

Informal Summary

2011 Economic and Social Council High-Level Segment General Debate Tuesday, 5 July 2011

Chair: H.E. Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe, President of ECOSOC

Opening remarks:

Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General, UNDESA

Professor Frances Stewart, Chair of Committee for Development Policy

Opening Statements:

H.E. Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe, ECOSOC President, opened the General Debate of the 2011 ECOSOC High-level segment and invited the first speaker, **Mr. Sha Zukang** to deliver his statement on the theme of the Annual Ministerial Review, “Implementing the Internationally Agreed Goals and Commitments in regard to Education”.

Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) introduced two reports of the Secretary General, one on the Annual Ministerial Review and the other on the thematic discussion. The reports noted the substantial achievements made on the education-related MDGs and the Education for All (EFA) goals. Significant progress has been made in guaranteeing the rights to basic education, increasing primary enrolment, reducing gender disparities, and better targeting vulnerable children and young people. However, challenges and obstacles still remain. These include the: low quality of education; mismatch between education curricula and skills required by labour markets; acute shortage of well trained and qualified teachers; and high out-of-school rates for girls. Mr. Sha also touched on the effects of the multiple crises, including the slow and uneven recovery from the global economic and financial crises, and volatile food and energy prices, which hinder further advancement in achieving the education-related goals. To overcome these challenges, he highlighted the need for concerted policy interventions, a global partnership for development and strong political commitment. He commended eleven countries that would make National Volunteer Presentations (NVPs) for sharing their experiences and lessons learned.

Professor Frances Stewart, Chair of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), introduced the report of the thirteenth session of CDP. She emphasized the relevance of education to individual wellbeing, institutional development and economic growth. However, the CDP noted the risk of the goal of universal primary education not being achieved by 2015, and that higher enrolment rates had not led to faster economic growth, mainly because: 1) the enhancement of school enrolment was not paralleled by improvements in the quality of education; and 2) the mismatch between education and skills required by labour markets. To enhance equity and the quality of education, comprehensive educational reforms integrating educational policies into national development strategies, might be necessary. She pointed out that effective partnerships between the private and public sectors were crucial to link the formal and informal education

systems. The CDP also made recommendations on how developing countries could improve the quality of education.

General Debate:

H.E. Mr. Jorge Martin Arturo Argüello, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of **Argentina** to the United Nations in New York, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stated that the implementation of the MDGs in regard to education faced a most challenging time, as the world is in a state of economic recovery. The role of ECOSOC and its leadership in providing policy advice and coordination was therefore crucial. The Group of 77 and China are committed to achieving the internationally agreed goals related to education, especially universal non-discriminatory access to primary education. Acknowledging that many challenges and obstacles still remain, the Group of 77 and China expressed their commitment to eradicate illiteracy, promote basic education, place special emphasis on girl's education, and provide adequate infrastructure. Stressing the importance of Education for All throughout life and the right to education, the Group called on donors to strengthen commitments on ODA and provision of predictable financial and technical support.

H.E. Ms. **Grażyna Maria Bernatowicz**, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Poland**, speaking on behalf of the European Union, its Member States, and EU candidate countries¹ and countries aligned with the statement,² stated that education is a foundation for human and societal development and a fundamental human right. Education is a prerequisite for sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and overall sustainable development, as it provides an effective means to climb out of poverty, reduce inequality and empower women and girls. She emphasized the critical role of education for reaching all MDGs, as well as its pivotal role in state-building and creating an inclusive and democratic society. While tremendous improvement has been made towards universal primary education, challenges remain. The delegation underscored the importance of a comprehensive approach looking beyond primary education, to address specific challenges, such as: 1) countries with low income and in fragile situation; 2) low quality of education, including the shortage of competent teachers; and 3) secondary and tertiary education and technical and vocational education and training. To support developing countries to cope with the negative effects of the economic crisis, and help improve their education conditions, she reaffirmed EU's continued support in applying the principle of aid effectiveness to avoid fragmentation and duplication, respect and promote the fundamental principles of national ownership and leadership in mobilizing domestic resources and promote good governance, democracy, human rights and gender equality. It was noted that financing for education should be viewed in a comprehensive manner, including domestic resources, innovative financing, private sector funds and foundations.

