



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
Inter-American Council for Integral Development
(CIDI)



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OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION**

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DECLARATION OF QUITO
“BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUTH OF THE AMERICAS:
RETHINKING SECONDARY EDUCATION”

(Adopted during the closing session held on August 14, 2009 –
Provisional version pending to be revised by the Style Committee)

WE, THE MINISTERS OF EDUCATION OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS), gathered in Quito, Ecuador, from August 12 to 14, 2009, for the Sixth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education in the Framework of CIDI, declare the following:

1. We affirm that equal and timely access to education is a human right and that quality education is essential, a public good and a priority that forms the central pillar on which our societies are built. Quality secondary education is an essential ingredient for the successful access and insertion of youth into post-secondary, tertiary and higher education, personal development, and an active civic life.

2. We will redouble our efforts to fulfill the commitment of our Heads of State and Government at the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile, in 1998, taken up again and reformulated at the Fifth Summit, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in 2009, to achieve a gross secondary school enrollment rate of at least 75% by no later than 2010 and, with the support of the OAS, specialized regional and international institutions responsible for the follow-up of the Millennium Development Goals and the “Commitments of Education for All” and civil society organizations, to develop strategies to make quality secondary education accessible for all our youth by no later than 2015, especially for the most vulnerable groups and those with special education needs. These strategies must be rooted in the principles of equity, quality, relevance, and efficiency in education, taking into account the gender perspective and ethnic diversity and youth cultures, and also encouraging innovation and creativity.

3. There are enormous challenges in meeting the commitment to guarantee quality secondary education for all, given that, in many settings, the demands by the various players in society exceed the resources available in the system, be they economic, social, institutional, human, or organizational. At the same time, we recognize that the commitments in this Declaration of Quito must be translated into actual and institutionalized practices in each of our countries. In countries in which secondary education has been established as compulsory, it is essential that it be of high quality, free of charge, and accessible to all.

4. Education is one of the principal vehicles of the social mobility needed for countries to develop, as it promotes greater social equity and access to opportunities, which are prerequisites for overcoming the exclusion, poverty, and marginalization that affect many youth in the region. We consider that it is essential, especially in the context of today's global economic crisis to prioritize financing of quality education of all kinds and at every level, as an investment in the future of our peoples and societies. We recommend that our governments review financial strategies for fostering education in our Hemisphere that envisage greater public funding for this sector and, at the same time, promote cooperation strategies and partnerships between the public and private sectors.

5. Dialogue, exchange, and international cooperation can boost and enrich our national efforts, by generating the resources, knowledge and partnerships needed to achieve a genuine transformation of secondary education that will yield concrete benefits for everyone. Working with the OAS, through its Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), and in coordination with international organizations and agencies, other donors, and civil society, we pledge to develop a regional cooperation plan to strengthen secondary education, with clear goals and the resources needed to foster exchange and cooperation among countries.

6. Against a backdrop of scant resources and growing social demand for secondary education, we emphasize the need to explore innovative and flexible education supply strategies that promote access, retention, reinsertion of those who have dropped out of school, and quality in secondary education, especially in rural and marginalized urban populations, indigenous peoples and other groups that have been historically excluded, migrants and/or other socially vulnerable groups. Taking into account national realities, education policy must consider the experiences and unique characteristics of these groups in order to provide them with relevant and quality education, and create conditions to ensure access to, and improve retention in, secondary education for the most vulnerable sectors.

7. We commit to strengthen mechanisms of participation of youth in decisions related to their own educational development and in the creation of public policies aimed at them. We commit to consider the proposals of adolescents and youth in our discussions and decisions concerning the commitments adopted at this Sixth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education, and instruct the CIE, through our Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices, to follow up on the agreements adopted.

8. We recognize the importance of using a secondary education model that allows students to build a career that combines general education, personal development, and preparation for the world of work and that enables them to develop decision-making skills in keeping with their own interests and particular circumstances, both in choosing a higher education option and in developing future employment prospects.

9. We recognize the need to strengthen curricula according to national and sub-national policies and priorities so that they are relevant to the demands of the contemporary world. Comprehensive education in the 21st century should ensure the incorporation of youth cultures and consider different socio-cultural contexts and the knowledge, values of indigenous peoples and other groups that have been historically excluded, the development of specific policies for inclusion and youth citizenship, and the development of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, it should emphasize and promote a critical understanding of society, knowledge of and respect for human rights, democracy, diversity, inclusion, non-discrimination, inter-culturalism, the environment, sex education and addiction prevention, among others.

10. We recognize the implications of the HIV pandemic for youth in all the countries of the Hemisphere as a major problem that poses an enormous challenge for national governments, as set forth in the Ministerial Declaration “Preventing through Education” of the First Meeting of Ministers of Health and Education to Stop HIV and STIs in Latin America and the Caribbean in the framework of the XVII International AIDS Conference, held in Mexico City, in August 2008. We commit to promote the development of strategies and programs aimed at the prevention of these problems in our schools.

11. We recognize the importance of strengthening technical, professional, and vocational training, as well as other skills relevant to the development needs of our countries, in order to create local and regional capacity for innovation and to forge community, local, national, and regional development projects.

12. We underscore the importance of developing accreditation and certification systems for core competencies and work-related skills, recognizing the knowledge and skills acquired by youth in the world of work or other settings, in order to reinforce the processes of inclusion and reinsertion of students who have dropped out of the formal education system before completing their schooling.

