GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for EDUCATION
quality education for all children

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Julia Gillard
Chair, Board of Directors
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March 31, 2014

His Excellency Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya
Co-Chair, Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
Division for Sustainable Development
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Secretariat Building
405 East 42nd Street
New York City, NY 10017

His Excellency Csaba Kőrösi, Permanent Representative of Hungary
Co-Chair, Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
Division for Sustainable Development
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Secretariat Building
405 East 42nd Street
New York City, NY 10017

Your Excellencies,

I am writing this open letter to express my support for your current efforts to articulate a visionary agenda that will guide the world towards more equitable and sustainable development by 2030. As the newly appointed Board Chair of the Global Partnership for Education, I congratulate you for your leadership in forging a consensus on many focus areas for the Open Working Group. The Global Partnership for Education stands ready to help tackle the multiple dimensions of poverty, particularly in the world's poorest countries. We see a quality education as the most powerful antidote to poverty, and we endorse the inclusion of a stand-alone goal for education within your ambitious post-2015 agenda.

We are also ready to share the expertise, resources and lessons from our partnership model to inform the implementation of efforts to achieve the post-2015 goals. Growing from only seven partner developing countries in 2003, the Global Partnership for Education has to date supported 59 low-income countries in the development, implementation and monitoring of national education strategies, which aim to give even the most marginalized children a quality basic education. For the past decade we have helped our developing country partners accelerate their progress towards the education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the number of children completing primary school has since then increased an average of 12 percent after a developing country partner joined the Global Partnership.

The Global Partnership for Education's evolution also reflects lessons we have learned in our mission to improve development effectiveness in the education sector: coordinating and leveraging the strengths of many stakeholders, supporting national ownership and empowering citizens, increasing our flexibility and impact in fragile and conflict-affected states, and building stronger national systems more capable of delivering a better education for the long term. As we look to the future, we are prepared to dedicate ourselves to helping implement a bold post-2015 agenda for education among our developing country partners.

We are prepared to do so because we believe that the success and sustainability of a holistic and ambitious global agenda depends on the extent to which we prepare current and future generations of young people, who will inherit many of the challenges we face today. I therefore commend you for safeguarding the spirit of a comprehensive stand-alone education goal in the Open Working Group's focus areas document and in particular for recognizing education's inter-linkages with the majority of the proposed sustainable development goals. With that in mind, we must ask ourselves: what kind of education do future citizens of the world need to address the challenges of gender equality, better health, water and sanitation, decent work, empowerment of marginalized groups, better climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience, and much more? How can educational content and pedagogy help shape the world we envision in the post-2015 agenda? What do education systems require to deliver on that potential?

We agree with the Open Working Group that every girl and boy has a right to a free, compulsory primary and secondary education and that these rights are a means to ensuring other human rights as well. The quest for sustainable development for all can only be realized if we secure the right to education for all children and youth, starting from the very early years of life with early childhood development and continuing as children transition through all stages of education.

Consistent with international commitments since 2000, we must continue to focus on the unfinished agenda to enable more children to go to school, all the while guaranteeing that the quality of that education is high enough to meet their diverse learning needs. In turn, those learning needs should be informed by the kind of world we want to live in in 2030, as the vital human element of peaceful, prosperous, sustainable and cohesive societies. Yet, according to current estimates, more than 250 million children do not even acquire the most basic levels of learning in reading and maths. It is our urgent challenge to ensure that all children make it to school at the right age, that they stay in school, and that they learn, use and benefit from the foundational skills and functional knowledge that empowers them to become active citizens with the capacity for lifelong learning.

The foundations of any future agreement for a sustainable development agenda must also be inclusive of all children and youth, regardless of where they find themselves. As global leaders, we should therefore underscore the importance of specific, targeted actions to provide a quality education for the most marginalized children: girls or boys from the poorest families, whether they live in urban or rural settings; children with disabilities; and those who continue to face persistent barriers to education often brought about by social, economic and cultural dynamics -- which the Open Working Group's focus areas document has so aptly captured. Data also show that the majority of children who still lack education are in fragile and conflict-affected states. Many of the most marginalized children are affected by humanitarian emergencies, involuntary displacement, natural disasters, and even violent attacks against them, their teachers or their educational establishments. A conflict and crisis-sensitive approach to the post-2015 agenda will bring about equal, sustainable progress amongst all nations.

I am delighted that you have considered how education must better serve the other sustainable development goals, in addition to seeing it as an end in and of itself. The Open Working Group's Sustainable Development Goals should emphasize the bi-directional impact of education and other sustainable development goals. For example, investing in education for girls could boost sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural output by as much as 25 percent. Additionally, 12.2 million children could avoid becoming stunted if their mothers had a secondary education, thus improving their likelihood of attending school themselves. On the other hand, lack of education exacerbates the risk of chronic hunger, while malnutrition undermines the physiological capacity to learn.

Investments in education can catalyze virtuous cycles that, one by one can, have a powerful impact on the multiple dimensions of poverty. This is why the international community should set a strong education goal as the bedrock of the sustainable development agenda. We should all remember that we are building better, more sustainable approaches so that the youngest generation benefits as a result of more equitable progress.
The Global Partnership for Education stands ready to support the Open Working Group's efforts, particularly by accompanying all of its partners in their deliberations on how to make a future sustainable development agenda a reality through adequate external financing and domestic mobilization of resources – all in the spirit of development effectiveness principles.

I kindly request that you share this letter with other members of the Open Working Group on my behalf.

Sincerely,



Julia Gillard

cc: Member States of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
Ms. Alice P. Albright, Chief Executive Officer, Global Partnership for Education Secretariat