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General Debate
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**H.E. AMBASSADOR MARIA NAZARETH FARANI AZEVEDO,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL**

Mr. President,

The decision to highlight the internationally agreed goals in education as the priority theme for the 2011 ECOSOC substantive session is particularly auspicious.

No other tool can play a more decisive role in poverty eradication and social inclusion. Without access to quality and universal education it will not be possible to realize the goal of sustainable development. Education has the power to transform the present and project hope into the future.

In her first public address, President Dilma Rousseff highlighted the critical role of education and conveyed her commitment to invest more and better in this area.

Mr. President,

Brazil believes it is necessary to adopt a systemic approach to education that encompasses all the different policy aspects: integrating elementary and secondary schools is as important as addressing academic and vocational education. Similarly, basic and university education and continuous learning have to be fostered as much as illiteracy has to be fought.

Our educational policy integrates a comprehensive social development agenda. "Bolsa Familia" benefits more than 12 million families. It ensures minimum income to families that commit themselves to meet certain positive conditions in terms of school attendance, maternal health examinations and the elimination of child labour.

With the recently adopted programme "Brasil Sem Miséria", the Government aims to expand access and enhance the quality of public services, focusing on the segments of the population in situations of extreme poverty with a view to raising the income and the well-being of all Brazilians.

Mr. President,

Financing plays a central role in educational policy. In 2007, the Brazilian Congress created the Basic Education and Teacher Support Fund. FUNDEB, as we call it, increased federal funds allocated to education more than tenfold. In 2010, the funds transferred through FUNDEB amounted to approximately 10% of all public education spending.

For the 2011-2020 period, the Government has proposed to Congress a new National Education Plan. The Plan establishes specific strategies for the inclusion of minorities, children with disabilities, indigenous people, communities of African descent (quilombolas), as well as students in rural areas.

Our goal is to qualitatively and quantitatively expand public investment in education from the current 4.5% of GNI to 7% by the end of the decade.

Social inclusion through superior education is a priority in Brazil. Programme "University for All", ProUni, ensures scholarships for low-income students in private universities, in exchange for fiscal benefits for the institutions.

Another inclusion tool adopted by a number of public Universities in Brazil has been the quotas for people of African descent. The positive academic performance of the beneficiaries shows that inclusion and education go hand in hand.

Mr. President,

For over a decade, Brazil has been making significant progress in the area of education: more than 95% of Brazilian children are enrolled in primary schools. Disparities between regions, between urban and rural areas, genders and income levels, have decreased systematically from 2005 to 2010.

In Brazil, educational services, the level of schooling and quality of education have improved simultaneously in the country. As the World Bank

has observed, a six-year old child in Brazil today, in the lower quintile of the income distribution curve, will achieve more than twice the level of schooling as her parents. Since 1995, the average level of schooling in Brazil has improved faster than in any other developing country.

Mr. President,

There is still much to be done, but we believe that we are headed in the right direction. According to the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the average test scores in Brazil have increased in all categories during the ten years that the country has participated in the initiative.

Brazil fully shares the sense of urgency attributed by the international community to the promotion of the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in education.

We consider that investments in education are investments in the future of the country. International cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, has a central role to play, complementing domestic resources and supporting national strategies. Brazil is ready to cooperate and share its experiences.

Thank you very much.