

Education for Innovation Societies in the 21st Century

St. Petersburg, July 16, 2006

1. Education is at the heart of human progress. Economic and social prosperity in the 21st century depend on the ability of nations to educate all members of their societies to be prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing world. An innovative society prepares its people to embrace change. We will promote the global innovation society by developing and integrating all three elements of the "knowledge triangle" (education, research and innovation), by investing fully in people, skills and research, and by supporting modernization of education systems to become more relevant to the needs of a global knowledge-based economy.

2. Education enriches cultures, creates mutual understanding globally, underpins democratic societies, builds respect for the rule of law. Education, the enhancement of skills, and the generation of new ideas are essential to the development of human capital and are key engines of economic growth, drivers of market productivity, and sources of cohesion for all nations.

3. Development of a global innovation society depends on the mobility and integration in all nations of people, knowledge and technologies. As science, technology, and economic progress become more global, international collaboration is indispensable to generate the talent and knowledge needed to find solutions to fundamental global challenges.

4. Knowledge-based economies require innovative education systems and reliable, transparent, and non-discriminatory legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks. These frameworks foster pro-competitive and predictable policies, offering strong protection of intellectual property rights, supporting research, development, and investment, and providing incentives that favor innovation.

5. To achieve this common vision for the Innovation Society, and noting the Moscow Declaration adopted by Ministers of Education on June 2, 2006, we will:

actively cooperate to achieve high quality basic education, literacy and gender equality in accord with the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the objectives of Education for All (EFA);

build modern, effective education systems to meet the challenges of and participate fully in the global innovation society;

encourage educational policies and investment that foster diverse, efficient, sustainable, and high quality higher education institutions;

promote lifelong learning based on the principles of the G-8 Cologne Summit Charter on Aims and Ambitions for Lifelong Learning, to enable individuals to adapt to change, maximize their skills and knowledge, and contribute to their communities and work places;

cooperate with the private sector to expand research networks to generate knowledge, encourage innovation, and move new technologies quickly from the laboratory to the marketplace;

increase exchanges in science and technology and other fields at all levels of education, and promote better understanding of foreign qualifications and educational outcomes;

promote high standards notably in mathematics, science, technology, and foreign languages at all levels of education, and support the engagement of highly qualified teachers in these critical areas;

promote social and economic integration of immigrants into host countries and societies with education being one of the effective means of doing so.

I. Developing a Global Innovation Society

6. We must generate new knowledge and nurture innovation to sustain long-term economic growth. We will collaborate on creating research networks among higher education institutions, research centers and business, and capitalize on the leading edge technology they produce. We will share best practices on knowledge-based cluster development and public-private partnerships to facilitate global knowledge dissemination and move technologies quickly from the laboratory to the marketplace.

7. We will promote investment in knowledge, research and development. We will also leverage public expenditures strategically to attract private funding in R&D, including in the education sector. In addition, we will encourage closer cooperation between universities and industry. These actions will generate innovation that improves the lives of our people, the prosperity of our nations and the well-being of the global community.

8. We will develop policies to promote the creation and dissemination of new technologies that encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. We will also make effective use of technological advances and research across businesses, education systems, and nations, while preserving the rights of innovators. We appreciate the contribution made by business and higher education leaders from our countries who met in Moscow on July 11, 2006 to discuss leveraging the resources, ideas and expertise of the public and private sectors to foster greater innovation and meet the education and workforce needs of the 21st century.

As a follow-up to the St. Petersburg Summit, we welcome Italy's offer to organize in cooperation with UNESCO a World Forum on "Education, Innovation and Research: New Partnership for Sustainable Development".

9. Education is vital to the public interest. Our governments will cooperate with the private sector in the development of innovative, high quality higher education and research and development systems. We will ensure a reliable, transparent and non-discriminatory environment that fosters a supportive, pro-competitive and predictable policy framework, offers strong protection of intellectual property rights, provides incentives to investment, and promotes regulatory policies that encourage innovation. Our governments will promote dialogue and synergies with business, higher education and labour to develop sound higher education and human resources policies.

10. We will promote innovation alliances and increase the exchange of ideas and expertise about university-based public-private partnerships in the G-8 countries. Sharing among relevant stakeholders best practices ideas and experience about education governance, funding, modern teaching methods, as well as about recognition and transparency of qualifications could also add value. We will collaborate internationally through innovation alliances to generate the critical mass of scientific and technological talent and knowledge needed to support innovative societies.

