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Joint Statement by

Country Representatives of UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and ILO in Pakistan

on the occasion of

World Teachers Day, 5th October 2011

On this World Teachers' Day, we would like to acknowledge and commend the role played by teachers in the socio-economic development of Pakistan. Teachers have been, are, and will remain the torch bearers of knowledge and social change -- they nurture and inspire the future generations. This is vital for bringing peace and democratic stability, for creating jobs and achieving economic development, and for creating respect and harmony between boys and girls, men and women, different beliefs, and ethnic groups.

We also avail this opportunity to highlight the significant contribution of teachers towards improving the learning of students in schools, colleges and universities of Pakistan. Teachers are fundamental in human capital formation: building children and young peoples' capacity to be part of a productive labour force across the entire spectrum of livelihoods and occupations. Dedicated, caring teachers also equip students with the knowledge and attitudes that make them good citizens in a vibrant democratic society, imbued with a sense of civic responsibility. Teachers also enjoy substantial influence in their social environment, being role model for their pupils, and are held in tremendous respect by local communities who seek their guidance in both personal and communal matters. Teachers, along with good parenting, are our children's future and therefore the nation's future – and beyond that – the world's future. You can have a school without a building, without desks, without books, but so long as there is a good teacher, there will be learning.

Given the current challenges that Pakistan is facing teachers have the responsibility to promote peace and instill in their students the universal values of peace, tolerance, equality and respect for diversity. This includes equal rights for all including men and women, all socio-economic groups, and minority groups.

Recognizing the wide gender disparities in education in developing countries, the global theme for this year's World Teachers' Day is 'Teachers for Gender Equality'. Participation rates of girls in education are

low in Pakistan and as a result the percentage of illiterate women is high. At present, about 40% of Pakistani girls are not enrolled in primary school. Teachers can play a leading role in motivating parents to send their daughters to school and keep them in school and in mobilizing local communities to support girls' education in safe, protected schools. The likelihood of out of school boys and girls is higher to enter the world of work as child labourers, including its hazardous forms. Many out of schools girls enter into invisible forms of labour, for example, child domestic workers.

We urge government and civil society, including the private sector, to focus on professional development of teachers by increasing the investment in teacher education, refresher training, and teacher support including taking concrete steps towards improving their working conditions. We also urge the government to give representation to teachers in different legislative and statutory bodies to ensure their participation in the decision making processes at various levels. We also appeal to the teachers and their associations to fulfill their moral and professional obligations by meeting the learning needs of not only the children enrolled in their schools but also of the children who are not fortunate enough to have access to education.

We are confident that the teachers of Pakistan can assist the country in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and targets of 'Education for All'. Teachers can contribute significantly in fulfilling the fundamental Right of all Pakistani children of age 5 to 16 years, boys and girls both, to free and compulsory education, as enshrined in Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan. Teachers can contribute directly and indirectly, through their pupils, in ensuring that Pakistan is a knowledge based democratic society, help garner support in post-crisis reconstruction, and help in coping with disasters and emergencies through working with local communities. Dream of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, who said, "Pakistan is proud of her youth, particularly the students, who are nation builders of tomorrow. They must fully equip themselves by discipline, education, and training for the arduous task lying ahead of them."

Teachers are catalyst for human growth and development. We also call for greater efforts and structures of social dialogue that give teachers a voice in decision-making through their democratically elected organizations. Without teachers' inputs to shape education reforms, recovery processes are not likely to achieve all their goals.

Once again we laud the contribution and dedication of teachers, particularly the female teachers working in far flung regions of Pakistan, towards building the next generation of a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Pakistan.

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