RESOLUTION ON GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND AND ENHANCE PUBLIC EDUCATION

....education...one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war.
Jacques Delors 1996


Believes that:
1. Children's rights are a collective responsibility and public education sits at the heart of democratic public policy.
2. Many Governments throughout the world have retreated from the universal provision of free public education in spite of being signatories to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and/or the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
3. Education is a right, which should be guaranteed by the State within the framework of a public service and not be subjected to the laws of the market.
4. Public education contributes to the reduction of inequality, supports social cohesion and national progress.
5. A neo-liberal economic policy that dictates privatisation or semi-privatisation of education and reduces the State's financial investments in public education marginalises children and adults living in poverty and reduces the quality of public education.
6. Education is the responsibility of the State and it is the State's duty to define the goals and objectives of education systems and to fully fund them.
7. The priority campaign for Educational International and its member organisations is the defence and enhancement of public education.

Recalls that:
8. In September 1990, a great promise was made to the children of the 1990s by 71 Presidents and Prime Ministers who came together for the First World Summit for Children. They committed their countries to make available the resources to end infant mortality and malnutrition as well as to provide protection for the normal physical and mental development of all the world's children.
9. Again in 1990, Governments came together at the World Conference, Education For All, in Jomtien, Thailand, organised by the World Bank, the UNDP, the UNESCO and the UNICEF. They acknowledged the central role of education and adopted a charter of commitments designed to turn the aspirations of the title into a global reality.

Notes that:
10. As the decade draws to a close, UNICEF claims that “the new ethic for children is still elusive”. Such an ethic demands that children be the first to benefit from humanity's successes and the last to suffer from its failures. Furthermore, it carries with it the recognition that the way a society protects and cares for its children is a measure of its civilisation, the best test of its humanity and of its commitment to the future.
11. Children have been the first to pay the costs of structural adjustment policies in developing countries and of budgetary restrictions or privatisation in industrialised countries.
12. UNESCO’s International Commission on Education for the 21st Century calls for all Governments to invest a minimum of 6 per cent of GNP on education.
13. The Director General of UNESCO, at the 1997 General Session, called for developing countries to set aside 4 per cent of military expenditure for education and housing.

14. In the 21st century, knowledge will emerge as the essential development strategy of all societies. In order for humanity to survive, human development - especially education - must be a focal point for nation-building policies and a central requirement is that the individual obtain the training necessary for one's entire life.

Recognises that:
15. Only public education provides all children with a sound foundation for life-long learning by granting both sexes equal access to early childhood services and schools, irrespective of the economic, social and cultural background of their parents, and thus contributes to equal opportunity for all.

16. Educating all children in public schools, without segregation, is a positive social factor which contributes to the diversity of the learning environment, promotes respect for and understanding of others, and contributes to the reduction of social, racial and cultural prejudices among young people. In countries where there is an immigrant population, it is particularly important to encourage intercultural education. The immigrants' culture and mother tongue should be respected, while the host culture and language are promoted.

17. Diversity in the political, social and cultural backgrounds of teachers in public schools guarantees respect for freedom of thought, thereby encouraging young people to be open minded and enabling them to develop democratic and tolerant forms of behaviour in the society in which they live.

Reaffirms that:
18. Public education is still a key instrument of social liberation, peace, progress and justice;

19. Every child has to be able to learn and that student achievements must be based on the rights and merits of each person and not on the financial capacity of families;

20. Improvements in quality education and standards are central to the aspirations of the teaching profession and, therefore, on the basis of the new challenges with which education systems and the teaching profession are faced today, EI and its member organisations will continue to advance proposals for the quality and efficiency of education systems.

21. Rapid technological innovation requires teachers to engage in education reforms to maximise effective use of information technology in learning environments;

22. The profession is willing to be a partner in a framework of consultations and negotiations in a process of education reform which ensures that public education is effective and efficient but rejects unfounded criticism and market driven reforms sought by the corporate sector, politicians or others with a vested interest in privatisation;

23. EI and its member organisations will oppose all forms of privatisation including vouchers;

24. EI and its member organisations are willing to work with parents, students, the business world, organised labour and media who have genuine commitment or valid criticisms about the capacity of education programs to provide students with every opportunity to face the uncertainty of the future.