11. We will identify points of contact in our countries that can facilitate the exchange of ideas and expertise, while recognizing that private sector involvement in the development of these partnerships is one of the main keys to achieving an effective linkage between higher education and the needs of the global innovation society.

12. We will promote international academic mobility at all levels, significantly increasing the mobility of students, teachers and researchers. We will enhance existing programs of exchange and promote the development of linguistic and cross cultural skills. The Bologna Process aimed at creating the European higher education area is an example of one such program. We will also facilitate access to knowledge generated in other countries, taking account of the multiple factors that impede the movement of students and scholars.

13. We will share information about qualification systems in our countries to increase understanding of national academic practices and traditions. We will foster a global education environment that merges excellence and innovation with increased access, and we will encourage effective systems for the assessment and comparison of foreign qualifications in the public and private sectors.

II. Building Skills For Life and Work Through Quality Education

14. We will improve the quality of education to provide stronger opportunities for our young people and for future generations. We will promote more effective use of public resources in education at all levels and at all stages of life. We will build innovative societies that provide continuing improvement of labor force skills and creative opportunities for lifelong learning.

15. We will prepare our people to embrace change through lifelong learning. We will strengthen linkages between learning, enterprise training and the labour market, including through distance education and cross-border provision of education services. We reaffirm the importance of the G-8 Cologne Summit Charter on Aims and Ambitions for Lifelong Learning and its call for opportunities and incentives for lifelong learning to be created for all people.

16. We place a high policy priority on the importance of early childhood education to give young children a strong start and to strengthen social equity. We will also foster greater and more equitable participation in adult learning beyond secondary and tertiary education.

17. We welcome active participation of the business community and non-governmental organizations in the development of continuous education that provides the competences and skills needed by our societies and economies.

18. Our nations will focus on achieving quality, efficiency, effectiveness, and affordability in our education systems. We take note of the joint efforts by the UNESCO and OECD to develop voluntary guidelines for quality provisions in cross-border higher education. We will collaborate with the academic community and the private sector to ensure we use the best models of education governance, teaching and management.

19. We encourage our educational institutions and appropriate organisations to share information and promote understanding of our respective countries' qualifications systems, teaching methods, education management and financing.

20. We reaffirm our commitment to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education more effectively in accordance with the G-8 Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society and the Tunis Commitment of the World Summit on Information Society. ICTs are crucial to meeting the educational needs of a technology-intensive economy. Accessible educational resources are important tools for creating a more equitable and more efficient global information environment.

21. We will strive for high standards in particular in mathematics, science, and technology to provide strong foundational elements for the global innovation society. All primary and secondary school curricula should stimulate more intensive learning in these subject areas, as well as problem-solving skills and critical thinking. We also encourage the efforts of developing countries to improve their science, technology and mathematics education at primary and secondary levels.

22. We welcome initiatives to support the learning and mastery of foreign languages at all educational levels. The ability to communicate and to learn foreign languages is also essential in today's global environment. It involves social and international skills, intercultural knowledge and competences and the understanding and respect of the values and the history underlying cultures and societies.

23. We will encourage the development of education policies aimed at fostering a system of accessible, diverse, sustainable, and high-quality higher education institutions, both university and non university including research institutions, community colleges, technical schools, public and private sector vocational training institutes, with the ability to respond to new demands. Universities and other tertiary institutions have a key role in innovative societies to educate our public. They must be able to adjust rapidly to the changing demands of society and the labor market through effective and transparent governance in the framework of education policies.

24. We will work within our national systems to make teaching an attractive career choice, to develop teachers' knowledge and skills, and to retain effective teachers in schools. The teacher lies at the heart of education. Fundamental to improving student learning and achievement is the presence of highly qualified teachers in every classroom. Teachers must have good knowledge of content and instructional methods to be effective educators and mentors. Effective teachers instruct their students in critical content knowledge, and help develop the desire and ability to excel and to pursue life-long learning.

25. We encourage our relevant education authorities, the private sector and other stakeholders to share information and best practices on a wide range of issues related to modernization of education systems. Modernization of our education systems must play an important role in achieving our common strategic goals. In the new millennium, the management of knowledge strategies is as fundamental as the management of more traditional educational resources - personnel, finance and facilities. Thus, education systems should focus increasingly on developing intellectual capacity, not only in terms of the mastery of content but in processing, adapting, applying existing information, and, more importantly, in creating new knowledge. Education must also find ways to combine excellence with the widest access possible.

