

## Speech to the World Economic Forum – Wisdom of Youth

*Andrea:*

Well, basically, as you should have seen on the screen, last week the World Economic Forum and the British Council gathered together sixty young individuals, leaders from forty nine different countries to discuss what our generation thinks are the important and the most pressing issues of our era.

Over three days, we talked about a lot of different issues – but we focussed particularly on education, and how it can and should be used to maximise the potential of the world's diverse communities.

Each of us travelled a long way to get to Greenwich, but we embarked on an even longer journey once we were there.

Each individual brought a unique perspective, a unique voice, and reaching an agreement was actually quite difficult.

We really gained a better knowledge of why international summits have to work really deep into the night before they reach any kind of agreement.

So basically, after seemingly endless discussion, we identified two pressing challenges.

The first is that the world needs to take education, collective action on education for all, but not just education for all, quality education.

The second was the need for active global citizens who'd strive for unity in diversity.

With these issues in mind, we were challenged by Klaus Schwab to develop clear, actionable proposals to present before you at Davos.

On Saturday, January 20th, the teams selected which team they believed would best represent their ideas at Davos as part of a great balloon debate, and all of the ideas are will be in this brochure [hold up copy] – that you will be handed out later on your way out..

Over a number of rounds, the group voted for the team they felt could best represent them at Davos and that is the Greenwich 6, which is us. Unfortunately one of our membes, Jad Kheir, had to return to Israel for a family funeral.

My name is Yoo-Sun Andrea Choi and I'm from South Korea.

Chanda Ghoorah – Mauritius

Yossra Tala – Egypt

Armin Stähli – Switzerland

Simon Moss - Australia

Basically we're here in Switzerland this week – not only to challenge all of you with our ideas – but to represent the other 54 colleagues that we met at the Greenwich Forum 2007 – who we think of as the seventh member of our group.

*Chandra*

I will now ask you to turn back time and ponder on your childhood days...

Do you remember that teacher who has marked you by teaching you how to read or to do long division or simply how to smile?!

I am sure you know what I am talking about...

Many children do not have these memories.

Either they are out of school. Or they are taught in conditions that provide them with few opportunities to really learn.

Did you know that:

In Mali, there are as many as 71 primary-age children for every teacher. The figure here in Switzerland is just 12.

How can you possibly expect a student to concentrate in a classroom packed with so many other students?!

Many teachers are under-rewarded and poorly motivated. Frequently, students come to school only to find their teachers absent.... In India, 1 in 10 factory workers fail to come to work every day. For teachers, the figure is nearly 1 in 4. We know, meanwhile, that in some countries teachers barely get any training at all.

For too long, education has been spoken about as an issue of quantity, not quality.

We need to reframe the debate. This means investing much more in teachers, who are the foundation of any education system.

We need to ensure that there are enough of them, of course. But we also need to ensure they are equipped to face the challenges of the modern world and that they have the knowledge and skills to pass onto their students.

It is only by doing so that we can fulfil our promises to provide education for all the world's children.

*Yossra*

The second challenge on our agenda is to develop new generations of active global citizens.

We live in a world where extremism, religious and political fanaticism, and terrorism are all on the rise.

It would be interesting to know that in 2004, we witnessed 651 Terrorist attacks all over the world – which is the highest since 1990.

The US alone saw around 7,000 hate crime incidents last year almost all based on religion or race, while in the UK – which is relatively a very tolerant country – there were nearly 180,000 racially motivated crimes in 2004 and 2005.

As the Prime Minister of Malaysia said here at Davos yesterday:

“All religions and cultures enjoin us to reach out to the other, to share their joy as well as their pain.”

But too few young people really know anything or understand anything about the other. This is a major cause of xenophobia, religious and racial hatred, and the dehumanization of those who are different from us.”

As your majesty has previously mentioned, and I quote:

“Education lights up the sky with new constellations of opportunity, yet if we are to unleash that power worldwide, we must tackle three critical challenges: which are to ensure access... improve quality... and provide the right teaching of our time.”

Our focus on quality in education includes not just delivery, but also the content of what young people learn.

We want to create generations that are socially responsible, tolerant, active participants in their societies, and have awareness and respect for other peoples’ civilizations, cultures, religions, and race.

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*Simon*

These are huge challenges that we are talking about here, and to address them, I think we really need concerted and coordinated action at a global level.

**And so we challenge the world leaders, and those of us here in the room, to establish a Global Fund for Education.**

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has led to a revolution in public attention and in funding on health. A similar fund for education would enable us to give that same attention and that same clarity, bring that same focus. A fund for education would bring together governments, businesses, foundations, and the public in a powerful coalition for change.

