

MP – 1Goal Education for All meeting

Sunday 11 July, 14:00-16:00, Presidential Guest House, Pretoria

- First I would like to congratulate you on South Africa's outstanding organisation of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.
- Over the past four weeks, most visitors to South Africa have come with only one goal: to encourage and support their national football teams. I am pleased to say that I have come with two goals. One is to support the Dutch team at tonight's World Cup final; the other is to join with you here to reaffirm my country's commitment to the international Education for All agreements and to the Millennium Development Goal on universal education (MDG2).
- As a strong advocate of education, the Netherlands supports the Global Campaign for Education and its current 1GOAL campaign. A campaign that calls on developing countries, donor states and international organisations to live up to their promises regarding investment in education.
- In October of last year I had the honour of participating in the international kick-off of this campaign, together with other government leaders, Queen Rania of Jordan and a number of footballers. I am delighted to see that the call for greater access to education and improved quality of education has won the support of more than 12 million people worldwide, including many prominent sportsmen and women, artists and politicians.
- Sports and education make a wonderful combination, offering young people the tools to achieve a healthier and brighter future. Of course, not every youngster can become a famous sporting hero. Most will have to find a regular job or start their own business. In both cases, knowledge and skills are the keys to reaching these goals. Education is not only a human right; research has shown that investing in education also makes an enormous difference to productivity and economic growth.
- Great progress has been made towards achieving our international goals for education. Since the end of the last century 40 million more children worldwide have enrolled in education. There have been some remarkable success stories, including in African countries such as Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya and South Africa. But at least 72 million children are still not in school, and millions more receive poor-quality education that hardly prepares them for a better future. What is more, girls still have an enrolment gap to bridge.

- The Netherlands bilaterally supports national education plans in eight African countries (including South Africa). We also invest in education programmes run by international organisations such as UNICEF, the International Labour Organization and the Education For All Fast Track Initiative.
- I realise that African countries may be facing considerable education budget cuts as a result of the financial crisis. The same crisis that has put the rich countries' development budgets under pressure. With this in mind it is important that we learn the lessons of earlier crises – such as in the 1980s. Destroying education and health systems by cutting budgets is not the way to achieve sound economic recovery, growth and sustainable development. I hope that world leaders will keep this in mind when they meet at the UN Summit in September to take stock of international development efforts.
- I hope that today's meeting will carry a strong message to the world. A message of ongoing, unfailing commitment from world leaders, politicians and footballers to achieving *Education for All*.
- This is a goal we must score!

Thank you.