

# World Teachers' Day declaration



## We, teachers of the World

**E**xpect that education authorities worldwide will implement the 1966 Recommendation on the Status of Teachers, as well as the 1997 Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Personnel in order to bring the working conditions of teachers and the learning environment of students up to the required standards;

**D**emand that the right of every child to free quality publicly-funded education be guaranteed all over the world;

**U**rge intergovernmental organisations and their member states to fulfil their commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including Education For All, and to consider education as a public service and not a commodity;

**C**all upon governments to plan for the adequate supply of quality teachers to meet future needs and upon the international donor community to give their full support to this;

**A**ppeal for the voices of teachers and their unions to be heard in the debate on quality education, as full professional partners in decision making processes and for constructive social dialogue practises to be developed in every nation and at all levels;

**T**ake a pledge to work with a high degree of professionalism to assure quality education for all children in the world;

**I**nsist that quality education can only be achieved with qualified teachers who have received high-level initial training, have access to adequate in-service training and have at their disposal pedagogical means to enable them to act as professionals in education;

**O**blige governments to take seriously their commitments to ensure equal pay and equal rights for women and to ensure their empowerment in the education setting, in decision making and in the workplace;

**N**ote the role that we, the teachers of the world, have to play in securing a quality education of all children - a mission which cannot be achieved without the full support of national, regional and world communities.

Oct  
**5** World  
Teachers'  
Day **2006**



Worlds of Education is published by Education International, the global union federation representing **29** million teachers, professors and education workers from pre-school to university in more than **160** countries around the globe. To learn more about EI, go to: **[www.ei-ie.org](http://www.ei-ie.org)**

#### Address:

Education International  
5, bd du Roi Albert II  
1210 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel.: +32 2 224 0611  
Fax: +32 2 224 0606  
[headoffice@ei-ie.org](mailto:headoffice@ei-ie.org)

#### Editor responsible at law:

Fred van Leeuwen,  
General Secretary

#### Editor:

Nancy Knickerbocker

Printed on 25 septembre 2006.

W  
E



# WORLDS OF EDUCATION

n°19  
September-October 2006



5

## Lebanon in crisis

El launches Urgent Action as schools shelter thousands displaced by bombs

7

## AIDS has a young girl's face

Education of girls is key to fighting the pandemic

10

## A culture of peace

Global educators meet to share ideas on teaching peace in troubled times

15

## World Teachers' Day 2006

Celebrating colleagues around the world who nurture the next generation

Special report:  
Ethiopian teachers  
struggle for quality  
education and  
union rights





## Welcome back to the Worlds of Education!

After a brief hiatus, EI is once again publishing our flagship magazine. I want to welcome our new communications coordinator, Nancy Knickerbocker, who comes to EI from Canada, and thank former editor Dominique Marlet, who has taken up a new position as coordinator in EI's Human and Trade Union Rights unit.

I am sure you will find much to spark your interest in this special World Teachers' Day edition. But even as we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers, we are painfully aware that colleagues in many countries do not enjoy the rights enshrined in that landmark document.



This edition carries reports of teachers assassinated in Afghanistan, bombed in Lebanon, imprisoned in Ethiopia, attacked in Mexico and Guinea. To all these colleagues, we extend the hand of solidarity and pledge our continued support.

In these pages you'll also find much to celebrate: teachers advocating for laws to protect quality public education, fighting ethnic discrimination in schools, defending academic freedom, creating a pedagogy of peace, and rebuilding schools after disaster.

I salute these colleagues and all of you, who every day in classrooms around the world fulfill the role of teacher with commitment and dignity.

*Fred van Leeuwen  
General Secretary*

### > Special report

# Ethiopian colleagues have the courage to keep union alive

— By Jan Eastman and Dominique Marlet

**On November 9, 2005, Mrs. Mulunesh Abebayehu was arrested, without warning, at the junior secondary school where she teaches and taken to the notorious Kality Prison near Addis Ababa. Her crime? Nothing more than being a member of her union, the Ethiopian Teachers' Association, and being active in its women's wing.**

**Although no charges were ever laid, Mulunesh remained in prison under harsh conditions for seven months. Education International raised her case publicly and appealed to the government about the injustice. Suddenly, on 9 June 2006, she was released without explanation or apology. To this day, neither a warrant nor charges have ever been produced to justify her detention.**

**I**t is a frightening reflection of the reality of teacher trade unionism in Ethiopia that Mulunesh is not alone. Far from it. At least, 58 teachers and ETA members were imprisoned in 2006. Many remain in jail, some without ever being charged.

Prominent among them is Kassahun Kebede, chair of the ETA's Addis Ababa branch. Kebede is one of 131 civil society activists who face a series of trumped-up charges including high treason, genocide, and outrage against the constitution, charges that potentially carry the death sentence.

Facing these unfair political allegations along with Kebede is ETA President Dr. Taye Woldesmiat, who is no stranger to the brutal conditions inside Ethiopian prisons, having suffered six years of incarceration. In 1996, he became the first Ethiopian declared a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International.

Kebede himself is currently listed as an Amnesty International



Secondary teacher Mulunesh witnessed atrocious treatment of prisoners during seven months in jail.

prisoner of conscience, testimony to both men's commitment to seek social justice, quality education and union rights through non-violent means, despite a history of violent repression by the government.

### A history of persecution

Founded in 1949, the ETA grew to become the largest union in Ethiopia. Its leaders were outspoken in defence of teachers' rights as workers, and students' rights to quality education in a country where millions of

youngsters are not in school.

As a constant thorn in the side of government, the ETA became the target of a particularly insidious attack – a kind of "identity theft" against the union. In 1993, the government sponsored the emergence of a rival group bearing the same name: Ethiopian Teachers' Association. The move created confusion among members and, more importantly, it deprived the authentic ETA of its assets and properties.

Since 1993, the ETA's bank accounts have been frozen, members' dues have been redirected to the government-sponsored group, and most of the ETA buildings have been sealed. The union headquarters are regularly ransacked. In November 2005, police occupied the two remaining ETA offices without warrant and confiscated all computers and official documents.

The authentic union leaders are constantly threatened. In 1993, Dr. Taye was dismissed from his position at the University of Addis Ababa after signing a letter condemning violence by government security forces

Thanks to the solidarity of teachers abroad, these Ethiopian students have access to clean water at school.



against student demonstrators. He was condemned on false allegations and imprisoned from 1996 to 2002, cruelly shackled in solitary confinement for long periods.

Asefa Maru, ETA's former Deputy General Secretary, was both a respected trade union leader and an executive member of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council. In 1997, Maru was assassinated by security police. In the wake of his murder, General Secretary Gemoraw Kassa was forced to seek asylum in the United Kingdom. Kassa returned voluntarily to Ethiopia in 2004, despite the risks.