III. Education for All and Development

26. We will work to provide affordable, quality education and professional training accessible for all, regardless of social and economic background, age, sex, religion, ethnicity or disability. Education is a vital investment in the sustainable development of a country and its human potential. Basic education, including literacy, numeracy and life-skills training is its foundation. In addition to access, the content of student-learning and the quality of their learning outcomes are equally important.

27. We will support the educational elements that develop critical thinking, and the open exchange of knowledge, which build both democratic societies and well-functioning economies with opportunities for all. Creation of an educated population and workforce is vitally important. To achieve this strategic objective, the world community embraced the education-related MDGs which prioritized the EFA goals of universal primary completion and gender equality at all levels of education. We regret that interim targets related to eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education have not been achieved. Greater concerted action by all will be needed to fulfill these key goals by 2015. We reaffirm our commitments in this regard.

28. We welcome the resolve of the 2005 World Summit to promote the Dakar Framework for Action (Education for All) adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000 as an integral part of renewed international development efforts. We reaffirm our commitment to the EFA agenda and welcome UNESCO's efforts to finalize a Global Action Plan to achieve the EFA goals and provide a framework for coordinated and complementary action by multilateral aid agencies in support of country-level implementation. Particular attention needs to be given to the poorest countries, including in Africa, where more than forty million children, 60 % of whom are girls, are currently excluded from the school system. We call upon UNESCO and the additional convening agencies of the Dakar Framework (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank) to support harmonization and alignment with national priorities, plans and targets and to utilize each organization's unique capacities to eliminate duplication of effort and increase efficiency.

29. We also support an effective implementation of the EFA Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) and reiterate our Gleneagles commitment to help FTI-endorsed countries to develop sustainable capacity and identify the resources necessary to pursue their sustainable educational strategies. We look forward to a progress report on the FTI by the World Bank at the Annual Meetings. We reiterate our commitment to support Africa in its achievement of the Education for all (EFA) agenda. This builds on the partnership that the G8 has developed with Africa, as set out in the Africa Action Plan (Kananaskis) and subsequently in the Gleneagles Declaration. In this context we confirm our commitment to work with all FTI - endorsed countries including newly endorsed ones to meet these goals.

30. We call upon developing countries to take the lead to create sound national education sector strategies, policies, and plans, to integrate them fully into national development plans, and to work with all relevant stakeholders to provide education opportunities for all. Success in EFA can only be possible if there is a strong vision and firm commitment by developing countries themselves with national ownership and self-help based on clearly formulated Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers or their equivalent and well-constructed long-term plans for the education sector as a whole. Effective governance, sound policy and institutional environment, a focus on quality, and the recognition of the value of informal and non-formal education are at the heart of healthy education systems.

31. We will work with all relevant stakeholders to promote cooperation and the sharing of good practices to achieve EFA goals. New forms of cooperation between and among developing and developed countries, including through trilateral cooperation, will play an important role in reaching EFA targets. We will encourage this, especially to improve learning outcomes and the quality of educational management, materials and teaching.

32. We are committed to attaining EFA goals and to eliminating obstacles in other sectors that narrow education opportunities. Assistance in the education sector alone will not solve the problem. We will work to support cross-sectoral approaches combining investments in education and other key areas such as poverty reduction, health and sanitation, water nutrition and infrastructure to achieve EFA goals, raising HIV/AIDS awareness in education systems.

IV. Advancing Social Cohesion and Immigrant

Integration through Education

33. We will promote civic participation, as well as equality of opportunity and cross-cultural understanding to help people to maximize their individual potential and overcome barriers to their participation in society. Inclusive, respectful and equitable societies provide the most conducive conditions for acquiring skills and knowledge, promoting innovations, and driving economic and social success. We view cultural diversity and knowledge of foreign languages, openness to new talent and the mobility of the labor force as essential attributes of innovative and inclusive societies.

34. We will facilitate social, cultural and professional integration in our societies by promoting support for life-long learning, and encouraging the language competencies necessary to secure employment commensurate with levels of skill and experience. We also call for joint research and exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practices among the G-8 countries and other stakeholders in this important area.

35. We will aim to maximize the human and social capital of all people through policies that recognize that diversity in the educational sector and in the workplace, advance innovation and stimulate creativity. Successful social cohesion policies, including education for democratic citizenship, will help to combat intolerance and discrimination. Our education systems should facilitate achievement of these fundamental goals, while taking into consideration that each country employs a range of different policies to promote acceptance and integration in its economy and society.

Source: <http://en.g8russia.ru/docs/12.html>