



## Global Preparatory Meeting

### Summary of the 2011 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting Lomé, Togo 12 April 2011

Presented by H.E. Mr. Jan Grauls, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the  
United Nations and Vice-President of ECOSOC

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to provide a brief summary of the AMR African Regional Preparatory Meeting held on 12 April in Lomé, Togo.

The Meeting was co-hosted by the Togolese Ministry of Education, and was organized by UNDESA in collaboration with UNESCO, UNICEF and ECA, with partial sponsorship provided by the Government of Denmark. It took place in the context of the African Union Teachers' Conference on "[\*Teacher Professional Development within a Reformed Education System in Africa\*](#)", held 13-15 April at the same venue.

The theme of the Meeting was "*The Right to Education for All in Africa: Reinforcing quality and equity*". The programme was set around four main sessions on education and the MDGs; a rights-based approach to inclusive, quality education; country experiences and best practices; and key policy messages for the 2011 ECOSOC AMR.

Among the key messages emanating from the discussion, three stand out:

- The first is that the overall situation of education in Africa is hopeful. Several countries are on track to achieve universal primary education and gender equality in education by 2015.
- The second is that, despite this encouraging news, progress in Africa is threatened by slower economic growth, reduced public and international expenditure on education, and by the demands placed on systems struggling to cope with increased enrolment.

- And third, among the most significant underlying causes of the current shortcomings and challenges to education in Africa are the lack of equity in the delivery of education services, which overwhelmingly affects poor and marginalized populations, and the low quality of education, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, which affects retention and learning outcomes, and contributes to grade repetition.

There were also several recommendations put forward during the Meeting. These included the need to:

- approach education for all from the perspective of honouring a fundamental human right;
- focus on “including the excluded”, whether in cities, remote areas, nomadic communities or conflict zones;
- eliminate school fees for primary education, with additional support for the marginalized;
- introduce early-childhood programmes, wherever possible, to give children a fair and early chance to learn;
- expand school feeding programmes to promote learning and health;
- make special efforts to enrol and retain girls, such as free school rides and sanitary facilities to promote inclusion;
- strive to ensure that schools are safe, welcoming places for both girls and boys;
- strengthen capacity to recruit and retain good teachers; and
- strengthen all relevant partnerships, including with the private sector.

Many of these recommendations will, of course, require more money. And raising more revenue for education — vital as it is — will not happen over night.

However, some initiatives replicate success stories and do not require heavy investments. Even better, many of the recommendations do not require a single extra penny of funding. It is in these areas where emphasis could be given in the very near-term for maximum effect.

Thank you.