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**Education for All: meeting the challenges of the 21st century**

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# **Education for all: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century**

**Speech by Julia Gillard, Chair of Global Partnership for Education**

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED 18:30 BST/19:30 GMT Monday 22 May 2017**

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## ***Introduction***

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, Professors Saul Estrin and Pauline Rose, distinguished guests, and, above all, students.

I am delighted to be here in London as it heads in to summer, which of course means its slightly colder here than in my home town of Adelaide, Australia, where winter beckons.

You are too intelligent an audience for me to now subject you to some cheesy line about being sustained by the warmth of your welcome, whatever the weather.

So instead, let me simply say it is always a privilege to be at the London School of Economics, which is rightly proud of its academic rigour, global focus and world leading research. It feels absolutely right to come to a great institution of learning to talk about education. As a result, tonight I intend to focus my remarks on the challenge of ensuring every child on the planet gets to go to a quality school. This is a cause close to my heart and one I am honoured to have the opportunity to pursue as Chair of the Global Partnership for Education.

But it would be remiss if I failed to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to LSE. I am grateful that I was able in June 2015 to serve briefly as a Senior Visiting Fellow at your Institute for Public Affairs in order to participate in the Above the Parapet project, which focused on women's experiences in leadership. It was a prescient research endeavour given 2016 would see your nation again being led by a woman and the year would end with a US presidential election in which gender was so much to the fore.

While this is happening by accident not design, my LSE visits seem to bring me to the United Kingdom at critical political moments. My 2015 visit occurred in the aftermath of that year's general election, which had redrawn the electoral map with a catastrophic defeat for British Labour while the Scottish National Party was delighting in its surge.

This visit is only a few short, frantic weeks of campaigning away from another election day.

The time in between has been filled with deep questions and political intensity. The world watched as Scotland voted to stay in the United Kingdom. The world gasped in surprise when the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union.

Such political high drama has not been confined to the UK. Democracies around the world are being roiled by new forces, leading to unpredictable outcomes.

These forces include rising inequality within nations, the reshaping of work by new technology, digital disruption, and faster, more efficient transport technologies.

Our world of rapid change is also one tinged with anxiety. As anyone living in a city like London or Paris, or Berlin knows, the risk of terrorism is very real, whether foreign or locally grown.

Many nations, including this one, have also felt the impact of record numbers of people around the world forcibly displaced by war or fleeing great hardship. Among them are 21.3 million refugees, half of whom are under the age of 18.<sup>1</sup>

Significantly, as all this is happening, how we access information has entirely changed in ways that can empower us, but can also enable fake news to thrive or actual news to be presented in more hyped up, partisan ways.

All this means that politics is increasingly framed as a contest between those who accept globalisation, indeed feel its benefits, embrace diversity and have the skills to adapt to change, and those who feel left behind and hanker for simpler times in more homogenous communities.

Think of how the constituencies for and against Brexit have been characterised and analysed. Think how differently this great global city of London voted from those who live in the valleys of the place of my birth, Wales. Yes, I was born here, though I realise there is no Welsh lilt left in my voice.

Tonight, against this back drop of fragmented, even fractious community sentiment, I want to discuss with you why I think we can still forge an important new political consensus around solving a global problem.

### ***Learning Crisis***

That problem is the global learning crisis which today means that there are 263 million children of primary and secondary school age out of school and out of hope. In addition, it is estimated that there are an additional 130 million children who can barely read or write, even though they are attending primary school.

Without immediate and radical action to invest more in education, over half of the world's upcoming youth generation – 825 million of the 1.6 billion young people who will be alive in 2030 – will simply not be equipped to work and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The ones who miss out will be defined by pre-existing patterns of poverty.

On current trends, in low-income countries, by 2030, only one in ten children will acquire basic secondary education skills. The vast majority – 9 out of 10 – will be lucky to complete primary school.

