Pledging Conference
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Statement from the Government of Cameroon
Delivered by Ms. Youssouf Hadidja Alim, Minister of Basic Education in Cameroon

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Madam Chair of the Board of Directors,
Ministers,
Donors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely honored to have this opportunity to address this donor conference of the Global Partnership for Education.
I wish to thank you Madam Chair for giving me the opportunity to speak about Cameroon's experience with the implementation of the EFA/Fast-Track Initiative.
I will speak primarily about the programs implemented to:

- Reduce gender disparities;
- Improve early learning outcomes and the quality of education;
- Increase access to education for unenrolled children;
- Promote inclusive education; and
- Improve governance of the education system.

Cameroon, a country in Central Africa, currently has a population of approximately 20 million inhabitants, 60 percent of whom are young people.
It is a bilingual country, with French and English being the two official languages.
The constitution recognizes Education as a national priority. Primary education is compulsory and free. Cameroon adopted an education framework law and established an institutional framework (six ministerial departments for the sector were created: Basic Education, Secondary Education, Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, Employment and Vocational Training, and Youth).
In June 2006, after an in-depth diagnostic analysis of the education system [Status Report on the National Education System *Rapport d'Etat sur le Système Educatif National* RESEN], Cameroon drafted and adopted a ten-year education policy document. The primary objective of this Education Sector Strategy is the achievement of universal primary education. It includes several priority areas:
1-Improvement of access and quality of education through the:

- Establishment of many primary schools;

- Hiring of contract teachers trained in public schools and the improvement of their working conditions;
- Capacity building of teaching staff (refresher, continuing education, distance education);
- Strengthening of the teacher supervision system;
- Construction and equipping of educational facilities;
- Reduction of the repetition rate among students subsequent to administrative measures (collective promotion) combined with teaching measures (competency-based approach);
- Improvement in the level of ownership of textbooks (establishment of a national commission for the approval of textbooks and teaching materials, school libraries, the issuing of textbooks to students in priority education zones, and educational kits to teachers; and
- Inclusion of ICT education in school curriculums.

2- Promotion of gender through the reduction of disparities and combating violence in the school environment, promotion of excellence, implementation of programs and projects for the education of girls (the launch of the campaign to lobby and raise awareness: UNGEI Cameroon, School is Good for Girls); distribution of school kits and dry rations, and establishment of school cafeterias.

3- Strengthening of partnerships with the private sector and civil society.

4- Improvement of governance of the education system:

- Rationalization of the management of teachers in schools "hazard reduction";
- Deconcentration of the management of staff and resources (schools' operating expenses, minimum packages, transfer of skills and resources to decentralized regional authorities);
- Combating corruption in the school environment (the establishment of an anti-corruption unit, experimenting with the rapid results initiatives in pilot schools);
- Inclusion in school curriculums of the teaching of morality, education on responsible citizenship, and human rights; and
- Establishment of school councils.

After the approval of the education sector strategy by the Technical and Financial Development Partners, Cameroon became eligible for international financing. The national budget, the French resources from the C2D (Debt Reduction and Development Contract), and the Catalytic Fund (US$47.5 million) administered by the World Bank, also jointly financed a major program for the recruitment of 37,200 teachers in five years (2007-2011), a situation which arose from the economic crisis that besieged Cameroon during the 1990s and which resulted in a hiring freeze for teachers in the Public Service.

This program helped to address a major shortage of teachers, estimated at over 30,000, improve the student-teacher ratio from 63 to 51 percent, and reduce the hazard rate from 45 to 34 percent.

This program has had several positive effects:

- Improvement in the indicators for the entire system (2006-2010): the gross enrolment rate (110 percent), net enrolment rate (89 percent), the completion rate moved from 48 to 73 percent; the repetition rate decreased from 30 to 16 percent; the student-teacher ratio decreased from 63 to 51; the student-class ratio reduced from 64 to 52; and
- Streamlining of human resource management through the privilege granted to Priority Education Zones (PEZ) and the deconcentration of resource management.

Moreover, in the context of the implementation of universal primary enrolment, the introduction of free primary education approved by the Head of State in 2000 allowed for a significant increase in the demand for education and the reduction of gender inequalities. Incentive programs (School is Good for Girls – school cafeterias - dry rations - promotion of excellence – hiring of teachers), and awareness-raising campaigns about educating young girls also contributed significantly.

Although the teacher recruitment program has ended, there is still a significant shortfall. The State is committed to pursuing the hiring of trained teachers and paying them out of its own budget. For 2011, 2,260 teachers were hired. When the Education for All project was assessed, all the effort that had been made was very evident.

Other measures designed to improve the quality of education were also implemented, especially studies to measure learning outcomes. The results of these studies have facilitated the development of remedial tools.

In short, this is the strategy that has been adopted by Cameroon since 2006 and implemented with the invaluable support of the FTI. A new boost from the Global Partnership for Education would enable our country to make significant progress toward the full achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, with the threefold assurance of improved access, quality, and the reduction of inequalities.

This means, ladies and gentlemen, that Cameroon's political will is at the root of all these developments. This is evident in the increase in the budget envelope for the education sector, gender-sensitive budgeting, the introduction of support measures, the development of several programs and projects, and the strengthening of partnerships.

Madam Chair,
Ministers,
Donors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Cameroonian Government, allow me to express sincere gratitude to the Chair of the Board of Directors, and all the donors, for all the assistance provided.

Using its own resources, and with the support of the TFPs, Cameroon is committed to continue the actions initiated during the past few years. Being cognizant of the importance of and the need for partnership, Cameroon supports all initiatives designed to ensure the mobilization of resources to improve the quality of education. It encourages aid for countries and fragile states. Congratulations Madam Chair on this wonderful initiative and for the tremendous mobilization of States and donors.
Thanks to the Danish authorities for the very warm welcome and the perfect organization of the conference.

Thank you for your kind attention.