

ADDRESS BY MRS. LAUMA SĪKA

DEPUTY STATE SECRETARY

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

ECOSOC

ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW

“IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED GOALS AND COMMITMENTS IN
REGARD TO EDUCATION”

STATEMENT, JULY 5, 2011

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Mr President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to address you at this afternoon session and to share views on the importance of the education in order to develop an inclusive and socially responsible society. Society, where people of different ages, sex, interests, life experience, cultural and intellectual background live, learn, enjoy and work side by side and can realise their full potential over their lifetime.

I strongly believe that the exchange of ideas, experiences and solutions on raising efficiency for implementing the internationally agreed goals in education will help us to develop a common platform for the future. I would like also to stress, that Latvia aligns with the statement of the European Union.

Mr President,

The political, economic and social world has changed over years and innovation has become the predominant engine for all spheres of life. Therefore, traditional problem-solving and decision-making methods no longer work as expected. We cannot tackle all the challenges alone or from a perspective of one limited field only. Education helps us to rise above the "glass ceiling" in order to unlock every individual's potential and find solutions looking from a different perspective. It is also crucial that we are fully aware of risks, for example, that technological innovation could lead to widening the gap between those who can initiate and enjoy these developments, and those who lag behind.

Millennium Development Goals, as well as the seven years of the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development have provided us with a framework that can be used to secure that everyone has a chance to benefit from education, to be treated equally, inclusively, to be respected and to be given a choice.

A strong connection must be sustained not only with the Millennium Development Goals, but also with other global initiatives which are already in place – in particular, the Global Action Plan "Education for All" and UN International Literacy Decade. Each one of these initiatives has their own role to play, outlining the content and the purpose of the education for the 21st century. In this context UNESCO plays a particularly important role in a continuous dialogue with the Member States, sustaining their commitment, maximizing resources and mobilising their responses to various challenges.

In Latvia the awareness of and advocacy for the implementation of internationally agreed goals has been developed already since the second half of

1990s. In the Baltic Sea Region strong influence has come from the *Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region*.

To reach the goals of the global action plan Education for All and to implement the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia and the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO have concluded an agreement to continue to adjust the Latvian education system corresponding to the diverse needs of the learners.

The education requires all three concepts of learning – life-long, life-wide and life-deep learning. The approved Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy of Latvia include three priorities for lifelong learning at all stages: provide availability of lifelong learning, to ensure high quality education offer according to the needs of target groups and to improve resource administration.

In this context I would like to emphasise Latvia's strong awareness on teachers' role in the education process. Latvia continues to invest in continuing training of teachers in order to keep them up to date with technological advancements and innovation thus promoting their personal potential in favour of learning society.

There are also several issues that we in Latvia keep high on agenda to prevent exclusion and to foster more inclusive education and society:

First, we recognize diverse causes for being at risk of exclusion – these may be social, such as different income levels, cultural – such as background and traditions, linguistic, medical, psychological, economic and even sometimes very personal. Second, we must improve our understanding of the target groups for inclusion and providing the necessary assistance for them.

One of the success stories of Latvia has been the implementation of the bilingual education system that enables the minority children and adults to fully

participate in the life of society while ensuring the sustainability of their ethnic identities.

It is important to continuously keep in mind that learning starts before and continues after formal school age. In this context we need to address the needs of adults, as well as to provide early childhood education. At the same time besides the formal education schools should open their doors to non-formal education providing access for self-realization and value education.

I would like to emphasize extracurricular education in Latvia as part of life long learning that secures development of skills and talents, as well as promotes inclusion and participation. In this way schools can contribute as places of learning, self-realisation and participation, as well as places where new learning approaches are being successfully developed.

Latvia with its geographic and social situation has proved itself as a good example on how the education system can respond to the different and changing needs of the society and can serve as a good example to other countries and regions. At the same time, Latvia is ready to cooperate with and learn from other countries, facing the global challenges such as migration of students and workforce.

Mr. President,

In a situation where everyone is being confronted by new challenges I think we realize that in order to address the problems of sustainability we not only need economic solutions, but we must work together pursuing common values of the 21st century, which will underline and set trends for the sustainable and peaceful present, and therefore future.

Latvia highlights the role that the UN and especially UNESCO as UN specialised agency in education must play so to keep education high on the development agenda both in the developing as well as developed world. This is the way how to continue to promote balance, changing focus from economical issues to the development of human potential by being true owners of the platform of the enormous "smart power", taking full responsibility and mandate to strengthen the coordination and implementation of existing policies, programmes and mechanisms for Education for All and other internationally agreed goals.

I thank you very much for your kind attention!

