

**Draft Transcript**  
**Press Conference Education Conference, Brussels**  
**May 2, 2007**

**Speaker:** Ladies and gentleman we will now start the Press Conference. I will first give the floor to Commissioner Michel, as host of the meeting, then to President Wolfowitz of the World Bank and to Minister Baah from Ghana and then to Mr. Hillary Benn from the UK.

**Louis Michel:** Well, ladies and gentleman, thank you Paul, thank you Hillary, and thank you Minister for being here today in the European Commission to hold this important event. Our joint initiative was born last year from a simple but strong conviction. There is no development without education. Education is the way out of poverty, beyond the moral and ethical imperative if we want to achieve the millennium development goals. We, international community rich countries must keep our promises on education. Access to education is access to prosperity, but it goes also hand-in-hand with good governance. More and more developing countries have integrated this in their priorities. Ghana of course is an enlightening example in West Africa and I pay tribute to your efforts Minister, but let me mention another country that I visited again two weeks ago; Rwanda, a small country with the highest density of population in Africa and very few natural resources. They have understood that their real potential lies in Human Resources - in people - and therefore they are focusing intensively in education with support of international donors, particular from the EU. The Rwandan government is about to achieve universal access to primary school and they now turn, they have hopes to secondary school. This is the way forward not only to prosperity, but also to build a nation and educating peace in a region where this is much needed.

The good news emerging from our meeting this morning are that access to primary school is improving and that an increasing number of girls can attend school in the developing countries, but at the same time we are forced to acknowledge and to regret that 77 million children still do not attend school, 75 countries will not be in a position to achieve the millennium development goal of universal access to primary school in 2015 unless things change. The lack of human and material resources remains in the education system of the developing countries remains really critical. To put it simple, we need an extra 7 billion Euros a year in aid to change the situation. The International communities should triple its aid to education if we want all children to attend primary school in 2015. The EU has undertaken to increase its official development aid to 0.56 in 2010 and 0.7 in 2015. This commitment offers a unique chance to increase the funds for education, in particular, through the fast track initiative launched five years ago.

For the next programming period, the European Commission envisages a direct aid for education of 1.7 billion Euros, this is in addition to all the money that goes for education through budgetary support, which the commission wants to increase substantially where good governance conditions are met. We consider budgetary support to be more efficient, to provide better ownership and to better ensure that teachers get their salaries and schools are built and equipped decently. Furthermore, this budgetary aid is more predictable, the Commission envisages to create a new form of budgetary support with less conditions attached and for a longer period, focused on concrete results and ensuring a minimum level of support for education, this is what I call the MDG contract. I would invite our member states to support this initiative.

[Statement in French by Louis Michel]

**Speaker:** I now give the floor to the President of the World Bank Mr. Paul Wolfowitz.

**Paul Wolfowitz:** Thank you, we are here today to keep our promises on education and to make sure that all children can complete primary education by 2015, one of the millennium development goals. I'm pleased today to join with leaders to move the education for all initiatives forward, I want to thank Commissioner Michel, the European Commission and thank the government of the UK and particularly Chancellor Brown and Minister Hillary Benn for joining us in hosting this important event. And I want to congratulate Minister of Ghana for the achievements that his country has made in bringing education to their people. I've said it before and I can only repeat it here today, nothing, nothing is more critical to successful economic development and the personal development of individuals through education. It is the most valuable resource any country has, most valuable investment any government can make.

There has been progress, 80% of children are now enrolled in primary school but that means still around the world there are over 77 million children who don't go to school at all. That's a number worth pondering, it's more than the population of the United Kingdom, its more than the population of France or Italy, it's almost as large, as the population of Germany. It is a whole generation which if they are not educated will be another lost generation. People going through their lives handicapped, and limited in what they can do for themselves, for their families, and for their societies. Half of those children live in Africa, and more than half of them are girls. We don't only want children to enroll in school, we need to make sure that the schools they go to, offer environments where children can thrive and learn, so then go pass primary school to the next level of education and training.

