

Mr. Ban Ki Moon  
United Nations Secretary-General  
UN Headquarters  
First Avenue at 46th Street  
New York, NY 10017  
USA

Your Excellency,

As the UN is in the last stage of preparing its report "Accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015", we want to put to you the need to defend the right to lifelong education as a key aspect to social and environmental justice. Knowing the commitment you expressed in the Global Initiative Education First, we are sure that the human right to education will be highlighted in your Final Report.

Currently, there are 780 million illiterate people, two thirds of whom are women, 51 million children out of school, 240 million young people who have completed four years of school and cannot read, write or count. Given the current context of multiple crises, these facts make it crucial to recognize the fundamental human right to education, and the need for concrete and immediate actions to guarantee this right. Lifelong education and learning are unavoidable concomitants of "not leaving anyone behind," because they represent the only way to offer people a real opportunity to demand their rights and exercise their citizenship in an active form.

Education (beyond formal education) must maintain a holistic and inclusive approach and contribute to the elimination of inequalities and discrimination. Instrumentalist views that reduce education to servicing the market and deprive it of its transformative and critical function must be overcome and prevented. The concept of education as a public good, not merely a private benefit, must be preserved, as well as its necessary inclusiveness, and its intellectual quality. A realistically adequate budget is essential to achieve all this.

A key function of adult learning is helping people understand and influence the economic changes that affect them. This is an absolute necessity if we are to achieve an integrated sustainable development approach, with cohesion and coherence.

We also believe that the goals need to be ambitious and wide enough not to reduce learning to reading, writing and numeracy. The targets presented must overcome the reductionism that characterised the Millennium Development Goals. They must go further than primary education. Moreover, we expect these targets to respect the fundamental dimensions of the human right to

education: the need for free education, an adequate level of financing, the existence of enough trained teachers and the overcoming of all forms of discrimination in and from education. Adult education, including but not limited to the overcoming of illiteracy should be present in the targets so that they will reflect the final aims of education: the whole development of human personality, the preparation for decent work, exercising citizenship and peaceful coexistence, as set out in the Universal Human Rights Declaration.

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2030 is indeed an ethical imperative for every nation in the World and for the International Community and the United Nations System. But this, like eradicating violence and inequality, is not possible without going to the root causes of these evils, of which ignorance is one. The horizon of the post 2015 Development Agenda must be the attainment of all Human Rights to a life of justice and dignity. To achieve this, lifelong learning and adult education, including literacy of women and girls, is essential.

We hope, then, that your final report recognizes these issues and that one of the universal objectives to be established will be to provide "quality education and lifelong learning", as recommended by the High Level Panel Report "A New Global Partnership".

Therefore, we suggest that the following recommendations be part of the report:

1. The right to lifelong education and learning should be recognized.

States are obliged to ensure this right for all people equally and without discrimination by race, ethnicity, gender, age, sex and economic status. Privatization, which views education as a commodity, must be eradicated, as well as macroeconomic conditions that undermine investment in education. The international monitoring and follow-up mechanisms of commitments made at CONFINTEA VI are essential in thinking about the Post-2015 situation.

2. Adult learning and education (ALE) should be recognized as essential to overcoming poverty and (gender and generational) violence, in order to achieve greater equality and to address the global food, energy, environmental and financial crises, for peace. Silent violence of economic, social and cultural inequality is unacceptable. Equal opportunities should be a central concern in the reorientation of youth and adult learning and education, with an emphasis on the education of women.

3. Literacy and lifelong learning are essential elements of the Millennium Development Goals and should be contextualized in the right to education and articulated with other intersectoral actions and policies. Adult Learning and Education, including literacy, must be clearly prioritized in international frameworks and national government policies. States and international agencies must demonstrate a clear political will and increase their resource allocation to ALE, commit to the

qualified training of teachers and professionals in this area and ensure appropriate working conditions.

4. It is essential to rely on educational approaches that link education to transformation for social and environmental justice. In this way, Popular Education is relevant when, through its methodology, its vision of citizenship, its coordination of learning with the environment, its empowerment of social stakeholders, it has given vitality to literacy, to ALE, to education linked to life and other kinds of development with a sustainable and intercultural perspective.

5. The report should promote interculturalism, equality, gender equity, the link between citizenship and democracy, care and harmony with nature, the elimination of all forms of discrimination, the promotion of justice and the building of a culture of peace and non-violent resolution of conflicts.

ACTION is required: we need to have legal and policy frameworks, governance structures and mechanisms, as well as international monitoring and follow-up mechanisms of commitments made – all of them clear and appropriate to the ensuring of the Right to Education for all people.

We thank you in advance for your attention. Yours faithfully,

Signature: Dr Jennifer Strauss AM

Organization: Graduate Women Victoria Inc.

Date: 16 July 2013