Greetings to all my good friends in Porto Alegre for Education International.

I wish I could be with you, President Mary Futrell, General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen, members of the board of Education International and all the delegates. I thank you really for this opportunity. I must say that I have fond memories of meeting your board during my first days as ILO Director General.

We have worked closely through the years. Also as a Chilean, I will never ever forget your commitment on solidarity with our struggle to regain democracy in the dark days of dictatorship in Chile.

We all know that education is a road to self-respect and opportunity. It lights up paths leading out of poverty and raises awareness of our very dignity as human beings. Today I wish to salute your profession and pay tribute to your work as trade union organisations in the field of education.

Your meeting in the city that launched the World Social Forum and proclaimed to humanity that another world is possible is, of course, highly symbolic. We, the ILO, also believe another world is possible but I would add not only possible but indispensable.

A world under the grip of the power of arms, terror and inequitable markets is not sustainable. It is a world evolving into an ethical vacuum.

That is why we have worked together to propose the decent work agenda as the key to poverty eradication. That is why we also took the initiatives to convene a world commission of the social dimension of the globalisation whose report challenges the international community to build a fair globalization that creates opportunities for all; but it cannot happen without you.

Your members work in every community and you give girls and boys and young women and men the tools to prepare their future, and increasingly you work with adults and older people seeking employment or new skills as economy is restructured.

The theme of your Congress “Education for Global Progress” addresses truly strategic questions: the public responsibility of our states and the role of markets, the right to learn and the professional responsibility of educators and the worldwide need for quality teachers to provide quality education.

On each of these issues I cannot stress enough the importance of equity. The issue is at the heart of a fair globalization.

The ILOs work on standards reasserts the rights of workers to organize and to bargain collectively for decent work. I strongly support EI’s engagement with the ILO in attacking one of the greatest of all inequities: the scourge of child labor.

We will continue to work with you to defend human and trade union rights and the threat as we have done most recently in Ethiopia and Colombia. We’ll beginning to work with you on an important New Action Program – on the conditions required to ensure that we have enough teachers to achieve education for all.

We’ll draw on our work with the UNESCO, which has highlighted evidence of a decline in teachers working conditions and status. A decline that simply must be reversed; but it is a sad symbol of our times. People often forget that in many countries teachers are among the working poor and have to take other jobs to survive, taking them away from the classrooms where they are most needed. We also have important work to do together on vocational education and migration- two key items on the agenda on this year’s International Labor Conference.
So we must deepen our partnership. I hale the spirit of your Congress on Education for Global Progress.

Rest assured that you can count on me and the ILO.

Thank you and best wishes for a successful Congress. The future needs you. You can educate a new generation of girls and boys for whom social justice and equality is a right and not a privilege. You can mobilise public opinion around the world to help ensure their leaders.

Make quality education a key public service goal.

You can help build a fair globalisation that creates opportunities for all because, after all and beyond the official curricula, it is the heart and soul that you put into teaching that alternately makes a difference: that infectious motivation, that sets young enquiring minds of blaze - that's what you are all about. Yours is the most beautiful profession of the world.

Thank you so much.