

Australia's Global Partnership for Education PLEDGE

Statement from the Government of Australia

Delivered by Senator the Hon Brett Mason, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I thank the European Commission for hosting this event, the second pledging conference of the Global Partnership for Education. And I congratulate the GPE Secretariat and all GPE partners on the hard work and dedication of the past few years which have led up to this important day.

We are here today because we all believe that education is fundamental to human development. Education empowers people and transforms lives. It is a catalyst for economic growth, security and prosperity; and vital to the achievement of other development goals. Education benefits not just individuals but whole communities and societies. And these benefits are not just for the short term but are sustained, transferable and diverse.

Australia is committed to doing our part to improve access to education for every child in every country, and our partnership with GPE is key to our ability to fulfil this commitment. Australia has been a strong supporter of GPE since it was established as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative and we are proud of our role in building GPE into the diverse and inclusive partnership it is today.

It is my pleasure to announce that Australia pledges \$140 million Australian dollars to GPE. This brings our total commitment to GPE to date, to \$410 million.

Education is a key pillar in the Australian Government's new aid policy.

Last year, the Australian Government invested 978.5 million Australian dollars in education. In the coming year, we will spend 1.1 billion Australian dollars on education.

Our bilateral investment in education covers some 21 countries and we are committed to helping poor families send their children to school, upgrading school facilities and training teachers. Beyond basic education, we are increasing funding for our Australia Awards, which include scholarships, with at least 4,500 recipients for the next year.

In our region, Australia's education programs are targeted towards improving access and quality for all children, especially girls and children with a disability.

As we all know, investing in education for women and girls is one of the best investments we can make in our common future. An educated woman is less likely to die in childbirth, more likely to raise children who are themselves educated and healthy, and more likely to increase her household's income.

We also know that children with disabilities are significantly less likely to attend school than their peers without disabilities. This has a direct impact on their ability to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to their communities.

In partnership with GPE, Australia will continue to invest in education and seek to include those who face discrimination and disadvantage because of their gender or disability.

It will be important that the post-2015 development agenda includes the goal of promoting access to quality education for all children, with an explicit focus on the participation of girls and children with a disability. We believe GPE has a significant role to play in achieving a post-2015 goal on education.

We need to make sure that children who are in school are actually learning the skills they need – so quality is of paramount importance.

Practical targets and indicators that are compatible with member states' own approaches to measurement will allow us to track progress, and to better understand and meet challenges along the way.

As a major donor, Australia looks forward to working with the GPE to implement its new funding model. As the Australian aid program refocuses on our region, we urge the GPE to continue, and strengthen, its investment in the Indo-Pacific region.

I congratulate other GPE partners on the commitments they have made today. Australia has been a strong supporter of GPE during an important period of transformation, and GPE will remain our largest multilateral partner in the education sector.

We are confident that with a strengthened governance structure and new funding model, GPE is better placed than ever to deliver progress towards our shared goal of achieving quality education for all children.

Thank you.