In Africa only 60% of children complete grade six of primary school and Africa needs to be the core of our development efforts. There is good news though from Africa, six African countries have increased primary completion by over 10 percentage points a year since the turn of the century. That's not only attributable to development aid but also perhaps more important to governments focusing their own resources on basic education. But our work won't be done when those 77 million children reach the classroom door, we need to make sure that inside every classroom there are trained teachers and the resources they need to cultivate new skills. That's why the World Bank fully supports the theme of today's conference which is to deliver more, better, faster and longer term aid for education. World Bank is keeping our promises to increase funding for education. The concessional lending arm of the World Bank, International Development Association, will commit \$1.5 billion to education to the poorest countries this fiscal year which ends at the end of June. That is a 50% increase compared to the average of previous years, including last year. And we intend to continue that level through 2008 and hopefully beyond as the resources to IDA are replenished.

But more funding is only the start. We need better aid, we need to ensure that it helps children achieve good learning outcomes; we need to make sure that children can read and write and do arithmetic. Through IDA programs we are addressing the challenge of quality education through extensive research, technical support and sharing of best practices. The children waiting for education need faster and predictable aid. In this context I'd like to say that the World Bank is a committed sponsor and partner in the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. We have supported 29 countries and developing education plans and it's helped to mobilize the resources needed to support their implementation. I'd like to just conclude with a personal note, as we were meeting today, I was thinking about the fact that my grandfather came to the United States almost a hundred years ago, without much education and was never very good at reading throughout his life. But my father, his son who came to the United States at the age of 10, benefited from free public education all the way through University. He became a distinguished mathematician and gave me opportunities in my life that my grandfather could never have dreamed of. On a trip to

Africa as World Bank President, my first trip to Burkina Faso, I met a group of parents in a small village outside Ouagadougou. Parents who were scraping together a \$100 a year to pay their share of 25% of the tuition for their children in that school. It's also 25% of the per capital income, these were poor parents sacrificing incredibly so that their children could have a better future. If poor parents and poor countries are going to make that kind of sacrifice for the future of their children, then those of us who live in comfort in rich countries need to do more ourselves. It's not just a moral obligation, though it is a moral obligation. It's also in our self-interest because those children, that potentially lost generation, those children are part of our future as well because we all live together on the same planet. Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you, I will now give the floor to the Minister of Finance and Economic planning of Ghana Mr. Minister?

**Baah Wiredu:** Ladies and Gentlemen, I am here this morning basically to update the efforts that we have done since last year. In May last year, Finance Ministers of Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and our development partners met in Abuja and we concluded that we should prepare a technical report and operational plan which might be 'costed' to reflect our needs for the next ten with regard to education at all levels, first, second and third cycles. We went back, we prepared all the reports and in Singapore in September, we submitted those reports 'costed'. The total costs or the total requirement came to about \$80 billion and we indicated from our resources we will be able to at least deliver \$50 billion. The financing came to \$30 billion. Since then, all of us have been working together to make sure that at least we get adequate resources to finance the gap and that's why we are here today to follow up because the title of that conference was 'Commitment to Action'. And really we got support from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the UK Government and the EU and other development partners. I am from the Ministry of Finance, our real commitment is that we must get the resources to fill that gap.

The Ministries of Education and others have actually prepared their technical reports. So, our main interest is to see how we can actually get their resources and get things done. We are interested in increasing ourselves to education, improving upon quality and especially the management of our schools because we have to see schools as corporate entities that must be managed and managed well. So, that means the managers of our institutions must also be trained properly. What we are interested in is to avoid duplication. Nations have their one-year budgets. They have three year, five year medium plans and long-term plans. For example in Ghana, we are currently preparing a project that's titled "2057 budget for Ghana," to be read on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2056. A young lady has volunteered to do the presentation, so we are looking a little bit into the future and make sure that the right things are done. So, really what we need is to make sure that resources that we have mobilized, are disbursed as quickly as possible. The MDG's contract really is good, we are prepared to see to it but that the delivery must be on time. More predictable so that we can actually make it. In fact we are going to follow this conference with another one on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 2007 in Accra, Financing for development is just another review of what we are unable to achieve as African countries. We forgot what we did in Singapore and then Abuja. I am very happy that today a very interesting presentation was made and that means our developed partners have been graded. Global Campaign for Education has actually done a school report, indicating donors or development partners who have been fulfilling part of their promises. So, the grading is there, we don't have to argue, all that we have to do is to move forward and do the best that we can for African countries. We don't want your men and women from Africa to migrate through the Sahara or try to escape from Senegal to Canary Islands and be drawn in the Atlantic. We want them to stay but obviously we need to share the glory of education because we believe knowledge is the greatest currency in this whole world.