However, by October 2005, Dr. Taye felt compelled to go into exile for a second time. The latest charges, laid *in absentia*, confirm his fears that remaining in Ethiopia would have resulted in his incarceration once again.

EI provides solidarity assistance to the ETA and humanitarian support to teachers and their families who are victimized, because rank and file members also pay a price. Teachers who join the ETA are harassed, displaced and subjected to discrimination and unfair working conditions. Attending union meetings leaves them open to various forms of attack.

Nonetheless, the ETA demonstrates repeatedly that, despite these enormous difficulties, it is determined to continue its advocacy.

### A record of accomplishment

That the union has been able to survive since 1993, despite all the interference, is nothing short of amazing. In fact, the ETA remains an incredibly committed and strong organization that accomplishes much. It is powerful testimony to the strength, courage and commitment of the leaders and the members of the ETA.

ETA activists continue to work on promotion of the Education for All program, health education and HIV/AIDS, professional issues, and child labour. Projects and activities for 2006 included union capacity building, gender issues, research and publications, field survey, policy development, advocacy and mentoring.

Over the last dozen years teachers around the world have stood with their Ethiopian colleagues. EI has spoken out about the abuses of teachers' rights and freedoms in many international venues. In July, the Dutch teachers' union (AOB) hosted a series of meetings in Utrecht in conjunction with EI and the National Union of Teachers of England and Wales (NUT).

The ETA leaders were heartened by the gesture and glad of the opportunity to meet with Dr.

Taye, their exiled president, for the first time in many months. Later, they also discussed their plight with Kari Tapiola, Executive Director for Standards, and other key staff of the International Labour Organization.

"Our morale and energy to act was greatly enhanced with the support and helpful suggestions offered by Mr. Tapiola, other ILO representatives and our international colleagues," said General Secretary Kassa.

Together the teacher trade unionists decided to make a detailed report on the ongoing abuses against Ethiopian teachers to the ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Status of Teaching. As well, they will launch the second official complaint to the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association against the Ethiopian government.

Meanwhile, despite the obstacles and lack of resources, the ETA leaders courageously carried on with plans to hold their 2006 General Assembly from 30 August to 1 September in Addis Ababa. The assembly opened with about 160 delegates and all local and foreign guests present — except the Ethiopian Minister of Education, who had been invited but chose not to attend.

Unfortunately, the ETA's hopes for a constructive assembly were dashed when, for the second time this year, authorities disrupted the meeting. During the lunch break, armed security officers surrounded the meeting hall, dispersed the audience and forcibly shut down the assembly.

ETA officers and representatives from EI immediately advised foreign embassies and the ILO, where they appealed for direct intervention with the Ethiopian authorities to urge them to abide by international law guaranteeing freedom of association.

This is only the latest chapter in the ongoing story of repression against the ETA and interference with its activities and finances. EI will continue working in solidarity with the teachers of Ethiopia, and urging the government to acknowledge the ETA as the legitimate voice of the teaching profession and a worthy partner to build a better school system for all the children of Ethiopia.

*Jan Eastman is Deputy General Secretary of EI and Dominique Marlet is coordinator in the Human and Trade Union Rights unit.*

## > Education for all

# Roma students launch landmark school segregation appeal

**E**ighteen Roma children forced to attend segregated schools in the Czech Republic are taking their landmark case to the European Court of Human Rights.

The case, *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, seeks to end a widespread practice of discrimination throughout Central and South East Europe, whereby Roma children are routinely placed in schools for the mentally disabled regardless of their actual intellectual abilities.

The Open Society Justice Initiative and the European Roma Rights Center filed the appeal on behalf of the children. They are asking the Court of Human Rights to review their case because of its significance for all minority groups in Europe. At a time when Europe is struggling to address its growing racial and ethnic diversity, the capacity of law to ensure equal treatment is of the highest importance, according to legal counsel for the students.

In an interview from New York, James A. Goldston said: "Evidence showed a massive disproportion in the extent to which Roma children are assigned to remedial schools for students who are deemed to be mentally deficient. Virtually nobody who attends these schools ever goes on to secondary school, let alone university." Roma students were segregated at a ratio of 25 to one over non-Roma, he added.

"In short, if this case does not amount to racial discrimination and segregation, it is hard to see what would," Goldston said.

## Teachers also combat discrimination against Roma

EI and the European Trade Union Committee for Education have also been alert to the plight of Europe's more than 7 million Roma children. In 2003, ETUCE launched a project on non-discriminatory quality education for Roma students, working with teachers' unions from Bulgaria and later with Slovakian and Hungarian colleagues. Its objectives are:



Roma children deserve equal access to quality education.

© Joana Karapataq/OSCE

- > To raise awareness and build capacities at trade union, authorities, parents and educators' level to enhance the quality of education for Roma children

- > To contribute to changing policies and legislation in accordance with the EU Anti-discrimination Framework

The project, which continues until December 2006, involves training of trainers in the three countries. Educators working with Roma children, trade union representatives and others offer training on ways to change attitudes in classrooms, schools, and places of work.

# New Argentine law commits government to provide quality public education



EI' meeting with Argentine President Kirchner and Education Minister Filmus.

©

EI representatives meeting with the Argentine president on 26 July 2006 welcomed a new education law that reaffirms government's responsibility to provide quality public education for all. President Nestor Kirchner and Education Minister Daniel Filmus met with an EI delegation gathered in Buenos Aires for a workshop on challenges facing education in the region.

Kirchner spoke of the financial crisis that nearly brought the country to bankruptcy a few

years ago. By contrast, today the country's economy has recovered so that his government can now reinvest in education. "Only a while ago we were discussing how to survive. Now we will be able to achieve what we could only dream of before," he said.

While plans to privatize and deregulate national school systems have dominated the education reform agenda in many Latin American countries, Kirchner's new education law reaffirms the responsibility

of the national government to provide quality public education. The legislation, adopted earlier this year, regulates education financing to ensure adequate allocation of public funds. In the coming years the national education budget will be increased to at least 6% of the country's Gross Domestic Product, while inequalities between provinces will be eliminated.

The new law was developed in consultation with the teacher unions, CTERA and CEA. It en-



# War in Lebanon hurts children, schools

**P**eople around the world watched in horror this summer as violence once again flared in the Middle East. For one terrible month, Israeli bombs thundered down on Beirut and other parts of Lebanon, while Hezbollah rockets flew over the border into northern Israel.

By mid-August, when the ceasefire came into effect, the losses were catastrophic. According to Amnesty International, about 1,000 Lebanese civilians were killed, one third of them children. An additional 40 Israeli civilians were killed. Hundreds of thousands of people in both countries were displaced.

