

**OPENING SPEECH**

**BY**

**YAW ANSU, DIRECTOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AFRICA REGION,  
WORLD BANK**

**AT THE**

**3<sup>RD</sup> REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

**ON**

**SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN AFRICA**

**LA PALM ROYAL BEACH HOTEL, ACCRA**

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### **3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Conference on Secondary Education and Training in Africa (SEIA)**

#### **Opening statement by Yaw Ansu, Director Human Development Africa Region, World Bank**

Honorable Minister of Education for Ghana, Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegations, Country Representatives, Colleagues representing Development Partners, including the World Bank Country Director for Ghana, members of the press, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is an honor and a privilege to be here with you for the Conference on Secondary Education in Africa.

On behalf of the World Bank, I would like to express my deep felt thanks to the Government of Ghana, and especially the Honorable Minister of Education, Science and Sports, for hosting this conference. I would also like to thank our co-organizer, ADEA and its Executive Secretary, Mr. Mamadou Ndoeye, for working with us.

We are here for the next three days to discuss secondary education in Africa.

#### **Why focus on Secondary Education?**

Because we are beginning to be successful in promoting primary education. Thanks to the progress made in boosting primary school enrolments through the efforts of African countries, supported by the Education For All campaign, the gross enrollment rate at primary school level has increased from 63% in 1990 to 93% in 2004. Similarly, the primary completion has increased from 49% to 62% in the same period. Consequently, the demand for secondary education is rising very fast in Africa: Faster than for primary education and faster than in any other region in the world. Where are all these primary school graduates going to go? If they do not find opportunities to continue their education to prepare them for productive employment, will parents continue to make the sacrifices to put their children through primary school? Very unlikely. So, in order to sustain and improve on the progress made on primary school enrolment, we need to now also focus on secondary education and training.

In most countries in Africa now, including all the countries represented here, there is a strong desire to become competitive in today's globalized economy, so our economies will grow faster and improve the lives of our people. But the global economy of today is increasingly based on knowledge, technology and skill. Where will the scientists, engineers, doctors, managers and skill workers come from if our focus is only on primary education? In fact, can our nations fully justify the resources that they are putting in primary education, if they do not lead eventually to the provision of this trained labor force to make our countries competitive? Clearly not. Yet, secondary school enrolment in African countries averages only 30%, compared to 61% for developing countries worldwide, and close to 100% in East Asia. And quality in most cases is not where it needs to be.

#### **What Needs To Be Done?**

While we continue to seek progress on primary education, we need to now also increase our focus on secondary education. We need to expand access improve quality and relevance, and improve equity - both between boys and girls, between urban and rural areas, between the rich and poor,

and across regions within countries. This is not going to be easy; I will require fundamental changes in the way we approach secondary education. For example, the curricula will in many cases need to be revised to make them more relevant to today's needs. In many countries in the region secondary curricula have not been revised for decades. Secondary school programs continue to reflect the elite traditions of academic schooling that are inappropriate for today's rapidly changing society and labor market. And where curriculum reforms have been attempted they have often had limited success. The increased focus on secondary education will also require resources.

### **Where Will the Resources Come From?**

Needed resources will have to come from three main sources:

- 1) Efficiency—getting more from what we spend
- 2) Additional efforts from countries (governments and parent) and hopefully external development partners.
- 3) Economic growth

On average, the cost of a student in lower secondary school in Africa is three times that of primary education; the cost of upper secondary education is six-times that of primary, and the cost of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is over 12 times that of primary. What can we do to bring these cost ratios down?

You may also be interested to know that Africa spends roughly the same percent of GDP on overall education as the East Asian countries. In 2004, African countries spent 4.6% of GDP on education, comparable to the between 4.3% and 4.6% in Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. One can find similar ratios in the 1960s and the 1980s. But the outcomes are very different, mainly because of the efficiency in the use of resources and just as important, faster economic growth that translates the GDP percentages in East Asia into significantly larger resources. So, to sustain progress in the secondary school agenda, we need efficiency in the use of resources in education and we need policies to accelerate growth.

Lastly, some countries may actually have to do much better in providing resources for education. Whereas the averages educational expenditure in Africa is about 4.6% of GDP, in some countries, it is as low as 2%.

### **Conclusion**

As you can see we have a large agenda. During this conference we seek your inputs and opinions. The conference version of the SEIA Synthesis Report you have received brings together conclusions from the two previous regional conferences (Kampala 2003 and Dakar 2004), the thematic studies, and country working groups. I hope your feedback and recommendation will improve it and truly make it a "landmark" discussion document that provides all stakeholders with "food for thought" and a tool for "setting the reform agenda". I look forward to have a fruitful exchange of ideas for the agenda for Secondary Education in Africa. Thank you