

ANNEX IV

**Opening address by Mr Abraham B. Borishade, Minister of Education of Nigeria
and President of the 46th session of the International Conference on Education**

Honourable Ministers,
Mr Director-General,
Your Excellencies,
Madam Director of IBE,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great humility that I rise to thank you all for the confidence you have reposed in me by your unanimous gesture of electing me to guide, with your cooperation, the deliberations of this 46th session of the International Conference on Education, which is taking place at this moment when we are all girding our loins to face the challenges of a new millennium.

Beyond my person, I consider your gesture as an honour to my country, and our President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, joins me in thanking you all. The honour is also, of course, being shared by our dear continent of Africa. In that context, I am most grateful to my colleagues from the African continent who kindly proposed my candidature for this position of honour and to all of you from all regions of the world for your generous acceptance of their proposal.

Please allow me at this point to pay due tribute to our outgoing President of the 45th session for her devotion and commitment in guiding our last session to a successful conclusion. Mr President, please accept our thanks for your exemplary performance and contribution to our corporate work.

It is my determination to uphold the established excellence of our Conferences and with your help and support I am sure our deliberations and their results will live up to the high expectation of us all.

Dear Colleagues,

At its 30th session two years ago, the General Conference, in a forward-looking resolution, recognized the renewed mandate of the International Bureau of Education and the importance of the contribution that it is called upon to make for the achievement of the Education for All Programme of UNESCO. That resolution also bid the IBE to promote policy dialogue between decision-makers, researchers, educators and other partners in the educational process by organizing the 46th session of the International Conference on Education which, taking account of the four pillars of the Delors Report – in particular “Learning to live together” – will focus on ways of ensuring that each learner masters the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the individual’s and the society’s intellectual and moral development.

This is the mandate of our gathering and this is the challenge for our deliberations in the next few days; our deliberations which are placed under the label of “Educational content and learning strategies for living together in the twenty-first century; problems and solutions”.

Dear Colleagues and Mr Director-General,

Dialogue and exchanges of ideas have always been essential hallmarks of the functioning of the International Conference on Education. And in the true spirit of dialogue, wide-ranging consultations have taken place in preparation for this Conference, involving Member States and

their educational institutions, Ministers of Education, Members of the IBE College of Fellows and several other specialists in the field of education. This preparation has resulted in the rich and varied materials that we have before us, to help our discussions.

The hard reality today in education in many Member States is that in spite of the valiant efforts made in many countries, the achievement of our set goals in education, continue to elude us. It is true that there has been some progress and some achievements, most of them very laudable. But the stark reality is that we are far from achieving our aspiration of providing appropriate relevant and meaningful education for the individuals and for our societies.

So our duty here is, through exchange and dialogue, to fashion out plans for pooling our intellectual resources and sharing our practical experiences in a corporate effort to move our societies forward towards the excellence required for ensuring education for all, quality education for all, and education that is conducive to helping us meet the challenges of this dawning millennium – particularly the challenge of learning to live together.

Dear Colleagues,

You will soon be called upon to examine for approval the plans proposed by the Secretariat and our Bureau for the pursuit of our work at this session. It is a plan full of innovation and crafted out for maximum interaction among the participants and for ensuring the most in-depth examination of the many facets of the value and quality of Education for All. This, I am persuaded, will afford us the opportunities for intensified international dialogues and exchanges of experiences on the contents, the methods and the structures of teaching and education and at every level.

In reviewing the draft programme of work, I would humbly ask you to have firmly in mind the expected results of our deliberations and the proposals and recommendation that we hope will emerge from our work. We should ask ourselves to what extent are these plans suited to the full and thorough examination of the existing situation in education, are they properly geared towards enabling us to determine the “criteria for selection and organization of the contents and methods of our education” and finally, would the proposed format of work help us identify issues of shared concerns by all and the best practices as they exist today?

Dear Colleagues,

If at the end of our deliberation at this session we achieve these goals and we are able to present proposals and recommendations for strengthening national capacities for articulating and implementing innovative and effective educational policies and reforms; if our recommendations are truly geared towards sharply refocusing the Education for All movement and giving new life and meaning to the now established dialogue between our nations, through our Ministers of Education and other stakeholders in the field of education; if our proposals are clearly tailored for contributing to the strengthening of the “links between education, peace and the capacity to live together, then we would have made a meaningful contribution to the progress of the global effort in favour of education, that gathered force in Jomtien, some 11 years ago and which more recently has been reinvigorated in Dakar. And through our success here we would have moved further ahead in our preparation for confronting the educational challenges of the twenty-first century.

Dear Colleagues,

I have no doubt that together we will succeed in reaching our laudable goal.

I wish you “bon courage” and all success at this 46th session of the International Conference on Education on Education. And I thank you for your attention.