



Joint Message on the Occasion of World Teachers' Day

Ask any parent to name the most important element of her or his child's education and chances are that the answer you will receive will be "good teachers." While new technologies and new subject areas are rushing into the foreground of the educational process, these can only be used appropriately by students through the guidance of good teachers.

Today on World Teachers' Day, we ask parents and all citizens to take a moment to think of the difference that a good teacher, a memorable teacher, has made in your life. Where would you be now if that teacher hadn't crossed your path, if, demotivated, that teacher had already left the profession?

That is what is happening now, in large numbers, in rich and poor communities alike: massive flights of teachers prompted by budget cutbacks in public service, by chaotic working conditions, by imminent retirement for ageing staff, by stress and burnout, and in many communities by a massive death-toll of teachers due to HIV/AIDS. The result is a teacher shortage crisis - up to an estimated 35 million new primary school teachers may be needed globally by 2015, almost as many as are currently teaching in primary education. Without these teachers, the millennium goals to which the countries of the world have committed themselves – especially those of

achieving universal primary education and eradicating extreme poverty, for which education is so important - will not be met. This crisis, largely unnoticed, is often accompanied by public indifference stemming from an erroneous assumption that anybody who knows anything about children can teach, and that large numbers of people can always be found who can be quickly trained to teach. Although we are in charge of four United Nations bodies which deal with many aspects of education, we can definitely state that, without proper training and support, we could not step into a school classroom and teach effectively.

We ask each community to consider the minimum requirements for a good teacher. These were perhaps most succinctly defined by the 1966 international Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers: “Teaching should be regarded as a profession; it is a form of public service that requires teachers of expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous study; it calls also for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge.”

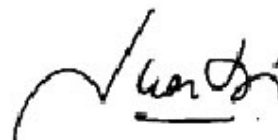
We ask all education stakeholders involved in planning programmes for the academic year to think of what it would take, in the way of resource reallocation and public support, to make sure that this minimum standard of professionalism reaches all teachers in their communities - and all prospective teachers as too.

Today, we say thank you to teachers, to whom society has given one of the most responsible and sensitive jobs in the world. Thank you for the positive expectations you have of your pupils, who bring their problems but also their hopes into the classroom. We know, for example, that the positive expectations you have of girls’ achievements give an incalculable boost to their full

participation in society. Thank you for your skill and your perseverance. Thank you for using your ingenuity for making the classroom a safe and welcoming place for all girls and boys, for respecting their rights, for encouraging their talents, for assuaging their fears, and for building their sense of dignity. Thank you for coming to work every day, despite hardships and, in many cases, physical and political persecution. We salute your courage, commitment and determination. Be assured that there is no substitute for your profession, which deserves the respect and support of everyone. Let there be no mistake: our future depends on it.



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