

1. It is our pleasure and quite important for EI to be here with you today May 1, as EI is one of the founding organizations of the GCE. Also this conference is at a time close to this year's GAWE, where we asked our members to urge their governments to invest more in free quality public education.
2. EI has 30 affiliates in 22 of the Arab countries. Earlier on we had some relations with few Arab unions, and in 2012 we established the Arab countries cross regional structure ACCRS to advance our work and that of teachers unions in the Arab region. We had projects on organizational development and professional development with our affiliates in almost all the Arab countries
3. We believe that teachers unions are key to improving the quality of education and to making our school systems accessible to all. We also believe that teachers unions play a significant role in making societies more democratic and equitable.
4. Quality education for all is always at the core of all our cooperation in the region. And in recent years with unprecedented influx of refugees from Syria, and the huge number of internally displaced people in Iraq and Yemen, we developed our partnerships and lobbying to assure quality education for refugees.
5. In line with the SDGs 2030 and specifically education in crisis, EI is keen to protect the rights of children to education, especially the poor, girls, disabled children, children in rural area, conflict and post-conflict areas and, of course, refugees.
6. In the framework of the relevant resolutions passed by EI and its affiliates at our last world congress in 2015, EI had a number of initiatives on the right of education of refugees and migrant children.
7. The refugee crisis in the region is becoming a global concern, there is a reality of a young generation of refugees who are confronted with the lack of education, and other social consequences.
8. We commend public schools in neighboring countries to Syria such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey who are doing their best to provide education in the regular school shifts and additional afternoon shift. This is despite the fact that the huge number of

refugees is weighing heavily on all aspects of life; national school systems, unemployment, and competitiveness with the labor force of the host community.

9. We know the efforts are still far from perfect, whether it is for the national educational systems or the education in crisis component. We know that the gaps in financing education to achieve the SDG4 are huge, but this crisis entails that we all join forces; international organizations, national civil society and teachers unions should be in the lead as teachers are the ones closest to the daily challenges in the schools. We encourage our affiliates to work with the national GCE coalitions, and we hope this conference will be the right platform to make concrete steps to advance our common objectives.

10. At EI, we voice our members concerns, and we also insist that teachers unions should be partners with the governments and the funding agencies. We believe this enhances social dialogue and protects the national school systems.

11. Based on the latest figures of; literacy rates, girls education, gaps of education for rural areas, we know that greater access to education is a priority, and the solution to that is the accessibility to free public schools with qualified teachers. And that financing of education should be the priority of the development agenda of any country.

12. Guided by our principles and objectives, EI has a responsibility to promote the right to free quality public education for all, to protect the professional and working conditions of our teachers, and to empower teachers unions and civil society to make sure of their monitoring roles towards financing of education. Our role as teachers and as civil society, especially in the conflict areas going through violence and segregation- is to educate and promote diversity, tolerance, democracy, justice and peace.

13. Furthermore, governments have to believe in union works and empower it and not to undermine unionists works or criminalize them for doing what they should do. We encourage governments to work aline with unions to achieve SDGs and more. And ofcourse we need the help of all brothers and sisters in civil society to do the job.

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Vice President

On behalf of EI General Secretary David Edwards