

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by

H.E. Ambassador Michael Omolewa,

President of the General Conference of UNESCO

to the 2003 ADEA Biennale

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Grand Baie, Mauritius

Honourable Ministers of Education,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
(should edit to be as specific/appropriate for the occasion)

I should like to thank the Association for the Development of Education in Africa for having invited me to attend this extremely important Biennale Meeting, “The Quest for Quality: Learning from the African Experience”. I should also wish to thank the Government of Mauritius, especially the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research for the quality of this meeting’s organization together with your very warm hospitality here in Grand Baie. I have the pleasure of joining my greetings to you with those of the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, the Chairman of the Executive Board, Mr Hans-Heinrich Wrede, as well as all those from the entire Organization!

It is indeed my pleasure to be here with you today, to speak to you on behalf of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization on the subject of quality education. In fact the equitable development of the entire global village of the earth is in our abiding interest; and for this reason it is why UNESCO is being represented at the highest organ of its governance, the General Conference.

The theme you have established for this year’s meeting – namely education and development, and the devotion of more attention to quality education, as well as the financing of education, partnerships and the role of civil society are similar to those of UNESCO.

As you may know, Ladies and Gentlemen, quality education is one of the strategic objectives that UNESCO is pursuing during its current Medium-Term Strategy. Quality Education is also one of the six Education for All Goals and is one of the UN system's Millennium Development Goals. One of UNESCO's tasks, therefore, is to sustain a debate on the topic of quality education in order to advance the knowledge about what is understood by it in a globalized context especially taking into account local conditions.¹ I am keen, therefore to hear opinions on these subjects from such an august assembly.

UNESCO will thus take advantage of its role as lead agency in the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) to promote broad partnerships and integrate economic, ecological and social dimensions of sustainable development into the EFA agenda and in line with the Millennium, Development Goals (MDGs). Capacity development and support to Member States will be a key feature in my Organization's efforts, based on consultation and collaboration with partners such as yourselves together with the fostering of carefully selected innovations.²

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa, ADEA, has been at the forefront of development education since the late 80s. I am proud that UNESCO, through its International Institute for Educational Planning, has collaborated with ADEA throughout its fruitful existence. In fact, the universality of an organization like UNESCO – where it brings all countries together to establish international criteria for education – and collaboration with worthy partners like ADEA help contribute to the cross-fertilization of ideas from the international, to the regional, the national and the local level. Without such partnerships, our efforts would be somewhat in vein.

¹ UNESCO Programme and Budget, 2004-2005 (32 C/5), paragraph 01114

² *ibid.*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO was created on the premise that the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace is indispensable to the dignity of man. For the education programme, this means promoting education through which people learn to live together harmoniously, showing tolerance towards one another and respecting human life and human rights.³ It is for this reason that the pursuit of quality education is important to the development not only of Africa, but of the entire planet.

UNESCO aims to encourage cultural dialogue and to create with its partners a shared and expanded vision of quality education as a foundation for human security. The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development will be a key vehicle for pursuing this agenda.⁴

However, Ladies and Gentlemen, UNESCO cannot go it alone. The needs of the African continent, the needs of Sub-Saharan Africa and the needs of individual Member States of this continent are such that partnerships must be developed to build on synergies, to share experiences and equitably prioritise actions for the greatest impact and effect. For this reason, ADEA's contribution to our own efforts will be most desirable. As we all know, Africa is constantly on the outlook for credible partners with whom to ensure that the prescription for the problems are genuine, adaptable, attainable and capable of moving the entire continent from the challenges of poverty, illiteracy, technological backwardness, marginalization, frustration, discrimination, civil conflict and inadequate social services.

³ UNESCO Programme and Budget, 2004-2005 (32 C/5), paragraph 01012

⁴ *ibid.*

Let me assure you, Ladies and Gentlemen, that the outcomes of this conference will be circulated for necessary consideration and action amongst those at UNESCO and the IIEP who are most appropriately concerned.

I wish you every success for this important conference in the coming days.

Thank you.