Mandate of the High-Level Group on Education for All

The Dakar Framework for Action states in §19 that “UNESCO’s Director-General will convene annually a high-level, small and flexible group. It will serve as a lever for political commitment and technical and financial resource mobilization. Informed by a monitoring report...it will also be an opportunity to hold the global community to account for commitments made in Dakar. It will be composed of highest-level leaders from governments and civil society of developing and developed countries, and from development agencies.”

Context

The 2011 High Level Group (HLG) meeting will take place in Thailand just over 20 years after the historical 1990 Jomtien Conference on EFA where the EFA movement started. It will also be a year after the Addis Ababa Meeting where participants had requested concrete proposals “to enhance the effectiveness of the HLG and the underpinning coordination architecture”; and six months after the UN High Level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs where the importance of education as a basis for development was reiterated.

The format and content of the meeting will mark a change in comparison to previous HLG meetings, in transition towards what is likely to become a significantly different type of “High Level Forum” in order to better fulfil the mandate given to it by the Dakar Forum in 2000. While commemorating the anniversary of the Jomtien World Conference on EFA, the meeting will take stock of progress achieved towards the 2015 goals and define ways to accelerate progress in overcoming persistent obstacles to delivering everyone’s right to quality education.

The Asia and Pacific region, host to the 2011 HLG, benefits from a dynamic EFA coordination and support structure through the Regional Thematic Working Group on EFA (TWG on EFA) operating under the umbrella of the UN Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and steered by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education, two UNICEF regional offices (for South Asia and for East Asia and the Pacific) with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). The membership of this support structure also includes international and regional non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the sub-regional South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). National efforts to implement programmes towards the achievement of all the EFA goals are supported, among others, by the APPEAL unit, located within the UNESCO Regional Bureau. Annual meetings of National EFA Coordinators and other relevant country representatives and EFA partners have also been organized by UNESCO Bangkok since 2001.

Purpose

The purpose of the meeting will be:
1. To revisit the original 1990 vision of Jomtien of Meeting basic learning needs, especially in relation to the vision of the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action as well as the MDGs and the needs of today’s knowledge society
2. To identify strategic and pragmatic initiatives to address remaining challenges, collectively and at the level of each country, building on best practices and successful policies in order to accelerate efforts towards achieving EFA by 2015.

3. To review progress towards the EFA goals, on the basis of data provided by the UIS, regional progress reports for the period 1990 – 2010, other reports (such as those prepared for the major World Education Conferences and the 2010 MDG Summit), and the goal by goal chapters of the 2011 Global Monitoring Report

**Expected outcomes**

1. A reinvigorated vision of the EFA agenda, identifying the importance of the task ahead and inspiring all partners to new achievements

2. A declaration of political commitment indicating the urgency of an increased effort to address key challenges for the remaining 5 years until 2015

3. A shared understanding of achievements and failures concerning the Jomtien and Dakar commitments, at country, regional and global levels

**Preparation of the Statement**

A draft of the statement will be prepared by the UNESCO Secretariat in advance of the meeting in order to allow sufficient time for consultations with EFA partners, the host country and invited participants. It will be informed by the findings of the Global Monitoring Report and key recommendations from the Meeting of the Working Group on EFA and from the EFA Regional Reports prepared by UNESCO for the meeting. The aim is to finalise the statement at the Senior Officials Meeting in Jomtien on 22 March 2011. There should be no need to set up a specific “Drafting Group”, as in previous meetings.

**Format and Participation**

The HLG meeting will bring together around 40 global leaders (5 Heads of State or Government, 15 Ministers of Education, 5 Ministers of Development Coordination, Heads or high officials of multilateral, regional and bilateral agencies (7), NGOs (5), the private sector (3) for one day of plenary discussions. Each leader can be accompanied by 1 person only in the HLG meeting room (i.e. 80 persons in total) which will be set up for a round-table discussion so as to facilitate an open exchange among the participants.

The HLG meeting will be preceded and followed by two “Senior Officials” technical meetings (approx. 80 participants) during which the persons accompanying the leaders will exchange information to prepare the HLG plenary and reach agreement on the statement to be adopted (morning and afternoon of 22 March); as well as discuss follow-up and possibly an initial action plan (morning of 24 March 2011).

**Organisational Aspects**

Detailed arrangements and responsibilities for the organisation of the meeting are shared between UNESCO and Thailand. In broad terms, Thailand as the host country took charge of the venue and logistical organisation of the meeting including local transport (to and from Bangkok), protocol and security, and for the associated costs. UNESCO staff from Paris and Bangkok will support the host country in this task. UNESCO is responsible for the overall content, programme, documents and invitations.

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1 This significant reduction of the number of participants, especially accompanying delegates, and strict admission rules to ensure the level of participation as well as a more favourable working environment and atmosphere for the leaders will need to be well explained and communicated to the Member States and partners. The Addis declaration is a solid basis for this.