

## THE GAMBIA TEACHERS UNION

### WORLD TEACHERS DAY: 5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2016

#### PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

World Teachers Day (WTD), held annually on 5<sup>th</sup> October, is an important event for the entire educational community. It is an opportunity to celebrate the teaching profession and to promote the ILO/UNESCO Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel (1997). These instruments define international standards for the teaching profession.

The theme for this year's World Teachers' Day is: **“Valuing Teachers, Improving their Status”** and this year's event marks the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of event. The Recommendations which are meant to improve the professional status and working conditions of teachers are more urgent than ever. Evidence from EI research and other studies show a decline in teacher status and conditions over the last few years, mainly due to:

1. Sub-standard teacher preparation programmes and the recruitment of unqualified personnel;
2. Infringements on academic freedom and professional autonomy;
3. Serious violation of teachers' human and trade union rights; and
4. Poor salaries and working conditions, quite often less than those of professionals with comparable qualifications in other sectors.

This negative trend must be reversed; Governments and employers have an obligation to ensure that teachers are valued, honored and respected. Valuing teachers and all education personnel should entail the provision of decent working conditions; well-resourced, safe and healthy working environments; trust; professional autonomy; academic freedom, high quality initial training and continuous professional development, among others.

Education International, the parent body of Unions encourages all unions to cooperate with relevant education stakeholders, including , the Ministry of Education and other education authorities, UNESCO, civil society and other partners in celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers and demanding its full implementation by governments. The voices of teachers must be heard throughout the world on 5<sup>th</sup> October and governments must be reminded of their obligation to improve the status of the teaching profession.

Governments are urged to provide teachers with access to training opportunities and continued professional development, based on appropriate qualifications. Attracting committed and diverse teachers requires environments that value professional autonomy and equality. Teachers need to be supported in fulfilling their responsibilities to students, and their voices must be listened to by school leaders, education systems and public authorities. Teachers' salaries must be set objectively and fairly, such that remuneration commensurates with the importance of the profession and the qualifications and responsibilities of individual teachers.

Teachers, in turn, must be accountable to their students and communities. Members of the Fraternity are encouraged to uphold the principles and ideals of the GTU's Codes of professional ethic and conduct. They must continue to conduct themselves based on the highest ethical and professional standards, and to be oriented around the goal of teaching all students effectively and equally.

On this day, we call for the creation of supportive teaching environments, adequate teacher training and safeguards for the rights of teachers. We must break the vicious cycle of declining professional conditions for teachers in order to improve the quality of learning for all.

Teachers are the foundation of good schools, and good schools are the pillars of healthy and democratic communities. Certainly, Teachers Matter!

I wish to congratulate all of us and urge everyone to continue giving your best.