



# ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Inter-American Council for Integral Development  
(CIDI)



## **FOURTH MEETING OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION**

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### DECLARATION OF SCARBOROUGH AND COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

(Declaration adopted at the third plenary session held August 12, 2005  
Subject to review by the Style Committee)

We, the Ministers of Education of the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS), gathered together in the city of Scarborough on the island of Tobago from August 10 to 12, 2005, for the Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Education, to consider how we may offer quality education that promotes social inclusion, the development of a democratic citizenry, and preparation for productive work, based on the principles of the Charter of the OAS, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and the Declaration of Margarita. After varied discussions and consideration of different proposals, we resolve the following:

1. Education must play a fundamental role in developing a democratic and productive citizenry and in promoting social inclusion in order to find collective solutions to problems and to ensure that future generations enter a world filled with opportunity and hope. In this regard, we reaffirm the commitment assumed in the Meeting of Ministers of Education in Mexico in 2003 to strengthen a true partnership of the Americas for education. In the spirit of this partnership, economic development policies of each country should support their public education policies. In this way, education can become the key to the advancement of our societies and civilization.
2. Quality education that is relevant to local contexts and global realities is first and foremost a human right and a public good that forms a central pillar of our societies. Ensuring that all our citizens receive the best education possible requires adequate funding, good management and the genuine participation of students, families, teachers, administrators and civil society.
3. We are committed to attaining the education goals of the Summits of the Americas, namely: "promoting the principles of equity, quality, relevance, and efficiency at all levels of the education system; ensuring, by 2010, universal access to and completion of quality primary education for all children and to quality secondary education for at least 75 percent of youth, with increasing graduation rates and lifelong learning opportunities for the general population". In conjunction with these objectives, we emphasize the need to make efforts to offer the same opportunities of success to both genders in all levels of education.
4. We agree that ensuring a quality education for all citizens requires us to evaluate our efforts based on clearly defined standards and to promote accountability for results. Following on the commitment made by our heads of state at the Monterrey Summit, we agree to expand

the dissemination of student assessment results and other useful information about our education systems to policy makers, educators, families and the general public.

5. We recognize that many countries in the Western Hemisphere suffer from significant levels of income inequality. Education offers us the single best opportunity for improving the lives of the millions of people who find themselves in poverty and therefore, we prioritize equity with quality.
6. We recognize the fundamental role of teachers and we prioritize their professional development as a key factor for learning and the development of our societies. We therefore encourage countries to work together to ensure that mechanisms are adopted to assist developing countries in the training and retention of teachers. We strongly urge our Heads of State and Government or highest appropriate authorities as well as our legislators to continue to guarantee the conditions commensurate with the noble profession of teaching and the principles of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.
7. We recognize the need to broaden the structure of education beginning with early childhood education, given its very positive impact on the quality of education and on the reduction of inequality.
8. We recognize the need to work on the high indices of illiteracy existing in the countries of the region; therefore, we propose considering the design of a regional literacy program and we entrust the OAS with studying this possibility.
9. We will increase our attention to secondary education and technical preparation for the development of employment and other key competencies relevant to the development needs of our countries, because we recognize that our greatest opportunity to create local and regional capacity for innovation, creativity, and increased productivity is a well-educated, well-informed, and democratic workforce.
10. We recognize the importance of increasing access to and quality of higher education in our countries, and of incorporating pertinent technology into higher education as a factor that will help enable our citizens to enter the productive sector.
11. We recognize that information and knowledge are fundamental to social inclusion, employment, and democracy, and that the promotion of equal access, use and incorporation of new technologies in our educational systems is essential to prepare students for the information society. We recognize the fundamental importance of science, technology, engineering, innovation, and education as major driving forces behind economic and social development. We also recognize the importance of promoting them in national and regional development plans. We are committed to promoting the development of science education in our countries at all levels, in order to develop human capacity, eliminate gender disparities, reduce technology gaps and foster the development of a competitive and knowledge-based workforce.
12. We recognize the impact that health and environmental issues have on human development and we recognize the role that education plays in promoting healthy lifestyles, decreasing the

incidence of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and valuing and caring for the environment.

