Introduction to the EI Progress Report
Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary, Education International

Let me come right to the point. These have not been the best of times for international cooperation. It has been 36 months since we last met in Jomtien. And less than two months after we all had returned home safely, the Twin Towers collapsed under a terrorist attack that shook the world.

We have worked in the shadow of that tragedy and those that followed in Bali, Madrid and elsewhere. Our governments seem to have put on hold their commitments to fight poverty, to achieve education for all, to respect universal human rights standards, to democratic development itself. All these commitments have been made subservient to other goals, and to one goal in particular: the war on terrorism. We have worked in an international political environment dominated by one superpower, run by an administration that has put its own interest at the centre of all of its policies. The law in international relations has been abandoned. International institutions have been dismissed or ignored. At stake is multilateralism as a way to resolve our international problems; the role of the United Nations and its specialised agencies. Many of our friends and colleagues from NEA, AFT and AAUP will attend the Democratic Convention in Boston next week to prepare for the upcoming Presidential elections. I know that I speak for everyone in this room when I say that we expect you to win back your country. Re-defeat Bush! If you don’t mind me saying…. four years have been enough. For you and for all of us.

Europe too has become self centred and pre-occupied with its own regional problems: the enlargement with ten countries joining in May 2004, serious disagreements about foreign policy, trade issues and and monetary principles. The North-South dialogue seems to be fading if not disappearing from the agenda. I make a strong plea to all of our European member organizations to exert maximum political pressure on their governments to prevent the European Union from becoming an inward looking, even chauvinistic assembly of nations, to ensure that they take up their responsibility in the international community. When the new leader of the European Commission a few days ago proudly announced that the European Union is now the largest trade block in the world. Is that all there is to the European dream?, I was not sure whether to cheer or to jeer! How about Europe’s obligations toward the rest of the world? How about real commitment to the Millennium Development Goals?.

The countries of North America, Europe, East Asia and other industrial nations do possess keys to the solution of most of the problems afflicting the planet. It is not their ability that is lacking, it is their political will.

Let us look at the other regions of the world. In Africa the UNDP has released new figures showing a drop in average life expectancy from 47 to 37 years! Grinding poverty, the ravages of HIV/AIDS, and civil conflicts are all taking an awful human toll. As we speak, the latest tragedy, the conflict in Darfur in Sudan has led to some 30,000 people killed, 1.2 million internally displaced and at least 130,000 living as refugees on the Chad border.

In Asia and the Pacific, despite rapid growth figures many millions live in dire poverty. From Nepal to Bangladesh people have been made homeless by the exceptional violence of this year’s monsoon. The HIV/AIDS epidemic threatens to explode across the entire region. Grave tensions threaten world peace and security on the Korean peninsula in the East and in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the West.

Latin America, remains a region of vast contrast between the wealth of elites and the poverty of millions of people eking out an existence in rural areas and in sprawling urban favelas. This region has been the favourite for neo-liberal experiments, some with devastating consequences, as we saw in Argentina. The election of Lula gives hope, marking commitment to a new approach, refusing to accept poverty, determined to achieve changes for the benefit of all, not just a few.

If we look at the context for our work in each of the regions, we see a common thread:
We continued to face an international economic order that is hostile to governments spending money on basic social services, including education. Many governments feel they can reduce their role in education and make more room for the market. We say that education is a human right, a right for individuals as well as a collective right providing a key to the development of communities. We say that education is an instrument for both social and economic development, and that it is therefore a core responsibility of government. That means that it must be financed out of public funds. The level of funding must ensure full access for all to education of the highest quality. Quality public education is not a miracle solution for all the problems of our economies and our societies. But it remains a key to social and economic development and to survival and success for our young people in an uncertain world.

As of 2002 we have organized our work around five Principal Aims: [(1) Quality education for all; (2) Improving the welfare and status of teachers and education personnel; (3) Ending discrimination in education; (4) Promoting democracy, sustainable development and solidarity; and (5) Strengthening EI and membership participation.] You will find detailed information on our action and activities in the Annual Reports that we have produced since the last Congress, the first one – for 2001 – having been sent to you in 2002. These Annual Reports replace the former triennial progress reports and should be seen as the official record of EI activities.