Knowledge is the greatest currency in this whole world. As a result, we want everybody to benefit so that the world can be better off with them. We are also very happy that foundations that the private sector took part into this conference. The vertical funds, they have actually made their constraints known to all of us and areas that they are supporting, we obviously go together with all of them. Aid is important, but obviously it must go with trade. We don't want aid dependency but I believe nations depend on each other probably over the past number of years. We depend on each other. In Ghana we produce cocoa, for more than 100 years we have been exporting. That means other countries have been depending on us, there should always be a balance. So, if aid will come, it must come at a proper time, proper rate, so that all of us can develop. On this note, we thank all of you for assembling here but my message is simply, there is nobility in moving forward. All of us will be nobles if we deliver on what we have said, within the context of the terms we have set out for ourselves, we hope for further discussion. If there are any questions we are prepared to take them, thank you very much.

**Speaker:** Thank you very much. Mr. Hillary Benn you have the floor.

**Hillary Benn:** Thank you very much indeed. I want to echo the thanks that have been expressed to the European Commission, to the World Bank, to the foundations, the business community, to Civil Society and particularly to the school children who are here in Brussels today who have expressed with enormous eloquence why they believe that all the world's children should have the chance of an education that their good fortune has given them, and I say that because we know that apart from the love and care of those who bring us into this world, what is the most important start we can have in life. It is the chance to go to school, because it opens a window on the world, it gives us confidence and aspiration and knowledge and understanding and we will need all of those things if the world is to have a safe and secure and prosperous future.

Now we have been discussing today a very practical problem. What are we going to do about the 77 million children who don't yet have that opportunity or haven't yet had their window on the world open? And the task is really quite simple. Colleagues in developing countries, education ministers, they want to train the teachers, they want to be able to pay their salaries, to build the classrooms, to buy the textbooks and the desks. They know how much money they can raise themselves from their own resources but they also need to know how much they can rely on from the rest of the world community to put those two pots of money together to be able get those children into the classroom where they should be. And that is why when we talk about long-term predictable finance, it means something, because if you train a teacher and pay his or her salary, you don't want to turn around next week and say I am really sorry, we ran out of cash. You don't want to disappoint the children to whom you have given the chance of an education by saying we can't continue it and that's why the amount of money that we pledge, but its reliability to predictability, the fact that its a commitment for the long-term, matters just as much and that is why I welcome what's been said today both by Paul Wolfowitz on behalf of the World Bank about the commitment the Bank is making, by you Louis Michel, the contribution of the European Commission and your proposal for long term budget support based on a contract to achieve at the MDG in education.

It's why the United Kingdom made last year a commitment over 10 years of 8.5 billion pounds, or \$15 billion to education and why today I was able to announce two further countries that will benefit from that funding over 10 years, one of which is Ethiopia, and the second of which is Tanzania. Two other things I want to say, the first is that, if it was just a question of writing a big enough check, if we could do it we would solve the problem. It isn't just a question of writing a big enough check, it's also about governments and countries having the right governance to organize getting all their children into school and when we look at many of the countries where

children have never seen the inside of a classroom, Somalia for example, 80% of children have never been in a classroom with a desk and a teacher. What is the cause? It is a failure of governments, it is conflict, and therefore dealing with conflict, building the capacity of the state, supporting ministers like my colleague, Minister Baah Wiredu who I must say has done an extraordinary job with his colleagues in Africa, in bringing together these 10-year plans which we are being asked to contribute to fund.

