

**PLEDGE FROM SWITZERLAND**  
**GPE Second Replenishment Conference**  
**June 26, 2014**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with pleasure that I take up the floor on behalf of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Global Partnership for Education and the European Commission for the excellent preparation and organization of this very important event. It is a crucial moment for the future of education and the community that is involved in one way or another and who is committed to contribute to it.

Switzerland has a longstanding tradition of supporting the efforts of the poorest countries in addressing issues of poverty and development and overcoming humanitarian crisis. We stand for poverty alleviation, the respect of human rights and the promotion of democracy. Over the last years, Switzerland has steadily increased its contribution for international development cooperation; and today we are at 0.5% of our GDP.

According to the political framework from the Swiss Parliament for the period 2013 to 2016, equitable access to quality basic services is considered crucial for all areas of development. Switzerland's economy, its social, cultural and political life depends primarily on the quality and the competences of its human resources. Recognizing the value of education also at international level, basic education, together with vocational skills development, is one of the nine priority domains for Switzerland.

Switzerland promotes a rights-based approach for education and regards education as an important condition and enabler for sustainable development. Key priorities within education are strengthening of equitable access to qualitative and relevant education that is adapted to the context, at the same time improving the national education systems. Our focus is on the most marginalized groups, such as women and girls, rural population, nomadic populations and those excluded from the formal school system. Recognizing the important development challenges, Switzerland's geographical focus is mainly on Sub-Sahara Africa, where we support and advocate for holistic education systems, including non-formal and innovative educational services. Too many children and adults having been deprived of access to quality education, Switzerland has been developing and promoting, over many years, alternative models for out-of-school children and youth, as well as adult literacy. To promote economic opportunities for the many youth coming on the labor market we also strengthen linkages between basic education and vocational skills development as a continuum, a sector that Switzerland has a long tradition.

We also foster and strongly demand that children benefit from a safe and conducive environment for their education especially in contexts of conflict and that all measures are taken to protect them from violence or exclusion from learning.

With regard to the post-2015 debate, Switzerland pleads for a comprehensive goal, based on the right to education for all – children, youth and adults. We strongly

advocate for this approach to be properly taken into account in the different targets which are now discussed.

In terms of funding, Switzerland provides support at different levels:

At bilateral level, in 2012 Switzerland spent 5.5% of its bilateral aid budget for education, equivalent to US\$77 million. This amount has constantly increased since 2007. Its bilateral aid is aligned with national education sector plans and is disbursed through budget support, sector budget support, common funds, programs and support to national civil society.

As countries face similar issues, regional organizations can catalyze knowledge sharing and mutual learning. Switzerland provides support to regional partners and programs in Africa to an amount of US\$5.6 million a year.

Switzerland also makes available funding to a diversity of international partners: specialized UNESCO institutes, civil society and research networks. We have just renewed a four year contribution for the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg and the UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning in Paris, for US\$6.7 million each. And a new support the PASEC program of CONFEMEN is starting. The overall contribution to these multilateral and international education partners amounts to US\$13.5 million in 2014. Other contributions go to UNICEF, WFP, UNWRA or UNHCR for educational activities in humanitarian situations.

**Finally, the Global Partnership for Education has become an increasingly important partner over the last years.** Switzerland joined Fast Track Initiative/GPE in 2008 with a modest contribution to start with and has since then constantly increased it. Currently we have signed a contribution for the period from 2013 to 2015 with an annual amount of US\$7.2 million. The actual framework for international cooperation from the Swiss parliament for the period 2013 – 2017 does not provide for additional funding to GPE at this moment of replenishment. However, Switzerland can confirm the continuation of its commitment to GPE beyond 2015, if possible with a substantial increase from 2017 onwards, depending on the political approval from parliament.

GPE is a partnership that goes beyond financial contributions. Switzerland remains a member of the donor constituency 1 and brings in its experiences from the field level. At country level, where education is a priority sector for Switzerland, we are actively engaged in the Local Education Group. Currently, we are the coordinating agency in Niger. Next year, we will take up this role in Burkina Faso.

Recently, Switzerland has also joined the German Back Up Initiative for Education, with the aim to further strengthen the cause of education in Africa and the capacities of the partners.

Switzerland will remain committed to education and to the GPE.

Thank you for your attention.