Using the model provided by the Global Fund for health, the Global Fund for Education's mission would be to ensure quality education for all and to nurture the global citizens of tomorrow's global future.

Building on the work of the Fast Track Initiative, on the work of the Global Campaign for Education, a Global Fund for Education would have a strong commitment to quality education for all, and global citizenship.

And the strength of a global fund in our eyes lies in its ability to bring people together, to bring together financial resources, to bring together intellectual resources, and to bring together political resources. It enhances effectiveness, co-ordinates action, and it gives the sort of clarity and direction we've seen in Gordon Brown's work in the UK on the Commission for Africa, on the Stern report, and on when Tony Blair'll hand over to him. (laughter).

Now we see that we've got the same opportunity to give this focus and clarity to Education.

Even with the coordinating work of something like the fast track initiative, we're still billions of dollars short on reaching the MDG 2, universal primary education for all. Yet how are we to reach this even higher benchmark of quality education for all if we don't invest more money, and not just look to governments for the investment of this money, but look to all places.

And so I doubt anyone in this room – except perhaps the Google guys and Bill Gates – of themselves can actually address these problems single-handedly. So we're proposing that we bring together all of the key stakeholders when it comes to education and invest in real outcomes and quality education for all.

I'm now going to hand over to Armin and Yossra, who will go into a bit more detail on some of our thoughts on how we'll make this happen.

*Armin*

Now first of all we're going to talk about quality.

And we believe that investing in the teachers is the key factor to really promote and boosting educational standards.

We believe that the Fund, the Global Education Fund, should focus on three aspects: quality teacher training, decreasing absenteeism, and reducing class sizes.

As Chanda has told us previously, in many countries, some teachers get hardly any training at all.

We have to learn how to teach!

The Fund could support innovation in teaching training, could help spread best teaching practice from country to country, and set up an international network helping teachers, giving them advice in their professional development.

Once we've trained teachers properly, we have to make sure we give them good jobs.

Many teachers currently work in terrible conditions.

Now, perhaps we should *not* be asking ourselves why teachers are absent from school, but why they show up at all.

Now this leads us to the question: how can we reduce absenteeism?

One approach would be to increase local control, for example by giving local school committees new power, new powers to hire and fire teachers.

Another would be to reduce class sizes.

Ladies and gentlemen, teaching 25 students is hard. Teaching 70 is a cruel and unusual punishment.

We believe the Fund should set a target for a maximum class size of say 30 students in primary schools. Otherwise, education for all lacks meaning, substandard education for many.

Part of the solution is better use of technology and the intelligent deployment of teaching assistants.

We will need much more innovation, innovation from us, from you if quality standards are truly to make an increase. And in the end, I believe that this is our job.

Yossra

The Fund's second area of focus will be to nurture active global citizens.

This relies on introducing curricula that can be adapted by individual countries, but fulfil certain general principles.

The principles include helping students develop the skills to work across cultures by providing them with the knowledge of historical experiences of the different cultural groups.

All students should also have the opportunity to study different languages and should also have the opportunity to work on various key skills such as problem solving, civic values, conflict resolution, rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and, last but not least, pathways of active participation.

This could be done through addressing different various areas of core studies which include:

- Civilizations of the world
- World cultures
- Comparative religions

and, last but not least,

- Human rights

The handling of this material must be done in creative and interesting ways, cultivating critical thinking and analysis.

One would ask: is this actually possible? In the UK, we saw various many projects that imaginatively linked together different ethnic communities, and tackled intercultural tensions in and out of school.

There are many such initiatives across the world that show us what can be done.

But they need greater global support and better networking amongst them to share their experiences and exchange their opinions.

If it is bold enough, the Global Fund for Education can save millions of people from dying – not from diseases but from ignorance.

*Andrea*

We want to thank you for listening to our proposals.

But we also want to challenge you, the world's economic powerbrokers, to begin the change that you wish to see in the world and to put your words, and our hopes, into action.

In reality, we believe that the world's leaders should make a renewed commitment to quality education.

We've seen similar efforts turn into reality before, right here at the World Economic Forum in the year 2000, as GAVI - The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, was launched.

We're asking for this type of global mobilization to happen once again, through your efforts and initiative.

The world is often so preoccupied in dealing with issues that flare up today that we forget about our tomorrow. Nobody disagrees that the children are our future and that education designs the fabric of our society.

Your Majesty, Chancellor, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, we must no longer delay in combining these two truths together – the Global Fund for Education is an opportunity for the world to act on their words.

We ask you – the world's leaders – to give your personal commitment to making that happen.

Thank you.