

If progress is to continue, development partnerships need to be strengthened locally, nationally and internationally and funding for education must be put on more reliable footing.

New resources will have to be mobilized, while old ones maintained. There are many opportunities for civil society and the private sector, with their energy, capital and know-how, to play a larger role too.

Reaching the marginalized, the focus of today's meeting, is the final hurdle to achieving not only universal primary education but also a wide range of other education targets. Now is the time to abandon old

Unemployment and illiteracy go hand in hand, as one problem leads to another. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Middle East and North Africa have the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world, with one-fifth of 15 to 24-year-olds unemployed; in Egypt, youth account for over 60 percent of total unemployed.

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenges we face are considerable, but far from insurmountable. Look at all we've achieved so far.

Since 1800, the world's population has multiplied six times, yet average life expectancy has more than doubled and real income has risen more than nine times, according to UN estimates.

Taking a shorter perspective, in the past fifty years, poverty was reduced more than in the previous 500 years combined. In 2005, compared with 1955, the average woman on Planet Earth ate one-third more calories of food, buried one-third as many of her children and could expect to live one-third longer.

She was less likely to die as a result of war, murder, childbirth, accidents, tornadoes, flooding, famine, whooping cough, tuberculosis, malaria, diphtheria, typhus, typhoid, measles, smallpox, scurvy or polio. She was less likely, at any given age, to get cancer, heart disease or stroke. And yes, she was more likely to be literate and to have finished school.

By any standard, this is an astonishing human achievement. There is every reason to believe then that by sustaining the momentum and continuing to share best practices, our current education targets will also be met soon.

Thank you.