



**Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

**By**

**Ms. Grażyna Bernatowicz**  
**Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland**

**At the 2011 Economic and Social Council Substantive Session**  
**Annual Ministerial Review**

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia\*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, and Montenegro\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

Mr. President,

Education is the foundation on which human societies are built. It is essential to human and societal development and a fundamental human right. The EU is fully committed to this agenda.

Since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, education has been at the core of the UN's work on human rights and its development efforts, notably through the Dakar Framework of Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President,

Education is a cornerstone of sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and overall sustainable development. It provides an effective means to climb out of poverty and has the potential to transform people's lives, and the future of nations. It plays a pivotal role in state-building, in the establishment of inclusive and democratic societies, in reducing inequality, and in empowering women and girls.

As we all know, the MDGs are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Education is critical for reaching all the MDGs: there is virtually no MDG that will be achieved if we do not get education right.

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\* *Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

Tremendous progress has been made towards the goal of universal primary education. While this is a major achievement, huge challenges remain which we need to address - firstly by ensuring universal primary education in all countries by 2015 and secondly through a comprehensive approach that looks beyond primary education.

Mr. President,

This requires addressing the following challenges:

- **The first challenge is that of inequality in access to education.** There are still 67 million children out of primary school, almost half of them in conflict and post-conflict countries and a majority of them are girls. Millions of children never complete school or they leave school without having mastered basic literacy and numeracy or any life-skills. Girls and boys of marginalised groups are too often left behind. Countries in fragile situations, in particular, should be supported adequately in ensuring education continuity.

- **The second challenge concerns the quality of education.** Access to education is not enough. What matters, ultimately, are education outcomes, and these depend on the quality of education. To address this challenge, we need to overcome the serious shortages of teachers. Globally, according to UNESCO, over 9 million new primary teachers are needed worldwide to achieve universal primary education alone by 2015. But we do also need competent teachers and this requires high quality teacher training.

- **The third challenge relates to the lack of post-primary education.** In addition to universal primary education, secondary and tertiary education, as well as vocational education and training are needed. No country can improve the quality of life of its people and be competitive in the global economy over time without qualified workers equipped with strong technical and scientific skills that can also help maintaining or facilitating employment also in times of economic crises. Education systems must train a wide range of professionals, such as teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers, technicians and managers. While basic education lays down the essential foundation, sound educational pathways must also encompass higher secondary and tertiary education, as well as vocational education and training and life-long learning.

There is still a serious financing gap to meet the MDG of universal primary education in low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Significant amounts of aid are spent on education. Many low income countries have also increased the share of their budget spent on education. At the same time, others still neglect education, and the financial crisis has forced still others to cut their education. Overall public education spending in the developing world is falling behind targets. This calls for the use of diversified sources of financing for education, including through innovative sources of financing, at national and global level. However, domestic resource mobilization remains essential.

Gains in efficiency and effectiveness by all stakeholders – developed countries, emerging economies, the UN and multilateral institutions, the private sector and foundations – are needed if governments are to reconcile their legitimate policy aspirations with financial

resources and other forms of assistance. The education sector has gained a reputation for good practice in applying aid-effectiveness principles but more can and must be done. There is still a great deal of fragmentation of aid to education, duplication in efforts or conflicting approaches to the same issue, and high transaction costs for developing countries. The application of the principles of aid effectiveness, as defined in Paris and Accra, remains a priority and should contribute to the effectiveness of national policies.

Mr. President,

The EU is strongly committed to addressing these challenges and to supporting developing countries in their endeavour to meet the education MDGs.

The MDGs remain at the heart of the EU's development efforts. The EU will continue to fully respect and promote the fundamental principles of ownership and leadership by developing countries, including through the mobilisation of domestic resources, and the promotion and respect of good governance, democracy, gender equality and human rights.

The EU is committed to and actively working towards its ODA targets. Despite the global financial and economic crisis, EU ODA reached a historical high in 2010 of €53.8 billion representing 0.43% of the EU GNI, thus confirming the EU's position as the largest provider of ODA in the world.

In the area of education, the European Commission has programmed about 2 billion euro in its current multiannual programming for the period 2007/2008-2013. This corresponds to €1.3 billion for Asia, Latin America and the Mediterranean and €400 million for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. This is complemented by €3.8 billion worth of general budget support, mostly in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, which also makes an important contribution to education outcomes. EU Member States also devote substantial parts of their bilateral assistance to education programmes.

As a result of its aid, the European Commission estimates that since 2004, more than 9 million pupils have been enrolled in primary education and more than 700,000 primary school teachers have been trained.

At the same time, we must remember that ODA can only work as a catalyst. Financial resources for education must be looked at in a comprehensive manner. This includes domestic resources, as well as innovative financing, private sector funds, and foundations.

The EU would also like to underline the potential of cooperation amongst developing countries in the field of education. Emerging economies have a significant potential for helping other developing countries which needs to be drawn on.

With four years to go until the 2015 MDG deadline, the EU is convinced that, building on the achievements to date, significant progress can be made to achieve the education targets, both regarding primary enrolment and gender equality, as well as to improve education quality and learning outcomes.

Mr. President,

We need to continue working towards the full realisation of the right to education for all. This means education systems that deliver quality for all levels and types of education. For sustained, inclusive and equitable growth, and socially, ecologically and economically sustainable development this is an absolute prerequisite.

I thank you for your attention.

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