In response to an appeal from both Lebanese affiliates, the

shrines the right to education, and will make secondary as well as primary education compulsory. It also recognizes teacher organisations as partners in education policy development.

"The law aims at ensuring quality public education for all Argentinians and this is of crucial importance for the economic, social and democratic development of our country. It will help us combat poverty," Kirchner told the teacher representatives.

EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen, who was leading the delegation, said he is pleased to see that the Argentine government is breaking with the international trend to reduce the role of government in education. Van Leeuwen assured Kirchner that EI would help mobilize support within international financial institutions for implementation of the new law.

Teachers' Syndicate of Lebanon and the League of Public Secondary School Teachers of Lebanon, Education International issued a formal statement on the dreadful situation. EI called for hostilities to cease immediately, and for Hezbollah to be disarmed in accordance with UN Resolution 1559. It continued:

"While Israel and Lebanon have the right and responsibility to protect their citizens against violence, military action that kills innocent civilians is intolerable among civilized nations, and cannot be dismissed as being just an incidental consequence of war. The use of terrorism as an instrument of combat must be strongly condemned, for terrorism by its very nature is indiscriminate, and innocents inevitably pay the price."

Meanwhile, teachers on the ground in Lebanon got to work doing what teachers always do: trying their best to meet the needs of students and their families. They opened their schools as shelters for those displaced by the bombing, with some housing as many as 700 people.

*El Safir* newspaper reported that: "Despite all the hardship and lack of necessary supplies and services, the displaced people – many of whom are women, children and old people – are in high morale and have enough patience with their calamity while waiting for whatever the coming days will bring, declared members of the League of Public Secondary School Teachers."

Even as they struggled to offer comfort to the grieving and practical help to the displaced, the teachers and professors of Lebanon also raised their voices for an end to the violence. In a



Lebanese teachers demonstrate for peace at the UN building in Beirut.

demonstration August 3, 2006 in front of the United Nations building in Beirut, educators in both the public and private schools and the universities called on the conscience of the world.

Their placards bore heartbreaking photographs of wounded and dead children, and slogans such as: "No school for this child" and "What is the crime of the Lebanese children?" One man's sign called on colleagues everywhere to take similar action. It read: "Teachers of the world, Practise your utmost pressure on your governments to stop the massive massacres against the Lebanese people."

Colleagues in neighbouring Cyprus also witnessed the consequences of the conflict, as more than 40,000 people who were evacuated from Lebanon landed on their shores. The five Cypriot teacher unions wrote to EI saying: "The cost of this new war in the Middle East seems endless and suffocating, and the ones who are paying

this cost most are the innocent: the children."

EI's official statement laments that in the current context of extremism, opportunities to build peace have been lost.

"Instead of development there is destruction. Even when the present offensive is over, reconstruction will take years. EI is highly sensitive to the appeal received from its Lebanese affiliates and the sense of desperation felt by the colleagues there.

"Like their colleagues in Palestine and Israel, like teachers everywhere, they want to build for the future, educating children and young people in a spirit of hope, not despair."

With the start of the fall semester, the challenge is daunting. UNICEF estimates that 50 schools in South Lebanon were completely destroyed, and 300 more suffered major damage.

## Show your solidarity with Lebanese teachers

**With an initial contribution of € 20,000, EI has established a solidarity fund for Lebanese teachers and their families. You can show your solidarity by responding to this Urgent Action Appeal and contributing to the fund. Here's how:**

**Bank name:** ING Bank

**Address:** 1 rue du Trône, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

**Account:** 310-100 6170-75 B

**SWIFT code:** BB RUBE BB 100

**IBAN code:** BE05 3101 0061 7075

**Message:** Contribution to the EI Solidarity Fund for Lebanese Teachers by (your name or name of your organisation)

## > EI Activities

# UN Rights Commissioner speaks out on LGBT issues

**T**he atmosphere was electric as 1,500 delegates from 111 countries gathered to hear Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, offer the opening keynote at the International Conference on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights in Montreal.

It was an historic moment because it was the first time ever that the UN's top rights advocate has made a major public statement dedicated to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues.

Arbour's words brought hope and inspiration to more than 60 LGBT officials and unionists from Education International and Public Services International who were attending a related conference titled Workers Out!

"It was an opportunity to get recognition for their invaluable work," said Rebeca Sevilla, a coordinator in the Human and Trade Union Rights unit at EI. "It brings optimism to our daily struggle, even as it highlights the significant human rights challenges

remaining around the world."

Arbour noted that most UN member countries still do not recognize sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination. Indeed, more than 80 countries maintain laws that criminalize homosexual practices between consenting adults. Of those, seven states make homosexual activity punishable by death.

"Neither the existence of national laws, nor the prevalence of custom can ever justify the abuse, attacks, torture and indeed killings that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons are subjected to because of who they are, or are perceived to be," Arbour said. "Because of the stigma attached to issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity, violence against LGBT persons is frequently unreported, undocumented and goes ultimately unpunished... This shameful silence is the ultimate rejection of the fundamental principle of universality of rights."

Arbour also made the case that the right to privacy not only pro-



© UN

protects the family and the home, but also one's sexual identity. And she drew the connection between LGBT individuals' right to privacy and freedom of religion, including the freedom to not be required to live by someone else's view of morality.

The High Commissioner concluded with strong encouragement to LGBT human rights defenders to continue their struggle, and to work with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to further their goals.

Marilies Rettig, EI Executive Board member, and Bob Chase, EI/PSI LGBT Forum co-chair, were among the contributors to events at Workers Out! Participants developed a plan of action to help unions worldwide take up the struggle for LGBT rights in the workplace and in society.

## Excerpt from the Declaration of the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights Montreal, 26-29 July 2006

- > We call on trade unions, professional organizations and NGOs working for human rights and social welfare to participate in our fight against discrimination.
  - > We urge donor countries and international institutions to step up their aid programmes for the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and work with local LGBT health groups.
  - > We demand that the UN High Commissioner for refugees step up his actions to convince national governments to implement the Guidelines on Gender-Related Persecution, adopted in 2002.
  - > We demand that the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and other organizations be granted the place they deserve among the many other NGOs that are entitled to consult with the Human Rights Council.
  - > And, we call all countries of the world, and on the United Nations, to recognize the 17th of May as the International Day against Homophobia.
- The Workers Out Action Plan and the Montreal Declaration can be found at <http://www.montreal2006.org>

# Fifth triennial World Congress slated for Berlin

"Educators joining together for quality education and social justice" will be the theme of EI's fifth triennial World Congress. The event, expected to attract more than 1,000 teachers and trade unionists, will take place



in Berlin, Germany, from July 22 to 26, 2007.

