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Canada

Conseil des
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(Canada)

UNESCO World Education Forum 2015 (WEF)

Incheon, Republic of Korea

May 19–22, 2015

Report of the Canadian Delegation

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background.....	3
3. Canadian delegation.....	4
4. Main issues discussed that are relevant to CMEC	4
5. Main messages conveyed by the CMEC representatives.....	5
6. Main outcomes of the conference	6
7. Follow-up for CMEC.....	7

1. Introduction

The UNESCO World Education Forum 2015 (WEF 2015) took place in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from May 19 to 22, 2015. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the event by declaring that “Education secures human rights, including health and employment, and education is also essential to fighting security threats, including the rise of violent extremism.”

The main objective of WEF 2015 was to seek agreement from the international education community on a global roadmap for education until 2030. The forum’s main outcome was the adoption of *The Incheon Declaration – Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all*,¹ which will underpin the education targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be ratified by the United Nations in September 2015.

This milestone event was jointly convened by UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and the World Bank.

Approximately 1,500 delegates from 155 countries attended the forum, including 140 ministers and secretaries of state and 128 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). WEF 2015 included a combination of plenary and parallel group sessions, panel debates, and side events on issues related to the post-2015 education agenda and its implementation. The detailed program for the forum is available at:

<http://en.unesco.org/world-education-forum-2015/file/286/download?token=PswEOI1E>.

In addition to Mr. Ban, an impressive number of high-level speakers addressed the forum attendees, including Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO; Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF; Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank; Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women; Kailash Satyarthi, co-winner (with Pakistan’s Malala Yousefzai) of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize; Julia Gillard, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education; and Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General of *l’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*.

2. Background

2015 is the target date for reaching the Education for All (EFA) goals and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In April 2000, participants in the World Education Forum (WEF 2000) in Dakar, Senegal, adopted the *Dakar Framework for Action – Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*² and reaffirmed their commitment to attaining the six

¹ http://www.waam2015.org/sites/default/files/incheon_declaration_en.pdf

² <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001202/120240e.pdf>

EFA goals³ in order to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth, and adults. In September 2000, world leaders came together at the UN Headquarters in New York to adopt the MDGs,⁴ which include two goals related to universal primary education and gender equality in education, acknowledging the pivotal role of education in human development.

It is now widely recognized that the EFA agenda and the related MDGs have led to significant advances in rights to education (84 million fewer out-of-school children and adolescents, 52 million of which are girls, thereby reducing disparities; 12 million more teachers recruited and deployed in primary and secondary education; and 34 million more children in school due to intensive efforts of EFA movement). However, major education issues still persist in all countries and regions of the world. For this reason, the UN has been mobilizing the world to define the development agenda beyond 2015. Further consultations led to the adoption, in July 2014, of the *Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals*,⁵ influenced by *The Muscat Agreement*⁶ from the Global Education for All Meeting (GEM), in Oman, in May 2014. The proposal contains one stand-alone goal and several targets on education.

3. Canadian delegation

- His Excellency Eric Walsh, Ambassador of Canada to the Republic of Korea, as Head of Delegation;
- The Honorable Clyde Jackman, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, Newfoundland and Labrador, as deputy head of delegation;
- Julie Shouldice, Director, Education, Child Protection and Gender Equality, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD);
- Dominique Levasseur, Senior Programme Officer, Permanent Delegation of Canada to UNESCO;
- Marcel Courchesne, Analyst, International, CMEC Secretariat.

4. Main issues discussed that are relevant to CMEC

At WEF 2015, ministers discussed the achievements and shortfalls in implementing the *Dakar Framework for Action*, including the EFA goals and the education-related MDGs during the period 2000–2015. They also discussed and agreed on a joint position on the education goal of ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education” and promoting “lifelong learning opportunities for all” for the post-2015 development agenda to be adopted at the UN Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in September 2015.

³ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/efa-goals/>

⁴ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

⁵ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=1579&menu=1300>

⁶ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/muscat-agreement-2014.pdf>

Presentations focused on: education as a fundamental element in achieving the sustainable development agenda; education as a human right; links between education, healthy societies, and employment; the need for quality and inclusive education; the importance of gender equity; the use of technology within education; and the importance of lifelong learning.

The speakers noted that collective efforts over the past 15 years have resulted in unprecedented progress in education; however, the EFA agenda remains unfinished business. According to the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*⁷ issued in 2015, there are still some 57 million primary-age children and 63 million adolescents out of school and around 781 million illiterate adults globally.⁸ It will cost an additional \$22 billion a year to ensure universal pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education by 2030.

Discussions at WEF 2015 attested to the need for education systems to focus their efforts on equity and inclusion, quality, and learning outcomes within a lifelong-learning paradigm in order to prepare today's students for the 21st century. While core competencies in areas such as literacy, numeracy, and science remain foundational, there is an increasing emphasis on widening the definitions of 21st-century learning to include the development of cognitive, social, and emotional skills such as critical thinking, resilience, empathy, tolerance, adaptability, personal and social responsibility, integrity, and self-awareness.

