

**Speech by Mr. Arnaldo Nhavoto, Director of the UNESCO International
Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) at the COMEDAF V
Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria**

26 April 2012

Your Excellency Minister of Basic Education and Literacy, Republic of Togo

Your Excellency Prof. Ezin, AUC Commissioner, HRST

Your Excellencies Ministers

Director Ngosi, AUC, HRST

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by conveying the warm greetings of Mme Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, and that of Mr. Qian Tang, Assistant Director General for Education of UNESCO, both of whom attach great importance to this COMEDAF V meeting. They have asked me to reconfirm to you UNESCO's commitment to do all it can to help African Member States in their effort to meet the goals of EFA and the education-related MDG goals.

I would also like to congratulate the African Union Commission for the very good job done in planning and organising such a successful meeting. Colleagues at the AUC truly deserve an earnest note of thanks for the big effort they put into the work.

I must also thank our kind host the Federal Government of Nigeria for the very warm welcome accorded to all of us, and for availing all that was necessary for the safe and orderly conduct of the meeting.

The outgoing chair of the COMEDAF, the Republic of Kenya, has done an excellent job in promoting the development of education in Africa during its chairmanship. I therefore add my voice to express my sincere appreciation to our Kenyan colleagues for their commendable contribution.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fifth ordinary session of the Conference of Ministers of Education of the African Union (COMEDAF V) is taking place during the week that was declared by the Global Campaign for Education as week dedicated to early childhood care and education.

As a follow up of the World Conference on ECCE in Moscow, September 2010, organised by UNESCO, Global Action Week presents an opportunity for UNESCO to mobilise its full network of governments, NGOs and national offices alongside the national coalitions of GCE. As Director of UNESCO – IICBA, I would like to inform this august assembly that last week we conducted a validation workshop that resulted in a review of seven Modules on ECCE. In the coming months, these modules will be available to be used by Member States. In this regard, I would like to appeal to all honourable Ministers of Education and partners for development, as well as Civil society and private sector to invest more in ECCE so that we can make real contribution for quality education.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you all are aware, the end year of EFA and the MDGs, 2015, is fast approaching, with only three more years to go. While we should acknowledge the enormous efforts we African countries have put to make sure that we meet the goals we have set out to

ourselves back in 2000 in Dakar, and celebrate our achievements, we must also face the reality that we still need to do a lot more than we have done so far. You all know that nearly a half of our African countries will not meet some of the EFA and MDG goals by 2015. We are therefore at a critical time to take stock of what we have done, and what needs to be done, and brace ourselves to live up to the challenge. In this regard, there is a lot for all of us to learn from each other and share experiences. We also need to pool our resources and expertise beyond national borders so as to tackle the problem in a coordinated and mutually supportive manner. The vision of Africa free from poverty, conflict, and mismanagement of resources and people can only be realised through a concerted effort to educate our peoples. To use the near-cliché remark, education may be expensive, but ignorance is even more so. I therefore call on all of us to redouble our efforts to bring Africa up to par with the rest of the world that enjoys a decent standard of living. With the good performance of some countries in our continent recently, there are very good signs that this is happening already, and we need to build on that and create a sustainable development. Education has proved itself to be the best tool for doing this.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to use this opportunity to reiterate the position of my Organisation UNESCO, which is on record for making Africa, together with gender, its priority. UNESCO has been assisting African countries through its Capacity Building for EFA (CapEFA) programmes, and the Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA). And learning from its experiences, it continues to refine and redesign its interventions for maximum impact on the education scene in Africa. In this connection, it is reinforcing its presence in, and contribution to, Africa through consolidating its field

offices and restructuring them to better serve Africa. As you know, UNESCO is now phasing in a new field network reform where there will be five sub-regional offices who will undertake programmes and technical assistance in all the areas of UNESCO's competence namely, education, human sciences, natural sciences, culture and information and communication. The Organisation has also established a Liaison Office in Addis Ababa to better serve the African Union Commission, and position itself well within the United Nations Economic Commission (UNECA).

And if you allow me to relate the important measures being taken by UNESCO to something closer to me, I would like to share with you that the Institute that I lead, the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), is being strengthened both by human and financial resources to be of better use to you Member States of UNESCO in Africa. I would like to call on you all to get to know IICBA better, and call on its services in the areas of teacher development and teacher policy issues. As you all agree, the issues of sufficiently qualified teachers in sufficient numbers is a very important concern to many African countries. IICBA would like to constitute its small share in this undertaking.

Lastly, I want to thank all of you for being engaged all throughout our experts' meeting discussions and deliberations and for taking our work with the seriousness it truly deserves.

Thank you very much for your attention.