If we get that in place, that's what history teaches us, allows countries to make progress. The final thing is we have to look at all of the practical problems that families face, and even when you have the teachers and the desks and the classrooms, if you still charge fees, poor families can't afford them. They can't afford the pencils and the exercise books. As the young girl I met in Malawi a month ago told me what's the point in going to school if I can't write anything down. Her colleague said to me, well even if I complete primary education, they charge fees for secondary education, no way will my family be able to afford to send me. Those are the practical obstacles that we have to overcome to realize this dream and frankly the time for talking is over and the time for doing is now.

**Speaker:** We will now have time for a couple of questions on the issues discussed this morning in the conference. I will ask you to identify yourself and the media you represent. One single question short and concise on the issues discussed. Thank you. One over there and the second one here.

(Cross Talk)

**Alex Ritson of BBC:** Thank you, Mr. Wolfowitz, are you making an absolute commitment on behalf of the World Bank that we can hold you to that all those children will be in school by 2015 and are you the right person to make sure that happens, if so why?

**Paul Wolfowitz:** This has to be a team effort. The World Bank is, as I said doing \$1.5 billion in grants and loans, mostly grants this fiscal year, we are planning another \$1.5 billion next year. Over ten years that would be I guess round the \$15 billion that the other big contributors are doing. But the real point is we need more people to step up here, we need the United States to step up here, we need some of the people who weren't represented at this conference. So, it's a matter of two things, it's a matter of keeping the promises that have been made and I am absolutely confident that the World Bank will do that. We are talking about long-term, it goes long beyond me, but it's also a matter of getting more promises from people who haven't stepped up yet.

**Speaker:** Next question? Microphone is there.

**Mary-Louise Muller of Bloomberg TV:** Hello, Mary-Louise Muller from Bloomberg TV, I am sorry to do this, but Mr. President Wolfowitz, what is your reaction to the latest statement from the former head of the Ethics Committee at the World Bank? Are you going to resign from the World Bank and how do you feel you have been treated through this whole affair, for the Commission and the two ministers, how worried are you that what's going on at the World Bank, will undermine the integrity of the institution and overshadow the important work that you for example have discussed today? Thank you.

**Paul Wolfowitz:** Well that wasn't the topic of our discussion this morning, but just briefly, the Board is considering this issue. I had a chance on Monday to give my full explanation to the Board and it's available to all of you if you want to read it. We need to follow due process, but in the meantime, we need to stay focused on very, very important work at the Bank and we are doing that. In April, we did \$1 billion of grants for African countries and we are heading toward another record year for Africa. We produced a new health and nutrition strategy, we produced a new financial sector strategy and we are supporting this very important work here. The work of the Bank goes on, it is critical, there are millions of poor people around the world who depend on us and we'll make sure we do what we need to do for them.

**Minister Baah:** Institutional building, what we regard a growing concern. There should always be an operational continuity so that the nations of this world can also move on.

**Speaker:** Is there maybe a last question on the event please? Yes?

**Jeff Mason:** Jeff Mason from Reuters, for Mr. Wolfowitz as well. First of all what can you do, the World Bank do, to get countries like the United States to step up on this and secondly, to follow up on my colleague's question, can you just give us a specific response to the comments from the former head of the Ethics Committee at the World Bank, that would be very helpful to us.

**Paul Wolfowitz:** I just -- on the last point I urge you to go back and read the statement I gave the Board on Monday. I think we have come a long way, I am not speaking for the United States, I speak for the World Bank. I think the effort that was made starting with the Gleneagles at the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative was a very impressive case of the world community coming together, first led by the G-7 but then as Trevor Manuel put it, a G-185 decision. One of our big jobs now is to make sure, talking about promises being kept, that countries keep the promises they made, that includes the United States but not only the United States, keep the promises they made in the context of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, that not only would they cancel the debts of the poorest countries but in fact they would make up dollar for dollar and its there in writing and its very specific, dollar for dollar the lost flows to IDA.

IDA, for those of you who don't like acronyms, is the International Development Association. It's the concessional lending arm of the World Bank, its where that \$1.5 billion a year has to come from. It's absolutely vital that this replenishment which we do this year for every three years, that will carry forward from 2009 to 2011 that that be full and complete.

**Speaker:** Okay, thank you very much for your attendance. Thank you.