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On behalf of the
Director-General of UNESCO

At the High-Level Segment
ECOSOC Substantive Session of 2002

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President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO, I am pleased and honoured to have this opportunity to make comments on the subject of your discussions at this High-Level Segment: the contribution of human resources development, especially education, to the process of development. All the more so, that UNESCO was closely associated with the preparatory process leading to the present High-Level Segment.

The United Nations system has made a great global contribution by situating our efforts to eradicate poverty in the larger framework of understanding poverty from a human rights perspective. This gives additional force to our arguments and efforts against the very processes that perpetuate poverty. At the same time, and from UNESCO's standpoint, this challenges us to ensure that our approaches to poverty alleviation, especially propagated through education, are also human rights-based. Education is one of several sectors that must be intimately linked and working in close harmony, if development is to be achieved.

In this regard, UNESCO continues to orient its work in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), mainly through pursuing the six goals of the Dakar World Education Forum. The emphasis of the Secretary-General's report on the urgent need for acceleration in reaching the goals the world has set for itself is welcomed. We share the concern that, while some countries are progressing very well, others will need to make very special efforts. However, be that as it may, it is evident that, together: the Donor Community, The cooperating Agencies and the countries concerned, will have to redouble efforts to make the achievement of the goals a reality. And, this bearing in mind and taking into account, the additional burden imposed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

From UNESCO's perspective, a special effort is being made with regard to the 2005 gender parity goal. This is because of the alarming research data about which you are all aware on this front. But also, as reaffirmed by the Secretary-General in his statement, we recognise that without progress on the education of girls and women, development will be stalled. Therefore, UNESCO is also an active partner in the UN Girls' Education Initiative (led by UNICEF), which has a key role to play in advancing that agenda. While some countries

will be very hard pressed to achieve the 2005 goal of gender parity, we urge all of you to put forth all possible effort towards tangible progress. Often it is the initial progress that is the most difficult, but it is this initial breaking of barriers that makes acceleration possible.

We wish to re-emphasise the importance of literacy, in all its forms, to education, both in and out of school. The UN has identified next year, 2003, as the start of the literacy decade, and our combined work here is essential if we are to eliminate poverty. UNESCO welcomes this decade and its related activities as part of the Education For All movement, and the Organisation is aware that the literacy decade presents some challenges in unprecedented forms. These challenges relate to the horrifying numbers since more than 800 million adults are without literacy, the gender dimension, which calls for attention; the globalisation factor and, the evolving information and knowledge all make attention to literacy in its many forms a necessity without comparison.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow us to share with you two concerns that must be central to all our planning and implementation if human resources development is to have any measure of success:

- First of all, to meet the Millennium Development Goals and EFA goals, education systems must be defined broadly and must be improved as a whole. This requires more open minds in our thinking, and more innovation in capacity development.
- Secondly, we must balance the number game (that is, access) with a focus on quality – because, it is **what** and **how** learners learn and build their own knowledge systems that will make the difference, now and in the future.

Addressing, let alone meeting, the challenge of educating for the future, requires partnerships of many kinds. UNESCO wishes to take this opportunity to thank its many partners and, this august body, for sharing the burden. We take the responsibility of including the full range of stakeholders seriously, even though this is sometimes quite difficult for a formal inter-governmental organisation. We are particularly encouraged by the support of NGOs to education. UNESCO is committed to further broadening the partnership for education – because we have all learned the lesson that while education is the technical domain of specialists, education is more generally the domain of everybody.

In this regard, we are pleased to share with all of you here, progress, in our work in education in support of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). As you know, Agenda 21 assigns to UNESCO specific responsibilities in relation to education for sustainable development (ESD). We are pleased to note that the draft version of the Chairman's document for the WSSD cites education, and particularly EFA, as one of the necessary conditions for sustainable development. In addition, in collaboration with FAO and other partners, UNESCO is initiating a series of activities directed towards closing the rural-urban gap in basic education.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to close with these illustrations of how the work of the various parts of the UN system is increasingly synergistic, and by thanking you, again, for giving UNESCO this opportunity to address you on this very important debate.