

Education for All – Fast Track Initiative

Accelerating progress towards quality universal primary education

PRESS RELEASE

Boosting Support to Education: High Level Conference in Brussels, 2 May 2007

Washington, April 30, 2007 – In two days, on Wednesday 2 May 2007, **Education for All** will be again at the forefront of the development agenda in Brussels.

Following on from the successful ministerial roundtable on education in Singapore in September 2006, the European Commissioner Louis Michel, UK Chancellor Gordon Brown and World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz are convening a high-level education event to generate renewed high-level political commitment to finance basic education in an urgent and longer-term predictable way.

Conference participants will include Ministers of Finance and Development Cooperation of the EU Member States, the OECD donor countries, emerging donors and developing countries, leaders of international organizations, foundations, civil society organizations and the private sector as well as Members of the European Parliament, individual advocates and experts. More information on the program can be found on the website: www.promises-on-education.org

The conference will call for aid to education to improve in four ways:

1. **More aid:** current donors need to keep increasing their financial support to the sector, and new sources of funding will need to be confirmed as well. New bilateral donors such as Bahrain will be present, supporting the objectives of the conference. Private foundations, such as the Soros and Hewlett Foundations, which will take part in the meeting, can also play a major role in increasing aid to education.
2. **Better aid:** More money is simply not enough. It is imperative to ensure that financial resources remain on plan: aid should be aligned behind developing countries' policies and strategies and clearly focused on building capacity and improving outcomes.
3. **Faster aid:** New aid instruments and aid delivery mechanisms need to be used to ensure that resources are channeled fast to the local levels, where they are most needed.
4. **Long-term predictable aid:** Developing countries cannot develop comprehensive sector-wide strategies without being able to rely on foreign aid for more than 2 or 3 years.

“The May 2 meeting will provide a vital opportunity for donors to demonstrate their commitments to increase support for education, and to sustain it over the long term,” said Desmond Bermingham, Head of the FTI Secretariat. “There have been substantial increases in aid for education over the past few years but assistance to basic education in the poorest countries in 2005 was still only a little over 3% of total ODA. Recent success in FTI endorsed countries shows that with consistent and coordinated support developing countries can make remarkable progress towards goal of a good quality education for all children.”

The Education for All *Fast Track Initiative* has been widely welcomed as an important initiative to help to increase the levels of financing for primary and basic education in poor countries. It is also helping to ensure that all financing – both domestic and donor financing – is used effectively to help countries achieve long term and lasting improvements in their education systems.

The FTI has contributed to major progress in the past few years. In Niger for example, over 1 million additional children now go to primary school, which represents an 84% increase from 2000. In Yemen, a country where girls traditionally were lagging far behind boys in school attendance, there has been a sharp increase in intake rates (from 78% to 117% from 2000 to 2005). And in Kenya, an initial \$24.2 million grant from the FTI Catalytic Fund has helped the schools to purchase textbooks on time for the start of the school year.

The FTI is a global partnership supported by over 30 major bilateral and multilateral agencies working in the education sector. It currently provides technical and financial support to low-income countries to help them to achieve universal primary school completion by 2015. The FTI has received pledges and commitments of support from donors of over \$1 billion to the end of 2009. 31 developing countries have already been endorsed as FTI partner countries, including several fragile states that have moved rapidly to develop sound education sector plans. It is expected that by the end of 2008, another 30 countries could join the Partnership.

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