H.E. Dr. David Namwandi, Deputy Minister for Education, **Namibia**, speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), noted that some African countries had made considerable progress in education, especially closing gender gaps in access to education. He called on developed countries to meet their aid commitments. He closed his remarks by stating that achievement of the MDGs is collective responsibility, and should not be left to the government alone. The private sector, the public sector, NGOs, and other stakeholders should work collectively to solve the issue.

¹ Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro

² Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Ukraine, Georgia, and Republic of Moldova

H.E. Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Luxembourg**, began his statement by reaffirming the statement made by the EU. The Minister highlighted the crucial role of ECOSOC in promoting and implementing the MDGs. The Minister, reaffirming the SG report, emphasized the catalytic role of education in achieving all the MDGs. On education funding, the Minister stressed that while national budgets remain the primary source for funding, the international community should also fulfil their responsibilities. Luxembourg has allocated 1.09 per cent of GDP to ODA in 2010. The Minister also stated that education and vocational training were key priorities of Luxembourg's bilateral development cooperation and 10 per cent of ODA had been earmarked for this purpose. In concluding, the Minister underscored the importance of protecting children from violence. In this context, Luxembourg welcomed the UN Security Council's initiative to include attacks on schools and hospitals on the "list of shame", in the annex of the SG report on children and armed conflict.

H.E. Dr. Ahmed Gamal El-Din Moussa, Minister of Education, **Egypt**, opened his statement by pointing out that in the wake of the 25 January revolution, Egypt had changed its approach in dealing with development. Egypt has tremendous human resources, particularly in respect to youth. He stressed that the current situation necessitated more productive and effective human resources management. As a result, Egypt has put forward an education reform programme, aiming to: achieve education for all; increase education budget for modernizing schools; improve quality of education; and enhance partnerships with all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels. These efforts have already resulted in significant progress, but major challenges persist, in particular, in such areas as: increasing financial resources and expenditure for education; capacity building of qualified teachers; and linking education to labour market needs. The Minister concluded by stating that Egypt would follow the political will expressed by the revolution and continue to work with the international community to achieve success in education.

H.E. Muhammad Nuh, Minister of Education, **Indonesia**, commenced his intervention by stating that education is of utmost importance for human development and forms a key building block for achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development. The Minister reiterated that the key to advancing education was increased investment in Education for All, particularly investment to improve access and quality of education to the poor and those in remote areas. In the effort to achieve the IADGs, Indonesia had included in its education policy, the right to education for all, lifelong education and education for sustainable development through formal and informal approaches. The Minister also emphasized that political will and government action alone were not enough as dynamic partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders were essential to bring about transformational change in education. The Minister welcomed the ministerial declaration of the High-level Segment and its focus on access, quality and partnerships.

H.E. Mpinda Simão, Minister of Education, **Angola**, started his statement by confirming that education for all is a fundamental human right, which was also enshrined in the national constitution of Angola. Since 2002 Angola has focused on achieving the IADGs, including the education goals through multi-sector partnerships. In 2004 Angola commenced an education reform to extend primary and secondary education. Between now and 2012, it is further envisioned to expand school networks, improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching, enhance the image of teachers, reduce illiteracy and poverty among school children and ensure health for all children. As a result of these efforts, enrolment has increased from 2.5 million to more than 6 million between 2002 and 2010. In the same period, more than 53.000 new classrooms were built. However, improving quality and effectiveness of education remain main concerns. Enhancing training and working conditions for teachers will be a priority for the government. .

