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Organización
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联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of 45th Session of the Commission on
Population and Development**

To be delivered by Philippe Kridelka, Director of the New York Office

23 April 2012

Chairperson, Ambassador Hasan Kleib,

Excellencies Chairpersons,

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is pleased to participate at the 45th Session of the Commission on Population and Development under the theme "Adolescents and Youth."

This is an important opportunity for us to join together to assess and renew our commitment to work with adolescents and young people, in order to create and sustain a world in which they are fully empowered to develop to their full potential in a safe and supportive environment.

Young people should not be seen in the singular.

Adolescents and youth are some 1.8 billion strong today. They are a heterogeneous group that is in dynamic evolution globally and within regions and cultures.

We must understand this and break down this policy category to design effective strategies.

Girls and women are a case in point, and they are especially vital for reaching all of the Millennium Development Goals.

The global gender divide remains deep today -- an estimated 35 million girls are missing out of primary education and 37 million are absent from the lower secondary level. These violations of human rights reinforce wider inequalities and hold back the development of societies as a whole.

The latest World Youth Report, published on 6 February 2012, shines the spotlight on the challenges young people face.

These include lack of job opportunities, inadequate education, vulnerable working conditions, risks to ill-health and insufficient government investment. In this picture, the right to education is paramount for making progress towards reducing poverty and gender inequality. The scale of youth unemployment is daunting. In 2010, youth unemployment represented an average of 12.6 percent worldwide, higher than adult rates.

We have seen extraordinary progress towards the Education for All goals in some of the world's poorest countries over the last decade. An additional 52 million children enrolled in primary school from 1999 to 2008. Gender parity in primary enrolment has improved significantly in the regions that started the decade with the greatest gender divides.

However, there remains a large gap between the goals set in 2000 and the advances that have been made.

The number of children out of school is falling too slowly. In 2008, 67 million children were out of school. Progress towards universal enrolment has slowed. Many children drop out of school before completing a full primary cycle. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, 10 million children drop out of primary school every year. About 17 percent of the world's adults -- 792 million people, nearly two-thirds are women -- still lack basic literacy skills. Gender disparities continue to hamper progress in education.

Education is basic human right that is essential for human dignity.

It is also a force for equity and equality. A woman's level of education impacts not only on her economic and social position, but also on her children's nutrition, health and education. The impact is community-wide.

We must also never tire in making the case for education as the best motor for sustainable and inclusive development.

Education provides individuals with the tools to respond to change and make the most of it. It is an accelerator for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals.

It is also vital for combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Evidence shows that women with secondary education are far more likely to be aware of measures for preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, which contributed to an estimated 260,000 fatalities from HIV-related illness in 2009.

The facts are revealing. As analysed in UNESCO's 2011 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 60 percent of mothers with secondary education or higher in Malawi were aware that drugs could reduce transmission risks, compared with 27% of women with no education. Education saves lives.

This raises the stakes for preparing adolescents and youth for the transition to adulthood. Far too many adolescents and young people are still affected by HIV, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortion and gender-based violence.

It is encouraging to see that the number of young people becoming infected with HIV is continuing to fall in 33 countries, but we must sustain positive changes in behaviour among young people and other key affected populations. Continued investment in education and HIV prevention, treatment and care must remain a priority.

Young people are key actors and partners in all of UNESCO's work to build peace, eradicate poverty, foster sustainable development and promote intercultural dialogue.

However difficult, governments must protect education budgets and invest in what makes education work – by creating stimulating learning environments, providing incentives for quality teaching, reaching out to the vulnerable and adapting curricula and pedagogies to a fast-changing world.

The better the learning outcomes, the more attractive education becomes.

Quality is a concern for all countries. Assessing test scores is important, but this does not give the full picture. We must understand the causes for shortfalls that lead to drop out, poor learning outcomes and inequalities.

Working with a range of partners and States, UNESCO is developing a framework to help countries diagnose, analyse and monitor the quality of their education systems, and enhance them.

Education must also be inclusive to be effective.

Inequalities linked to wealth, gender, ethnicity, language, location and disability are holding back progress across the world. Education is not for all when exclusion prevails.

In May 2011, UNESCO launched a *Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education*, with the United Nations Secretary General, the United States Secretary of State, and the Prime Minister of Mali and Bangladesh.

The Global Partnership targets the weak links of girls' secondary education and women's literacy. We have joined forces with major private sector companies to make a concrete impact on the ground.

UNESCO is working in close collaboration with the Government of the People's Republic of China to prepare for the *Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training* on the theme of "Building Skills for Work and Life," that will be held in Shanghai on 13-16 May.

Young people stand at the heart of these deliberations.

The expectations of young people are high today.

We saw this during the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum, organised in Paris, France from 17-20 October, 2011, before the meeting of our General Conference. Some 210 delegates attended from across the world to debate the question of "how youth drive change."

Ce débat a eu lieu dans le contexte des changements rapides qui se déroulent dans le monde arabe et dans d'autres régions. Les jeunes de ces pays, hommes et femmes, jouent un rôle central dans ces changements, déterminés qu'ils sont à jouir pleinement de leur droit à la dignité humaine et aux libertés fondamentales.

Depuis la place Tahrir au Caire jusqu'aux campements du mouvement "Occupy Wall Street", le signal est clair: les jeunes veulent être entendus, ils veulent contribuer au changement et ils veulent être traités sur un pied d'égalité avec tous les autres citoyens.

C'est dans cet esprit que l'UNESCO réaffirme l'engagement qu'elle a pris en juillet 2011 dans la Déclaration conjointe du réseau inter agences de l'ONU sur le développement de la jeunesse (Joint Statement of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development).

L'UNESCO s'engage à inclure plus que jamais la voix des jeunes et les défis auxquels ils font face dans nos programmes de développement et de réduction de la pauvreté. Ces programmes multisectoriels doivent inclure les droits de l'homme et doivent répondre aux besoins des adolescents et des jeunes, y compris les jeunes filles adolescentes marginalisées.

Dans cet effort, l'UNESCO est déterminé à renforcer les capacités des institutions nationales et des organisations de jeunesse. Les jeunes hommes et les jeunes femmes doivent avoir le droit et la capacité de jouer pleinement leur rôle dans la société, y compris dans les mécanismes de prise de décision.

Aucune société ne peut se permettre d'exclure aucun de ses citoyens.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Irina Bokova