5. Main messages conveyed by the CMEC representatives

During the plenary session on the proposed framework for action (FFA) for 2015–2030, Minister Jackman stressed the importance of mobilizing and assembling partners and stakeholders, including UNESCO Member States and UN agencies, as well as their networks — in particular, UNESCO National Commissions, the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), UNESCO Chairs, the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, and World Heritage sites — to achieve the goals and actions highlighted at the forum.

Minister Jackman also emphasized the importance of ensuring a proper monitoring system at the international level to measure improvements and identify gaps, defining robust indicators that measure the achievement of agreed-upon targets without broadening their scope, and taking into account indicators already developed by international organizations.

Over the four-day conference, Minister Jackman met with different delegations to promote a number of pan-Canadian initiatives, including the *CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework*⁹, which presents a pan-Canadian vision for early learning that can be adapted to the

⁷ <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2015/education-all-2000-2015-achievements-and-challenges#sthash.DLy8LVmh.dpbs>

⁸ http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/world_education_forum_will_set_roadmap_for_global_education_until_2030/#.VXXjXkZcghR

⁹ <http://cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/327/2014-07-Early-Learning-Framework-EN.pdf>

unique needs and circumstances of each province and territory, and potentially to other education systems.

He also attended the thematic debate on “Innovating through technology: Shaping the future of education,” in which panellists discussed how technology will not only facilitate learning in core disciplines but also allow students to acquire the general information and communications technology (ICT) skills essential for life and employment and for contributing to their societies as responsible global citizens in the 21st century.

6. Main outcomes of the conference

The main outcome of WEF 2015 was, following intensive negotiations, the adoption of the *Incheon Declaration*, which builds on the EFA movement that was initiated in 1990 and reiterated in 2000. The commitment of the international community to the MDGs and the EFA goals has resulted in significant progress, but many of its targets, including universal access to primary education, remain unfulfilled. The objective of the *Incheon Declaration* is to complete the ambitious EFA and MDG agendas.

The declaration encourages all countries to provide inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 — for example, it encourages the provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education¹⁰ — by mobilizing them and their partners to implement the new agenda on education for 2015–2030. The declaration also underpins the education targets of the SDGs, which will also be ratified by the UN Member States in September, by affirming that education is the key to global peace and sustainable development.

The *Incheon Declaration* will be implemented through the FFA, a roadmap for governments and partners for 2015–2030 to be adopted in November 2015. This framework will provide guidance on effective legal and policy frameworks for education, based on the principles of accountability, transparency, and participatory governance.¹¹ Its aim is to mobilize all countries (including Canada) and partners around an ambitious global goal and set of targets and propose ways of implementing, coordinating, financing, and monitoring the post-2015 education agenda — globally, regionally, and nationally — to ensure equal opportunity in education for all. The international community also acknowledges that an effective implementation will require strong coordination and rigorous monitoring of the education agenda, as well as more funding, especially for the countries furthest from providing inclusive, quality education. Note that

¹⁰ Pre-primary education is not compulsory in all countries — including, for example, Canada and France. Both countries were instrumental in negotiating the use of a more noncommittal term, i.e., “encourage” instead of “recommend.”

¹¹ http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/world_education_forum_adopts_declaration_on_the_future_of_education/#.VXh8VUZcghR

indicators related to the targets included in the FFA were not part of the discussion; UNESCO announced that global and thematic indicators will be developed afterward, in consultation with Members States, and be adopted in July 2016.

While discussing the declaration, a number of participants stressed the importance of having a contextualized strategy based on their national priorities, resources, capacities, and challenges, which should also be considered within the context of the FFA.

Both the *Incheon Declaration* and the FFA urge governments to set nationally appropriate spending targets and increase their official development assistance (ODA) to low-income countries.

7. Follow-up for CMEC

Given the importance and the scope of the FFA, which will influence education across the globe for the next 15 years, it is strongly recommended that the CMEC Secretariat coordinate Canada's participation in the 38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2015, where the framework will be officially adopted and launched at a special high-level event.

Therefore, the delegation recommends that the CMEC Secretariat closely monitor:

- the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, including SDGs, at the UN summit in September 2015. The proposed SDGs, which will replace the MDGs at the end of 2015, comprise 17 goals with 169 targets, including the overarching education goal of ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education” and promoting “lifelong learning opportunities for all”;
- the adoption of the FFA at a special high-level ministerial meeting on the margins of the 38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference, whose participants will include all WEF 2015 convenors and partners, including nongovernmental organizations and civil-society representatives; and
- the implementation of the FFA for 2015–2030, which is expected to come into effect in December 2015.