



Statement from the Government of Benin

Delivered by His Excellency Eric Kouagou N'da, Minister of Early Childhood Education of Benin to the Global Partnership for Education Conference

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to reiterate the strong desire of my country, Benin, to make education a key driver of its development. My remarks reflect the aspirations of Benin, a country that has taken significant steps to tackle major challenges in the education sector.

In order to successfully implement its education policy, Benin adopted a Ten-Year Education Sector Development Plan covering the **2006–2015 period**. With the aim of executing this plan, the Government made important decisions and implemented appropriate measures using internal resources (**20 percent of the budget**), as well as resources from the technical and financial partners obtained through the Fast-Track Initiative and from bilateral sources. I would like to express my appreciation at this forum for the responsiveness of these partners and bilateral donors, which has been demonstrated time and time again, and for their speedy response to our various requests.

The foregoing decisions include free early childhood and primary education, the gradual provision of free secondary education for girls, significant improvement in the living and working conditions of teachers, and the construction of schools.

These commendable efforts have paved the way for very encouraging results, among them the rise in the number of children attending school from **1,356,818 in 2006** to **1,787,400 in 2010 (a 24 percent increase)** and the increase in the net school attendance rate of girls from **72.75 percent in 2007** to **87.53 percent in 2010**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see, the measures adopted by the Government of Benin have not only led to clear interest in school attendance, but also to new needs that must be addressed in the years ahead. They are:

- The construction and furnishing of more than **10,000** classrooms;
- The establishment of more than **1,000** new school cafeterias;
- The recruitment and training of more than **10,000** teachers ; and
- The creation and strengthening of the professional technical and vocational training areas that offer potential, with the aim of reducing the barriers faced by young people to joining the work force.

The importance of these challenges in terms of improving the quality of our education system is well understood. For this reason, Benin has started the process of updating its Ten-Year Plan so as to place greater emphasis on these areas during the 2012-2015 period. ***This effort will call for an additional investment of more than US\$100 million.***

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the fact that its resources are meager, Benin is determined to continue to improve its education system, with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals in this sector by 2015.

With this in mind, it is my fervent hope that my remarks are viewed as a renewed appeal to the entire international community and, more specifically, to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), so that they can assist us with implementation of the updated version of our Ten-Year Education Sector Development Plan.

I am counting on the kindness of each and every one of you to ensure that education for all becomes a reality for thousands of children who are still shut out of the school system.

I would like to express my wish for an enduring Global Partnership for Education.

Thank you.