H.E. Prof. Sam Ogeri, Minister of Education, **Kenya**, highlighted that improving education and achieving the MDGs were priorities for his government. He noted that government aimed to foster the development of the education sector through health and nutrition initiatives. The Minister noted that free basic education was a constitutional right in Kenya. He highlighted policies including: the *home grown feeding programme*, an initiative to provide children with the necessary nutrition to be able to learn; efforts to increase equity and quality of education the system; efforts to improve gender equity in education; provision of education for children of refugees; and steps to increase access and school coverage. The Minister noted that even though there had been notable progress in education in Kenya, there were still challenges ahead.

H.E. Mr. Séraphin Moudounga, Minister of Education, **Gabon**, noted that by constitutional mandate, education was free for children aged 6-16. The Minister highlighted that despite progress, there were still challenges in their education system, mostly derived from scarce resources and capacity. The Minister noted that government was pushing for improving educational modalities including pre-primary, primary, language, vocational training, scientific, cultural, and sports education. The Minister emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships in order to improve education and noted that even if education is expensive, ignorance is more so.

H.E. Mr. Dennis Alonzo Mazariego, Minister of Education, **Guatemala**, noted the progress in the education sector that his country had made in recent years. The Minister emphasized the importance of education to government's social development strategy. The education policies highlighted included a conditional cash transfer programme (Mi Familia Progresá); the creation of the Council of Social Education; the establishment of bilingual education programmes; the implementation of transparent monitoring systems; and a solidarity programme with teachers that aims at fostering their development. The Minister also lauded the efforts of international organizations in supporting the work of the government of Guatemala in the education sector.

Mr. Martin Dahinden, Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, **Switzerland**, emphasized the importance of education in expanding the freedoms of people, improving the rights of citizens, promoting social mobility, and in fostering peace and cohesion. The representative noted that education was not only an engine for development but also a goal in itself. The delegate highlighted the importance of the Dakar-EFA framework for improving education. In particular, he noted that Switzerland had special concerns with supporting education quality, life and vocational skills, and adult literacy. The delegate also noted the importance of civil society organizations in helping to improve education outcomes.

H.E. Mr. Ikuo Yamahana, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, **Japan**, thanked the international community for its support and solidarity following the country's series of crises this past spring, while assuaging fears among development partners by asserting that Japan's current dip in ODA will be temporary. Mr. Yamahana reaffirmed the country's USD 3.5 billion funding commitment to global education initiatives. Japan also intends to promote its "School for All" model as part of its development cooperation efforts, he added.

H.E. Mrs. Milena Damyanova, Vice-Minister for Education, **Bulgaria**, welcomed the strengthening of ECOSOC via resolution 61/16. Bulgaria is committed to scaling-up domestic preschool enrolment rates while revamping quality at all levels via new national "standard setting" initiatives, she noted.

H.E. Mr. Mahmud Mammad-Quliyev, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, **Azerbaijan** declared his country's commitment to education reform at home and abroad. He announced plans to send 5,000 local university students to top-flight foreign universities and to continue to encourage foreign students to study in Azerbaijan (with roughly 70 countries already represented there). Azerbaijan is committed to scaling-up education aid, particularly for girls' schools in Pakistan and Turkey, he added.

H.E. Mr. Gennady Gatilov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, **Russia**, called on the international community to raise more resources for education. He commended the work of UNESCO and applauded ECOSOC for using the High-level segment to raise the visibility of education-related problems. Mr. Gatilov also reminded the audience of Russia's commitment to early childhood education — demonstrated during its hosting of a 2010 international conference on the topic.

H.E. Mr. Vijith Gamini Wijayamuni Soyza, Deputy Minister for Education, **Sri Lanka** announced that the country is a signatory to most, if not all, of the international education conventions and treaties — and is thus committed to expanding access and improving quality throughout Sri Lanka. Mr. Soyza highlighted progress in several areas, such as in early childhood literacy and gender parity. He also expressed disappointment that resources continue to be allocated “via supply and demand” and not “more equitable” mechanisms.