EI's World Congress is an exciting opportunity for teachers to meet and discuss the major issues affecting the future of public education around the globe.

The World Congress is also the foundation of EI's democratic structures. At Congress, dele-

gates adopt policies and programmes, and approve financial and other reports. EI officers and executive board members are elected for the following triennium.

In addition, EI uses the occasion of World Congress to honour outstanding educators and activists with the Albert Shanker Education Award and the Mary Hatwood Futrell Human and

Trade Union Rights Award. Nominations for the two awards are open and can be done online, by email, fax or surface mail before February 22, 2007.

For more information, please visit the World Congress website: [www.ei-ie.org/congress5](http://www.ei-ie.org/congress5)



## Education of girls key to AIDS prevention

— By Wouter van der Schaaf

**I**t is high time to confront the vulnerability of girls to HIV and AIDS, and to support the crucial role of the education sector in combating the pandemic.

That was the message Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, brought to the 16th International AIDS Conference, held August 13 to 18, 2006 in Toronto, Canada. An estimated 24,000 delegates from around the world shared the latest research and strategies on prevention, treatment and rights for those living with HIV and AIDS.

"Today, AIDS has a young girl's face," said Robinson. "In Africa alone, 6.4 million youngsters between 16 and 24 are infected, and 75% of them are girls and young women."

Robinson praised conference organizers who, for the first time, placed a high priority on the role of education, specifically for girls.



© UNAIDS

"Education is the best investment for the future," Robinson said. "The school is potentially life saving." Strong applause from thousands in the audience underscored their support for her statement.

Like Education International, Robinson emphasized the undeniable link between the goal of Education for All and the ability of public education systems to make a successful contribution to preventing HIV infection. Specific emphasis on gender

equality must be a core task in all these efforts, she said.

"Governments must honour their commitment to education goals, and strengthen the coordination between EFA and HIV," she insisted. "These bridges are absolutely necessary."

EI also had a role at the conference. Gertrude James and René Jolibois, EFAIDS Programme Coordinators from Guyana and Haiti respectively, and Zainab Akiwumi of the World Health Organization in South Africa spoke at a well-at-

tended special session on the role of teachers and their unions in combating HIV and AIDS. All speakers underlined the lack of initiative on the part of their respective governments in providing necessary and systematic pre- and in-service training of teachers.

Scientists at the conference reported that over one million people are now undergoing treatment, 90% of whom live in the industrialised countries. By contrast, 90% of those who are HIV infected live in developing countries, where they cannot get access to treatment.

The number of people being treated today is much lower than the global target of having 3 million persons in treatment by 2005. Poverty and the lack of access to anti-retroviral drugs still comprise the major obstacles to saving millions of lives.

*Wouter van der Schaaf is EI's campaigns coordinator responsible for the EFAIDS programme.*

## FIFA supports EI's protest against trafficking of women and girls during World Cup

**T**his summer, football fever spread around the globe. However, as fans flocked to Germany, reports emerged of a dark side to the World Cup.

EI wrote to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Joseph Blatter, president of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, to express concern about the trafficking of women and girls into Germany and their exploitation in the sex industry during World Cup season.

EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen requested a clear

statement from FIFA that sport is an activity that must promote human dignity and fundamental rights. "Buying sex is not a sport! Sexual exploitation must end," he wrote.

EI also deplored the use of child labourers in the sportswear industry, and urged the involvement of FIFA in combating activities that deprive children of their right to a better future.

In response, FIFA President Blatter did indeed send a formal declaration in which he condemned the trafficking of women and young girls forced

into prostitution during the World Cup. Blatter underlined that he recognises "the leading role of sport, and of football in particular, to act as a catalyst in campaigns against the scourges of society all around the world."

Consequently, he said, FIFA has decided to concentrate on three main messages for the 2006 World Cup: the rights of children, peace and the fight against discrimination.

EI thanked FIFA and the German government for their responses. In reply to EI's letter,

Merkel's office expressed her government's shared concern that women and girls could be trafficked into Germany and exploited in the sex industry during the World Cup.

The Chancellor's office affirmed, as did EI and FIFA, that trafficking of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a criminal offense in Germany. It underlined the fact that Merkel is "personally engaged in the ILO's 'Red Card' campaign against child labour," which aims to eradicate child labour worldwide.



## > Teachers' rights



© Narconews

Mexican teachers demonstrating in Oaxaca City.

### Striking teachers in Mexico face tear gas, bullets

Education International is deeply concerned that striking teachers in Mexico are meeting repression instead of dialogue from a government that, as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, ought to demonstrate a higher standard of respect for international law.

In recent months, teachers in the south-central state of Oaxaca have been leading a strike that has grown into a

broad-based social movement for quality public education, freedom from poverty and anti-indigenous racism, respect for human rights and social justice.

The teachers have won the support of parents and others across society because, while they have been attempting to bargain for fair wages and better working conditions, they are also negotiating for improvements to students' learning conditions, including school meal programs and elimina-

tion of fees that pose barriers to children living in poverty.

On May 22, 2006 teachers from all over the state began a sit-in at the Zócalo, or main square, in Oaxaca City to back their contract demands. However, on June 14 the state government reacted by unleashing tear gas and physical violence on the teachers and their supporters. There were unconfirmed reports of two dead, including a student, and the disappearance of several union leaders, whose whereabouts remain unknown.

In a letter sent to the government of Mexico, EI condemned the use of any form of violence against striking teachers. EI also reminded Mexican President Vicente Fox Quesada that as a member of the newly-formed UN Human Rights Council, his government should negotiate peaceful solutions to social conflicts instead of abusing human rights.

EI urged Mr. Fox to intervene immediately to bring about

peaceful negotiations with the representatives of EI's affiliate the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE) in Oaxaca, to open an independent and transparent investigation into the alleged human rights violations, and to prosecute those responsible.

However, the situation in Oaxaca intensified in August, when authorities again fired several times on a peaceful demonstration of about 20,000 people, killing one man and wounding two other people. According to the daily *La Jornada*, José Pérez Colmenares, husband of secondary school teacher Florina Jiménez Lucas, died in hospital of a gunshot to the heart.

Daniel Romero Rosas, spokesman for Section 22 of the SNTE, blamed the death on state Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz and his "repressive, authoritarian policies." He said that in 19 months of Ruiz Ortiz's government there have been 36 political assassinations in Oaxaca, *La Jornada* reported.

### Guinea commits gross violations of human and trade union rights

Crushing increases in the cost of living sparked a nation-wide general strike in Guinea in early June 2006. Teachers were among the thousands of workers who took to the streets to protest the escalating price of basic commodities such as rice and fuel.

