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G8 must try harder – much harder

Global Campaign for Education's verdict on the 2008 G8 communiqué

The 2008 communiqué from the G8 Summit, the annual get-together of the world's richest and most influential nations, was released today. As part of the statement on Development and Africa, the G8 have committed to fill the 2008 financing gap for countries endorsed through the Education Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI), amounting to \$1 billion. A progress review on support to FTI will be tabled at next year's Summit.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) has given a lukewarm reaction to the communiqué, stating that this outcome represents little if any progress from the G8's position in previous years. The increase is welcomed by GCE, especially given that aid levels for basic education have stagnated over the last two years. Yet GCE points out that the amount pledged is less than 10% of what the G8 owes to meet its collective 'fair share' of the \$16 billion annual financing requirement for EFA. What's more, the omission of the pledge that 'no country seriously committed to EFA shall fail for lack of resources' from this year's statement is a worrying retreat from wording in previous communiqués.

'African governments need predictable, long-term and substantial aid flows to invest in building schools, hiring teachers and offering literacy programmes, to give everyone a chance not just of survival, but success' said **Gorgui Sow**, GCE Board Member of Africa Network Campaigns on Education For All (ANCEFA) *'The \$1 billion pledged today will cover a fraction of the costs of what the poor countries need to invest in all levels of education.'*

The Africa and Development statement contains one further paragraph on education highlighting a number of priority areas. It acknowledges the need for attention to teachers, quality, and inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised children, especially in fragile and conflict-affected states. Primary education should be prioritised within a holistic approach to the education system that also includes post-primary education and lifelong learning, according to the document. Although GCE's members are deeply concerned about many of the same issues, GCE spokespeople say that the wording stops short of commitment to action on any of the issues.

GCE also joined other anti-poverty campaigners in criticising the G8's half-hearted reiteration of the 2005 commitment to give an extra \$50 billion in aid each year by 2010. Last-minute campaign efforts partly paid off, and the final text does refer to the \$50 billion annual target, but in weak and equivocal language.

'Children truly know the value of promises. Broken promises mean broken dreams for generations left to suffer in ignorance and illiteracy.' **Kailash Satyarthi, GCE President and Chair of Global March on Child Labour**