Principal Aim 1 Quality education for all

EFA

Mary reminded us yesterday that some governments attach more importance to school enrolment figures than to education quality, that the recruitment of unqualified teachers is taking root in a number of countries. Let me repeat our position: The right to education is the right to a qualified teacher. We only accept the hiring of unqualified teachers as a temporary measure to overcome teachers’ shortages, provided that they are working under the guidance of a qualified teacher and enrolled in teacher training programs. Not as a cheap alternative!

For some time there was a strong feeling among our affiliates that the World Bank was the evil genius behind the voluntary teacher concept. Last December in a meeting with the President of the World Bank we were able to remove some misunderstandings. Four important points: According to Mr. Wolfensohn, the Bank supports quality public education provided by qualified teachers; (2) it does not advocate school fees; (3) it does not favor the reallocation of resources from higher to basic schooling, and (4) that it does not promote the hiring of voluntary, unqualified teachers. In other words, if your government claims that it is introducing such measures on the recommendation of the World Bank, either the government is not telling you the truth, or the World Bank representative is not following the Bank's policy. For both cases we have set up with the WB an early warning system, as mentioned by its Vice President yesterday, an informal consultation mechanism through which those problems can be dealt with. The first example of this system occurred recently in the case of Zambia.

Basic Education for everybody by 2015. Are we going to achieve this Millennium Target? Together with Oxfam International and other partner organisations, we have succeeded in mobilizing hundreds of thousands of people, mostly teachers and students. Let me thank all of you who have been involved in our annual action weeks. More than 1.5 million students and teachers in 150 countries in the Biggest Lesson everlast year. In this year’s action week we organized the World’s Biggest Lobby. A million children and their teachers in 110 countries approached their parliaments, wrote letters to their presidents, and invited parliamentarians to their schools to remind them of their commitment. Colleagues, today, thanks to the impact of your mobilization on public opinion, no government can escape its responsibility to work for achievement of the EFA targets set in Dakar 2000.

But, as you have heard, we are falling short. The amount needed to ensure basic education for every child, and to put a stop to child labor, is between 16 and 25 billion dollars per year in addition to current education expenditure. Funds committed by donor countries to Education For All are not coming forward. The pledge made by the G8 group on debt reduction is far from being realized. And whatever happened to the promise of the OECD countries to spent 0.7% of their GNP on development cooperation? We must insist that this promise this promise be kept. How can we think of winning the war on terrorism without making available the resources needed for the fight to end illiteracy and poverty?

Nations will not fulfill their commitments without political pressure from groups such as education unions. In several donor countries the Global Campaign has been quite successful. Allocations to basic education programs have increased. The European Parliament adopted a resolution mandating the European Commission to triple the amount to be allocated by the EU Development Corporation program to education. Let it be clear that we talk about funds to be made available by governments to governments to ensure the development of sustainable
public school systems. While we accept private and informal schooling as a temporary provision in areas where public schooling is unavailable, we would find it difficult to accept the unavailability of public schooling because of the existence of private and informal schooling. We have asked our friends in the donor community, all of whom are strongly committed to education for all, not to place their bets on the funding of private schools or separate school systems, but to help communities organize political pressure for quality public education.

**GATS**

[The achievement of EI’s first principal aim – quality education for all – requires that education remain a public service.] This is not an ideological choice, but a very practical aim. There is no other way to realize the right to education for everyone. At our Congress in 2001 we discussed the General Agreement on Trade in Services – GATS - established by the WTO. We concluded that the application of GATS to the education sector could seriously undermine public school systems. You instructed us to advocate for a clause in the Agreement that would exclude basic social services. Although I believe that we have been more or less successful in discouraging governments from opening their education markets, we have not persuaded WTO officials of our points of view. A few governments are actively promoting the trade agenda. We have protested against New Zealand’s request that 24 countries open their education services, and against efforts of the US Government to force open the education market of China.

[A few months ago in a meeting with WTO we were told not to worry about this as this would not affect (our members in) education in the USA. This was simply to allow the giant American publisher Berlitz to start selling its dictionaries in the Peoples Republic in China and to become active in language education. And – let us be honest – is there anybody on this planet better qualified to teach the Chinese English than Berlitz? Please... Give me a break...]

We have paid particular attention to higher education and vocational training. These are the sectors most at risk.

Last year, in Norway, I took part in a forum on post-secondary education and GATS. One of the participants represented a corporation that trades in universities. It had just acquired a few higher education institutes in Mexico and was confident that they could soon be turned into profitable enterprises - by increasing school fees and by closing all those faculties that do not yield direct profits. Because *that* will be the standard. And, colleagues, if that had been the standard in the 1930s and 40s, one famous and active member of the American Federation of Teachers, who was teaching at the university of Princeton, would have been without a job. His name was Albert Einstein.