But instead of responding to the cries of its hungry impoverished people, the government lashed out with extreme violence. Guinean security forces committed murder, rape, assault and theft against demonstrators and bystanders alike, according to Human Rights Watch, which in-

terviewed more than 50 victims and witnesses to the events.

In this context, EI and Guinean teachers took very seriously the death threat made against Louis Mbemba Soumah, General Secretary of the Free Union of Teachers and Researchers of Guinea. The State Minister of Guinea, Fodé Bangoura, inflamed the situation further with a public vow to "crush trade unionists."

In a strongly worded response, EI wrote to the minister condemning the death threats against Mbemba in particular, and trade unionists in general. It



Protesters during a nationwide strike in June.

© Maseco Conde/IRIN

also lamented the assassination of students.

Here is how one witness, a taxi driver in the capital of Conakry, described to Human Rights Watch what he saw on June 12:

"The police were dressed in full riot gear with shields and helmets. When they arrived, they leapt out of their cars and immediately started beating anyone they could catch with their clubs.

The students stated fleeing. It was total panic. Then some students came back and started throwing rocks. The police responded by firing their rifles straight into the crowd. I don't know if it was just one policeman firing, or several. The students fled again, and the police chased after clubbing those they could, and kicking those who fell to the ground. I saw four dead."

## Attacks on Afghan schools and teachers are war crimes

**I**t's becoming more, not less, dangerous to be a teacher or a student in Afghanistan, according to Human Rights Watch.

A disturbing new report by the respected human rights group documents more than 200 brutal attacks on education in Afghanistan between January 2005 and June 2006. Schools have been blown up or burned down. Teachers have been threatened, beaten, and killed. Students – especially girls – have been intimidated and warned that they could be burned with acid or murdered if they go to school.

These attacks are “abuses that infringe upon the fundamental right to education. When committed as part of the ongoing armed conflict in Afghanistan, these attacks are serious violations of international humanitarian law – they are war crimes,” assert the authors of the report, entitled *Lessons in Terror*.

Their research found a sharp increase in attacks in the past 18 months, including reports of at least 17 assassinations of teachers and education officials.

Indeed, the report reinforces the news EI received from the Afghanistan Teachers Association in the past year. Gruesome reports of one teacher being executed at the school gate and another being beheaded in front of his family prompted EI to write to President Hamid Karzai in January 2006, demanding stronger measures to protect students and teachers, especially those who teach girls. Since then, communication with the ATA has become



© 2005 Saman Zia-Zarifi/Human Rights Watch

more difficult as the security situation has deteriorated. Up to press time, *Worlds of Education* received no response to phone calls, fax or email sent to the ATA office.

In its research Human Rights Watch found entire districts where attacks had closed all schools and driven out all teachers and NGOs providing education. They learned that threatening “night letters” are often distributed in mosques or near schools warning students not to attend. President Karzai has publicly acknowledged that about 100,000 children who attended school last year do not go to school today.

The report highlights a disturbing setback for an entire generation of Afghan children whose hopes of having access to edu-

cation were beginning to be realized after the defeat of the Taliban in 2001. Significant progress was made and enrolment soared as restrictions on girls’ education were lifted. However, the gender gap remains huge, and access is still limited for both boys and girls. Secondary level enrolment rates in 2004 were only 5 percent for girls and 20 percent for boys, the report states.

Fear of violence compounds the other significant obstacles to education facing Afghan children. These include having to walk a long way to school or lack of a local school altogether, shortage of teachers (especially female teachers), low quality of teaching, and deep poverty.

The latest attacks are chilling evidence of resurgence of the Taliban and other armed opponents of the government and its supporters. The report lays blame on a weak international response.

An abandoned girls’ school in Wardak province, just south of Kabul, vacated in late 2005 because students discovered an explosive device left inside. A threatening “night letter” ordering the school to be closed was left at the local mosque before the attempted attack.

“This crisis of insecurity, now affecting millions of Afghans, was predictable and avoidable,” it says. “The international community, led by the United States, failed to provide the economic, political, and military support necessary for securing the most basic rights of the Afghan people.”

The report urges the Afghan government, NATO and coalition forces to implement a security policy tied to development needs. “Human Rights Watch believes a key measure of their success or failure should be whether children are able to go to school.”

The report rings the alarm bell that the education system in Afghanistan, already one of the weakest in the world, is facing a serious and growing threat. “The continuing denial of education to most Afghan children is a human rights crisis that should be of serious concern to those who strive to end Afghanistan’s savage cycle of violence and war,” the report states.

To read the full report, *Lessons in Terror*, go to:  
[www.hrw.org/reports/2006/afghanistan0706/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/afghanistan0706/)

## > News from affiliates

# Educating a generation for a culture of peace

— By Nancy Knickerbocker

**“If we are to wage a war on war we must begin with the children.”**

— Mahatma Gandhi

**T**eachers from around the world gathered under the banner of the World Peace Forum to talk, plan and dream together of ways to educate a generation to create a culture of peace.

Education International's President Thulas Nxesi travelled from Johannesburg, South Africa, to Vancouver, Canada, to open the International Peace Educators Conference, held June 25-27, 2006 at the University of British Columbia. The EI delegation also included Deputy Secretary General Jan Eastman.



Thulas Nxesi, EI President, giving a speech at the Peace Forum

For more than a decade EI has been committed to peace education, and has formal policies on disarmament, on children and war, on the elimination of nuclear arms, on education in a global economy, and more. EI promotes the values of gender equity and non-discrimination in education, and reaffirms the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in peaceful, democratic societies.

All of these values were fundamental to the International Peace Educators Conference, which featured hundreds of workshops and seminars for teachers and parents, as well as co-operative games, painting, singing, and a peace museum for children.

Professional artists also worked with teachers and students to create an exhibit of new art from old war toys. Children donated hundreds of toy guns, tanks, soldiers, fighter planes, etc. and had fun transforming them into works of peace art, which were placed on exhibit at the UBC Museum of Anthropology.

From Argentina to Zambia and everywhere in between, participants explored creative strategies to develop a pedagogy of peace. They shared songs for a peaceful planet, circles of dancing peace, one school's successful peace plan, stories of peace and landmines, a peace mural project, a video about a refugee child finding peace in a new land, a drama about the famous children's march during the American civil rights movement, classroom resources about the Nobel Peace Prize laureates, and much more.

Keynote speakers articulated the broad range of work teachers can engage in under the rubric of peace education.

Mary Gordon, the creator of the Roots of Empathy program, described the changes that occur when seven- to nine-year-olds



Students from Olinda, Brazil, came to share the "Living Values" program that has transformed their school into an oasis of peace in a violent neighbourhood. Many children live on the street and are exposed to daily violence, including personally witnessing murder, yet there is no bullying at their school.

