EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN A POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

ISTANBUL DECLARATION

We, representatives of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) together with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), in partnership with the United Nations Turkey, World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), OMEP/Turkey, The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CGECCD), United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA), joined by advocates, family representatives, social, health and education service providers, academics, NGO’s convening in Istanbul on 24-25 January 2013, building on the normative frameworks specifically the Millennium Declaration, a World Fit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and using the power of local governments and collective responsibility of municipalities and societies, pledge to prioritise Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Millennium Development Goals have widely benefited children, both boys and girls, but there is major unfinished business, widened inequalities and disparities as well as emerging and neglected issues that must be addressed boldly in the Post-2015 Development Agenda to ensure a world fit for children.

The UN Secretary General’s Status of the CRC report focusing specifically on early childhood and adoption of the Third Committee Omnibus Resolution (A/65/452) at the UNGA 65th Session reaffirms the commitment of State Parties to promote and protect the rights of children, including specific recommendations and strategies for implementing child rights in early childhood.

Investment in promotive and protective ECD policies and programs of good quality targeting young children 0-8 years, especially the most disadvantaged reduces preventable risks due to poverty, ill-health, malnutrition and inadequate levels of care and intellectual stimulation. Investments in accessible good quality early and primary learning environments improves the efficiency of the education system by reducing repetition and drop-out, which leads to dramatically better completion rates and improves achievement, especially for girls and marginalized groups. This can break the cycle of inequity contributing to better health, higher educational attainment and efficiencies, and greater success in life.

Despite the growing evidence on the efficacy of ECD policies and programs and enhanced resources on improved education, health, and nutrition outcomes for children, over 200 million children under 5 years in low and middle-income countries will not reach their developmental potential, with only 19 countries out of 68 with high child mortality rates able to meet MDG targets by 2015. Currently, 64% of young children in developing countries have no access to early childhood programs – 61% in Asia and 86% in Sub Saharan Africa. Investment in ECD is one of the most effective instruments to accelerate and achieve the sustainable and secure future we want for all children. The evidence is clear: the estimated benefit of investment in improving just one component of ECD – preschool enrolment – to 25% could generate US$10.6 billion, while an increase to 50% could generate economic benefits of US$33.7 billion, with a benefit-to-cost ratio estimated to range from 6.4 to 17.6. Governments and donors must invest in strengthening quality ECD programs and communities.

For this we urge you to Join the Call to Action to:

- ensure funded, inclusive and integrated ECD policies and promotive and protective programs in every country by 2020 for all young children 0-8 years, especially the most disadvantaged
- ensure national and sub-national data is routinely collected to monitor trends and disparities in ECD and generate evidence-based knowledge to inform budgeting and policies
- support the expansion of a global alliance with a portal and clearinghouse for knowledge generation, sharing, dissemination, research development and networking
- create an innovative global funding mechanism for early childhood development that will support the above at all level including increased role of local governance.