13. We agree on the need to promote measures for youth outside the school system in order to foster their integration into society in both educational and work settings. We consider that these socio-educational measures should be coordinated with formal education systems to encourage the completion of middle (or secondary) school studies and to facilitate continuing education.

14. We recognize the need for increased articulation or coordination of educational subsystems of national systems, in particular, of secondary or high school curricula with tertiary or higher education and technical education curricula, the purpose being to ensure students equal access and facilitate free movement throughout the educational system, from early childhood into adulthood.

15. Considering the fundamental role of teachers in education, we reaffirm the commitment to adopt cooperation mechanisms for the development of pre-service education and professional development of teachers that respond to the demands of 21st century education. We entrust the CIE to follow up on this issue through the Inter-American Teacher Educator Network (ITEN), to which we give our full backing.

16. We agree to the need to strengthen the national systems of information and evaluation of education, such as the participation in international assessment instruments, in order to advance strategies to consolidate quality secondary education.

17. We recognize with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of the Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices, given its contribution to strengthening a democratic and non-violent culture, through formal and non-formal education, promoting the participation of youth in an active and meaningful way in the decisions that affect them. We encourage the inclusion in secondary school education programs and curricula of the principles contained in international instruments aimed at promoting and protecting human rights and democracy, such as, the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, in accordance with each country’s legal system. Furthermore we support the implementation, in the framework of the Inter-American Program, of new initiatives to stimulate participation and leadership by secondary school students.

18. We endorse the concerns of our Ministers of Foreign Affairs expressed in the Declaration of San Pedro Sula, "Toward a culture of non-violence," adopted at the thirty-ninth regular session of the OAS General Assembly, and we commit to promote public policies and educational programs aimed at bringing about a cultural transformation geared to eradicating violence, particularly intraschool and domestic violence and that against women, children and youth, caused by cultural, economic, social, ethnic, political, and other factors .

19. We recognize that the study and practice of art, culture and sports strengthen identity and personal development, forge better interpersonal relations, develop a greater sense of social responsibility, increase discipline, and enhance the interest in learning. We encourage the promotion of the inclusion of cultural, artistic, and sporting contents and activities in secondary school study programs. We support the efforts of the CIE to collaborate with the Inter-American Committee on Culture (CIC) in designing initiatives that promote creativity and strengthen cultural learning for youth through the education system, pooling their experiences and social backgrounds for dialogue and exchange with others. We recognize the importance to promote the strengthening of the cultural content of educational programs, in particular those directed at youth to promote the development of their cultural identity, foster intercultural dialogue, and create a greater awareness and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

20. We reaffirm our Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education adopted at the Fifth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from November 12 to 14, 2007, in which we undertook to increase quality comprehensive early childhood education coverage, in accordance with each member state's possibilities and with the long-term goal of universalizing its integral care for the very young. We express our satisfaction at the progress in implementing the mandates that we set on that occasion and, in the inter-American framework, under the coordination of the CIE. In order to give this greater impetus and visibility, we have agreed to entrust CIE to develop an Inter-American Program on Comprehensive Attention to Early Childhood, to which we will give a firm support.

21. We recognize the importance of broadening access to the use of information and communication technologies in secondary education as a factor that will contribute to young people's preparation and their appropriation of knowledge, tools that are needed to mainstream active and democratic citizens into the political, social, cultural, and productive sectors. We pledge to continue working toward universal access of young people to ICTs and their integration into secondary education, as well as preparing schoolteachers in the teaching-learning process, gaining access to knowledge reducing the digital divide. We instruct the CIE to incorporate these subjects into processes of horizontal cooperation, technical assistance and exchange of experiences.

22. We recognize the importance of implementing policies in the education sector, aimed at promoting technological innovation and scientific development. We pledge to promote and support programs and policies that foster the active participation of young people in innovation, science and technology initiatives, bearing in mind their expectations and vocations, in keeping with the human, social, cultural and productive development needs of our countries.

23. We express our satisfaction that the CIE has made a positive contribution to the development and improvement of educational policy in Member States. In this regard, it should be noted that the CIE has become a valuable forum for ensuring that the political mandates emanating from this and prior ministerial meetings receive appropriate technical support and follow up. We also recognize the important support represented by the existence in this process of a special fund to

provide seed money to implement projects that respond to the mandates of the Summits and ministerial meetings in the area of education, and we urge cooperation, development, and financing agencies to work together in backing the multilateral activities of the CIE, contributing new funds which, coupled with the contributions of member states and other partners, would serve to implement the mandates that we adopt today.

24. We instruct the CIE, with the support of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI), to draw up a Work Plan for 2009-2012, the central objective of which should be to implement and follow up on our decisions, with special attention to lines of action such as: (1) strengthening of horizontal cooperation and technical assistance processes; (2) promotion and monitoring of policies of equity, quality and inclusion and experiences of innovation; (3) strengthening of pre-service education and professional development of teachers; (4) financing and resource mobilization based on the criteria of equity, quality, and efficiency; (5) strengthening of strategies, mechanisms, and entities to promote the participation of youth; and (6) the use of information and communication technologies

25. We instruct the CIE Authorities to convene a meeting for this purpose by February 2010 at the latest. In that connection, we entrust the CIE with seeking partnerships with other organizations in order to put together resources to support implementation of the Work Plan and with reporting on progress made in its implementation at our next ministerial meeting and also to other appropriate political organs in the framework of the OAS.

26. We thank the people and government of Ecuador for the special welcome they have extended to us during this Sixth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education in the framework of CIDI. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the leadership of the Ministry of National Education of Ecuador in ensuring the success of this event.