

**Speech by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania,
His Excellency BENJAMIN WILLIAM MKAPA
at the opening session of the Eighth Conference of Ministers of
Education in African Member States (MINEDAF VIII)**

Your Excellency Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO;

Your Excellency Mr. Amara Essy,

Interim Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union;

Hon. Pius Ng'wandu, MP, Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education;

Ms. Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Secretary;

Hon. Prof. Kader Asmal, Outgoing President of the intergovernmental Committee (MINEDAF VIII);

Mr. Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director;

Honourable Ministers;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning for the opening ceremony of the Eighth Conference of the Ministers of Education in African Member States, (MINEDAF VIII). On behalf of the People and Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, I welcome you all to our country. For those of you who are visiting Dar es Salaam for the first time, please feel at home and enjoy the breeze of the Indian Ocean. And for those who have been here before, we say, *Karibuni tena!*

I should like to thank UNESCO for granting Tanzania the honour to host this very important Conference, an honour we are enjoying for the first time. I do hope that we will live up to your expectations, and that you will all have a comfortable stay in this traditionally welcoming and peaceful country. We also take the decision to convene this Conference in our country as recognition of our firm commitment to education and, in particular, to the desirable and necessary goal of Education for All, (EFA).

Let me also congratulate the organisers of, and delegates to, this Conference. Your contribution to the development of education policies and strategies is heartening. I know that you have commitments and tight schedules back home. That you have, nonetheless, agreed to spare your precious time to attend this important Conference illustrates the importance that you, as individuals and as representatives of your governments, attach to the development of education in Africa.

Chairperson,

Today we live in a changed and ever-changing world. It is a world that demands a revolution in our traditional mechanisms for the delivery of education to our people, and the supply of quality human resources to our public service, to our industry and to the business community. Knowledge-based technologies are transforming our world in ways that would have been unheard of not too long ago. These developments have naturally pushed education to the centre of our development efforts, and they render your presence here all the more significant. And, it is not just any education, but the kind of education that can change with the times, and respond to the new demands of the market in a globalising world.

We in Tanzania see MINEDAF VIII as an appropriate occasion for our collective rededication to the cause of Education for All. It is also an Opportunity for us to show how our collective commitments can be met. I understand that you will examine objectives, priorities and arrangements for regional and international cooperation in the education sector, as well as contribute to mobilising world opinion, and influencing decision makers and the international community to support Education for All objectives. This is a weighty responsibility that we, the African Heads of State, have placed on your shoulders, confident that you will discharge it honourably and timely.

In Durban earlier this year we transformed the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU). It was not a cosmetic decision, but a major step in the process of unifying African countries, not only in political terms as was the case in the past, but also in the alignment of our development policies and strategies. In addition, the promulgation of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) as the economic programme of the African Union constitutes a renewed expression of our political will to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including those of education. We count on forums such as this to find concrete ways to fulfil these political and economic ambitions, and expressions of unity in the struggle to improve the quality of life of all our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference will be worthwhile if it shows how best to move from commitments to action-action at once local, national, regional and global. Convening, as you do, after the two world conferences in Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000), we are now justified in demanding more concrete deeds than pious words.

The Dakar Framework of Action reaffirmed the goal of Education for All as laid down by Jomtien and other international and regional conferences, and committed governments to work towards specific educational goals by 2015, or earlier. More significantly, it affirmed that, "No countries seriously committed to Education for All will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources".

While different countries may have different strategies and milestones to reach the EFA targets by 2015, what is expected of nations, regions, and the international community is action. All people must put their money and time where their mouths are. African nations must show firm commitment to these targets by increasing the share of national expenditure deployed for education. On their part, rich countries, and international and regional financial institutions, should fill the gap that thwarts the attainment of EFA goals, through debt relief and new resources.

Chairperson,

We also must bear in mind the fact that Education for All encompasses not only primary education, but also early childhood education, literacy and life-long education programmes. It involves creating and providing learning opportunities through different approaches -the formal, the non-formal and the informal. Additionally, an active commitment has been made to target the poor, people with disabilities, orphans, and all distressed and variously challenged people, including those affected by HIV/AIDS. This commitment must be kept.

