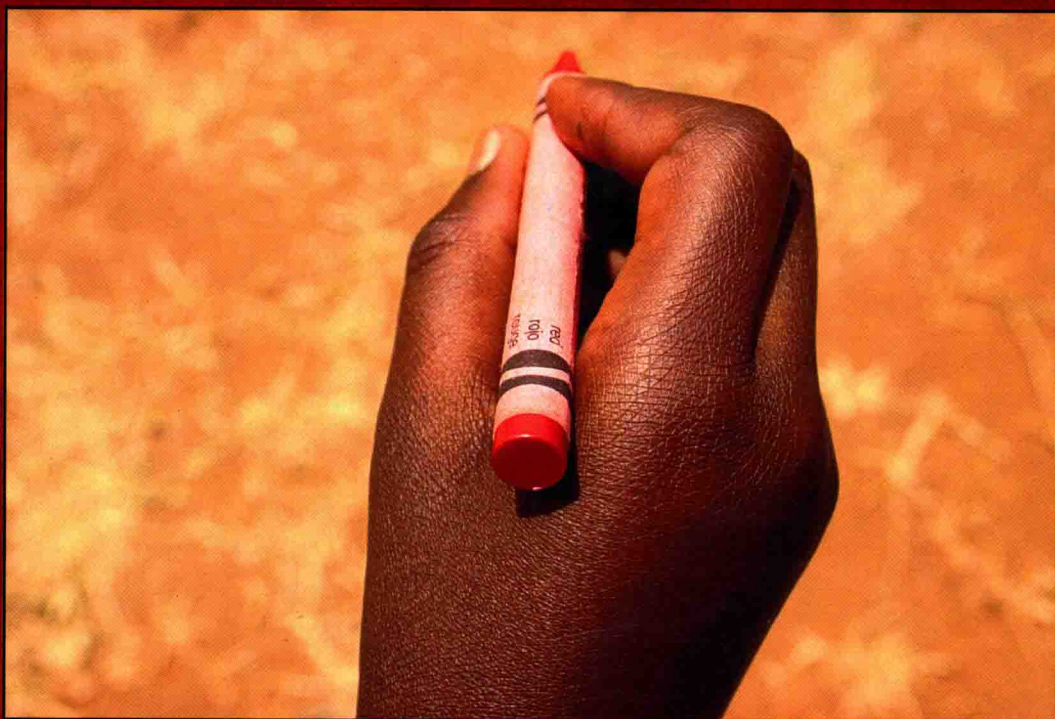


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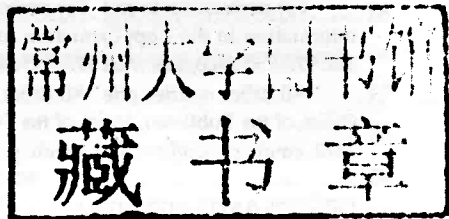
AFRICA HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SERIES

# Sustaining Educational and Economic Momentum in Africa



THE WORLD BANK

# Sustaining Educational and Economic Momentum in Africa



Africa Region Human Development Department



Association for the  
Development of  
Education in  
Africa



THE WORLD BANK  
Washington, D.C.

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# Foreword

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Most African countries and their external partners can take pride in the unmistakable progress towards the Education for All (EFA) goals for 2015 agreed at the Dakar 2000 World Education Forum. The increase in access to primary education has been particularly remarkable, reflecting the combined impact of laudable *education reforms, substantially increased public financing of education and greater flows of external aid for education.*

Yet the good news has been dampened by the global financial crisis that broke out in full force in late 2008. Recovery has been slow, uneven, and often uncertain and the adverse effects of the crisis on domestic budgets and aid flows are now making it more difficult for African countries to solidify policy reform for lasting results in education. The hard won gains of the last ten years could well be reversed, thereby jeopardizing attainment of the EFA goals and those of the African Union's Second Decade for Education in Africa. More worrisome is the potential setback to nascent efforts in many African countries to align the expansion of secondary and tertiary education more closely with the needs of the economy and to equip the workforce with the skills, particularly in science, technology, and innovation, to help businesses compete successfully in the global economy.