Mr. Fancisco Varela, Under-Secretary, Department of Education, **Philippines**, stated that following the adoption of constitutional reforms in the late 1980s, the country's Education Ministry now has the highest budget of all national government ministries. Mr. Varela lamented the fact that despite high-levels of education spending, universal primary education has yet to be achieved in the Philippines. Current efforts to improve education quality in the country are shaped by the new “Basic Education Reform Agenda”, which focuses on innovative tools like conditional cash transfers and school feeding programmes, he added.

H.E. Mr. Miloš Koterec, Permanent Representative of **Slovakia** to the United Nations, New York, supported the earlier statement by Poland on behalf of the European Union. Slovakia is working to meet the EU's recommended targets on ODA, he announced. The country has also created a EUR 1 million fund to encourage foreign students from developing countries to attend university in Slovakia. Mr. Koterec also advocated a “rethink” in several areas, such as making education financing more streamlined and better tailoring education curriculum to job opportunities.

Mr. Jorma Julin, Director-General of the Department for Development Policy, **Finland**, supported Poland's earlier statement on behalf of the European Union. Finland will continue to devote 6 to 8 percent of ODA to education, he announced. Mr. Julin argued for a more holistic approach to education, including: (i) greater cooperation with the private sector to improve the “employability of graduates”, and (ii) greater focus on teacher development. He also highlighted various concerns on issues linked to aid effectiveness, such as: (i) needless duplication, (ii) limited coordination, and (iii) poor integration of aid into national education strategies. Finally, Finland urged ECOSOC to “send a clear message at Busan to donors and partners” on the need to make aid work better.

H.E. Ms. Lauma Sika, Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Education and Science, **Latvia**, outlined the country's three education priorities: (i) access, (ii) quality, and (iii) improving “education administration”. She also emphasized the need to, among others; promote lifelong learning, teacher development and bi-lingual education, where appropriate.

H.E. Mr. Pedro Oyarce, Permanent Representative of **Chile** to the United Nations in Geneva, supported Argentina's statement on behalf of the G-77 and China. He called on ECOSOC to continue internal reforms in order to become a more effective forum for the promotion of the international development goals. Such reforms, it was added, include elevating the Council's public visibility and also endowing it with more political relevance. Mr. Oyarce mentioned Chile's four main education concerns: (i) access, (ii) quality, (iii) "rethinking" delivery of education services; and (iv) improving efficiency. Chile also warned that ECOSOC's Ministerial Declaration must have force behind it in order to achieve its goals.

H.E. Mr. Jüri Seilenthal, Permanent Representative of **Estonia** to the United Nations, supported the earlier Poland/EU statement. Estonia intends to scale-up ODA education efforts in places like South Sudan, Haiti and other least developed and conflict-affected countries. Mr. Seilenthal also outlined the country's education priorities, which include promoting educational opportunities for girls and women (Estonia applauded the creation of UNWomen), as well as expanding vocational and entrepreneurial training.

H.E. Mr. Claude Heller, Permanent Representative of **Mexico** to the United Nations in New York, called on ECOSOC to continue to prioritize the Millennium Development Goals, adding that now is the time to start planning for the post-2015 development agenda. He also urged Member States to endow the Council with a more active "policy setting" role.

H.E. Ms. Paulette A. Bethel, Permanent Representative of the **Bahamas** to the United Nations in New York, supported the statement by the G-77 and China. The representative noted that the Bahamas has met MDG education targets on primary enrolment and gender parity, thanks to "steady increases in education investments over the years". In August 2010, the country launched a joint initiative with the Inter-American Development Bank to further develop local human capital. The Government has announced plans to create a "Career Academy" to enhance national labor market opportunities for students. Gender awareness can and should be better mainstreamed into education reform efforts, she concluded.