RESOLUTION ON THE DEBT CRISIS, STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND EDUCATION

The Education International First World Congress meeting in Harare (Zimbabwe) from 19 to 23 July 1995:

1. Notes that many countries, especially in the Third World and also to some extent in Eastern and Central Europe, are caught in a debt trap;
2. Notes that programmes for "economic reconstruction" and "structural adjustment", imposed by the international financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, often hit the public sector hard and that attacks on the public sector have led to extensive cuts in educational spending;
3 Notes that public spending cuts in many countries under-going structural adjustment have meant that education budgets have been squeezed in areas which affect quality of education; education of teachers, maintenance of buildings, textbooks, learning materials;
4 Notes that figures over the last five years show that teachers' salaries in many developing countries have declined, and were sometimes not even paid regularly, with delays up to several months reported;
5. Notes that international financial institutions have, as a part of adjustment programmes, supported a development within the educational sector in favour of market oriented reforms, user-fees and privatisation;
6. Notes that many measures concerning teachers which relate to adjustment programmes have been implemented without any kind of negotiation or consultation with the organisations representing teachers and the educational employees.

A. The Congress believes:

7. That economic and social development requires commitment to education and that only education can create the constructive prerequisites for solving the great problems confronting humanity;
8. That education has to be seen as an investment, rather than as an expenditure, as it involves sacrificing an immediate return so as to reap a far greater benefit in the future; and if investment in human resources through education spending is to achieve the greatest return, it has to be made on a long term basis and not be subject to short term changes in value;
9. That government spending on education should be targeted and implemented as effectively as possible, but the criteria by which education should be assessed should reflect educational objectives and their contribution to economic, social and political development, both individual and collective, and not just the short term costs;
10. That the result of “rolling back the state” is a widening of economic and social disparities, not only between rich and poor including minorities and immigrants, but also in respect of the inequality of opportunities between boys and girls since, in many cultures, where parents have to make a choice as to which children receive an education, it tends to be the girls who are disadvantaged;
11. That privatisation of education increases inequities and thereby serves to widen, rather than diminish, division in society and makes education into a commodity which is bought and sold and thus regulated by “market forces” rather than by demands expressed by society in general.
B. Role of Education International

EI should:
12. Demand that all nations mobilise to guarantee public education for all;
13. Support a concerted international action for a substantial reduction of the debt faced by developing countries and Central and Eastern Europe, in order to quickly bring about its cancellation under conditions ensuring sustainable development and democratic processes;
14. Support the proposition that in order to guarantee that debt relief given to countries will benefit education such relief should include agreements to protect the social sector in general and education in particular;
15. Encourage trade unions in the concerned countries to ensure that their governments carry out debt relief agreements in which the social sector is protected;
16. Demand that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund change their present policies in taking carefully into account the views of the International Labour Organization (ILO), ICFTU and EI at the international level and the views of the social partners at the national level;
17. Encourage unions in industrialised countries to make representations to their governments in this regard so that they may exercise their powers within the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund;
18. Demand that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund recognise the importance of consultations with teachers and their organisations;
19. Urge that the industrialised countries fulfill their own commitments to allocate 0.7% of their Gross National Product to development cooperation and assistance to the developing countries;
20. Inform and influence international organisations and governments about this situation and about the proposed solutions.