners the future of the teaching profession. We conclude today recognizing that it cannot remain a unique occasion.

Secretary Duncan posed the question: *“Why haven’t we done this earlier?”*

After a day and a half of frank and robust dialogue, we know that this was just a start. As Fred said, this cannot be a one-off event. The momentum must be carried forward.

This dialogue must obviously be pursued nationally. We have seen around the table that dialogue is engaged, to different degrees, in almost all the countries represented. Happily, the idea of dialogue is not new! But we have also seen that dialogue is greatly enhanced in today’s world by the international dimension. Comparing and sharing, we all benefit. And most important of all, children and young people growing up in the inter-connected world of the 21st century will benefit.

So EI believes this summit must provide a springboard for a global forum on teacher policies, through which this incredibly valuable dialogue can continue on an ongoing basis.

Teacher unions bring to this dialogue a resource that is critically important – the capacity to engage the profession through representative organizations – organizations that are independent of public authorities, and are ready to engage with governments to identify and implement policies that will really provide quality education for all children.

Reforms are needed. This is not a time for business as usual. And the stakes are high. For the sake of children and young people, we've got to get it right. But we have also seen that getting reforms right is immensely challenging. And getting them right means engaging the profession. That engagement with the profession is what the unions are willing and able to bring to the table. We've identified the importance of engaging dialogue at the early stages, at the "**design**" stage. But we also identified early on that the continuation of the dialogue is critical when it comes to **implementation**.

We've seen this theme of the need for ongoing engagement coming through each of our agenda items:

Another recurring theme has been the importance of research and evidence as a basis for dialogue. OECD has developed through PISA and Education at a Glance a rich collection of

internationally comparative data. I think, at least I hope, we share a willingness to go beyond the superficial headings and to use that data with other research as a basis for our common effort to get reforms right.

Teacher unions actually have a tremendous institutional memory, which counts when it comes to **sustainable** reforms, and a research base, with a capacity for analysis, that ought to be used.

When it comes to the role of teachers, and their impact on learning, TALIS provides a beginning – but TALIS is just the beginning, in a still limited group of countries. Again, teacher unions can bring the all-important resource of their connection to the members, in the search for better understanding of what really happens in our classrooms, and of what works in education today.

We must continue the dialogue about what we mean by the quality of education, about the kind of rounded education that all children need and deserve, regardless of their backgrounds, their social status, their ethnic or cultural origins – that critical dialogue about **equity** in education.

As we ask *“where do we go from here?”* Education International observes that a new and welcome global consensus has emerged on the need to address the issue of quality in education through addressing the teaching profession.

As a Global Union Federation we see the potential for connections across institutions. We believe quality education for all should be a priority at the G20, as a key investment in sustainable recovery.

Teacher organizations have shown here, that they can and must be what the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation so clearly states: *“ a force which can contribute greatly to educational advance and which therefore should be associated with the determination of educational policy.”*

And we do take seriously the statements around this table by Ministers that governments recognize that positive force.

All of this underlines the need, as Fred said at the beginning, for this summit to be a springboard for a **Global Forum on Teacher Policies**. Such a forum would not be a substitute for bilateral and collective dialogue, but would build on it.

This is about the power of dialogue. We need to deepen that dialogue and broaden it. We

Believe it should be taken to the local community level, and must engage other stakeholders.

And it is also about a new vision for the teaching profession.

And to conclude, I go back to the ethical foundation, to which Fernando referred yesterday. It is really about, not only the kind of education, but the kind of society we aspire to.

Teacher unions are ready for the dialogue to continue. This dialogue must be a two way process. We will continue to put our case to governments, while taking the discourse back to members. In just 4 months, the EI World Congress will debate an important new resolution on the future of the teaching profession.

When EI was founded 18 years ago, in 1993, our theme was *“Teachers United, Ready for Change”*. We **are** ready to take the dialogue forward, and to play our part in translating it into reality.