



**2009 World Conference on Higher Education:  
The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research  
for Societal Change and Development**

**(UNESCO, Paris, 5 – 8 July 2009)**

**DRAFT COMMUNIQUE  
(1<sup>st</sup> Draft 26 June 2009)**

Considering the Declaration and outcomes of the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education, which are still valid, and the debates and messages from the preparatory regional meetings in Cartagena de Indias, Macau, Dakar, New Delhi, Bucharest and Cairo, we, the participants of the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education 'The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development' held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, on 5 to 8 July 2009, issue the following statement and call for action:

**Statement**

The Social Responsibility of Higher Education; the Social Commitment to Higher Education and Major Global Challenges

1. Higher Education is strategic for all education and the basis for research, innovation and creativity. At no time in human history has the welfare of nations depended in such a direct manner on the quality and outreach of their higher education systems and institutions.
2. Higher Education plays an important role in nation-building. Higher Education as a public good must be a matter of responsibility of all governments.
3. The current economic downturn may widen the access and quality gap between developed and developing countries and within countries, presenting additional challenges to countries where access is already restricted.
4. Faced with the complexity of current and future global challenges, institutions of higher education have the social responsibility to advance our understanding of multifaceted issues, which involve social, economic, scientific and cultural dimensions and our ability to respond to them. To do so, institutions must increase their interdisciplinary focus and promote innovative thinking which contributes to the advancement of sustainable development, peace, well being and development, and the realization of human rights, including gender equity.
5. Our ability to realize the goal of Education For All is dependent upon our ability to address the worldwide shortage of teachers. Higher education must scale up teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, with curricula that equip teachers to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills they need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This will require new approaches, including open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communications technologies (ICTs). Preparing education planners and conducting research to improve pedagogical approaches also contributes to this goal.
6. The training offered by institutions of higher education should both respond to and anticipate real-world needs. This includes promoting research for the development of new technologies and ensuring the provision of technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship education, and programmes for lifelong learning.
7. Institutions of higher education worldwide have a social responsibility to help breach the development gap by increasing the transfer of knowledge across borders, especially towards developing countries, and working to find common solutions to foster brain circulation and alleviate the negative impact of brain drain. International university networks and partnerships are a part of this solution, and help to enhance mutual understanding and a culture of peace.
8. In each of its three functions of research, teaching and service to the community higher education must address today's global challenges, notably those expressed in internationally agreed development goals, including Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Higher education has a central role in

supporting national and international development for a sustainable future and an anticipatory role in alerting society and decision-makers to emerging trends and fostering technological innovation.

9. New dynamics are transforming the landscape of higher education and research. They call for concerted action, both nationally and internationally, to assure the quality and sustainability of higher education systems worldwide, in particular in Sub-Saharan Africa, small states and other least developed countries.

#### Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

10. The WCHE paid special attention to the needs of Sub-Saharan Africa, where the revitalization of higher education is an important tool for the development of the continent. There is scope for greater pan-African collaboration in areas such as qualifications recognition, quality assurance, governance and research. This could be facilitated by the creation of an African Higher Education Area; regional Centres of Excellence for the exchange of experiences and expertise; student and staff mobility at regional level; the encouragement of joint degrees; and mutual recognition of certificates, diplomas and degrees.
11. Developing the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics is particularly important for African higher education. These subjects should be given priority without neglecting Social Sciences and wider access issues.
12. Sustainable growth in Africa is contingent on the capacity of States to diversify their economies, and to thus train human capital that will help carry out and support this transformation. In this process, higher education plays a key role in training qualified individuals who will be capable of implementing new technologies and using innovative methods to establish more efficient enterprises and institutions.
13. There is a need to increase and broaden equitable student access and success, including student welfare and services with the appropriate financial and educational support to students from poor and marginalized communities; to target a greater representation of women across broad fields of study; to provide a diverse range of higher education institutions. The promotion and training of African engineers locally should be a strong priority.

#### Internationalisation, Regionalisation and Globalisation

14. Higher education is international in nature and this feature may need protection and encouragement in the economic downturn. Effective internationalisation is a blend of cooperation (through the sharing of knowledge and good practice) and competition (through the quest for excellence), without ever forgetting values.
15. Higher education should reflect the international dimension in both teaching and research. Partnerships for research and staff and student exchange are a good vehicle for this. While encouraging academic mobility there should be mechanisms to encourage Diasporas from developing and transition countries to contribute to the development of research capacities at home to alleviate the negative impact of brain-drain.
16. Greater regional cooperation in higher education is desirable in areas like quality assurance, the recognition of qualifications, and research on development issues. These could become important themes for the emerging regional higher education and research areas. Regional cooperation should be fostered and inter-regional cooperation pursued in all aspects of higher education and research, in particular on a South-South axis. Countries facing similar challenges (e.g. the small states) can usefully collaborate on a global basis.
17. Globalisation has marked higher education and research significantly, creating both new challenges and opportunities. For globalisation of higher education to benefit all,

there is a need to assure equity in terms of access and success, to promote quality and to respect cultural diversity as well as national sovereignty.

