

Joint Message on the occasion of World Teachers' Day 2017

'Teaching in Freedom, Empowering Teachers'

5 October 2017

Teachers are a critical foundation of every society's long-term strength -- providing children, young people and adults with the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their potential.

But around the world, far too many teachers don't have the freedom and support they need to do their vitally important jobs. That is why the theme of this year's World Teachers' Day -- "Teaching in Freedom, Empowering Teachers" -- reaffirms the value of empowered teachers and recognizes the challenges many encounter in their professional lives across the globe.

Being an empowered teacher means having access to high-quality training, fair wages, and continuous opportunities for professional development. It also means having the freedom to support the development of national curricula -- and the professional autonomy to choose the most appropriate methods and approaches that enable more effective, inclusive and equitable education. Furthermore, it means being able to teach in

safety and security during times of political change, instability, and conflict.

But in many countries, academic freedom and teacher autonomy are under pressure. For example, at the primary and secondary school levels in some countries, stringent accountability schemes have put enormous pressure on schools to deliver results on standardized tests, ignoring the need to ensure a broad-based curriculum that meets the diverse needs of students.

Academic freedom is critical for teachers at every level of education, but it is especially critical for higher-education teachers, supporting their ability to innovate, explore, and stay up-to-date on the latest pedagogical research. At the tertiary level, teachers are often employed on a fixed-term, contingency basis. This in turn can result in greater job insecurity, diminished career prospects, higher workload and lower wages -- all of which can restrict academic freedom and undermine the quality of education that teachers can deliver.