When GATS was signed, many developing countries believed that opening up the higher education sector would attract foreign providers to assist in building sustainable education for the future. This has not happened. Senegal and Jamaica are two well-documented examples of the failure of GATS. Our member organizations found that the foreign providers were simply undercutting the local universities and colleges.

That is precisely the problem with the GATS approach. It takes no account of equity concerns – between rich and poor countries, or within countries. You only have to look at the negotiating procedures of the WTO to see that they have nothing to do with equity or with democracy. Those procedures may be great for trade lawyers and trade specialists. But they have little to do with the objectives of education for the development of our communities and the personal development of their citizens.

A recent and particularly worrying feature, arising from the WTO Ministerial Meeting last year in Cancun, Mexico, is the risk that a sector like higher education could be ‘traded off’ to break a deadlock in negotiations in the agricultural or manufacturing sectors. Governments becoming impatient at the slow progress in the GATS talks may want to strike separate bi-lateral deals which will be even harder to monitor than the secretive GATS process. The point that I want to make is that the future of post secondary and higher education must be determined by democratically elected governments, by the public authorities, in consultation with their academic communities and their organizations. Not by the business community and not by narrow interest groups.

Following the resolution we adopted in Jomtien, we have been involved in the joint work of UNESCO and OECD to develop guidelines on “Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education”. The draft guidelines that we have proposed are in your documents.

**OECD**

Quality standards and education content are increasingly subject of international debate. The OECD Programme on International Student Assessment (PISA) has become one of the most...
important guides for education policy makers in the industrial economies. These studies are politically explosive material. Our affiliates have become increasingly active in OECD policy and research projects – as well as reviews of national education policies. OECD now has a separate Directorate for education. We are involved in other projects of major importance such as the one on teacher shortage and one on tertiary education. Through our role in the Trade Union Advisory Committee – TUAC- we have made significant input into OECD Ministerial meetings, not only the Education Ministers who met recently in Ireland, and but also the Labor and Science and Technology Ministers. Through TUAC we have consistently put the case for education to Finance Ministries and to the G8 summits.

Our advocacy work has won us access. But, if we really want to influence policies, we must have solid research. Linking what EI does at the OECD and what our affiliates do in the national capitals also means linking our research capacities, and setting up a good system for sharing data and information. That program item is more important than ever, and we will it give renewed priority, inviting your active participation.

**Principal Aim 2 Improving the welfare and status of teachers and education personnel**

Did you know that in Sao Paulo a bus driver or a cook earns considerably more than a primary school teacher? In the past three decades teachers’ earnings have declined relative to per capita GDP and in comparison with other salaries. The conditions of service have not improved either. High pupil/teacher ratios, unsafe school buildings, a lack of teaching materials, and sometimes not receiving your salary, these are all too familiar features of a teaching job in most of the developing countries. In the industrial economies burn out rates are sky-rocketing as a result of increasing workloads, unnecessary bureaucracies, and let us not forget, school violence. In the past three years, teachers have been victims of too many violent incidents at schools. We have organized workshops on this issue and raised it with UNESCO and ILO. While we should carefully examine the causes of violence we must insist that public authorities take all the measures required to ensure the safety of students and teachers. It is startling to see the easy access minors have to guns even in countries with strict gun laws.

There are about 60 million teachers in the world, and two-thirds of them are employed in developing countries. The increasing demand for teachers in the developing world, the aging teacher population and the growing flight from the profession in many industrial countries is expected to create staggering shortages of between 15 and 35 million teachers worldwide in the next decade. It is not realistic to believe that the world will be able to recruit that many qualified teachers in such a short period of time. Clearly, teacher education must be given a more prominent place in the EFA program. Recruitment and retention policies to be developed by our governments, one of the sub-themes of this Congress, will be crucial to meeting quality education standards. Again, we insist that all who teach be qualified or work under supervision of qualified teachers while following teacher training programs. At the same time, let us stop assigning teachers with duties that have nothing to do with teaching. That means hiring more teacher assistants.

