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Commentary on the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries Zero Draft

The Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) has reviewed the zero draft of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries (LDCs). We commend the extensive coverage of factors related to social, economic, and natural development encompassed under the six key focus areas of the Programme of Action. We note, in particular, that the draft document includes the fact that individuals living in LDCs have limited or no access to quality education. As an NGO committed to promoting linguistic justice, the UEA suggests that the role of language and education in advancing the six focus areas should receive further thought and attention.

As much as 40% of the world's population do not have access to education in a language that they understand. Recent Global Education Monitoring reports highlight this lack of linguistic access as a substantial threat to educational equity and inclusion (SDG 4). The World Bank, in its July 2021 paper¹ *Loud and Clear: Effective Language of Instruction Policies for Learning*, emphasizes that linguistic access to education is vital not just for learning in itself but for every aspect of development because the building of social and economic capital and the expansion of knowledge and skills are all language-based.

Accordingly, the UEA encourages Member States to give further attention to multilingual education, specifically mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE), during the informal consultation process. We suggest as useful sources of further information the aforementioned paper by the World Bank as well as UNESCO materials² on language and education, especially its *MTB MLE Resource Kit*.³

Multilingualism is a foundation for sustainable development. Individuals who cannot understand will be left behind.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/loud-and-clear-effective-language-of-instruction-policies-for-learning>

² <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced/languages>

³ <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/mtb-mle-resource-kit-including-excluded-promoting-multilingual-education>