Even in middle-income countries, less than half of all children will acquire minimum secondary school skills.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the jobs of tomorrow will require higher skill levels than today, given it is estimated 2 billion jobs will be lost to technology by 2050.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR UK Figures at a glance.

<sup>2</sup> Education Commission Report, page 13

This divergence between skills acquired and skills required could create a cycle of joblessness, poverty and despair if we keep plodding along our current path.

Condemning hundreds of millions of children to a dismal future, regardless of their aptitude is a huge injustice, a violation of basic human rights and poses significant risks.

### ***Hard headed arguments for education***

Indeed, inequality and joblessness, especially among young people, have been cited for several years in a row as top global risk factors by the World Economic Forum.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation recently published a report called *Africa At a Tipping Point*,<sup>3</sup> which provides a clear analysis of the implications of the continent's rapidly growing youth population.

Its warning is stark. Africa could reap a demographic dividend from the energy and talent of its young people or it could fail to educate them and as a result see significant economic losses, armed conflict, brain-drain and social and political unrest.

I hardly need to remind this audience of the connection between higher levels of education and economic growth. But to put some dimensions around it, we know a dollar invested in a child's education in a low-income country generates more than \$5 in additional gross earnings annually, even after taking costs into account and allowing for the variable quality of education<sup>4</sup>.

In lower-middle income countries, the rate of return is \$2.50 for every dollar invested. If the quality of that education improves, the returns are even higher.<sup>5</sup>

If you still need convincing: individual earnings rise by about 10 per cent for each additional year of schooling a child receives; and if every child in low- income countries were able to complete secondary school by 2030, income per capita would increase by 75 per cent.

On these numbers alone, education is obviously a good investment and is the clearest pathway for nations to leave poverty and aid dependence behind.

So I am pleased that LSE, which obviously has a knack for scooping up former Prime Ministers, has joined with Oxford University to create a Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development, chaired by David Cameron. I am sure this work will bring new insights on how to foster growth in fragile states but I am equally confident it will end up identifying quality education as a foundation stone of economic advancement.

But as we know from our own societies, while education matters for economic growth, it matters for so much more. We know, for example that education is a significant determinant of the peace and stability of societies.

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<sup>3</sup> *Africa At A Tipping Point*, Mo Ibrahim Foundation

<sup>4</sup> Education Commission report, page 35

<sup>5</sup> Education Commission report, page 34

Higher levels of schooling, provided opportunities to learn are equitably shared, can significantly cut the risk of conflict.

Youth without education are at greater risk of recruitment by rebel groups and we know that a major motivating factor for Syrian families seeking refuge in Europe and elsewhere is access to education for their children.

So if we want to reduce armed conflict and stem irregular migration flows, equitable access to quality education is essential.

It is now also crystal clear that education improves health outcomes.

Better educated populations make healthier choices for themselves and their families. Should an epidemic strike, higher education levels make it easier for communities to understand what is happening and abide by health warnings.

We know education is a preventive factor in the spread of HIV – especially for girls. Every additional year of secondary school significantly reduces a girl's risk of contracting the virus.

An educated mother is also much more likely to marry and have children later, to vaccinate her children and to have them sleep under mosquito nets to prevent malaria.

And of course there are huge economic benefits to be gained from women entering the workforce and nations utilising the talents and potential of the whole population. Indeed, education is the bedrock of women's economic empowerment.

Given the many and varied benefits of education, it is saddening and gallingly irrational to see that aid to education from the world's richest nations dropped from 13 per cent of total aid in 2002 to 10 per cent in 2014. By contrast, the share of aid for health rose from 15 to 18 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately, there is now a growing momentum for change. As the intellectual case has become clearer, the voices for education have grown louder.

I am glad to see many of our friends in this fight here tonight – education campaigners who are working with us to make sure we finally get this right.

All this is what gives me heart that now is the moment to strike a new global consensus around prioritising education for every child.

Just as the world rallied in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis to find new ways to collaborate and mobilise resources on health – now it is education's time.

I am convinced that people everywhere are able to embrace the education agenda.