Last month the ILO adopted a report submitted by the ILO/UNESCO Committee that monitors the application of the 1996 Recommendation on the Status of Teachers and the 1997 Recommendation on Higher Education personnel. The experts found the social dialogue in education to remain “extremely fragile”. According to the Committee this is (and I quote) “due to the apparent reluctance of public authorities to engage in meaningful consultations with teachers’ organizations in a context of limited budgetary resources”.

World Teachers Day, launched by UNESCO in 1993 at the creation of EI, is steadily growing in importance, becoming the day in the year when teachers are recognized. Unfortunately so far it has not made public authorities any friendlier. Teachers deserve recognition every day of the year.

In too many places the rights to organize and to bargain collectively continue to be denied to the teaching profession. We have made every possible effort to support our member organizations in these countries, through missions, through protests to national authorities and by lodging complaints with the ILO. In the last few months, in Macedonia and Bosnia, in Burundi, Suriname, Russia and Brasil, EI has responded to the requests of member unions for support. I cannot stress too much the importance of solidarity in these cases through the world-wide response to our Urgent Action Appeals. Your action does make a difference.

In 2003, ICFTU reports that 129 trade union activists were killed. Colombia, as you all know, continues to be one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a union activist. Public service union leaders, including teachers, are among those paying the highest price of all. Nepal is another example where teachers, caught between government and rebel forces, are
abducted and killed with impunity, or used as human shields. Thousands of schools remained closed. In the Philippines a respected professor and union leader was ambushed and killed this year. In Haiti and Cambodia the leaders of EI affiliates have received death threats, and teachers in the Ukraine have been threatened with violence. In India, the Chairperson of the Global Campaign for Education, our friend Kailash Satyarthi, who was with us in Jomtien, was brutally beaten while trying to rescue child labourers.

Last month, the Attorney General of Ankara in Turkey sought a court order tooblige our member Egitim Sen to change its constitution and delete references to teaching children in their mother tongues, failing which the union would be banned. In Ethiopia, the government tried for years to break the teachers’ union. The point that EI makes consistently in all these cases is that the government must engage in serious and meaningful dialogue with the education union in order to address such issues in the interests of all children and young people. Nothing can justify the misuse of legal processes, or attempts at intimidation, or worse, torture and murder, in place of dialogue. EI will always defend the right of its members to freedom of expression, and the importance for each national society of establishing constructive dialogue with the organized teaching profession.

In Jomtien, we had called again for the release of Dr. Taye Woldesmiate President of the Ethiopian Teachers’ Association. After 6 long years in jail Taye was released. The mobilization of colleagues around the world – was crucial in winning your release. The EI missions to Ethiopia, and the findings of the ILO Freedom of Association Committee, all helped. The point, quite simply is this: EI will not give up! The ETA continues its legal struggle, but the government knows that the spotlight of international opinion is focused on its every move.

Details of the many other EI interventions in defense of human and trade union rights are provided in the Three Annual Reports.

**Principal Aim 3 Ending discrimination in education**

In your Congress papers are three triennial reports – on the situations of women, of gay and lesbian teachers and educational personnel, and of indigenous peoples. Those reports show both the work that is being done by dedicated people in our member organisations, and the distance that still has to be travelled to achieve our aim of ending discrimination in education.

There is an increasing participation of **women** in most education systems, especially as teachers. But they remain under-represented in management positions. The positive message from within our ranks is the growing influence of women’s networks in the regions and the mainstreaming of gender equity issues in EI programs, notably in leadership training and national capacity-building projects.

Colleagues, at this Congress we take an important initiative, following our debate at the Jomtien Congress and the resolution we adopted there. Together with the Public Service International, we have established the **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Forum**, and the first meeting has been held here in Porto Alegre. I invite you to read this triennial report, and in particular some of the accounts in it of discrimination suffered by colleagues or students for no other reason than their sexual orientation. I know these are sensitive issues for colleagues in many countries, raising not only cultural taboos but intimate questions of personal identity. EI and PSI are calling practical steps to abolish all forms of discrimination, whether at the workplace, at school or in the wider community. Convening of the Forum marks our determination to do just that. Its recommendations will be distributed to you.

As the report on **Indigenous peoples** points out we are talking about a large number of people – some 300 million in all regions of the world. Indigenous children are among those most likely to be deprived of education, to be exploited through child labour. Delegates may even be surprised to discover the very large number of countries with indigenous minorities. The report explains that very clearly, and makes recommendations for concrete action that can be taken by EI and affiliated unions.