© BCTF

are educated about the care and development of babies. For example, a student who was abandoned as a baby asked his teacher if she thought a child who had never been loved could grow up to be a good parent.

Nurit Peled, an Israeli educator, encouraged the participants to keep a sharp eye for nationalist stereotypes about historic enemies that can pervade curriculum and textbooks.

Dr. Michael Apple, from the University of Wisconsin, drew the link between peacemaking and the neo-liberal global agenda for privatization of public education.

Cora Weiss from the Hague Appeal for Peace set the challenge for delegates to engage in peacemaking by critiquing the actions of those in power and standing up and speaking out as members of civil society. "If we wait for the politicians to create peace, we'll be waiting a long time," said Weiss.

Conference participants concluded that education is fundamental to any successful bid for peace on our planet. The

content of peace education is broad, including anti-poverty, social justice and environmental stewardship. In addition, it needs to be rooted in empathy development, open-mindedness, non-violent skills development, constructive problem-solving and support for girls' education.

Among the peace educators' recommendations:

- ▶ Expand the global campaign for peace education started at The Hague Appeal for Peace;
- ▶ Support activities that engage children in cultivating a culture of peace and non-violence;
- ▶ Promote and teach democratic participation with children that will purposely move towards abolishing war;
- ▶ Involve children in global networking;
- ▶ Create programs for the intellectual, religious and national exchange for youth through sports, the arts and education; and
- ▶ Lobby governments to include peace education as part of core curriculum.

Nancy Knickerbocker is editor of *Worlds of Education*.



## Katrina devastation spurs officials to fire teachers, privatize New Orleans schools

One year after Hurricane Katrina and ensuing floods devastated New Orleans, almost all the city's public schools remain closed, thousands of teachers are still without jobs, and their students are facing an uncertain start to the school year.

Joe DeRose, communications director of the United Teachers of New Orleans, says the "so-called reformers" saw the disaster as an opportunity to impose sweeping changes, and they seized it immediately.

Within days of the hurricane, the school board hastily called a news conference to announce that all 4,000 teachers and 3,500 school support workers would be fired.

"Suddenly all our rights as workers had been terminated!" said DeRose. "Most of our members found out they were fired on the 5 o'clock news – at least those that still had electricity. Thousands of professionals who dedicated their careers to educate children in one of the neediest cities in America, and they were treated with utter disrespect."

As if that wasn't bad enough, officials also announced that all public schools would be closed, even those that had suffered only minimal damage, and they would remain closed for the rest of the year.

Brenda Mitchell, President of the UTNO, made a tearful, impassioned public plea. "You can't do this!" she cried. "Our kids are not throw-away kids!"

But they did it anyway.



© UTNO



© UTNO

Bradley elementary school destroyed after Hurricane Katrina

Gentilly public school closed after Hurricane Katrina

Outraged teachers insisted that now, more than ever, the children needed their neighbourhood schools as centres of community and healing. So, the union filed a law suit to force reopening of enough schools to provide an education to the children still living in the ravaged city. By April they had been successful in reopening only four of 116 public schools.

"Democracy was ignored," DeRose said, describing subsequent actions by state legislators. For example, they changed the definition of a "failing school," making it easier for the state to take over governance of most public schools. As well, the governor unilaterally issued an executive order that meant it was no

longer necessary for a majority of teachers and parents to vote for their public school to become a charter school.

In a statement on the UTNO web site, American Federation of Teachers President Edward J. McElroy says: "Louisiana is using — and abusing — this tragedy to do what it couldn't accomplish before: replace most of New Orleans' public schools with privatized or charter schools."

Reg Weaver, President of the National Education Association, also expressed similar concerns. "This amounts to nothing more than the Administration exploiting this crisis in an attempt to push through an unpopular and divisive social policy debate," he said.

While the politicians made their moves, teachers across the country pitched in to help children and colleagues in need. The NEA pledged to raise \$1 million in relief, and have almost reached that goal.

Still, as the new school year begins, New Orleans teachers are facing precarious employment and parents are deeply worried about instability in the system. "Now you have a plethora of policies, school starting dates, admission requirements and a great deal of confusion. It is not educationally sound," says DeRose.

As always, students are the ones who will bear the brunt of a right-wing educational experiment launched in the wake of natural disaster.

## East Timor: teaching in refugee camps

Many teachers and students are still living in refugee camps after three months of violence that shook the country over the summer, according to EI affiliate, the East Timor Teachers' Union.

The ETTU reports that slowly, schools and universities are reopening. However, for many refugee children, the opportunities to learn are limited and

school facilities are rudimentary. On 8 August 2006, EI disbursed financial assistance from the Solidarity Fund to help with the daily functioning of these schools. The funding will be used mainly for the purchase of writing materials and books, to ensure teaching and learning can continue even under such adverse conditions.

Meanwhile, the teachers are also struggling to re-organise their union. The head office in the capital, Dili, was destroyed so the ETTU is now functioning from the homes of several union leaders. Because it is difficult to contact members now displaced throughout the country, an accurate assessment of the repercussions of

the violence on teachers and students is not yet available.

However, ETTU General Secretary Filomeno Salsinha said they have prepared a plan to rebuild the union and consolidate the membership. The rehabilitation plan will help the ETTU to hold a National Congress in 2007.

## > Analysis

# Academic freedom at risk in the knowledge society — By Angele Attard and Monique Fouilhoux

**I**n 1992, when the Sinaia Statement on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy was adopted under the auspices of UNESCO, it stated: “history has shown that violations of academic freedom and institutional autonomy have high costs in intellectual regression, social alienation and economic stagnation.”

Unfortunately, there is much to be said for history repeating itself. There has been declining respect for the principle of academic freedom, to the point where it is being blatantly undermined. Put simply, we are at a crisis point.

The 1997 UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel guarantees this right, stating that “higher-education teaching personnel are entitled to the maintaining of academic freedom.” The 1992 Sinaia Statement provides that “governments and the public must respect the rights of universities to serve as centres of completely free inquiry and of social criticism.”

Academic freedom is not only a right, but a responsibility of higher education institutions and academics. They rely on the state and society to ensure that academic staff are able to carry out their jobs without restrictions, threats to their independence, careers, and even to their personal freedom, safety and indeed their lives.

What is equally intriguing and upsetting is that, although one would think that only progress could have been made over the years, there actually has been a visible deterioration of this



© PNL

principle worldwide. In Northern Europe, there is great concern over visible signs of increased bureaucracy and control, political control of the use of research resources and the reduction of researchers' free right of publication.