18. Globalisation has also increased the pressure to make comparisons between higher education institutions, resulting in the emergence of international rankings. Such comparisons should promote institutional diversity by including a range of criteria that reflect the variety of goals and purposes of different systems, institutions and institution types. They should also acknowledge the world's cultural and linguistic diversity.
19. Cross-border provision of higher education can make a significant contribution to higher education provided it promotes quality and respects the basic principles of dialogue and cooperation, mutual recognition and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and national sovereignty. Cross-border higher education can however also create opportunities for fraudulent and low-quality providers of higher education that need to be counteracted.
20. Trade in services is a manifestation of globalisation that has caused great concern in the academic community; in particular with the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organization. Member States should not consider higher education as a commercial transaction; they should ensure that the educational interests are promoted and protected.

#### Access, Equity and Quality

21. Expanding access has become a priority in the majority of Member States and increasing participation rates in higher education are a major global trend. However, great disparities still exist. Some countries have achieved almost universal access to higher education with 70-80% of age participation rates while others remain well below 10%.
22. In expanding access higher education must pursue the goals of equity and quality simultaneously. Equity is not simply a matter of access – the objective must be successful participation and completion as well as assuring student welfare. This requires a culture shift at many institutions and reforms in curricula, teaching/learning systems and student assessment.
23. Closer links with the world of employment require people constantly to update their knowledge. Lifelong learning has become a necessity in knowledge societies. This is a new challenge for higher education institutions that requires them to give wider recognition of prior learning and work experience.
24. Modern societies need diverse higher education systems with a range of institutions having a variety of mandates and addressing different types of learners. Private higher education has an important role to play as the fastest growing sub-sector of higher education worldwide, reaching 70% of enrolments in some countries. Regulatory and quality assurance mechanisms should be put in place for the whole higher education sector that exclude discrimination, promote access and success and protect students by guaranteeing the quality and relevance of provision.
25. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) present opportunities to widen access to quality education at reasonable cost. However, to be successful such innovations require strong institutional commitment to the success of their students and good organisation. Higher education must invest in the training of its staff to fulfil new functions in evolving teaching and learning systems.
26. Expanding access poses challenges to the quality of higher education. Quality assurance is a vital function in contemporary higher education and must involve all stakeholders. Creating a quality culture within institutions is a more effective form of

quality assurance than assuring compliance with external requirements. Quality criteria must reflect the overall objectives of higher education, notably the aim of giving students access to success. It should encourage innovation and diversity rather than focusing on compliance with existing models.

27. Spurious providers (degree mills) are a serious problem, particularly because ICTs make it easy for bogus institutions to deceive students. Combating degree mills requires a multi-pronged attack at national and international levels.

#### Learning, Research and Innovation

28. It is increasingly difficult to maintain a healthy balance between basic and applied research in scientific enquiry. This is due to the high levels of investment needed for basic research and the challenge of linking global knowledge to local problems. Research systems should be organised more flexibly to promote science and interdisciplinarity in the service of society.
29. It is important for the quality and integrity of higher education that academic staff have opportunities for research and scholarship appropriate to their needs. Academic freedom is a fundamental value which must be protected in today's evolving and volatile global environment.
30. The knowledge society requires a growing differentiation of roles within higher education systems, with poles and/or networks of research excellence, innovations in teaching/learning and new approaches to community service emerging at different institutions. To avoid this leading to a hierarchy in public perception, Members States should foster excellence in their higher education systems and provide for institutions of all types.
31. In less developed countries and regions higher education institutions should seek out areas of research and teaching where they can address issues related to the well-being of the population and establish a strong foundation for endogenous science and technology and postgraduate education of quality.
32. Given the severe shortage of private funding for research and development in many countries, regional partnerships should seek innovative ways of increasing the participation of the private sector in research and innovation within higher education. This should include public-private partnerships involving small and medium enterprises.
33. The application of ICTs to teaching and learning is still in its infancy, although it has great potential. In order to ensure that the introduction of ICTs adds value as well as cuts costs, institutions and governments should work together to pool experience, develop policies and strengthen infrastructure, especially bandwidth.

