

**NEWS RELEASE**

**African Ministers Appeal to Donor Countries to Keep Poor Students in School During Economic Crisis and Beyond**

**Istanbul, October 1, 2009**—14 leading African Finance and Education Ministers have written to Development and Finance Ministers in leading OECD donor countries, appealing for financial help to send 20 million children to primary school for the first time by the end of next year.

In their letter to donor government leaders, the African Ministers, from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda, said they were particularly anxious to secure a successful replenishment for the Education for All Fast-Track Initiative, which faces an immediate funding shortfall of US\$ 1.2 billion through the end of 2010, and will need significantly more over the coming years to educate all school-age children in Africa, and elsewhere in the world.

*“We appeal to you, as leading Ministers in donor countries, to grasp this historic opportunity to move our African countries closer to our 2015 Millennium Education Goals, and to give our boys and girls their ultimate passport to escape poverty and embrace their God-given potential...a key ally in our efforts to educate our boys and girls is the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI). This global partnership has already achieved impressive results, and with your timely and generous help, it will achieve even more -- and help millions of new school students to stretch their minds to achieve a better life than their parents,”* the Ministers said.

According to the Ministers’ letter\*, the EFA Fast Track Initiative has achieved impressive results over recent years and that donor governments could be confident that their aid money was being invested wisely, especially during an economic crisis when donor aid budgets are under stress in many donor countries.

Specifically, the coalition of African Education and Finance Ministers note that:

- **20 million more children have enrolled in primary school in FTI countries** in Sub-Saharan Africa since the partnership began, a 64% jump in enrollments and double the rate in non-FTI countries
- **15 FTI countries are on track to reach the goal of 95% of all children completing primary school by 2015.** Another 11 countries are close behind and should reach this goal soon after 2015
- **Girls account for a remarkable 60% of new enrollments in FTI countries.** 16 FTI countries already have achieved the goal of gender parity in school enrollment, and another 16 FTI countries are on track to reach this goal before 2015.

In their appeal to donor governments, the Ministers are requesting a special high-level Ministerial Roundtable of Ministers from developing and high-income countries on Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, at the upcoming World Bank’s Annual Meetings in Istanbul to discuss the funding crisis in education.

*“ We were very pleased that the leaders of the Group of Eight meeting in L’Aquila, Italy in July this year reaffirmed that, “No country seriously committed to EFA will be thwarted in the achievement of this goal by lack of resources....We reiterate our support to the Education for All - Fast Track Initiative as a good practice for aid effectiveness.”*

In releasing their letter to the public on the eve of the World Bank Annual Meetings in Istanbul, the African Ministers said that “*education is one of the most powerful ways for developing countries to reduce poverty and to spur opportunity for our young people. For every year they spend in the classroom learning how to read, write, and count, our students can boost their potential future wages by as much as 10 percent.*”

*With your financial support, a re-energized FTI can set its sights on the estimated 75 million children around the world—about half in Sub-Saharan Africa—who still do not go to school. In 2010 and beyond, FTI aims to support us to substantially reduce the remaining number of children out of school and help them complete their primary education.”*

Signing on behalf of their young students already in class, and others languishing outside the education system, the Ministers who appealed to OECD donor governments not to abandon their education financing promises to the children of Africa, include:

The Hon. Lucien Marie Noel Bembamba (Minister of Economy and Finance, Government of Burkina Faso); the Hon. Marie Odile Balima Bonkougou (Minister of Basic Education and Literacy, Government of Burkina Faso); the Hon. Ato Sufian Ahmed (Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Government of Ethiopia); he Hon. Ato Demeke Mekonnen (Minister of Education, Government of Ethiopia); the Hon. Alex Tettey-Enyo (Minister of Education, Government of Ghana); the Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Government of Kenya); the Hon. Ken Kandodo (Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Government of Malawi); the Hon. George Chaponda (Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Malawi); the Hon. Salikou Sanogo (Minister of Primary Education, Literacy and National Languages, Government of Mali); the Hon. Aires Bonifacio Ali (Minister of Education and Culture, Government of Mozambique); the Hon. James Musoni (Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Government of Rwanda); the Hon. Charles Murigande (Minister of Education, Government of Rwanda); the Hon. Kalidou Diallo (Minister of Pre-School, Elementary and Middle School Education, Government of Senegal); the Hon. Syda Bbumba (Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Government of Uganda)

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***\*To read the Ministers’ letter in full, and see more information on the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative, please visit: [www.educationfasttrack.org](http://www.educationfasttrack.org)***