Chairperson,

Let me now relate these challenges and commitments to our own situation in Tanzania.

From independence, Tanzania aimed at promoting human welfare and development. Education has always been seen as an important tool for the eradication of ignorance, disease and poverty. With this in mind, Tanzania spearheaded the policies of Education for Self Reliance, and of what we called Universal Primary Education. Recognising the priority that we ourselves had put on education, donors supported us substantially in the 1970s. This admirable partnership enabled us to almost attain the goal of Universal Primary Education by the early 1980s. The Primary Gross Enrolment Rate was 98 per cent, and the adult literacy rate rose to 90 per cent. Unfortunately, however, these impressive achievements were rapidly eroded following a drastic reduction of donor funding before Tanzania could develop the local capacity to sustain such achievements.

Unquestionably, Africa should establish better management systems in respect of funds received from development partners. But it is also imperative that our partners realise that local capacity to sustain the programmes we build together have to be developed before ending donor support. Sight should also not be lost to the fact that investments in the social sector do not produce immediate observable returns. They require continued and reliable support for a reasonable period while the local capacity is gradually being built.

And that local, or rather national, capacity has to be multi-faceted and all- inclusive. It has, for instance, to include capacity to put up and maintain the necessary infrastructure for expanded school enrolment; capacity to produce quality teachers; capacity to motivate teachers to work properly; and capacity to monitor and assess learning achievements based on the set targets. Achievement of these desirable qualities needs strong commitments from our governments, from civil society, and substantial support and commitment from the donor community.

The commitment and competence of teachers is also critical. The quality of education offered depends largely on the competence and motivation of teachers, as well as on the teaching and learning environment. This Conference needs to look at strategies to improve the working environment for teachers, and to provide them with constantly available opportunities for professional development.

Universal Primary Education, which is one among the strategies for achieving EFA, is not simply a matter of having every child enrolled in school. In addition, once enrolled, the child ought to stay in school, ought to learn, and ought to complete the full primary education cycle. In Africa, too many children drop out of school for a variety of reasons. Sometimes our schools have not created a conducive environment for optimal achievement. Sometimes, the curricula have failed to meet the learning needs of children. The challenge, therefore, is to

ensure that our schools provide a child-friendly and inspirational environment that can motivate children to stay on, and to learn gainfully.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me once again share with you our experience in Tanzania in pursuit of Education for All goals. We are now in the second year of implementing a five-year Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) that articulates the vision of Universal Primary Education, and is anchored in the wider Education and Training Policy, the over-arching Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025.

We have reviewed the performance in the first year of the implementation of the Primary Education Development Plan, and all of us -the People, the Government, and our development partners -are happy and feel encouraged by the results. What are the critical factors that made all this possible?

- Firstly, there was a firm commitment by the Government, and education for all was prioritised. We waived all school fees in public schools to ensure full access, regardless of income status, to all children, boys and girls. We decided that at least 25 per cent of recurrent government expenditure should be set aside for education, the larger share going to basic education.
- Secondly, the people were sensitised on the importance of sending all their children, boys and girls, able and disabled, to school. They were also sensitised on local ownership of the infrastructure for educating their children, including classrooms, teacher housing, latrines, staff rooms, water supply and desks. They were thus sensitised, through the rural participatory approach, to take part in putting up and maintaining this infrastructure, with government subsidies. This not only enhanced the sense of ownership, responsibility and accountability, but also provided poverty-reducing income for a substantial number of people in the villages-
- Thirdly, the direct support to our education budget by development partners was critical. The support included the debt relief we received through the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, a USD 150 million credit from the World Bank, and grants from other bilateral and multilateral development partners including the United Kingdom, Sweden, Japan, Canada, European Commission, Ireland, Norway, The Netherlands, Finland, African Development Bank, and United Nations Agencies.

In other words, the significant successes that we attained in only one year were a product of government commitment and prioritisation of EF A goals on the one hand, and a genuine, dependable partnership between Central Government, Local Government, the People, and our Development Partners, on the other hand. I would recommend this partnership to all African governments.

Let me now outline a few of the achievements attained during the first year of implementing our Primary Education Development Plan.

