

Friday, 16 May 2007

Dear Mr. Koji Omi,

We are writing to you ahead of the G8 Finance Ministers meeting in Potsdam next week, to ask for your urgent attention to the issue of basic education.

On 2nd May, the European Commission, World Bank and UK government co-convened an extraordinary meeting 'Keeping Our Promises on Education' in Brussels. It was intended that this meeting draw up an action plan to provide the financing to get 80 million children into school and enable second chance learning for almost a billion adults. We were disappointed to note that most G8 countries did not see fit to send a Minister to this meeting. Consequently, the outcomes of the meeting fell far short of expectations – pledges of new money will enable less than a million more children to go to school in the next year. Children from Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, India, Columbia and a range of different European countries travelled to address the conference and were disappointed to hear that the response to their heartfelt campaigning was so weak.

We now urge you to use the opportunity of the upcoming G8 meetings to put the world back on track for achieving the dream of Education For All. We feel that the G8 must play a pivotal role in enabling all to benefit from a public good which our citizens value highly. Doing so will also help developing countries gain the benefits of economic growth, lower rates of HIV infection and mother and child mortality, proven to be associated with education.

We are deeply concerned that the latest available data shows that aid to basic education from all rich countries fell from a high of \$4.4 billion in 2004 to under \$3 billion in 2005. GCE's School Report shows that far too few donors are paying their 'fair share' – the proportion of the funding gap which matches their national wealth. At the present time, just five donors account for over 60% of the aid available for basic education in poor countries. Japanese government, shockingly, lies at 17th in the league table of OECD countries (refer to the report card of GCE at

<http://www.campaignforeducation.org/documents/news/2007/April/En%20Report%20Cards.pdf>). It is essential that the G8 governments, in particular, grasp their responsibility in reversing the education crisis. **If G8 countries paid their fair share, this would enable some 60 million or so children to go to school.**

GCE believes that 2007 must be a breakthrough year that finally delivers the much-needed resources to ensure that no future generation lives without the light and hope of education. Your leadership in this field will earn you the respect of over 10 million campaigners who have been mobilising since 2000 in support of this cause. Last month, children met the Foreign Minister, Mr. Aso to submit the messages of 1071 people in Japan, asking more and better aid for basic education. This demonstrates that the strength of public support for the principle that all should have an equal opportunity to improve their lives through education.

GCE and JNNE are demanding that:

- Donors immediately commit their fair share of the \$9 billion needed this year to get every girl and boy into quality education

- Donors publicly pledge that by 2009, aid to basic education will reach \$16 billion per year to enable adults, children and infants to lift themselves out of poverty through education
- Donors back the Education For All Fast Track Initiative with real, upfront resource, to encourage truly ambitious planning by developing countries

We therefore urge you to use the G8 meetings to announce that an adequate proportion of planned aid increases between now and 2015 will be used to meet these demands. This means that our government must increase the contribution to basic education to US\$1.1 billion a year by the end of 2009. Since low-income countries are particularly disadvantaged, we urge that you back the Education For All Fast-Track Initiative, earmarking 60% of new funds for FTI-endorsed country plans, and allocating US\$100 million to the Catalytic Fund of FTI this year.

The time for warm words is over. The time for action is now. Please ensure that the milestone events deliver real and tangible results so that no more lives are blighted by poverty and ignorance.

Yours sincerely,

Nobuhiko Katayama
Representative
Japan NGO Network for Education (JNNE)