



## **Joint Message on the Occasion of World Teachers' Day**

**5 October 2009**

Each year on 5 October we celebrate teachers for their invaluable contribution in shaping effective education systems and preparing children, young people and adults for active and responsible participation in society.

Education is a human right and central to sustainable development. It is both vital to increase access and to enhance inclusion and quality at all levels of education and in all settings. Among the many factors which affect the quality of education, teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring good learning outcomes. It is commonly acknowledged that the quality of learning depends, first and foremost, on the quality of teachers. It was on this day in 1966 that standards were adopted by the international community to promote quality teachers and teaching.

There is an acute shortage of qualified and trained teachers, especially in the developing world where enrolments at all levels are increasing. It is estimated that 2.4 million teachers (1.2 million new teacher posts) will be needed between 2007 and 2015 in sub-Saharan Africa alone to achieve Universal Primary Education. Lack of training, professional development and growing recruitment on a contract basis weaken education quality. But the profession is also gravely affected by poverty, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, natural disasters, conflict and violence against teachers in school.

We face an urgent need to bridge this global "teacher gap." It requires policies that take an integrated approach combining large-scale recruitment with appropriate pre-service and in-service training, strong leadership, satisfactory working conditions, and relevant teaching-learning tools and materials.

High expectations and demands are placed on teachers today with the emergence of knowledge societies and the growing integration of information and communication technologies in education. The 21st century calls for new approaches to learning, innovative thinking, the acquisition of specific knowledge about the environment, health and citizenship, and the promotion of ethical values and attitudes. The ability of education systems to respond

effectively to the needs of today's learners depends largely on the action that is taken now to recruit, train and support teachers and to ensure decent work for them.

The current global financial and economic crisis is placing increasing strain on education budgets around the world. It is critical to seek mechanisms that protect teachers and ensure that education investments match demand. One challenge is to find ways to make the teaching profession attractive in order to draw an adequate number of well-qualified and motivated candidates. Another is to make sure those already there stay on. Achieving these goals depends on the status, salary, career development opportunities available for teachers and public respect for them. It also depends on the autonomy they have to develop their own creative learning experiences. The voices of teachers and their representative organizations matter and must be heard.

We commit to expanding the focus of World Teachers' Day to include higher education, and to take into consideration the 1997 *Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel*. In particular, we need to address issues related to the respect for academic freedom and collegial governance, which have suffered greatly in recent times.

We call upon governments, communities, national and international institutions everywhere to act decisively to achieve Education for All. We commit to do our part and to extend all possible support to the new international task force on "Teachers for EFA."

The teaching force with its knowledge, experience and foresight can, in these times of crisis, bring new insights and solutions for a sustainable future. In celebrating World Teachers' Day 2009, we, the signatories, therefore call upon all to join us with renewed energy and conviction - to invest in teachers now!



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