1. We had a target to enroll, 500,000 pupils in Grade I this year. In fact, 1,624,316 pupils were enrolled, exceeding our target by 8.3 percent.
2. 12,868 new classrooms were constructed, a 92.8 per cent achievement against a target of 13,868 classrooms.

3. The Gross Enrolment Rate increased from 84.4 percent in 2001 to 100.4 percent in 2002, while the Net Enrolment Ratio increased from 65.5 to 85 percent during the same period.
4. The government recruited 7,135 qualified teachers, and 6,919 pre- service teacher trainees.
5. A programme for professional development of teachers was launched to ensure that all teachers with Grade B/C qualifications attain grade A qualifications.
6. 2,228 new teachers' houses have been constructed, mostly in rural schools. This has not only added to improved working conditions for teachers, but it has also facilitated the retention of teachers in rural areas.
7. The transition rate to secondary schools has increased from 19.5 per cent in 2000 to 21.7 per cent in 2001. This would not have been possible without the expansion of physical secondary school infrastructure through community efforts.
8. A National Strategy for Non-Formal Education is being developed. This strategy, among other things, will produce a basic education programme for children aged II-13 that dropped out of school, or were left out due to limited absorption capacity of primary schools. Some of these are temporary measures while the capacity is being developed for primary schools to absorb all eligible children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will not be surprised when I tell you that, these achievements notwithstanding, Tanzania continues to face formidable challenges and obstacles in the provision of quality basic education for all its children.

The first relates to enhancing the quality of our teachers who play a vital role in the provision of education. Teachers in primary schools are supposed to have a minimum of Grade A level qualifications. Only about half of them meet this qualification. The rest have Grade B or C level qualifications. The highest level of academic qualification attained by this second group of teachers prior to professional training is primary education, that is, the same level that they are teaching!

The second challenge related to teachers is their number. We have opened the door for religious organisations, and other Non-Governmental Organisations, as well as private investors, to build and operate private educational facilities, from kindergarten to University. But most of these have no capacity to train their own teachers, and have to depend on those being trained by the Government. In the belief that the grass is greener on the private sector side, quite a number of our teachers have left government service. What is worse, many teachers have been afflicted by the HIV scourge, and have died or are expected to die in the next few years. The financial and personnel challenge of replacing these teachers, while trying to meet existing shortfalls, is truly daunting.

Another challenge to our education sector is the very low capacity of secondary schools to absorb primary school graduates. As I mentioned earlier, the transition rate from primary to secondary schools in 2001 was only 21 percent. We need to urgently increase the number of secondary schools, and of teachers as well. And, the challenges in terms of numbers and

quality, in terms of the search for greener pastures, as well as the HIV / AIDS pandemic, are the same as for primary schools.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The quality of inputs in education, in terms of the quality of pupils, determines also the quality of outputs. Unfortunately, it is only very few children that get an opportunity to attend pre-primary schools, most of which are run by the private sector, and the fee charged often serving as a barrier for children from families with limited means. As a result, efforts to ensure quality child-care after birth, and creating the requisite mental stimulation through day care and pre-schooling, is an area largely left for the private sector, communities and the civil society. Capacity building and action is clearly needed on this front.

Furthermore, regular schools and programmes need to welcome, accommodate and meet the learning needs of all members of the local community, including children with special needs. Some children have difficulty in learning and are, therefore, excluded from attending schools. These include, among others, street children, orphans and those with disabilities and/or with exceptional abilities. We thus need an inclusive education system that can put to an end all discriminatory practices, be they racial, religious, gender or socio-economic, which consciously or unconsciously exclude some children and adults from receiving an appropriate education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

National funding for education is another serious challenge to many governments, especially in Africa. The share of the national budget going to education is a reflection of a government's commitment to achieving Education for All targets. I mentioned earlier that we, in Tanzania, have decided that at least a quarter of our recurrent annual budget should go to the education sector. But if the size of the economy remains small, it does not matter how big a share of the budget goes to education.