Academic staff in most Anglo-American countries have suffered from greater government oversight and management, with the US in particular experiencing a number of disturbing incidents related to the “war on terrorism.” In Latin America, government-related restrictions applied over the years have led to the wearing down of academic freedom, while external pressure on academic staff has also had the same negative effect in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Middle East.

All this has been coupled with recent cases of violence or other forms of abuse against academic staff in a number of countries. In some countries, academic staff believe that to speak out on controversial issues or to make statements that could be interpreted as critical of government or institutional policy will threaten their jobs or opportunities for advancement.

In many industrialised countries, external pressure arises from the ever-growing drive towards globalisation, competitiveness, commodification, and the increasing use of market mechanisms in higher education. Research funding is increasingly an issue of concern, as funding bodies often subject the use thereof to a number of conditions (e.g. regarding the publication and use of research results).

In other countries, the main concern is of a more serious nature, linked to under-development, and internal political or conflict constraints. Experience shows that once these latter countries overcome such problems, academic freedom is not necessarily guaranteed. Problems arising from globalisation and commodification, which are already on the rise, will undeniably grow.

In this context, the adoption of a recommendation on academic freedom and university autonomy by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is a positive sign. It states that these twin principles together constitute “a fundamental requirement of any democratic society” and that they “should be legisla-

tively, preferably constitutionally, guaranteed.” Although this has always been the most desirable aim for the academic community, it seems that even a legal guarantee may not be enough anymore. In many countries where legal protections exist, academic freedom is still undermined in practice. Notwithstanding that this principle has been affirmed time and time again in various national and international legal texts, it is a fragile freedom which constantly needs to be justified and clarified.

Academic freedom is not an outdated privilege or simply a protection granted to the academic community. Indeed, academic freedom is based on a clear rationale that links academics to society. In the context of fostering cultural diversity, the 1992 Sinaia Statement refers to the “obligation” of universities to speak out against all kinds of intolerant behaviour, and refers to the “commitment to open and independent inquiry” as a “defining characteristic of the university.”

Academic freedom is an essential criterion for the development of science, and the development and circulation of knowledge which is genuine, objective and impartial. This is precisely the academic sector's contribution to society. Ironically, it is in the present era of the so-called ‘knowledge society’ that this fundamental link is being completely disregarded outside the academic community.

*Angele Attard is an intern at EI, and Monique Fouilhoux is Coordinator of EI's Education and Employment Unit.*

## &gt; Update

## Rebuilding in the wake of disaster

— By Luc Allaire, Centrale des syndicats du Québec

**F**or everyone in Sri Lanka, 26 December 2004 will remain etched in their memories forever. On that day, a tsunami triggered a series of waves that killed 46,000 people and injured almost 17,000 others. The massive wave destroyed 180,000 houses, demolished 59 schools, and damaged 123 more.

The tragedy was so immense, Sri Lankan teachers knew they had to reach out to the international community for help.

Angela Wijesinghe, President of the All Ceylon Union of Teachers, contacted EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen just four days after the disaster. They set up a committee of five EI-affiliated Sri Lankan trade unions and immediately began to offer assistance to those who had suffered as a result of the tsunami. One of their first actions was to provide post-traumatic therapy sessions for teachers and pupils.

Teachers and their unions around the world responded to EI's appeal for solidarity assistance. A few weeks later, funds

raised by EI affiliates began to reach Sri Lanka and two senior EI representatives visited several regions affected by the disaster.

In February 2005, EI reached an agreement with the Ministry of Education to assist in rebuilding 11 schools located in all regions of the country ravaged by the tsunami. The schools were attended by the various cultural communities: Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim. A total of € 4 million was allocated to rebuild the schools.

Shariputra College in Ahan-gana, east of Beruwela, is located just 100 metres from the sea. The school comprises eight buildings, and is attended by 1,200 pupils from nursery up to pre-university level.

The tsunami killed five people at the school, utterly demolished two of the buildings and badly damaged the other six. What's more, all of the equipment was destroyed and learning resources lost.

"I couldn't even find a chair that wasn't broken," recalls head teacher Padmi Sapukotana.

Up to 61 girls were killed and 100 more injured in an air force raid August 14, 2006 on a children's centre in northern Sri Lanka. The area is among those where the EINO-VIB Post-Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme is rebuilding schools destroyed in the tsunami.

The Ceylon Tamil Teachers' Union reported the victims were among hundreds of students attending an annual course teaching first aid and disaster



© Luc Allaire/CSQ

The work of reconstructing Shariputra College is under way

"We found five bodies under the rubble."

In the wake of the tsunami, teachers knew they needed to restore some semblance of normalcy to the children's lives as soon as possible. They resumed classes only a few months later in temporary accommodation erected by UNICEF.

"But it was exhausting, and the children were traumatised. I went to the camps with other teachers to meet the parents and persuade the children to return to school," explains Jagath Rajipakse, Secretary of the Sri Lankan Independent Teachers' Union. "It was a really serious matter: these children could not spend any longer without education – particular-

ly the thousands of orphans."

As the ruins of the old school were demolished, teachers and students struggled to continue teaching and learning under conditions that were far from ideal.

"Today, though, we are eager to move into the new school because teaching under an awning is hard work," Rajipakse added. "There are no partitions. And when it rains, we teach under an umbrella. It is very difficult to motivate pupils in such conditions."

The reconstruction work commenced in April 2006 and is making good progress. Shariputra College is expected to be rebuilt within a few months.

## EI deplores killing of Sri Lankan students

management, as well as leadership skills and principles of gender equality. The course was in its fourth day when government jets bombed the site.

The government described the target as a training camp for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and justified the killings saying that the deceased were child soldiers. However, a UNICEF spokesperson who visited the site said most victims were girls

aged 16 to 19, and there was no evidence that any were rebels.

Education International wrote to Sri Lankan President H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa, expressing alarm at the recent upsurge in violence. EI called for an immediate cessation of hostilities on both sides and for negotiations to resume. "There can be no military solution to this lengthy conflict," EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen said in the letter.



## &gt; Publications

# Anti-poverty promises ring hollow without radical reform to aid systems



© Manoocher Deghati/IRIN

**C**ertainly it was an inspiring historic moment when millions of global citizens came together demanding more aid, cancellation of unjust debt, and creation of fair trade rules. Rock stars raised millions, and G8 leaders in Gleneagles pledged to increase global aid by \$50 billion annually.

A year later, world leaders face the litmus test: Were all their fine words merely empty promises?

Fortunately, organizations like Education International and ActionAid International are working to hold them accountable. ActionAid's latest report, Real Aid 2, takes a critical look at obstacles to the Millennium Development Goals, and pro-

poses concrete reforms to transform aid from charity to solidarity. It states:

"If last year's promises are kept, by 2010 global aid will have leapt from \$79 billion to almost \$130 billion, with half of this increase going to Africa, the region furthest off-track in achieving the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. Spent well, this money would make a lasting difference in the lives of millions of people across the developing world who live in extreme poverty and see their basic rights – to education, safe water and healthcare – violated daily."