### ***Call for Action: Member States***

34. Members States, working in collaboration with all higher education stakeholders, should develop policies and strategies at system and institutional levels:
- a) To ensure that there are adequate investments and resources devoted to the Higher Education and Research sector; reflecting the growing expectations and the essential roles it plays in society, culture and economy as well as in the pursuit of internationally agreed development goals;
  - b) To foster diversification in both the provision of higher education and the means of funding it; put in place appropriate regulatory and quality assurance frameworks; and sustain quality in times of economic difficulty;
  - c) To scale up teacher education, both pre-service and in service, with curricula that equip teachers to prepare children for fulfilling lives in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a commitment to peace and human rights;
  - d) To promote internationalisation that balances cooperation and competition, represents an appropriate blend of local and cross-border provision and is imbued with ethical values;
  - e) To encourage quality cross-border higher education that respects dialogue and cooperation, mutual recognition, cultural and linguistic diversity and national sovereignty and to promote access to transparent and reliable information; to develop regulation and quality assurance mechanisms to counter-act fraudulent providers of cross-border higher education;
  - f) To develop mechanisms to counteract the negative impact of the brain-drain while encouraging academic and staff mobility;
  - g) To support greater regional cooperation in higher education conducive to the establishment and strengthening of regional higher education and research areas;
  - h) To empower small states to benefit from the opportunities offered by globalisation and foster collaboration between them;
  - i) To encourage the emergence of a diversity of institutional evaluation systems using a range of criteria that reflect the needs of differentiated systems and institutions as well as the world's cultural and linguistic diversity;
  - j) To build capacity at national level so that the higher education community can promote and protect its interests in all relevant national and international negotiations;
  - k) To pursue the goals of equity and quality and assure that success is the important goal in expanding access to higher education, To this end, develop more flexible entry pathways and closer links to the world of employment, and assure better recognition of prior learning and work experience;
  - l) To enhance the attractiveness of the academic career by ensuring respect for the rights and adequate working conditions of academic staff;
  - m) To assure active student participation in academic life and to provide adequate student services;
  - n) To strengthen quality assurance and ensure that it involves all stakeholders. Quality criteria should reflect the overall objectives of higher education and should encourage innovation and diversity;
  - o) To combat degree mills through a multi-pronged attack at national and international levels;

- p) To develop more flexible and organised research systems which promote excellence, science, interdisciplinarity and serve society; and to strengthen links between the public and private sectors in research and innovation, including through public-private partnerships involving small and medium enterprises;
- q) To support the fuller integration of ICTs into higher education through systems that foster economies of scale;

**Call for Action: UNESCO**

35. In the context of significant progress towards achieving Universal Primary Education UNESCO should reaffirm the priority of higher education in its future Programmes and Budgets. In pursuing this priority UNESCO, within its five functions of laboratory of ideas, catalyst for international cooperation, standard-setting, capacity-building and clearing house should pay particular attention to:

- a) Assisting with the formulation of long term, sustainable strategies for higher education and research in tune with internationally agreed development goals and national/regional needs;
- b) Building capacity to formulate higher education and research policies and strategies at the system and the institutional level;
- c) Providing a platform for dialogue and the sharing of experience and information on higher education and research in the second decade of the twenty-first century;
- d) Helping governments and institutions address international issues in higher education by:
  - Continuing to sustain, promote and implement its standard-setting instruments, in particular the new generation of regional conventions for the recognition of qualifications; and the 1997 Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel;
  - Pursuing its work in capacity building for quality assurance in higher education in developing countries, through its partnerships with other organizations and using to this end the UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education, the UNESCO Portal on Higher Education Institutions, the UNESCO-CHEA Statement on Degree Mills and other existing tools, including major reference books developed by partner institutions;
  - Fostering international collaboration in teacher education in all regions and in Africa through TTISSA (Teacher Training in Sub-Saharan Africa);
  - Encouraging the transfer of knowledge through UNITWIN Networks and UNESCO Chairs, and in collaboration with other agencies to further capacity development to realize internationally agreed goals such as EFA, the MDGs and the UN Decades; and to foster science and innovation in developing countries;
  - Collaborating with partners on issues of academic migration and the development of research capacity in order to promote brain circulation and alleviate brain-drain;
- e) Establishing an International Multi-stakeholder Action Team involving policy makers, higher education experts and researchers and all major partners and donors, in order to ensure effective follow up to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education; to identify most important issues for immediate action; to monitor trends, reforms and new developments; and to draw up priorities for the co-development of higher education in developing countries.

- f) Reinforcing the UNESCO-ADEA Task Force for Higher Education in Africa which involves major partners and donors to ensure effective follow up to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education; to go beyond words and recommendations.