These concerns are a sharp reminder of what has become increasingly clear since the 2000 World Education Forum: that the agenda for educational reform development belongs to the whole government, not just to the ministries charged with developing and implementing education and training policies. It was thus with foresight that the organizers convened a conference to engage ministers of finance and of education in a dialogue on their joint leadership and mutual responsibility. That the conference attracted the participation of 44 African ministers from 28 countries, among them 16 ministers of finance, not only attests to its timeliness but also reflects agreement among African leaders on the centrality of education and training as an instrument for national development and economic progress, particularly in today's knowledge-based global economy.

The success of the conference augurs well for the future. It is however, only a start. Our hope therefore is that the ideas discussed at the conference, as summarized in this report, would initiate a process of continued dialogue and reflection. We are hopeful, too, that they would inspire a determined effort at cross-ministerial collaboration in the design and implementation of education policies. In today's vastly altered economic context, such collaboration is not only helpful but essential to secure durable progress in national development.

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This paper is based on “Sustaining the Education and Economic Momentum in Africa amidst the Current Global Financial Crisis,” the report on the Conference for African Ministers of Finance and Education, Tunis, July 15–17, 2009. The Conference was organized and implemented by a committee comprising Ahlin Byll-Cataria, Executive Secretary, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA); Baboucarr Sarr, Chief Education Specialist, African Development Bank; and Jee-Peng Tan, Education Advisor, World Bank. The committee benefited from the support of Dzingai Mutumbuka, Chair of ADEA and Birger Fredriksen, World Bank consultant and conference rapporteur, and from the help of an ADEA team staff comprising Hamidou Boukary, Sabine Diop, Elisa Desbordes-Cisse, Thanh-Hoa Desruelles, and Samia Harzi, as well as a World Bank team comprising Kaliopé Azziz-Huck, Norosoa Andrianaivo, and Douglas Sumerfield. Overall guidance was provided by Yaw Ansu and Christopher Thomas, respectively Director and Sector Manager, Human Development Department, Africa Region, World Bank; and Zeinab El-Bakri, former Vice President for Operations, African Development Bank and Thomas Hurley, former Director, Human Development, African Development Bank. The event was financed largely by a grant from the Education Program Development Fund of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative.

This paper was prepared on behalf of the conference organizers by Birger Fredriksen, the conference rapporteur. It was processed for publication by Petra Righetti.

This paper seeks to capture discussions at the conference as understood and interpreted by Birger Fredriksen, the conference rapporteur. It does not necessarily reflect the policies of the governments represented by the ministers at the conference or the official position of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, the African Development Bank, or the World Bank. Any inaccuracies or errors in the report are those of the rapporteur alone and should not be attributed to the officials who spoke at the conference or to the ministries or organizations for which they work.

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

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AAU	Association of African Universities
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CONFEMEN	Conférence des Ministres de l'Éducation des Pays Ayant le Français en Partage (Conference of Ministers of Education in Francophone Countries)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EFA	Education for All
EPDF	Education Program Development Fund
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMR	EFA Global Monitoring Report
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
R&D	Research and Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARUA	Southern African Regional Universities Association
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TVE	Technical and Vocational Education
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USHEPIA	University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnership in Africa
WB	World Bank
WGCOMED	ADEA Working Group on Communication for Education and Development

# Executive Summary: Reflections on the Outcomes of the Conference

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This Conference brought together 44 African ministers of finance and of education from 28 African countries<sup>1</sup> for a structured dialogue on sustaining Africa's economic and education progress in the current context of a global economic slowdown. Representatives of Africa's key regional institutions and development partners participated as observers. The overarching objective of the Conference was to deepen understanding of **why** ministers of finance and of education must exercise **joint political leadership** to protect the education gains of the past decade while fostering a dynamic alignment between the education sector and national goals for social and economic progress, and of **how** they might do it.

This summary distills the main outcomes of the dialogue at the conference which the main body of the report documents. It focuses on the three expected outcomes defined prior to the conference regarding increased understanding and consensus among key stakeholders on:

- The rationale for and the capacities needed by ministries of finance and of education to jointly exercise strong political leadership for aligning strategies for educational development with national agendas for economic growth;
- The need for concerted actions to protect Africa's education gains of the last decade and to prevent that the economic downturn causes a repeat of the education decline experienced in the 1980s and 1990s; and
- The critical role of strategic domestic policies, buttressed by a more catalytic use of external aid, to help ensure holistic and sustainable development of the education sector amidst the challenges of the current economic downturn.

