

### **Inclusion: central theme of the International Conference on Education**

Paris, 05 November – Children with disabilities and children from marginalized groups (migrants, street children, HIV/AIDS orphans) are still today largely excluded from the school system. The International Conference on Education, organized by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE) from 25 to 28 November in Geneva (Switzerland) will examine ways for schools to become more open to diversity and effectively reduce the drop-out rate.

The Conference, on the theme "Inclusive Education: the Way of the Future", aims to share experiences regarding education for inclusion, identify educational systems that take the diversity of pupils into account, and examine the role of governments in implementing policies promoting inclusion.

The event will bring together some 1,500 participants, among them 100 ministers and deputy ministers as well as education experts, representatives of NGOs and United Nations agencies. The opening plenary session, presided by UNESCO's Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura, will feature an introductory debate.

Seventy-five million children around the world still do not have access to education. And among those who do have access to school, it is estimated a substantial number will never reach the educational level needed to succeed professionally and personally. Moreover, some 650 million people are estimated to be deprived of their right to education because of physical or mental disabilities, or their special learning needs. In developing countries, the percentage of children with disabilities attending school varies from less than 1% to 5%.

During the Conference, UNESCO will launch the 2009 Education For All Global Monitoring Report, "Education for all: strengthening the commitment to equity". Eight years after the World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal), it assesses the progress towards achieving Education For All goals.

An international forum for exchange among Ministers of Education, the International Conference on Education (ICE) has been held regularly since 1934. The previous session, in 2004, explored the theme "Quality education for all young people".

An award ceremony will also take place during the Conference, to present the Comenius Medal to educators or institutions that have made a significant contribution to the development or renewal of education.

The IBE was founded in Geneva in 1925 to centralize documentation related to public and private education, to take an interest in scientific research in the field, and to serve as a coordinating centre for concerned institutions and societies. Initiator of the International Conference on Education, the IBE is one of UNESCO's specialized institutes in the field of education.

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More information on the Conference:

<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/ice/48th-session-2008.html>

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