



المجلس الأعلى للتعليم
SUPREME
EDUCATION
COUNCIL

Speech

HE / Saad Bin Ibrahim Al Mahmoud

Minister of Education and Higher Education
Secretary-General of the Supreme Education Council

TO THE

2011 ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW SESSION
REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE ARAB
REGION ON INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO REACHING
WOMEN, GIRLS AND THE MARGINALIZED

Geneva: 4 July 2011

Praise be to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger Muhammad; and upon his family and companions

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Fellow Ministers of Education,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Peace be upon you, Allah's mercy and blessings

It is my pleasure to take this opportunity to review the report on the Regional Preparatory Meeting for West Asia on the theme "*Innovative Approaches to Reaching Women, Girls and the Marginalized in the Arab Region*" which was held in Doha on December 9, 2010 with the participation of Ministers, education practitioners, international organizations, academia and the private sector from the Arab Region and beyond.

The event took place in the context of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) and was hosted by the Qatar Foundation and the Government of Qatar in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Participants acknowledged that countries of the region have made noticeable strides towards achieving universal primary education. However, over the last two to three years, progress has levelled off and current education policies in the region are not retaining those who are in school, nor reaching out-of-school children.

The meeting noted that progress towards the education goals in the region continues to be very uneven, with some countries having made remarkable strides, including in girls' enrolment, and others being held back by several factors, such as poverty, conflict and occupation, cultural and gender stereotypes, displacement and disability. Participants agreed that there is a need to provide equitable educational and learning opportunities for women, girls and marginalized groups, by inclusive education systems, as well as appropriate and targeted measures within and outside the education sector. Furthermore, participants stressed the need to set up adequate

national education budgets, complemented by adequate international support, including through new and voluntary approaches for education financing. In this regard it was emphasized that South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation and other innovative partnerships provide valuable contributions to enabling access to education, especially in emergency situations, for all affected populations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Doha Summit, we were reminded of the critical importance of engaging the private sector to facilitate the transition from basic education, vocational training, higher and non-formal education into the labour market. Participants further stressed that all stakeholders should work together to ensure quality education and to reduce drop-out and failure rates by the adoption of active and cooperative pedagogic approaches and learning and teaching materials that are gender sensitive. Another important message was the need to harness the vast potential of information and communications technology, in particular for those outside the formal education system.

Distinguished Guests,

The meeting also emphasized the urgent need to increase the number of teachers and enhance the quality of their teaching. As a way forward, participants underscored the importance of adopting cross-sectoral policies that address issues of recruitment, pre-service and in-service training, retention, professional development, evaluation, employment and teaching conditions, as well as teacher status.

On the issue of school facilities, participants commented that school conditions should be enhanced by building more classrooms and improving the conditions of school buildings and infrastructure, including by prioritizing investment in head teachers and school administrators. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to providing sanitary and other facilities for girls, thus removing one of their key obstacles to education.

The meeting urged the Economic and Social Council in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) other UN organizations to:

1. Recognize that education for all is not only a goal and a right in itself, but an essential condition to achieve all other Millennium Development Goals
2. Redouble efforts to realize the right to education, including in emergency situations.
3. Increase access to quality education, in particularly for special needs children and those living in rural areas, slums, mountainous regions.

The meeting also urged countries to:

1. Remove financial barriers to education, whether direct or indirect costs of learning.
2. Provide gender-friendly basic services in teaching and learning environments, such as food, water, sanitation, safety.
3. Increase national and international funding for education, and foster targeting of resources towards the most vulnerable.
4. Eradicate gender stereotypes in curricula and teaching practices.
5. Make innovative use of information and communication technologies, especially for reaching the marginalized.

Excellencies,

These are some of the key messages I took away from this important regional event which we were very pleased to host. Full details are available in the summary report available before you.

I thank you for your attention.

Peace be upon you, Allah's mercy and blessings