Let me say a word more generally about the fight against discrimination in all its forms. In today’s world we see how discrimination on ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic or religious grounds is at the heart of deep-seated conflicts dividing people. In country after country, we see that these conflicts have major political consequences.

The problem, as we have seen so often in history, is that education can be a two-edged sword, either reinforcing discrimination, or on the contrary, building respect for the identities of others. That lesson of history could not be more important than it is today. That is why it is so fundamentally important to insist on **public** education, open to all, respecting all, serving all.

Education International is the largest global teacher organisation representing over 29 million teachers through over 300 member organisations in over 150 countries and territories.
And that is why we must make action against discrimination — in all its forms: it is not a question of one form of discrimination and not another — why we must place this action at the centre of our work.

**Principal Aim 4 Promoting democracy, sustainable development and solidarity**

There can be no doubt that terrorism is a serious threat to democratic and civilized societies everywhere. We were all horror-struck by the attack on the twin towers in New York, we were all deeply shocked by the massacres at a tourist resort in Bali and the train stations in Madrid, we have been indignant at every single terrorist action that took away innocent lives. One of the flights which flew into the twin towers carried students and teachers on their way to collect an award in California; in Madrid colleagues of ours were among the victims, as was the case in Indonesia in Israel, in Russia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Morocco … the list goes on.

We have been infuriated, not only because our members or their loved ones lost their lives but because we all felt these attacks to be against the ideals that constitute the basis of open and democratic societies, the same ideals which unite the members of Education International.

While we believe that those responsible for terror should be brought to justice, while we believe that our governments have a responsibility to protect us, to provide security, we would expect of those governments, no we would insist, that in performing that responsibility they respect democratic rules and freedoms, and act in accordance with international law. The aim does not justify the means. We cannot allow democracy and human rights to become victims of the war on terror, for that would be a victory for the terrorists. In the annual report of Amnesty International serious concern has been expressed over governments using the war on terror to undermine human rights in the name of security. Governments have arrested people and have detained them without charge or trial. The right to freedom of expression and the right to organize have also been challenged in the name of security. Asylum-seekers have been forced to return to countries where they risked grave human rights violations, or interned with their children under appalling conditions.

Education unions have a special role to play in promoting and protecting democratic values in schools and in society. We have taken several initiatives to help member organizations develop policy in this area. One was a conference in Malta in November 2002 entitled Living and Learning together. Earlier that year we organized an international conversation between member organizations in Western and in Muslim countries. That meeting was important to clear up any misunderstandings, and to show that EI member organizations do not necessarily support the foreign policies of their governments. I must stress again that the strength of our international is determined by the independence and democratic nature of our member organizations. Sure, in our national organizations, we love our countries, but we do not support the kind of patriotism as defined by the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw: “the conviction that your country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it”. I want to believe that we, teachers, as professionals and trade unionists, that we are world citizens by nature.

That is the spirit in which the EI Board adopted resolutions on Afghanistan and Iraq, calling consistently for no military action to be taken unless as a last resort and within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations. No-one regrets the end of the Taliban in Afghanistan, where today girls can once again go to school, and we have helped to establish a free teachers’ union, whose President is with us today. Nor can I imagine anyone being upset that the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein has ended. So I want to be fair. But in the latter case, gung-ho unilateralism may have aggravated the very risk it claimed to combat — the risk of terrorism.

EI is working with the ICFTU to play a constructive role in Iraq where we have started assisting several education unions. We have also established contacts with teachers’ organizations in other parts of the Middle-East. We have been guided by the resolution that we adopted in Jomtien on the Israel/Palestine conflict, and we believe that resolution still provides the best basis for EI action. The situation has clearly become more difficult during the last three years. From a recent staff mission we have recommendations for improved development assistance to the Palestinian teachers’ Union, that have been discussed with both the GUPT and the ITU in Israel.