Conference participants welcomed the event and appreciated the timeliness of the topics selected for discussion and the convening of both ministers of finance and ministers of education as key national actors for addressing these issues. They applauded the quality of the presentations by the invited subject experts and the fact that the organizers arranged the program to maximize active participation in the dialogue by ministers in their roles as presenter, chair of sessions, or discussant. In this manner, the conference achieved one of its key objectives, which was to create a forum for substantive dialogue mainly among the ministers.

## **Rationale For and Capacities Needed to Exercise Stronger Joint Political Leadership**

Over the last 40–50 years, there have been many education conferences for African *education* ministers. The unique value of this conference was that it was the first continent-wide event in recent memory (perhaps the first ever) that brought together

both ministers of finance and of education from Sub-Saharan Africa as well as those from North Africa to discuss pressing issues pertaining to education and training. That both groups of ministers found it useful to attend suggests in itself an understanding among the ministers of the strong mutual interdependence between education development and economic growth and of the need for joint political leadership to ensure alignment between national objectives and strategies for education and the economy.

This enhanced understanding of mutual dependence and joint responsibility manifested itself at the conference in different ways:

- On the side of *education ministers*, the discussions acknowledged the need for the education sector to break out of the “silo mentality” sometimes displayed by education politicians and specialists. Awareness of this need was reflected in statements such as: (i) the importance of evidence-based education budget proposals to justify their request within the context of the government’s overall development priorities and budget constraints; (ii) the need to align education and training programs more closely to labor market demands; (iii) the imperative of better coordination among the ministries which often share responsibility for education and training issues and between these ministries and employers; and (iv) the benefits of greater pan-African cooperation to capture economies of scale and foster synergy in the area of education, training and research.
- On the side of *finance ministers*, the discussions showed a deep appreciation of the fundamental role of education and training in national development. Attesting to this view are such statements pertaining to the following: (i) the multi-faceted roles played by education and training in shaping the moral, ethical and social values of society, in preparing young people for employment and citizenship, and in fostering mutual respect, social cohesion and cultural integration in the society; (ii) the growing importance of knowledge and innovation as drivers of economic growth, and the role of skills development in enabling African countries to better compete in an increasingly competitive global economy; and (iii) the need for adequate funding of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), including programs benefiting the informal economy. Some of the ministers argued that an effective policy to address unemployment among youth requires a significant overhaul of governments’ budgetary policies for training as well as development of modes of co-financing by employers and others.

In short, interventions at the conference reflected a growing mutual understanding among the ministers of the **rationale** for exercising strong joint leadership in dealing with the many linkages between education and the economy. A few of the participants responded to the organizers’ encouragement to discuss whether existing **institutional capacity, mechanisms and accountability arrangements** are in place to exercise such joint leadership. However, time constraints prevented an in-depth discussion of these issues.



## The Need for Concerted Actions to Protect Education Gains during the Crisis

There was broad agreement among ministers on the need amidst the current crisis for concerted actions to protect the educational gains of the last decade and, beyond that, to ensure that investments in education and training continue to build a strong foundation for future development. This agreement spans several aspects, but most references were made to the need to mitigate the likely negative impact of the crisis on education budgets:

- The arduousness of the financial challenges to protect the gains towards Universal Primary Education (UPE) while also managing the pressure on secondary education and advancing reforms to expand and improve TVET and tertiary education.
- The likelihood of limited (or indeed reduced) space for *domestic funding for education* as a result of the projected slowdown in economic growth.
- The added risk of reduced external support as the *global economic crisis weakens political support for aid in donor countries, including aid provided through the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI)*. Notably, while external aid for education has risen since 2000, most donors are under-delivering on their past commitments and their pledges in recent years have stagnated or declined.
- The additional *vulnerability of countries that depend heavily on aid*. Uncertainties about the impact of the crisis on aid volumes will reduce aid predictability and exacerbate political risks, especially in countries where a large share of the budget for teacher salaries is paid out of aid flows.
- The special challenges of *post-conflict countries* in mobilizing the domestic resources required to rebuild their education systems, in securing dependable flows of external aid to facilitate successfully the transition to peace, including through education programs that play a particularly important role in this process.
- The *fairly good track record of effective use of education aid in Africa*, as attested by the region's solid gains in educational coverage over the last decade. This record should help maintain external support for the sector during the crisis.
- The call by some ministers for (i) *innovations in education financing*, including emphasizing the increasing role played by private providers in many countries in secondary and, especially, tertiary education, and (ii) a *significant re-evaluation of the government's budgetary priorities with respect to the support for TVET*.

