

EXPERTS TO DISCUSS 'EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT' AT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ROUND TABLE 14 FEBRUARY

Leading education experts will join together with education ministers and representatives to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in a round-table discussion on "Education and Development," from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday, 14 February in the Council Chamber. The event is in preparation for this year's ECOSOC high-level segment, whose theme is "The contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development".

Led by the President of ECOSOC, Ivan Šimonoviæ (Croatia), the round table will be co-chaired by John Daniel, Assistant Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Andre Roberfroid, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Professor Johannes van Ginkel, Rector of the United Nations University (UNU); and Kunio Waki, Deputy Executive-Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Participants include the ministers of education of Egypt, El Salvador, Gambia, Pakistan and Uganda, as well as education experts from the public and private sectors.

The morning section will discuss education for all, including girls' education, and technical and vocational education. The afternoon session will discuss higher education, and will be followed by a presentation of good practices in education and development featuring case studies from UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

One of the issues on the table is the worldwide shortage of teachers, which will become increasingly acute in the coming decade. In the industrialized world, this shortage is due to the large-scale retirement of the teachers who joined the expansion of education systems in the 1960s. In some developing countries, the progress towards education for all is generating massive demand for new teachers. In other countries, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is decimating the teaching force. Another reason for the shortage seems to be the diminishing status of teachers, and a concomitant decline in their working conditions.

Girls' education is another priority, with girls constituting 60 per cent of the 113 million children not attending school. At the same time, research shows that girls' education has a greater developmental payoff than boys' education, and is about the best investment in their future countries can make. The whole school environment must therefore be made girl-friendly -- for instance through female teachers providing role models, and a curriculum equipping girls for a richer life.

Another area for reform is technical and vocational education, which often does not keep pace with global changes in technology and labour markets. Too much of secondary education on offer disappoints the expectations of children and their parents, because the skills it provides do not match the world of work -- formal or informal -- that they will want to enter. The answer is to integrate vocational disciplines in secondary education, so as to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes for the world of work.

Universities, too, are under pressure to reform from rising costs, new information technologies and demands for improved quality of teaching and degrees. Staff development, distance learning technologies and expansion of international programmes for students can provide some answers.

The event follows up on the round table on health held on 5 February. A third round table in March will focus on human resources development in the development process. The results of the round tables will be presented to the high-level segment of ECOSOC to be held from 1 to 3 July in New York.

Provisional List of Participants

Ivan Šimonoviæ, President of ECOSOC, Permanent Representative of Croatia
Hussein Kamel Bahaa El Din, Minister of Education, Egypt
Evelyn Jacir de Lovo, Minister of Education, El Salvador
Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta, Secretary of State for Education, Gambia
Zobaida Jalal, Minister of Education, Pakistan
Edward Khiddu Makubuya, Minister of Education and Sports, Uganda
Andre Roberfroid, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF
Kunio Waki, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA
Hans van Ginkel, Rector, United Nations University
Ruth Kagia, Director of Education, World Bank
John Daniel, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO
Patrizio Civili, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Policy
Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs
Angela King, United Nations Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the
Advancement of Women
Jackie Shapiro, Co-Chair, United Nations Working Group on Girls
Penina Mlama, Executive Director, Forum for African Women Educationists
(FAWE), Kenya
James Hester, President, Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, New York
Jairam Reddy, Chair, Commission on Education, South Africa
Bruce Alberts, Co-Chair, InterAcademy Council, Washington D.C.
Christ-Weber, Member of the Board, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl
Scouts, Switzerland
M. Malitikov, President, International Association "Znanie," Russia
Valeria Merino-Dirani, Corporación Latino-Americana para Desarrollo, Ecuador

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