That same spirit of international citizenship has been substantiated over the past three years by the solidarity programs of EI and its member unions. In 2003 a total of 8 million dollars was spent on humanitarian assistance, trade union education and professional training programs for 113 member organizations in low income countries. 51% of those funds were spent in Africa, 21% in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, 14% in Asia-Pacific, 10% in Latin America and 4% in the Caribbean. There are bi-lateral programs sponsored by member unions in the industrialized countries – as well as multi-lateral programs sponsored by EI or our partner organizations. I want to thank all of you. You have made an important difference.
In the annual reports some of these programs are described in detail. I want to mention one, that is aimed at helping our Indonesian member organization, PGRI, to fulfill its aspiration to become a fully independent and democratic education union. During the Suharto years PGRI was locked up as a bird in a cage, as the PGRI President has put it. Today we are reinforcing the local and regional structures of PGRI, finding ways to give its over 2 million members a tool to improve their pay and conditions of service. It is a long term and costly undertaking but worth every cent if the result is a strong education union able to help achieve education for all and to influence education policy in the largest Muslim country of the world, one struggling to become a democracy. The size and importance of the program required the formation of a group of donor organizations, a consortium, willing to combine resources. There are other places where we need to combine our creativity and strength to help teachers build strong, independent and democratic organizations: not only to protect the interests of teachers and to promote quality education, but also to build civil society movements that will contribute to democratic development.

While we have been working really hard to help teachers organizations to become stronger so they can take on all these battles that I have talked about, our member in Namibia, NANTU, spends 50% of its monthly income to pay survivor benefits to family of members who have died from AIDS. In some African countries, one out of seven teachers is afflicted by the virus. In Jomtien, you instructed us to carry on programs aimed at (1) making medication and healthcare affordable to teachers and (2) providing teachers' training. I am proud to report that in the past two years we have been able to reach more than 50,000 teachers in 17 countries. The curricula and teaching materials that have been developed are widely used! The combat against HIV AIDS starts in the classroom. I am sad to report however that we may have to discontinue the program because of a change of policy of the US Administration. While the objective of our program is prevention through education, American funding is now directed at programmes operated by faith based organisations and aimed at abstinence. Placing bets on abstinence is in my opinion irresponsible - high risk groups include many women who are not given much choice in the matter. We have started looking elsewhere to compensate for the loss of American funds.

**Principal Aim 5 Strengthening EI and Promoting Membership Participation**

Colleagues, being a truly representative and self-sufficient organisation, has made us the voice of the teaching profession world wide. Our membership is our strength. The Global Action Weeks have been a tremendous tool to mobilize class room teachers. But this is not enough. We must find new ways to activate our members, we must enable them to take part in our solidarity work and advocacy. We should pursue the idea presented in Jomtien for EI to have support groups of teachers interested in international work, like the UNESCO national commissions. We must establish networks as we have done for women and for minority groups, and allow for the development of groups with a professional focus, such as on curriculum issues, related, for example, to our theme. The EI World Congress is becoming a triennial meeting place within our diverse and pluralistic International. That role can be further developed: We are a Federation, an organisation of organisations and that will not change. Opening our doors and windows to your constituents will also help you as education union leaders, help all of us, as our members come to realize that international meetings like the Congress are not just cost items on shrinking union budgets, but a real opportunity to change the world for the better.

By ratifying the Agreement with WCT we have virtually completed the task of unifying the teaching profession internationally. I believe that we have achieved the achievable. So what is next? First, we must remain united! In an organization that gets bigger, each of us will have to make a bit more room, more space for the views of others. We are a plural organization bringing together most of the cultures, religions, views and philosophies of this planet. So there will be more debate, and at times we will disagree. Yet, we are not and do not aspire to be the United Nations of education unions. We are founded on principles and ideals; we believe that our strength lies in the independent character and democratic nature of each of our organizations. I think it important that we reach out where teachers have not yet the right to form independent unions., where, organizations are ‘birds in a cage’.

**In Conclusion:**

Based on the experience of these last three years, and the international context, I believe that the Principal Aims which derive from EI's constitutional goals should remain unchanged. When we come to the Program and Budget, I will however propose some consolidation of strategic objectives in order to achieve more focus.
Colleagues, this has been a report on work in progress. The secretariat has worked hard and I believe effectively to carry out the mandates of the last Congress. Strong and steady leadership and guidance has come from your elected Board and the regional committees. Member organizations have more involved than ever. But all this in a very difficult international political context.

In this report I have suggested ways we can build on the work that has been done. Work in progress, yes, but not business as usual! We need a sea-change in the approach of governments to education, to move from rhetoric to action. And that means that we must, together, take the action of EI and its members to a new level of impact and effectiveness.

I invite you not only to receive this report, but also to join the new Board that you will elect, and the secretariat, in committing to the kind of action that can really change things in this world. We should leave this Congress with determination and hope. And let it be known, that EI will never, never give up!

Thank you