## The Critical Role of Strategic Domestic Policies and More Catalytic Use of Aid

Many ministers underlined the *critical role of strategic domestic policies* and of strong political leadership to guide education development. Several described the progress in their own countries in putting in place the required framework. Notable examples including ensuring that education policies, programs and budgets are integral parts of Poverty Reduction Strategies and of medium-term expenditure frameworks. Some ministers also reported progress in increasing the resources devoted to education.

Yet the dialogue also highlighted the wide diversity among countries, both in the process of policy formulation and in the quality of the policies themselves. Moreover, as one minister put it, good policies, and plans do not necessarily translate into effective implementation. Also, severe budget constraints make for difficult trade-offs between the needs of ministries responsible for education and training and those of other ministries. Knowledge and skills are necessary but not sufficient: they must be complemented by capital investments in many other sectors as well as with interventions that determine conditions that affect growth, for example, the country's macro and socio-political stability, the quality of the business environment, the ability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and the loss of talent through brain drain. Several ministers also noted that skill shortages in some areas often coexist with graduate unemployment in other areas and that more needs to be done to better match training supply with labor market demands.

In short, while there was consensus on the critical role of strategic domestic policies and of strong leadership, there was also recognition that crafting the right policies and practicing transformative leadership remain a work-in-progress. Some ministers acknowledge that visionary political leadership focusing on policies in education and training in the medium to long-term could help African countries make the transition from a "survival" to a "growth economy." In this regard, the ministers raised several concerns requiring urgent attention:

- *Within the education and training sector:* Sustainable pathways for the development and financing of TVET; the challenge of rapidly growing youth populations and cost-effective measures to equip them with skills for gainful employment, and the need to address severe shortages of trained teachers and, in some settings, the very low salaries paid to teachers.
- *Outside the education sector:* The slow progress in reducing fertility levels which implies continued high population growth and heavy fiscal burdens on the working population to nurture and educate the young. Some ministers noted that a root cause of the problem is neglect of female education in the past which left a legacy of high female illiteracy rates and kept fertility rates high today. Weak institutional capacity has impeded the implementation of even good policies; and slow economic growth has seriously constrained education budgets and the employment opportunities for school leavers.

The ministers also explored the idea of providing strong political leadership *without "politicizing" the education debate*. The Singapore Minister of Finance—invited to the Conference as distinguished guest speaker—emphasized that education policy choices necessarily are highly political. However, it is possible to limit "politicization" by monitoring and evaluating the impact of alternative policies and keeping the electorate informed. The objective should be to create a *virtuous political cycle* to support education, whereby solid evidence informs the democratic process and helps move education concerns higher up on the political agenda.

As regards actions to promote *more strategic use of external aid* in the education sector, only a few ministers commented specifically on this aspect. Most of the ministers focused instead on the need for more aid, and for counter-cyclic use of aid to mitigate the impact of the current crisis on domestic education funding. This focus is

consistent with the manner in which external education aid often is discussed in international fora. The tendency is to discuss the *volume of aid* rather than *where aid can have the strongest catalytic impact on the education sector*. It probably also reflects a need for more work to clarify questions such as:

- *The “additionality” of aid:* To what extent does (and should) aid for education leverage *additional domestic financing for education*, rather than substitute for domestic effort to mobilize national resources to finance investments in the sector? In this regard, some will argue that even if aid for education does not expand the education budget, it at least allows the country to shift its own resources to other vital sectors, thus having a positive development impact.
- *The “fungibility” between domestic and external funding:* What type of aid is likely to produce the strongest catalytic impact in a given country context? Some will argue that domestic and external financing are fully fungible and that there is therefore no need for particular attention to the use of aid, apart from ensuring that it is used efficiently wherever it is deployed. Others argue that domestic and external funding are not fully fungible in contexts of high aid dependency and severe budget constraints; and that national budget processes are often such that domestic funding for certain high-impact programs would not be funded if aid is not designated to them.
- *The appropriate criteria for aid allocation among countries* and the balance between “performance-based” and “needs-based” aid. How should aid be allocated in view of the prospects of different countries in attaining the Education for All goals by 2015?
- *The relevance of financing of “global public good” functions and pan-African cooperation in the education sector.* To what extent should donors prioritize these functions in considering the distribution of aid between country-specific support and pan-African/regional initiatives, networks and organizations?

