



**Joint Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,  
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Labour Organization, Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF, Achim  
Steiner, Administrator, UNDP and David Edwards, General Secretary,  
Education International  
on the occasion of World Teachers' Day  
“The right to education means the right to a qualified teacher”**

**5 October 2018**

Education is a fundamental human right and a public good. It transforms lives by driving economic and social development. It promotes peace, tolerance and social inclusion. It is key to eradicating poverty. And it enables children and young people to fulfil their potential.

In many places, however, children are deprived of the right to education because of a global shortage of qualified and experienced teachers – particularly female teachers in low-income countries. Despite an overall increase in access to education, more than 263 million children and youth worldwide are not in school. A staggering 617 million children and adolescents – nearly 60 per cent globally – have not mastered basic literacy or numeracy. The poorest, most marginalised children, including those living in areas affected by conflict, are most at risk of either being out of school or attending school, but learning very little.

The 2030 Agenda to which the international Community has committed itself calls for universal early childhood, primary and secondary education for all. To achieve this goal, we must expand access to quality education for every child and youth, end discrimination at all levels in the education system and dramatically improve the quality of education and learning outcomes. These objectives, in turn, will require an increased global supply of qualified teachers – an estimated 69 million more.

The theme of World Teachers' Day 2018 – “The right to education means the right to a qualified teacher” – reflects this reality. It also echoes the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 70 years ago, which recognized education as

a fundamental right. Today, we remind governments and the international community of the importance of safeguarding that right by investing in a strong teaching workforce, including in conflict-affected countries. To ensure that all children are prepared to learn and take their place in society, teachers must receive effective training and support that equip them to respond to the needs of all students, including the most marginalised.

But teacher shortages are hampering efforts to achieve equitable, inclusive, quality education for all – particularly in countries beset by widespread poverty and protracted crises, and in regions where the youth population is growing rapidly. To meet the demand for new teachers, education authorities often employ individuals with little or no training or by lowering qualification requirements. Some teachers are asked to teach subjects for which they have no pedagogical training. In low income countries, addressing the teacher shortage has meant drastically increasing class sizes, with a devastating impact on the quality of education and teacher workload.

As a result, the most marginalised and excluded children tend to be taught by the least experienced teachers, who may be on temporary contracts and receive no pre-service or in-service training. Teachers available to work in emergency or crisis contexts may not be trained to respond to the complex needs of vulnerable children, particularly girls, who have been forced to flee their homes because of armed conflict, violence or natural disaster.

Despite widespread recognition that teachers are key to achieving quality education for all, teaching is still not widely regarded as a valued profession. Its low prestige impedes efforts to recruit and retain teachers in rich and poor countries alike. In response, governments and education partners must take bold action to improve the quality of training for new and practising teachers. Teachers must receive quality initial teacher education, effective induction into the profession, and have opportunities for high-quality professional development to hone their skills throughout their careers. And they must demonstrate to the public that teaching is a valued profession by providing decent salaries and improving working conditions for educators at all levels of education.

On this World Teachers' Day, as we celebrate teachers' important contributions to improving the lives of children and youth around the world, we reaffirm our commitment to increasing the global supply of qualified teachers. We urge all governments and the international community to join us in this endeavour, so that all

children and young people, no matter their circumstances, can secure their right to quality education and a better future.