13. We are cognizant of the challenges and responsibilities our educators face due to increasing individual and group violence in our societies. Schools and institutions of higher education must be safe places that promote emotional, mental and physical health for both students and staff.
14. We have fulfilled our commitment to create an Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices. We recognize that peace and democracy are necessary conditions for the full exercise of fundamental freedoms and for the growth and development of our nations.
15. We acknowledge that the Hemisphere's cultural diversity and ethnic plurality have tremendous potential for enriching the quality of life of the people of our countries and strongly advocate the development, at all levels of schooling, of pedagogical practices that cater to the needs of all students. In particular, we recognize the importance of multilingualism in promoting better understanding and a greater level of cohesion within the hemisphere.
16. We recognize the need to give particular attention to children and youth with special educational needs as a means of achieving their effective social inclusion.
17. We recognize that the achievement of the Summit Mandates regarding education, the goals contained within the Millennium Declaration and the Dakar Framework for Action will require substantial financial outlays by the governments of member states as well as international financial institutions. We also acknowledge that Member States experience ever-increasing difficulty in financing education during periods of economic crisis, natural disasters, political instability and social unrest. Nevertheless, we fully recognize that despite these and other difficulties, our commitment to improving access to a quality education must remain a priority. We reiterate that education requires significant public investment and that we must continue to use our resources efficiently for the provision of quality education for all. In the pursuit of high quality education for all citizens, all countries must take action to ensure adequate funding of education.
18. We support the efforts of governments of the hemisphere that are exploring new ways to mobilize national and international financing for public and private investment in education. In that sense, we note with interest the advances made since our last meeting in the definition of mechanisms that allow debt swaps for education in the region, such as the strides made by Spain and Argentina in this regard. We recognize that such initiatives must be developed in coordination with our ministers of finance and with respect to our countries' legislation.
19. We follow with great interest the creation of a Social Charter and its respective Plan of Action by the OAS and we request that the present Declaration and its Commitments to Action be presented as input for the working group drafting the Social Charter.
20. We realize that there are many important on-going efforts to meet the Hemispheric educational challenges, of those we offer special recognition to:

- The Regional Program on Educational Indicators (PRIE), led by Mexico and the Hemispheric Forum on the Evaluation of Educational Quality coordinated by Brazil, both charged by the Summit of the Americas.
  - Efforts to increase transparency in the reporting of education information, as mandated by the Nuevo León Declaration and as undertaken through a survey and seminar supported by the United States of America.
  - The Hemispheric Project on the Prevention of School Failure, coordinated by Argentina.
  - The Hemispheric Project on Teacher Education, coordinated by Trinidad and Tobago
  - The Hemispheric Project on Secondary Education and the Development of Key and Labor Competencies, coordinated by Costa Rica.
  - The progress made in the use of new technologies, especially through the Latin American Network of Educational Portals, the Education Portal of the Americas, the EDUSAT satellite network, Computers for Schools Program, and the College of the Americas (COLAM) of the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education.
  - The Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training
  - The agreement achieved among Commonwealth countries to address issues regarding teacher recruitment and retention through the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol
21. We express our satisfaction that the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) has made a positive contribution to the development and improvement of educational policy in Member States. It has served as a valuable forum for ensuring that political mandates emanating from this and prior Meetings of Ministers receive appropriate technical support and follow-up. We wish for the CIE to continue to develop so that it provides a main venue for the technical and political follow-up on the mandates that we entrust to it.
22. We recognize and appreciate the work done by the OAS General Secretariat and Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, particularly the Office of Education, Science and Technology (OEST) in its capacity as Technical Secretariat of the CIE, the Knowledge Sharing and Advisory Network and supporting the Summit and Hemispheric Projects. The OEST should continue to assist Member States in sharing programs that have demonstrated their effectiveness, facilitating communication, and advising our Member States so that horizontal cooperation continues to grow and strengthen.
23. We thank the government and people of Trinidad and Tobago for the special welcome they have extended to us during this Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Education. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the work of Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Education in ensuring the success of this event.
24. The democratically elected Heads of State and Government of our countries have adopted mandates which provide guidelines for our education policymakers and planners. These guidelines represent our hemispheric commitment to proceed in a manner that ensures all of our citizens' right to a high quality education. We ask our leaders to consider this declaration in their deliberations at the IV Summit of the Americas in Mar de Plata in November of this year. To attain the Summit Goals as expressed in the Education Plan of Action and follow up on the above Declaration, we submit the following:

## COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

To ensure that this Declaration leads to concrete and effective actions, we, the Ministers of Education of the Americas, adopt the following Commitments:

1. To redouble efforts in our respective countries to achieve the education goals of the Summit of the Americas, joining the will and efforts of all sectors of society to achieve educational quality, equity, relevance and efficiency and by keeping education in a prominent position in public debate, public policy decisions, and public and private investment.
2. To request that education's important role in creating jobs, fighting poverty and strengthening democratic governance be reflected in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the IV Summit of the Americas; toward that end we submit a text for consideration by our Heads of State and Government via the Summit Implementation Review Group.
3. To urge cooperation, development and financing agencies to join efforts to support countries in achieving the education-related goals of the Summits and Inter-American Education Ministerial Meetings.
4. To support and strengthen the teaching force in the countries of our hemisphere, and to examine and build upon the results of research and initiatives in the hemisphere designed to provide such support, such as the Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training and the hemispheric project on teacher preparation, development and evaluation.
5. We support the initiative to organize an Interagency Forum on the financing and management of education and we suggest including as one of its topics the analysis of mechanisms to conduct debt swaps for education.
6. To promote the development of science education in our countries at all levels, in order to develop human capacity, eliminate gender bias, reduce technology gaps and foster a knowledgeable workforce.
7. To determine ways to maximize the use of information and communications technology to improve learning, promote equity, and support cross-national cooperation in our hemisphere, using strategies and tools such as:
  - i. Exploring ways to focus the content of the Educational Portal of the Americas on the Summit and Ministerial priorities in education.
  - ii. Considering the role that the Latin American Network of Education Portals can play in expanding high-quality educational resources available to

schools, promoting the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and diminishing the costs of developing national portals.