Several ministers commented on the last point listed above, suggesting that because countries compete for external support to address national concerns, they give too little attention to Africa-wide issues and pan-African cooperation. They argued for allocating more resources for such issues, by African countries as well as by development partners. Some speakers expressed concerns about the sustainability—and especially of scaling up—of some successful existing regional initiatives and networks in light of their heavy reliance on donor financing. Some ministers noted that while lack of resource constrains regional cooperation, often the most serious impediments are political in nature. More needs to be done by the African Union to resolve issues in the political domain.

Finally, the Concept Note prepared by the organizers prior to the conference foresaw that the “Ministers would articulate an agenda of practical actions for collaboration to help ensure continued education and economic progress in Africa in the coming years.” Although the agenda of practical actions did not materialize, the conference was successful in stimulating a lively dialogue and in building consensus among the two groups of ministers on the need for joint actions on education and training issues. The ministers acknowledged the dialogue initiated at the Conference

would serve as a useful starting point for closer collaboration among themselves and with their external partners.

Each of the three agencies that organized the Conference can take follow up measures to help strengthen this collaboration. The two development banks can do so by ensuring that education and training issues are routinely put into the broader context of national strategies for growth and poverty reduction rather than treated from the perspective of the sector alone. ADEA, for its part, can continue to play a leading role, in collaboration with its member agencies and its counterparts among African ministries of education, in fostering continued dialogue and learning on the key issues raised at the conference. ADEA's has a laudable track record over the past 10-15 years in this regard and can take pride in having helped enriched policy dialogue on key issues affecting the education in Africa. This achievement reflects the effort made over the years, especially within the ADEA partnership, to promote this type of dialogue. By extending the dialogue to include ministers of finance, this Conference has made a highly valuable contribution to an ongoing process of enhancing the quality of education decision-making in Africa.

### **Note**

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 provides the list of participants, and Appendix 2 provides the program of the conference.

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# Rationale and Objective

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The Conference brought together 44 African ministers of finance and of education from 28 African countries (Appendix 1 provides a list of the participants) for a structured dialogue on sustaining Africa's economic and educational progress in the current context of a global economic slowdown. Representatives of Africa's key regional institutions and development partners participated as observers.<sup>1</sup>

African countries have achieved laudable progress during the last decade towards the Education for All (EFA) goals for 2015 that were agreed in Dakar in 2000, particularly with regard to Universal Primary Education (UPE). This progress reflects the combined impact of several factors, notably courageous education reforms, substantially increased public financing of education—made possible largely by sustained economic growth and increased political priority for education—and greater inflows of external aid for education. The momentum may be jeopardized, however, by the current worldwide economic downturn. Tightening domestic budgets and external aid could increase the difficulty of sustaining policy reform and strategic investments, thereby putting at risk the hard won gains of the last ten years. They could also undermine Africa's efforts to develop post-basic education and training and delay achievement of key goals of the African Union's Second Decade for Education in Africa (2006 - 2015). The result would be to frustrate the aspirations of the increasing numbers of African youth who seek to go beyond primary education and to deny their prospective employers the skilled workforce that could help boost business competitiveness and economic growth.

The emerging global economic circumstances provided a **key rationale** for the Conference. Its purpose was to stimulate dialogue among senior policy makers on policy options to achieve a mutually reinforcing relation between education and the economy. In particular, the key concerns were to:

- Sustain the momentum towards the 2015 EFA goals as the overarching priority in the coming years and minimize the risk of repeating the education decline in Africa countries during the economic downturns of the 1980s and 1990s.
- Give increased attention to the urgent need for development of post-primary education to supply the middle and higher-level technical and managerial skills needed to sustain and accelerate the economic growth achieved over the last decade.

Against this background, the **overarching objective** of the Conference was to deepen the understanding of **why** ministers of finance and of education must exercise **joint**

**political leadership** to protect the education gains of the past decade while fostering a dynamic alignment between the education sector and national goals for social and economic progress and **how** they can do it. To this end, the Conference program (Appendix 2) was organized around seven inter-related themes, as summarized below.

