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*International Dialogue on Population and Sustainable Development*

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**Creating an updraft for sustainable development**

**Carol Bellamy, Keynote Speech**

*Check against delivery*

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Courtesies: I'd like to thank Minister Niebel, Nida Mushtaq [Youth Coalition, Pakistan], Babatunde Osotimehin [UNFPA], our hosts here at KfW, and all of the colleagues at BMZ who have made this happen.

And I would like to mention the important contribution of the German Government to education worldwide. All of us working to promote education appreciate your support.

I'm delighted that the theme for this Dialogue here in Berlin is 'Education Matters: empowering young people to make healthier choices'. This theme chimes with our work at the Global Partnership for Education, where we look beyond the numbers of children in school – important though the numbers are – to the very purpose of education.

Having been asked to outline the role of education in health and in sustainable development, I've been trying to find a single image to convey the deep connections between the three. It's not easy.

Is it a journey – we start at point A (education), travel smoothly on to point B (health) and arrive at our destination point C (sustainable development)?

Is it an equation – education, plus health, equals sustainable development?

Or is it a cake mix – add half a kilo of education to half a kilo of health, stir it around, bake it for a while and there it is: sustainable development.

If only things were that simple. If they were, the world's richest nations, which built their economies on a foundation of universal education and public health,

would be basking in the glow of truly sustainable development. And as we all know, our nations are actually living beyond their means, on borrowed time and on plundered resources.

History tells us that development is not a smooth, linear process. When things go well, education, health and sustainable development are mutually supportive, with each providing an 'updraft' for the others. (Perhaps the image of a bird spiralling upwards is closer to the truth – even though it is a little whimsical).

The key phrase is 'when things go well'. For most of the world's children and young people, a solid combination of education and health gives them that crucial first 'lift'. But there are still too many who miss out and remain earthbound, while others soar away.

This is about interconnectedness, it is about synergies, and – above all – it is about equity, to ensure that nobody is left behind.

In my role as Chair of the Global Partnership for Education, and in my former roles with the Peace Corps and with UNICEF, I have seen how crucial it is to build an equitable net of education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, child protection – a net big enough and strong enough to catch every child and every adolescent. If even one part of the net is weak, the whole structure can fail.

Poor health disrupts education, poor education disrupts health, and a failure to protect the young from conflict, exploitation, discrimination and violence disrupts even the most conscientious efforts and hard-won progress in every other area.

On the positive side, the world has come a long way in recent years. The number of primary-school aged children out of school has fallen from over one hundred million to around seventy million since 2000. The number of children under the age of five who die each year has fallen from twelve-point-four

million in 1990 to seven-point-six million in 2010, as announced by UNICEF and the World Health Organization last month.

There is no doubt – this is amazing progress. But now we need to take things to a whole new level to ensure that each and every child and adolescent has a share in the progress that is being made.

The benefits of education and health seem so obvious. But the fact that many children and adolescents in developing countries continue to miss out on schooling, or continue to suffer and even die as a result of preventable disease, suggests that we need to continually remind ourselves of what seems like plain common sense.

Let's take a look at just some of the benefits, and some of the synergies, through an education lens.

First, I believe that a decent education for every child is the tipping point for lasting social and economic development. Investing in education is the single most effective means of reducing poverty. The statistics confirm it. Put simply, every year of schooling you have translates into a ten per cent increase in your potential income. Take this up a notch – to the national level – each year of additional schooling boosts annual GDP by one per cent. Take it up one *more* notch to the regional level: in sub-Saharan Africa investing in the education of girls, in particular, could boost agricultural output by twenty-five per cent.

More than one-hundred-and-seventy million people could be lifted out of poverty if all students in low-income countries left school equipped with basic reading skills. If we could do just this one thing, we would reduce global poverty by twelve per cent.

The benefits of education for each individual – particularly for a girl – kick in the moment they are born, and last a lifetime. Education has a powerful influence on infant mortality, disease, maternal mortality, teen pregnancy, where and how a mother gives birth and the number of children she will have.

**Here comes a fact:** The lives of an estimated 1.8 million children could be saved in sub-Saharan Africa this year if their mothers had at least a secondary education.

