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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

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“INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE WAY OF THE FUTURE”



**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 48TH SESSION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION (ICE)**

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Meeting at the forty-eighth session of the UNESCO International Conference on Education (Geneva, 25-28 November 2008), we, the Ministers of Education, heads of delegation and delegates from 153 Member States have, alongside representatives of 20 intergovernmental organizations, 25 NGOs, foundations and other institutions of civil society, taken part in constructive and challenging debates on the theme of “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future.”

At the conclusion of our work, participants recalled Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that states that everyone has a right to education. We also affirm that inclusive quality education is fundamental to achieving human, social and economic development.

We agreed that governments as well as all the other social actors have an important role in providing a quality education for all and, in doing so, should recognize the importance of a broadened concept of inclusive education that addresses the diverse needs of all learners and that is relevant, equitable and effective.

All forecasts suggest that the global financial crisis will have a disproportionate impact on the poor – those who carry the least responsibility for these events. In this context, we reaffirm the importance of inclusive education for reducing poverty, and improving health, incomes and livelihoods. Therefore, despite the current global financial crisis, we emphasize that funding for education should be a top priority and that the financial crisis should not serve as a justification for a reduction in the allocation of resources to education at both the national and international levels.

Building on the outcomes of the nine preparatory meetings and four regional conferences on inclusive education organized by UNESCO’s International Bureau of Education, and based on the results of plenary sessions and workshop debates which took place during this Conference, we call upon Member States to adopt an inclusive education approach in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of educational policies as a way to further accelerate the attainment of Education for All (EFA) goals as well as to contribute to building more inclusive societies. To this end, a broadened concept of inclusive education can be viewed as a general guiding principle to strengthen education for sustainable development, lifelong learning for *all* and equal access of all levels of society to learning opportunities so as to implement the principles of inclusive education.

Therefore, we **recommend** to Member States to:

I. Approaches, Scope and Content

1. Acknowledge that inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination.
2. Address social inequity and poverty levels as priorities, as these are major obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education policies and strategies, and deal with these problems within a framework of intersectoral policies.
3. Promote school cultures and environments that are child-friendly, conducive to effective learning and inclusive of all children, healthy and protective, gender-

responsive, and encourage the active role and the participation of the learners themselves, their families and their communities.

II. Public Policies

4. Collect and use relevant data on all categories of the excluded to better develop education policies and reforms for their inclusion, as well as to develop national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
5. Consider as appropriate the ratification of all international conventions related to inclusion and, in particular, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in December 2006.
6. Pursue education in the public interest and strengthen the government's capacity to orientate, promote and follow up on the development of equitable education of high quality in close partnership with civil society and the private sector.
7. Develop policies that provide educational support for different categories of learners in order to facilitate their development in regular schools.
8. View linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom as a valuable resource and promote the use of the mother tongue in the early years of instruction.
9. Encourage educational stakeholders to design effective curricular frameworks from childhood onwards, while adopting a flexible approach in order to accommodate local needs and situations, as well as to diversify pedagogical practices.

III. Systems, Links and Transitions

10. Provide for the participation and consultation of all stakeholders in decision-making processes, as the overall responsibility of fostering inclusion implies the active engagement of all social actors, with the government playing a leading and regulatory role in accordance with national legislation when applicable.
11. Strengthen the links between schools and society to enable families and the communities to participate in and contribute to the educational process.
12. Develop early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes that promote inclusion as well as early detection and interventions related to whole child development.
13. Strengthen the use of ICTs in order to ensure greater access to learning opportunities, in particular in rural, remote and disadvantaged areas.
14. Provide high-quality, non-formal educational opportunities that offer the possibilities for formal recognition of competencies acquired in non-formal settings.
15. Enhance efforts to reduce illiteracy as a mechanism of inclusion, bearing in mind the importance of literate parents on the education of their children.

IV. Learners and Teachers

16. Reinforce the role of teachers by working to improve their status and their working conditions, and develop mechanisms for recruiting suitable candidates, and retain qualified teachers who are sensitive to different learning requirements.
17. Train teachers by equipping them with the appropriate skills and materials to teach diverse student populations and meet the diverse learning needs of different categories of learners through methods such as professional development at the school level, pre-service training about inclusion, and instruction attentive to the development and strengths of the individual learner.
18. Support the strategic role of tertiary education in the pre-service and professional training of teachers on inclusive education practices through, *inter alia*, the provision of adequate resources.
19. Encourage innovative research in teaching and learning processes related to inclusive education.
20. Equip school administrators with the skills to respond effectively to the diverse needs of all learners and promote inclusive education in their schools.
21. Take into consideration the protection of learners, teachers and schools in times of conflict.

International Cooperation

22. Recognize UNESCO's leading role with regard to inclusive education through:
 - Promoting the exchange and dissemination of best practices;
 - Providing, upon request, advice to countries on how they can develop and implement policies on inclusive education;
 - Encouraging South-South and North-South-South cooperation for the promotion of inclusive education;
 - Encouraging efforts to increase resources for education both at national and international levels.
 - Making special efforts to assist the Least Developed Countries and countries affected by conflict in the implementation of the recommendations.
23. Request other international organizations also to support Member States in the implementation of those recommendations as appropriate.
24. Disseminate the Conclusions and Recommendations, unanimously adopted at the closing of the forty-eighth session of the ICE among the actors and partners of the international educational community so as to inspire, guide, support and develop renewed and resolutely inclusive educational policies.