So, the pursuit of Education for All targets must be accompanied by national strategies to enhance economic growth and development. And, certainly, the building up of a national capacity for sustainability requires a growing economy. In the meantime, and in addition to debt relief and the contribution by our development partners, this Conference should address the challenge of exploring ways in which alternative resources can be generated to bolster funding for the education sector.

Chairperson,

The centrality of education in our development efforts cannot be overstated. Only an educated and skilled labour force can serve as a catalyst for rapid development. In turn, a growing economy gives the country in question the capacity to invest more in education. Thus the two- an educated workforce and a growing economy-reinforce and support each other. Education is particularly useful in the mustering, and in the use, of ever-growing new technologies.

Africa, with the assistance of UNESCO and other partners in development, should place more emphasis on vocational and technical education to develop useable skills and knowledge for self-development, and national economic development. We must devise, in terms of structure and content, an education system that not only imparts knowledge and skills relevant to the

targeted individuals, communities and enterprises, but also an education that develops a creative and inquiring mind, and produces employable and self-employable people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world is witnessing unprecedented development in science and technology, which our people can only muster through education. The American religious leader, Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969) said, "The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it". And, developing countries, especially those in Africa, will increasingly be marginalized if they do not adequately and wisely invest in education to keep pace with a changing world. Globalization, and the ever-increasing use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), tends to increase the gap between the poor and the rich. We have the responsibility to put in place an education system that will help to narrow this gap, and enable our people to face both the academic, as well as socio-economic, challenges of the new millennium with greater confidence.

ICT provides the opportunity for learners, both children and adults, to access abundant and useful information, and interact with sources of knowledge from different parts of the world instantly, and sometimes in real time. However, ICT in schools is only gradually developing in some of our countries. I want to commend UNESCO for setting up focal points for educational technology. We would like to appeal to our development partners to work with us in developing ICT extensively in primary and secondary schools, as well as in distance learning programmes. The founding President of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, counselled us to run while others walk. In many respects, the ICT revolution can help us run.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to conclude by highlighting the wider dimensions and higher degrees of awareness to which the vision of Education for All exhorts us:

1. The advantage of Education for All lies in its comprehensiveness; in its scope, as well as in the challenge it presents to us as a way of transforming and developing our countries.
2. Education for All focuses on early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education, and tertiary and life-long programmes. It focuses on both children and adults. It is concerned with formal, non-formal and informal education approaches;
3. Education for All challenges us to develop academic curricula that promotes functional literacy and life skills, including technical and vocational skills;
4. Education for All demands that the quality of education we offer should translate into strategies that enhance learning outcomes through building capacities for infrastructure, quality teachers, books and other teaching and learning materials;
5. Education for All requires formulation of practical policies and systems to ensure that graduates from primary and secondary schools are absorbed in the labour force, through various approaches such as establishing parallel vocational and technical education systems;

6. Education for All compels us to incorporate effective strategies for combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is robbing our countries of our people, including learned young people, and undermining the investment made at great cost in human resource development. Education is the key to develop effective and efficient responses to HIV / AIDS; and
7. Education for All in Africa calls on us to build bridges with our development partners in promoting education as a fundamental tool for poverty eradication and growth. The co-operation and support of our development partners, both in terms of debt relief and new development assistance resources, is necessary in meeting EFA targets.

Ladies and Gentlemen, The challenge before you is to come up with workable strategies of ensuring that our countries attain Education for All by 20 15 as already committed, or preferably earlier. The experiences of the people assembled here are enough to ensure that the outcome of this Conference will be an important signpost towards the attainment of our noble objectives. But to realise them, we must be prepared and willing to share knowledge and experiences.

The story is told of a little boy who went up to his father and asked: "Dad, where did all of my intelligence come from?" The father replied, "Well, son, you must have gotten it from your mother, 'cause I still have mine".

Thus are we warned not only against un-instructive vainglory but also against gender insensitivity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Shared knowledge is not lost knowledge; it is more knowledge.

I welcome you once again to Tanzania, and to Dar es Salaam, and I wish you a most successful Conference of sharing and learning from one another.

It is now my great pleasure to declare the Eighth Meeting of the Ministers of Education in African Member States (MINEDAF VIII) officially open.

I thank you for your kind attention.