For those dollars to be well spent, radical changes are needed in how aid is planned, managed and delivered, according to ActionAid. Their researchers calculated how

official aid figures exaggerate the generosity of rich donor countries. They conclude that roughly half of global aid – about \$37 billion – is "phantom aid" not genuinely available to poor countries. The wealthiest nations have highest proportion of phantom aid.

"The richest and largest economies, those of the G8, show up both as the meanest and lowest quality donors," they report. "For example, about two thirds of aid from the world's biggest donor, the US, is phantom aid. Once this has been discounted, the US gives just \$25 per person each year in 'real aid.' In real aid terms, the Norwegians are almost fourteen times more generous, and the Irish over five times more." Key components of phantom aid are:

- Poorly targeted aid (\$6.9 billion): Funds going to countries not because of most urgent need, but because of geopolitical, commercial or historical factors.
- Debt cancellation that is double-counted as aid (\$5.7 billion): This is particularly unjust given that the debts cancelled were often incurred for purposes that had nothing to do with fighting poverty.

- Over-priced and ineffective technical assistance (\$11.8 billion): One quarter of global aid is spent on technical assistance, yet it often failed to build capacity and even eroded existing capacities in developing nations.

ActionAid researchers looked into the history and current reality of technical assistance, which constitutes by far the largest component of phantom aid. They found it to be ineffective, over-priced, donor-driven, and based on an outdated model of development.

The authors conclude that for technical assistance to be meaningful, reform must be rooted in four key principles: "putting recipient countries in the lead; giving them the freedom to choose their own development path; mutual accountability between donors and recipients; and country specificity."

Among the recommendations for southern governments, ActionAid also urges that women's rights be fully taken into account in project planning and implementation.

To read the full report, see: [www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)

## EI and ActionAid strike strategic partnership

In April 2006, senior representatives of Education International and ActionAid International met in Johannesburg to forge an exciting new partnership. Together they built strong relationships of trust and clear political convergence on a strategy to help achieve Education For All. They agreed on seven key areas:

- On macro-economics, especially the damage done to na-

tional education budgets by policies of the International Monetary Fund

- On opposition to the expansion of non-professional teachers and the devastating consequences for quality education and equal access

- On violence against girls, and the need to provide safe learning environments

- On HIV/AIDS, the need to expand educational programs and defend the rights of those living with HIV

- On school-level governance

- On privatization of public education and the threat to free quality schooling

- On building a code of ethics for teachers

## &gt; World Teachers' Day

## 40 years later, teachers' recommendation remains a touchstone

This year marks the 12th year we have celebrated World Teachers' Day, but the idea of having a special day to mark the enormous contributions of teachers everywhere is much older than that.

The idea is at least 40 years old, and its spirit is articulated in the now-famous document that essentially serves as a charter of rights and responsibilities for the teaching profession worldwide.

On 5 October 1966, a Special Intergovernmental Conference adopted the UNESCO/ILO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers. For the first time ever, teachers throughout the world had an instrument that defined their responsibilities and asserted their rights as professionals and as workers. In adopting the Recommendation, governments unanimously recognized the fundamental importance for every society of having highly-qualified teachers who are equipped to do their best for the next generation.

"It's a charter of immense significance," according to one veteran teacher who was behind the scenes of that historic development. Norman Goble, former General Secretary of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession, said that the WCOTP "nagged UNESCO for years for some kind of a charter of teachers' rights and responsibilities."

Eventually UNESCO agreed, and formally asked the WCOTP to prepare a working document that could form the foundation for such a charter. The WCOTP turned to the Canadian

Teachers' Federation for assistance, and the CTF asked teacher trade unionist Charlie Ovans to write the first draft.

"Ovans was a giant of the formative years of teacher unionism in Canada," said Goble. "He was a great man, a great thinker." Ovans's work eventually went through many drafts in the hands of other writers, was transformed and subjected to lengthy discussions in many forums, but finally the document was indeed passed on October 5, 1966.

Goble believed the Recommendation was so important that it ought to be commemorated annually. "I was very much in favour of giving it the maximum exposure and promotion." He took the idea of an annual event to the WCOTP Executive Board, which wholeheartedly passed a recommendation to go forward to UNESCO.

"Of course the wheels grind very slowly, so I was long gone [from the WCOTP] by the time it was actually taken up," he said.

That happened in 1993 at the EI Constituent Congress in Stockholm. Federico Mayor, then Director General of UNESCO, announced the official designation of October 5 as World Teachers' Day, with the first one to be celebrated in 1994.

Goble said it's important that the work continues to this day, that the ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts (CEART) still exists to monitor compliance with the Recommendation, and still rules on violations of teachers' rights. "Unfortunately, it's also interesting to reflect on how far we've slipped back since then," he added.



Norman Goble

EI Deputy Secretary General Elie Jouen also reflected upon the distinctly different political landscape today, compared to when the Recommendation was crafted 40 years ago.

"In the 1960s governments really believed in the power of education to change societies. There were many newly independent nations coming out of colonial rule and it was also in the context of the Cold War," Jouen said. "Education was considered by many governments as a tool to win the ideological battle."

The ILO/UNESCO Recommendation is still very valid and very important, especially as teach-

ers confront neoliberal globalization and its impulse towards undermining and privatization of public education.

"I have no doubt that if a new debate were to take place on a recommendation on the status of teaching, it would be very much weaker today than the 1966 statement," Jouen said.

Indeed, as part of its role in defending the teaching profession and keeping the spirit of the 1966 Recommendation alive, on World Teachers' Day EI will host a series of events in Brussels. These include a Pan-European panel, a news conference and an international panel chaired by EI President Thulas Nxesi.

At that event, EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen will release a major report to the CEART, with updates on the extent to which governments throughout the world are complying with the provisions of the Recommendation. Watch the next edition of *Worlds of Education* for full details of the report.

### SEPTEMBER 2006

05-06 > EI at OECD regarding PISA 2006—Paris, France

09-11 > 11 EI Asia-Pacific Regional Conference—Jakarta, Indonesia

14-15 > Round Table for member organisations in Central & Eastern Europe—Sofia, Bulgaria

25-26 > Pan-European Seminar on Women's Issues—Budapest, Hungary

### OCTOBER 2006

05 > World Teachers' Day—Global

06 > Pan-European Round Table on Vocational Education and Training—Brussels, Belgium

### NOVEMBER 2006

09-10 > Annual EI Development Cooperation meeting—Brussels, Belgium

ei calendar