**Note**

<sup>1</sup> The ADEA Working Group on Communication for Education and Development (WGCOMED) organized a training seminar for African journalists to coincide with the conference for the journalists to disseminate information on the conference's rationale and outcomes in the African Press. More than sixty articles published in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese can be found on the WGCOMED website.

# Summary of Presentations and Discussion

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The Conference opened in the afternoon of July 15. The opening ceremony was chaired by **Ms. Obiageli EZEKWESILI**, Vice-President of the Africa Region, the World Bank. The chairperson welcomed the participants and invited goodwill remarks from the host government as well as from the Africa Union, the European Commission, UNESCO, UNICEF and the FTI secretariat. All the speakers stressed the importance and timeliness of this Conference, affirmed the support of their institutions for its objectives, and noted the uniqueness of the event in convening ministers of education and of finance to discuss how to sustain during the crisis the remarkable education momentum achieved by Africa over the last decade.

Following the goodwill remarks, the **Keynote Address** was delivered by **Mr. Donald KABERUKA**, President of the AfDB. Entitled *Human Capital for Africa's Long-Term Development: Sustaining Progress in Challenging Times*, the address emphasized the following themes:

- The timeliness of this opportunity to explore how to maintain the education momentum at a time of crisis and how to strengthen higher education and science as key inputs to Africa's development. The need to protect core investments in human capital during the crisis is particularly acute in many low-income countries and sustained support from the international community is needed to mitigate the impact of the crisis on domestic budgets.
- While some MDGs have continued to be elusive, Africa has made major progress towards UPE. But the challenges to achieve this objective by 2015 are still formidable, including huge numbers of children out of school; high population growth; poor education quality; shrinking budgets and increased demand for post-primary education. To successfully address these challenges, the private sector has a role to play, especially in post-primary education.
- Rapid enrollment growth has often eroded quality, especially of higher education. In the 1960s, Africa had several reputable universities. To rebuild tertiary and scientific capabilities is urgent: No nation can succeed in today's competitive and knowledge-based economy without that capability. A starting point may be to invest in universities that have the ability to serve as centers of excellence in science and research. Universities also need to develop more innovative ways of collaborating with their counterparts in other countries. Financing of higher education is a world-wide problem, and African countries



need to develop financing strategies including clarification of the role of private sector provision. The AfDB has adopted a new Higher Education, Science and Technology Strategy as a basis for increased support for this sector.

- To address capacity and quality constraints at all levels require measures in many areas including leveraging the use of technology, including information and communication technology (ICT) more effectively. This is an area of particular interest to the AfDB. Success also requires that public investment in education is seen in context with investments in other sectors. For example, water and sanitation are important factors in ensuring enrollment and retention of girls. Also, the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1) is to reduce poverty by half, and education plays a critical role in achieving this goal. But in the long term, the real poverty for today's African children is to be isolated from the world due to lack of knowledge. We all need to work together to sustain the progress achieved in the last decade in reducing this isolation. Thus, the importance of this conference.

Following the Keynote address, the Chair offered concluding remarks pointing out that while the financial crisis created difficulties, it also offered a golden opportunity for fresh thinking. She emphasized the importance of preventing reversals of the progress that African countries have achieved, of protecting the size and predictability of budgets for education, of ensuring that spending on education produced learning outcomes, of innovative partnership with the private sector for service delivery, of reversing the decline of tertiary education in many African countries, and of investing in Africa's human capital to help the continent reduce its dependence on commodities to drive growth. She affirmed the World Bank's commitment to support African countries in their effort to improve education at all levels as part of their strategy to accelerate economic growth. She stressed the importance for Africa of the themes to be debated during the Conference. The conference then adjourned for the day.

Over the next 1.5 days, the Conference agenda (Appendix 2) was organized around the following seven themes:

- (i) Political leadership to better align education and economic development;
- (ii) Mutual accountability of ministers of finance and of education for education development;
- (iii) Education priorities in a challenging environment;
- (iv) Skills development for economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- (v) Pan-African cooperation in education and training: What is the scope and what are the barriers?
- (vi) Priorities for education finance and external aid to support Africa's development in the coming years; and
- (vii) Pressing on amidst the global crisis: Next steps to sustain Africa's education and economic momentum.

The rest of this section will summarize the presentations and discussions under each of these seven themes.