- iii. Promoting the broader use of the EDUSAT satellite network to enrich content and pedagogy and promote equitable access to learning, even in remote areas, as well as to promote hemispheric dialogue on education with the support of partner organizations.
  - iv. Highlighting the Computers for Schools initiative, to provide access to refurbished computer equipment at a low cost and promote technology skills among youth.
8. To strengthen the Inter-American Education Committee (CIE) as the main forum for monitoring our progress on achieving the Summit mandates, and promoting inter-American cooperation in education, ensuring that skilled education professionals represent us at CIE meetings and by requesting that the Secretary General facilitate the Committee's work by providing appropriate assistance through the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development.

We ask the Inter-American Education Committee (CIE) to undertake the following:

- a. Monitor the progress made toward achieving the education goals of the Summit of the Americas, paying special attention to country progress on the goals from the Santiago Summit and also taking into account the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action and those contained within the Millennium Declaration, in particular by promoting analysis, dissemination and use in decision-making of the information produced by the Regional Education Indicators Project (PRIE).
- b. Undertake a strategic review of the Summit-related policies, programs and activities of the OAS in the realm of education, with a view to prioritizing and coordinating work, strengthening capacity and highlighting achievement.
- c. Examine the education chapter of the OAS Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development 2002-2005 in order to consider the need for adapting it to hemispheric agreements including the present Declaration and Commitments.
- d. Support efforts by member states to eradicate gender disparities and achieve gender equity at all educational levels, especially in primary and secondary education, by focusing attention on persistent disparities and coordinating action with the Inter-American Commission on Women.
- e. Explore ways to increase the capacity to provide for science and technology education at all levels, in partnership with the Inter-American Commission on Science and Technology.
- f. Explore ways to strengthen the strategic alliance among Ministries of Education and Ministries of Health, Labour and the Environment in partnership with the Pan

American Health Organization (PAHO) to ensure that schools become healthy, safe institutions for both teachers and students.

- g. Exchange information on disaster preparedness plans and contingency mechanisms for ensuring that education is returned to normalcy in the shortest time possible, especially given the usage of school facilities during such occurrences.
- h. Launch the Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices, by facilitating the development of a detailed and feasible work plan, benchmarks for progress, proposed budget and sources of financing for the program's first phase. These items should be developed by a working group of interested member countries led by Colombia, with assistance from the Office of Education, Science and Technology (OEST) and the Office for the Promotion of Democracy (OPD) of the OAS, and with guidance from an Advisory Group composed of citizenship education officials from member states, academic and civil society experts, and other appropriate, interested partners. The work plan, including specific initial activities and proposed sources of financing, should be presented to the CIE executive committee and authorities, before the end of this year. Among the initial activities in the work plan, to hold, in Mexico in the first quarter of 2006, a meeting of representatives of member states on successful experiences in citizenship education.
- i. Support the efforts of Member States to offer a high quality education in multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic contexts and to seek to enable more of our citizens to become competent in other languages, including the official languages of the OAS.
- j. Develop a strategy to augment funding for education by increasing effective cooperation with the Trust of the Americas or other appropriate entities, to marshal resources of civil society, the private sector and government to support and revitalize education in the region, particularly in those countries whose educational systems are the most vulnerable.
- k. Explore with the Inter-American Development Bank and other relevant organizations ways to augment information exchange and develop cooperative strategies in the area of educational finance and management.
- l. Explore ways that the recommendations presented in this Meeting from consultation with civil society organizations can assist in developing partnerships with such organizations, in order to benefit from their experience, especially in areas of education pertaining to the most vulnerable sectors of society.
- m. Provide input to the Organization of American States Permanent Council to ensure that the role of education in fighting poverty is considered in developing the Inter-American Social Charter.
- n. Help provide a Latin American and Caribbean dimension to a World Bank symposium on the contribution of early childhood education to economic

development, and related follow up, in cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank.

We ask the OEST to support the implementation of this plan of action and to support the CIE by:

- a. Promoting dialogue among education authorities and governmental institutions at the hemispheric, regional, national, and subnational levels, as well as with international and civil society organizations and others, aimed at meeting the challenges faced by education in the hemisphere, both in person and by virtual means.
- b. Undertaking diagnostic studies and policy analyses to support the actions established in this declaration.
- c. Supporting the exchange of information and other horizontal cooperation among countries regarding educational programs that have demonstrated their effectiveness or promise. In order for OEST to continue to support the growth and expansion of the OAS virtual knowledge and consultancy network called KSAN (CONARED in Spanish), we specifically request continued support from the Development Grant Facility of the World Bank and World Links.
- d. Continuing to coordinate its activities with education-related programs and activities of other offices of the OAS to help meet Summit education goals. Examples include but are not limited to the Educational Portal of the Americas; the Institute of Advanced Studies for the Americas (INEAM); the Fellowship and Training Program; the OPD, and education projects supported by the FEMCIDI.
- e. Assisting the CIE to monitor, analyze, and disseminate progress on achievement of our goals and mandates.