Opposes:
25. Those sections of the corporate sector that advocate the privatisation of public services, including public education, in order to generate profit for themselves.

26. The leadership of those nations who will not take responsibility for quality public education for all children. As a result, more and more non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are being entrusted in developing countries with the responsibility of setting up networks of primary schools, recruiting teachers and paying them in conditions that are much less favourable than those granted their colleagues in the public service.

27. The establishment of virtual schools and universities, being developed with the new information
technology, which are private, unregulated institutions, orientated towards specific training courses related to the interests of the investors and without any real quality controls.

28. Policies of international financial institutions that do not recognise that the low levels of national budgets in many developing countries, even where they spend 6% of their GNP on education, do not allow the deployment of sufficient financial resources, nor the ability to repay loans, even at reduced rates of interest.

29. Narrow national and international comparative assessment mechanisms that have the potential to be used as just another tool to undermine public education rather than contributing to the growth of quality systems. Conducting assessment in order to produce a ranking of schools and other education settings rather than to support student learning is an unacceptable use of scarce educational resources. Furthermore, the failure to identify and take into account multiple variables such as socio-economic status, language, curriculum experience or other differences makes such studies biased and irrelevant to the quality of teaching and learning.

Endorses:

30. An international campaign to defend and enhance free universal public education at all levels.

31. A call for governments to:
   - Formulate policies to improve the working conditions of teachers so as to attract the best talent to the teaching profession in order to extend quality education for children.
   - Establish in service training systems to enable teachers to continue to be equipped with the most advanced educational skills in order to enhance their professional quality.
   - Develop systems to enable children who have dropped out of school, to return to school to resume their education at any time.
   - Improve school facilities to ensure the broadest range of educational activities.

32. The development of quality indicators or benchmarks to enable member organisations to monitor investment levels, human resource policies including initial professional training, employment, remuneration of personnel, in-service education, the democratic participation in and management of educational institutions, along with educational guarantees for students.

33. The development by the Executive Board of an integrated international strategy that:
   - encourages member organisations to carry out activities to promote a quality public education;
   - builds alliances, at the international and regional level, with trade union organisations, parent and student organisations, the media and non-governmental organisations with a view to setting up partnerships that promote quality public education;
   - promotes education reforms which improve the quality of education and reinforce the credibility of public education systems;
   - develops international solidarity in opposition to all forms of privatisation, including vouchers;
   - influences the development of education policy at the national and international levels;
   - obtains a commitment from all governments to a minimum investment of 6% of GNP on education, as recommended in the Delors report; and
   - establishes an international network of recognised celebrities who support public education.

34. Work by the secretariat to:
   - reinforce the credibility of the public education system, in such a way that the trade union movement is the primary actor in defending the improvement of the quality of teaching in close dialogue and partnership with the education community and other social agencies;
   - promote EI and its member organisations’ participation in political and economic fora at the international and national levels in order to bring as much influence as possible to bear on education policies;
   - encourage NGOs engaged in the provision of education and training, to adopt policies and negotiate agreements with governments, which provide for the transition of such educational provision into public governance;
   - campaign for governments to fulfil their responsibility to ensure that public services replace
those NGOs currently operating in the place of States. Education is a right which no charitable act can replace;

- advocate for a debt reduction strategy to be implemented by the international financial institutions in the poorest nations and urge these bodies to end destructive adjustment policies, in order to arrest the decline of public services such as education;
- hold discussions with intergovernmental organisations like UNESCO and the ILO to inform them of the reasons behind our international campaign to promote quality public education, and, where we have common interests, to develop partnerships in pursuit of free universal public education at all levels; and work with the OECD and World Bank in order to assert the interests of young people and education personnel;
- prepare a discussion paper on options for funding public education, new and emerging governance structures and quality education reforms, including the implementation of life-long learning.

Rich people know that they can pass on money to their children, they can pass on land, they can pass on titles, but there is one great gift that workers can give to their children and that is good education. That is the basis for the hope that the children will live better lives, be able to move to a job, to a position within their countries and within their societies that is different and better than the one they enjoy.