For a business leader searching for talent, whether here in Europe or in emerging markets in Africa, quality education for all matters.

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<sup>6</sup> Education Commission report.

For a security analyst, fretting over the risk of conflict, quality education for all matters.

For a voter who worries about rising numbers of asylum seekers, quality education for all matters.

For a feminist, who admires Malala's courage, quality education for all matters.

And the list could go on and on.

Whether an individual voted Leave or Remain, Trump or Clinton, Le Pen or Macron, educating children should provide a point of unity.

I am also delighted to be able to say, speaking here in London tonight, that the case for education is one the United Kingdom can put powerfully in the world.

The UK has reaffirmed cross-party commitment to maintaining overseas development assistance spending at 0.7 % of GDP. There has also been a clear recognition in the UK's own aid priorities that education matters.

It would be a powerful demonstration of the UK's continuing strong voice in the world if, post-election, it increased its own support for education and led others in the G7 to do so.

### ***GPE's model***

Just as the case for education has never been stronger, the best ways to make a difference have never been clearer.

The Global Partnership for Education, which I am honoured to Chair, is the only global fund solely dedicated to education in developing countries.

I can confidently say to you that GPE is better now at the complex work of investing in and strengthening education outcomes in developing countries than it has ever been before.

With more than a decade's experience and several years of organisational reform behind us, we know that what makes all the difference, is whether or not there is a robust national plan to guide the development of a strong education system.

It is not just a matter of deploying more dollars or pounds to pay more teachers or build more schools but of ensuring accountability and focusing on results right through the education system.

For example Tunisia and Vietnam spend a similar amount per pupil on primary and secondary education as a percentage of GDP. In fact Tunisia spends slightly more.<sup>7</sup> But Vietnam scores considerably higher in international secondary education tests.

Vietnam's educational achievements are due to a number of factors, including strong cultural support for education and for teachers. But key to driving change has been the fact that Vietnam,

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<sup>7</sup> Education Commission, p. 53

which I am proud to say has been a GPE partner country since 2003,<sup>8</sup> decided to develop and implement a national plan to systematically improve access to and the quality of education, and to hold itself publicly accountable by publishing learning results.

GPE has fine-tuned a model of education funding and partnership so we can see more success stories like Vietnam.

Our first step in working with a developing country partner government is to analyse the existing education sector, to determine the scale of need and to bring everyone into a single planning process, including donors, local civil society and think tanks, teachers and private sector philanthropists.

This process leads to the generation of a transparent, high quality plan, but it must also meet other criteria: in order for a plan to be approved and then funded by GPE, our partner countries must include a financed proposal to systematically collect data and report learning results.

Very significantly they must also step up their own expenditure on education. Here I want to emphasise that although we urgently need to scale up aid for education, it is domestic funding that is, and will continue to be, the source of the vast majority of funds.

As a result of our focus on driving domestic investment, between 2002 and 2013, GPE partner countries increased their education budgets from 15.2 to 16.6 per cent of total government expenditure, more than three times the average increase in all low and middle-income countries.

Not only is GPE funding linked to domestic spending requirements, it is also results-based.

30 per cent of GPE's main education grant to a country is linked to the achievement of agreed results in equity, efficiency and learning.

### ***Replenishing funds***

But as efficient and effective as the GPE model is, to make a difference we urgently need more resources.

The Education Commission, an initiative of Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg, which was led by the UK's very own Gordon Brown, has recommended that GPE be scaled up to resource levels of \$2 billion a year by 2020 and \$4 billion a year by 2030.

To get to this goal, GPE is campaigning right now for funding of \$3.1 billion from existing and new donors for its upcoming replenishment for 2018 to 2020.

In the next three years, this would enable the partnership to support 89 countries, which are home to 870 million children and adolescents and 78 per cent of the world's out-of-school children.

We would be able to put more than 25 million children through primary and lower-secondary school, including almost 15 million in countries affected by fragility or conflict.