**And here come some more:** According to a World Bank study, mothers with at least four years of schooling have around one third fewer children than mothers with no schooling – a crucial issue for sustainable development, given the very real impact of population growth on our planet’s resources, and a crucial issue for discussion here in Berlin. What’s more, the mortality rate for children whose mothers have at least four years of schooling is half that of children born to mothers who are illiterate.

Education is good for your health, and that is good for national development. Rates of HIV and AIDS, for example, are halved among youngsters who have completed primary education. This means that if every girl and boy on earth completed primary school, at least seven million new cases of HIV would be prevented in a decade.

**And here comes a synergy.** Good health gives children and adolescents the strength, stamina and energy they need to seize the opportunities around them, particularly the opportunity to learn – to get the most out of their education.

**And here is where it all becomes sustainable:** children whose own mothers attended school are twice as likely to go to school themselves. Women who have fewer and healthier children are more likely to find paid work outside the home. Higher incomes can lead to higher savings, and a greater willingness to invest in the education of your children, who – because they are healthy – are better able to learn and thrive at school. Which creates an educated, healthy and productive workforce. Which, in turn, attracts investment.

In other words, education breeds health, and health breeds education, and both contribute to sustainable development – for children, for families and for entire nations.

And round – and up – we go, riding that updraft.

Simple, yes? I'm afraid not.

Yes, there has been progress, but it is appalling that there are still seventy million children of primary school age out of school: that is more than the entire population of France.

A similar number of adolescents are not in secondary school – one in five overall, rising to one in three in sub-Saharan Africa.

And yes, there are more children in the classroom, but it is often a struggle to keep them there. For many, the pressures of poverty and discrimination, coupled with schooling that fails to engage or inspire, are just too overwhelming. One third of the adolescents who are in school are trying to complete their primary grades – a dispiriting and demoralising experience. Not surprisingly, many drop out.

Synergies can be negative as well as positive. At the Global Partnership for Education, one of our major concerns is the way hunger derails education, with one third of all children under five in developing countries experiencing malnutrition that causes irreversible damage to their cognitive development. In other words, they lose the ability to learn as much as their peers.

We know that girls with little education are more susceptible to early marriage, even in countries where early marriage is not the norm. Here, poverty, inequity and lack of education combine to increase the risks. The median age at first marriage for women from the richest twenty per cent of households has risen by two years over the past two decades to twenty-one. The median age for girls from the poorest twenty per cent of households, however, is around eighteen – almost exactly where it was twenty years ago. The gap between rich and poor is growing.

Education can fill the gaps in knowledge that put lives and health at risk. Accurate knowledge of HIV and AIDS, for example, is lowest among the poorest households and in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa. Add lack of education to the mix and the problems are intensified. In Namibia, sixty-eight

per cent of educated young men have accurate knowledge about HIV prevention, compared to only thirty-three per cent of uneducated young women.

In education, in health, in so many other spheres, success or failure is a question of equity.

This is about the children and adolescents themselves ... who they are ... where they are ... and what is happening around them – to their communities, their families and, very importantly, their mothers.

It is about a failure to push that extra mile to reach families and communities on the very edges of society, or those caught up in conflict and other crises, such as unprecedented climate-related disasters.

It is about a failure to do enough, fast enough, to tackle the entrenched discrimination that keeps girls out of school and excludes women from health care, stifling their potential and endangering their very lives.

But it is not necessarily about national wealth: economic growth is no guarantee of education or health for all. Most of the world's poor and uneducated now live in middle-income countries.

It is, very often, about the decisions made by our political leaders. And here I have more bad news: the global commitment to education is in trouble. UNESCO estimates that it will take sixteen billion dollars of external assistance to low income countries each year to achieve the global goal of Education for All by 2015.

It sounds a lot, but it is only half the amount spent on ice cream in the USA and Europe each year. And it is only one-sixth of the current level of aid to basic education.

Bilateral support for education is dwindling and, in some cases, vanishing.

Several low-income countries are enduring the withdrawal of funding and technical support for education from several bilateral donors at once, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Nepal and Zambia.

And aid for education does not always go where it is most needed. Fragile and conflict-affected countries are home to more than half of the children who are out of school worldwide, but receive just over one quarter of all aid to basic education.

