

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

P. O. Box 3243

Telephone: 251 11 5517700 Fax: 251 11 5517844

Website: www.africa-union.org

**CALL FOR SUPPORT FOR
THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE SECOND DECADE OF EDUCATION
FOR AFRICA, AND THE AFRICAN EDUCATION FUND**

**BY HER EXCELLENCY, PROF. NAGIA ESSAYED
COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY**

Education is well recognised as one of the most important development sector by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. Hence in their 6th ordinary summit in Khartoum they declared 2006 to 2015 as the Second Decade of Education for Africa, in view of the education challenges facing Africa as it entered the new millennium. Ministers of Education of the African Union launched the Plan of action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa in September 2006.

Let me quickly mention the main reason for inadequate achievement in the first decade of education for Africa:

The evaluation report of the first decade states that

“Contrary to expectations, the Decade of Education in Africa did not appear to have been bought into by major international agencies and Africa’s development partners. UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, and other Jomtien partners developed Africa-specific programs during the period, but there was no evidence that these were ever linked with the Decade. At the national level, Member States negotiated their education sector development programs with development partners, but this was not explicitly (or even implicitly) done within the overall context of achieving the goals of the Decade”.

So often locally developed plans have been abandoned in the face of those developed from outside and backed by promises of large financial support. The evaluation Report alerts us to the hollow nature of some of these financial promises. It states;

“Promised external funding for education came in trickles during the period. The projections for financial support in the numerous ‘Africa special’ programs that mushroomed in the 1990s were not realized. ..The fast Track initiative, for example, is yet to become a reality in the continent, half a decade since the Dakar EFA Forum.”

In the Second Decade of Education, we are keen to address these and other hindrances to attainment of goals of the Plan of Action. Already we have implementation strategies for most of the areas of focus in the Plan of Action. We are also in the process of establishing strategic partnerships with African and international partners for implementation of the Plan. Underway are plans to establish a pan-African Education Observatory, to co-ordinate education management information systems in Africa in order to end the phenomenon of ‘data-blank’ and build capacity for information based planning, and systematic monitoring and evaluation at national and regional levels.

Ministers of Education of the African Union declared that the Plan of Action should be seen as Africa’s articulated collective priorities in education. It is therefore expected that true Partners will rally to support Africa’s home grown programmes.

The Second Decade of Education for Africa does not seek to contradict international initiatives in Education. The African Union considers them as worthy initiatives, and especially MDGs and EFA, as basic universally determined standards to be attained. However, AU member states consider them inadequate to fulfil their development goals. Member States developed the Plan of Action in recognition of the inadequacy of the existing initiatives, as demonstrated in part by the report of the evaluation of the first decade of education for Africa. The Plan takes account of these disparate initiatives, and goes further to enable Member States to meet their collective vision and aspiration for the 21st century.

To finance the implementation of the Plan of Action, the AU Summit of heads of state and government in January this year adopted a decision to establish an African Education Fund, to which Member States will be the first contributors.

There is need to clear the perception that the continental Plan of Action contradicts and may possibly draw away resources from national plans. The following issues need to be noted:

- a. Most of the activities related to the Action Plan are cross-national in nature and require collaboration among Member states for their efficient resolution, such as management of educational statistics, revitalization of African universities, improvement of the quality of education, gender issues and so on. They would therefore be implemented regionally and regional training would therefore be the most cost effective and efficient way of utilizing

resources. In such cases, continental or regional training programmes will directly support national efforts in capacity building.

- b. Regional collaboration opens up the possibility of sharing physical resources and expertise and such optimised synergies enhance the chances of successful implementation;
- c. Regional venues for training if rotated can expose officials to resources available in each country and open up the possibility for maximizing on available resources and avoiding unnecessary duplication;
- d. At their Extra-ordinary conference in Addis Ababa in January 2006, Ministers of Education committed themselves to helping one another and moving resources to countries in greater need. This will only be possible if Member States interact more closely and get to know each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- e. Finally, the African Union is a Union of African States, thus Member States have national as well as continental aspirations, to which the Plan of Action will contribute.

Development partners and donors are therefore called upon to support implementation of the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa, through the African Education Fund, as a show of good will towards Africa's effort to take up responsibility for its development.