Session Title: Teachers for the Future We Want – placing teachers at the centre of education reform and lifelong learning

Background

Quality education is challenged by the shortage of trained teachers in the classrooms: 1.6 million more teachers are required to achieve universal primary education by 2015 and 5.1 million more to achieve universal lower secondary education by 2030 (GMR 2013/14). Given the magnitude of the teacher shortage, not surprisingly the main emphasis in the 2030 education agenda has been placed on ensuring that a sufficient number of teachers are trained and recruited.

However, recruiting teachers to fill needed new teaching positions as well as to replace those that have become vacant due to attrition is not enough. The 2030 education agenda places quality education and relevant teaching and learning at its core. In order to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education, every learner must be taught by a teacher who is not only qualified, but also motivated and professionally-supported. This means governments and relevant stakeholders must:

1) Select and recruit the right teachers to reflect the diversity of the children they will be teaching;
2) Train the teachers to support learners with the highest learning needs, starting from the early grades;
3) Allocate the best teachers to the most challenging areas where they are needed; and
4) Provide teachers with the right mix of incentives to encourage them to remain in the profession.

(GMR 2013/2014)

Targeted strategies and provisions for appropriate incentives, including competitive remuneration, clear career paths and continuous professional development opportunities are required to attract and retain good teachers. Teaching should be promoted as a profession of choice for high performers in the education system while also being representative of all social diversity.

Teachers around the world continue to work against formidable odds – low pay, low status, no insurance, hazardous and unsafe environments, minimal or no training or professional development, limited career path prospects, and no resources/teaching tools or support. Yet, with heightened interests by governments in the quality of learning, teachers are under increasing pressure to perform and ‘produce’ better outcomes in their students’ level of achievement. Teachers are holders of socio-economic and political rights, and have the right to seek decent and enabling working conditions including adequate and timely remuneration. The growing tensions and dilemma between the issue of teachers’ increasing responsibility and their challenging teaching environment therefore needs to be brought to the attention of policy-makers in order to advance the professionalization of teaching.

The teacher target remains the foundation to enable the achievement of all the 2030 education-related targets and requires urgent attention. Due to the centrality of the teaching profession in the empowerment and advancement of societies, governments must involve all stakeholders in order to
achieve it. Ministries of Education need to collaborate with teacher organizations/unions and the wider labour sector in their efforts to enhance the professional status of teachers.

**Objectives**

In order to ensure that teachers are placed at the centre of education reform and lifelong learning and reflected in all other targets of the 2030 education agenda, this session will engage policymakers, teachers and researchers in a dialogue that aims to:

1) review the state-of-the-art and trends in teacher policy and development, with particular attention to the paradox of heightened expectations on teachers in tandem with the multiple challenges they continue to face in and out of the classrooms; and

2) identify key strategies for effective teacher policy reform, including social dialogue with active engagement of teachers in evidence-based policy reform.

**Key issues and guiding questions for discussions**

- How can we raise the social and professional status of the teaching profession via-a-vis other professions, and attract high-performing and diverse students to and retain them in the profession?
- How do we create, strengthen and institutionalize mechanisms and build capacity for teachers to exercise their rights and participate in the process of policy formulation and reforms in education, especially teacher-specific policies and legislation?
- What are the strategies to recruit and deploy well-trained and qualified teachers at every level of education in the right place at the right time, with keen attention to gender, special needs, ethnic, linguistic and geographical balances?
- How can we ensure that teachers who enter the profession are trained and certified/licensed with appropriate competencies and skills that enable them to teach and adapt to changing/evolving conditions of teaching and learning?
- What policies and strategies are needed to implement a monitoring system for the profession that provides evaluation, feedback and support mechanisms to guarantee teacher quality and quantity at every level of education?

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