### **So, what should be done?**

**We need an equitable approach** – an approach driven by the needs of the poorest and the unreached rather than the already better off majority.

There are solid examples of success. According to Development Progress Stories gathered by the UK's Overseas Development Institute, Bangladesh has increased its female net enrolment rate in primary schools from just thirty-three per cent in 1970 to eighty-six per cent in 2009.

And Ethiopia has not only increased primary and secondary enrolment by more than five hundred per cent since 1994; it has made strenuous efforts to do this equitably. The emphasis has been on tearing down the barriers to education – abolishing school fees, spending more on school construction and maintenance, hiring and training thousands of new teachers. All of this has been backed by a shift to teaching and learning in mother tongues and by the gradual and planned decentralization of the education system to progressively lower levels of government to improve service delivery.

When Burkina Faso joined the Global Partnership for Education in 2002 (then called the Education for All Fast Track Initiative), its primary school completion rate for girls was one of the lowest in Africa – the result of a combination of gender discrimination and grinding poverty. Since 2002, girls' enrolment has risen by more than seventy per cent, thanks to an emphasis on increasing the coverage of education without undermining its quality. There have been similar increases in the overall Grade One intake and in the percentage of girls

who continue on to secondary school, and a major fall in the percentage of children having to repeat school years.

How has this been achieved? While the provision of school meals and major information campaigns on the importance of schooling has helped to boost overall enrolment, there are also special measures to draw girls into the system, including support for mothers associations and for quotas that require fifty per cent of pupils to be girls. Women teachers are sent to areas with low girls' enrolment and teachers have been sensitized to the specific needs of girls in school. Stereotypical images of girls have been eliminated from curricula and textbooks, and girls also receive incentives such as food rations to take home and prizes for attending school.

Practical, feasible, realistic approaches. None of this is rocket science. It just needs political will, backed by adequate resources.

The Global Partnership for Education encapsulates such approaches. Our partnership of developed countries, forty-six, and growing, developing countries, international agencies, as well as development banks, the private sector, teachers, and civil society groups has transformed international cooperation in education.

We provide our developing country partners with the incentives, resources, and technical support to build and implement sound education plans. Members of the Partnership mobilize and coordinate resources to achieve national targets for school enrolment and education quality.

It works.

In 2009, over eighty-two million children were enrolled in schools in our partner countries, up from sixty-three million in 2002. In other words, the Partnership has helped to put nineteen million more children into school.

In 2009 more than two-thirds of girls in partner countries completed the last grade of primary school, compared to just over half in 2002. This increase in



completion will help to save the lives of approximately three-hundred-and-fifty thousand children under the age five.

Next month we go to Copenhagen for our replenishment pledging event with our new name and a renewed commitment to getting all children into school for a better education.

In Copenhagen we will be asking for contributions of two-point-five billion dollars over three years for the Global Partnership for Education Fund. This money will mean:

An additional twenty-five-million primary school children enrolled in school;

A halving of the number of children out of school;

A seven-point-five per cent increase in primary completion rates;

Fifty million new textbooks in classrooms;

The training of six hundred thousand new teachers.

And the impact will be felt beyond the classroom, reducing the number of children who die annually of preventable causes by one million and saving the lives of forty thousand mothers each year.

We are also looking for bilateral, private sector, civil society and multilateral additional commitments to basic education over three years that will help our partner countries fill a funding gap of eight billion dollars. We want commitments from our developing country partners to increase domestic funding for basic education. And we want solid policy commitments from all of our members to safeguard and promote equitable education as a key element of sustainable development.

Indeed, I have great hopes to see the German Government, within their new global education policy, pay more attention to basic and secondary education and allocate significant funding for such.

Finally, I would like this Dialogue meeting to consider a key question. **What do we mean by sustainable development?** The possible answers have huge implications for education and for health. Education for what? Health for what? To make the same mistakes as the world's richest nations?

We have learned the hard way over the past three years that constant economic growth does not mean a constant growth in happiness or well-being.

My fervent hope is that education and health will help to fuel genuine sustainable development – development that is equitable, development that is fair.

The world's poorest countries have one major advantage over rich nations – they have the option to chart a new and equitable course that is based on the true well-being of every citizen. We have squandered our opportunities. They have a one-time opportunity to get this right.

Thank you.