**Address by Mr Helmut Skala**

**Representative of the World Confederation of Teachers - WCT**

**to the Congress of Education International**

**Harare, Zimbabwe - July 1995**

Dear sisters,

Dear brothers,

In the first instance, I would like to thank you for having invited the WCT to participate in your first statutory Congress. On behalf of our member Organisation and of the Board of the WCT, I wish you all the best in the proceedings and deliberations of your Congress.

Your Congress will be the occasion and appropriate forum to affirm on the absolute necessity to defend the interests of all those involved in the teaching profession/ and in the other connected sections pertaining to Education and Culture: the policies conducted throughout the world are having consequential impacts and effects on the personnel: contraction of employment, erosion of salaries, conflicting or inexistent professional relations, degradation of conditions of work. In Africa, particularly, the situation is catastrophic and alarming.

The World Confederation of Teachers is fully conscious of the acuteness of problems confronting the staff of the teaching profession, of education and of worldwide culture: its presence in 60 countries in all the continents requires that all efforts must be mustered to find solutions to a series of problems and of situations which are too often dramatic with regards to conditions of work.

The organisation of our last congress in Africa - in Dakar, was not a random choice. Just like the Education International which is holding its congress in Harare, we also wanted to manifest and indicate our priority for Africa: we have a lot of issues in common with this continent and with our African sisters and brothers. The theme of our Congress: “Teachers and Education mobilised for democracy, culture and development" perfectly illustrates and underlines the necessity in favour of a new model based on sustainable and integral development. Only the establishment of genuine democratic Systems, keystone of success, implying pluralism, source full of values and above all in trade unionism are the essential ingredients guaranteeing peace and which can foster a new alliance among thinkers, decision-makers and those who are active on the field.

The WCT insists that priority of consideration should be given to the broad expectations and anxieties of men and women who commit themselves to promotion of education rather than to institutions. In the furtherance of our objectives, characterised by our autonomy and independence, we have never failed to make our views known to defend the rights of our members on a wide range of issues raised by political parties, churches, employers or governments.

In a spirit of solidarity, we can assure you of our determination and commitment to work in close collaboration with Education International. Two factors among others impose this process.

* The relatively low rate of unionisation in the world is a serious risk for democracy:

It is essential that we call and keep calling on all the democratic international and regional trade unions and on Education International in the first place, to form a genuine international trade union front. The co-operation, over the years, between the IFFTU, the WCOTP and the WCT guarantees a positive evolution in the future protection of the rights of the education staff in the international governmental and non-governmental institutions. There is ample evidence of the favourable results of this co-operation: so, we should continue our struggle for the unity, or action, of the teachers, educators. Even if regional and national susceptibilities impose, for the time being, several organisations, it is no less indispensable that the co-operation between our two international organisations should be strengthened, on the basis of mutual respect and the recognition of our common and specific values.

* A second factor makes this close co-operation necessary:

Together we have to break out of the vicious circle of the imposed predominance of the economic policies over human aspects, the vicious circle of neo-liberalism, deregulation and decentralisation which, combined/ undermine the international Standards, the preservation and promotion of trade union freedom and the basic respect for the human being as a person. Non-development is our concern in North and South, East and West. We have to develop, without delay, synergies in dialogue; we have to stake on the overall strengthening of the trade union movement and not on the preservation of some prerogatives or hegemonies. We hope that this message is unambiguous.

The future of the trade union movement lies in imagination and creativeness. No bureaucratic mimicry, no compromises: the renovation and reinforcement of the international trade union movement of education staff is an urgent necessity. We have to be the driving force behind progress, without getting enticed into corporatism but assuming all the problems of all women and men, of all children who have placed their hopes in us. Can we answer this multitude of anxious questions put to us? What are our priorities? Alone, no! Together, yes!

The results of your Congress proceedings are of paramount interest to us. Together we will continue along the line of structural co-operation. We have to take concrete measures to make sure that no one feels threatened by marginalisation or exclusion and that pluralism and democratic representations are guaranteed. It is now a matter of affirming the historic need to reinforce and reform our international trade unions.

Without preconceived schemes: everybody expects a lot of us; let's work together to answer the questions of those who have placed their trust in us.

I thank you for your attention.