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<sup>8</sup> GPE website, Vietnam country page

But in order to mobilise the funds needed, GPE also recognises that we need new mechanisms that provide additional incentives to our country partners to raise other forms of external co-financing and we need new donors to join the education challenge.

The old ways of doing aid, where a small number of donor country governments write the lion's share of grants for developing countries, just will not be enough.

So GPE is now able to offer new ways for donors and funders to invest.

Donors can directly invest in GPE's newly-created Knowledge and Innovation Exchange – we call it KIX. Donors that want to maximise impact can contribute to KIX to ensure new research makes an immediate difference on the ground. Our aim is for every country across the partnership to have, in a useable form, what has been learned by others - so the best new approaches can be included in an education plan.

For donors who want to multiply the value of their contributions, we are creating an incentive pool of funding which will provide developing country partners with an additional dollar for every three dollars they raise for education from other sources such as multilateral development banks, bilateral donors and the private sector. One clear use of this funding could be to create packages with the World Bank so that its soft loan International Development Association (or 'IDA') funding becomes more attractive to use in education.

Donors can also now target their financing to certain issues. For example a donor with a particular interest in girls education could invest in female teachers and ensuring girls have safe, clean toilets at school, so their menstrual cycle is not a barrier to attendance.

At GPE we recognise that a plan is only as good as its implementation. We ensure implementation is reviewed but we also believe that many local eyes make a difference.

Consequently, GPE supports civil society coalitions in over 50 countries to advocate for education and hold their officials to account. Just last year the coalition in Malawi helped to uncover 3 million kwacha (about 4000 US dollars or just over 3000 pounds) in misappropriated funds meant for a school to help it buy chalk, textbooks, and maintain its classrooms.

By building the capacity of school management committees and parent-teacher associations, engaging advocacy organizations, and investing in a strong and vibrant civil society, we are making sure accountability works from the bottom up.

### ***Working together***

GPE now has the capacity to drive results, but given the scale of the global education challenge, even with \$3.1 billion in our fund, we are not aspiring to work alone.

That's why we supported the creation of Education Cannot Wait, a new fund to provide education support when there is a crisis or emergency. It's also why we are supporting the campaign to create a new International Financing Facility for Education (or IFFEd), which would focus on creating a new pool of concessional loan financing for education for middle income countries,



especially lower - middle income ones. Just as he was at the centre of the Education Commission work, the indefatigable Gordon Brown is championing ECW and IFFEd.

All this energy and activity is testament to my central proposition to you tonight, which is *now* is the time for education.

### ***How you can help***

We have the pieces in place to bring about a transformation in global education that will have lasting benefit across the sustainable development agenda. We know what to do.

We have an opportunity to start an ambitious scale up; to deliver the step-change that is needed in global education financing.

But to realise the promise of this moment, we need to put the global education crisis – and the opportunity to fix it – at the front of the minds of world leaders. Prime Ministers and Presidents need to see education as a necessary investment akin to the investments they make in national infrastructure and defence. Education is not an expense, it's an investment in peace, security and prosperity. As Nelson Mandela put it so succinctly: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

We need you to join this effort because the world faces a stark choice:

We can continue business as usual, and face the consequences of denying hope and opportunity to rising numbers of young people in some of the poorest and least stable parts of the world.

Or we can step up now and make the investment in education that will pay dividends of prosperity and peace for the entire world.

The morally right choice and the smart choice are one and the same. We need to deliver change and create education for all.

I ask you to leave tonight resolved to support GPE's campaign by telling your Prime Minister or your President that you'll be watching how your country contributes to GPE's replenishment and that you expect them to scale up investment, and to scale it up significantly.

There's an army of civil society groups out there advocating for global education and campaigning for the success of GPE's replenishment. Join them, sign their petitions, and take action.

And for the digital natives out there, show your support on social media. I'll be tweeting too. Use the hashtag #FundEducation.

Let's act together to shape the future. To make the case for investment in global education.

I thank you for your kind attention.

**ENDS**