

## TIME FOR A NEW COMMITMENT – CALL FROM THE DAVOS YOUNG LEADERS

In January 2007, a group of young leaders was invited to the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos by Klaus Schwab, the Forum's founder and Executive Chairman, to present challenging ideas on the future of education.

After their Davos presentation, Gordon Brown, UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, issued a personal invitation to the group to bring their ideas to "Keeping our Promises on Education," a high-level meeting for donors, which he hosted with Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, and Paul Wolfowitz, President of the World Bank.

At the meeting, Yossra Mohamed Taha, from Egypt, called for a new international consensus on the need to provide quality education for all children. Her statement follows.

The young leaders' project is supported by the British Council.

For interviews, quotes etc, please contact David Steven, david@riverpath.com, +44 7939 038832

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Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you so much, your excellence the chair, for such invitation and support, it's really a great opportunity to be with you all today.

To start, I need to go back a few months ago, to January, when sixty young leaders from forty-nine countries met to discuss education at a forum run by the British Council. A smaller group then spoke in Davos, at the personal invitation of Klaus Schwab, the head of the World Economic Forum.

In Davos, we realised something very important. In 2007, the world has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to finally get serious about education.

As other speakers have already pointed out, the challenges are huge. The extremely large number of children out of school, and the many more in bad schools, should make us all feel sad and ashamed.

Children are desperate to be educated.

Let me tell you a story of a young girl from a rural area of my own country, Egypt. Her name is Sabrine and when she was born, her dad didn't obtain a birth certificate for her. As a result, she wasn't able to go to school.

Realising his mistake, he issued one for her younger sister. When it was time for the younger girl to start at school, Sabrine started crying and begged her father to let her go to school with her sister. Finally the father agreed. Sabrine's response was definitely a powerful one.

“When I joined school,” she said. “I loved it, and I consider myself lucky, because now I actually have chance for a better future”

It’s amazing how a 13 year old can have the will to fight for her right, while the international community is still having second thoughts.

So let me finish by saying what I, and my colleagues, hope will come out of this meeting.

First, we need to spend the next weeks and months building a new international consensus behind education. We need to talk not about *education for all*, but about *quality education for all*. For us, this means one thing above all others – investing in the teachers who can educate active global citizens for the future.

Second, we believe that the Fast Track Initiative should be repositioned so it can inspire and engage people from all over the world. Above all, this means linking the financial contributions of governments, private sector and even individuals, to real outcomes, for real people, and in certain named countries.

So for instance, if I had 10 million dollars to give today, could you tell me exactly what my money would deliver? How many kids would it get into school? How many teachers would be trained? And who are the countries that are going to benefit from all that?

Third, we would like to see commitment to two headline targets for 2008.

On the one hand, we should get all 60 eligible countries into the FTI and fund their needs. I am told this will require at least \$3bn in funding each year.

On the other, we need to demonstrate that education quality is improving – however slowly – in every country the FTI funds.

Our final objective would be to see a significant effort to engage the private sector. We would like a commitment to set a timetable for:

- Starting conversations with significant philanthropists to make education their legacy.
- And providing a credible mechanism for corporations to fund education through the FTI.

This meeting cannot provide all the answers, but it could be the start of something truly significant. Please do not let this chance pass you by, and do not let the momentum slip. Please do everything in your power to make *quality education for all* a reality.

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## Biographies

**Simon Moss** is 24 and the Chief Operations Officer of the Oaktree Foundation, an entirely youth-run international aid and development organisation. He is also on the board of Vibewire, a youth media and arts organisation dedicated to public debate.

**Armin Stähli** is 21 and currently studying international affairs at the University of St.Gallen, Switzerland. In 2006 he won first prize at the Swiss Foundation for Democracy Awards for his essay on the Turkish-Armenian conflict.

**Yoo-Sun Andrea Choi** is 21 and has lived in Korea, Japan and the USA. She is a graduate of the Division of International Studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, South Korea and works for the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**Yossra Mohamed Taha** is 22 and lives in Cairo, Egypt. Yossra graduated from Cairo University and is currently pursuing a masters degree in international relations. She has worked with the UN, the Arab League, The American Congress and the EU.

**Jad Kheir** is 21 and was born in Northern Israel to an Arab Druze family. He is a third year medical student at Technion medical school in Haifa. He is an international ambassador for the Center for Humanistic Education which brings together young people from Jewish and Arab backgrounds to develop a shared understanding of the future of Israel's society.

**Chanda Ghoorah** is 24 and lives in Mauritius. She is a youth officer at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, where she plans and implements programmes for young people. She is Secretary of a Co-operative Credit Union and is heavily involved in civil society.