2012 WORLD OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) CONGRESS
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DRAFT DECLARATION (VERSION 2) (AFTER AFRICA POLICY FORUM - 2012-02-23)

Note on the drafting process

A first version of a Draft Declaration on OER for submission to the World OER Congress was prepared by the Secretariat following the first meeting of the International Advisory and Liaison Group (IALG)* held at UNESCO, Paris on December 19, 2011. It was presented for further comment and editing at a regional policy forum for Africa held in Pretoria on 21/22 February 2012. This second version was prepared following discussions at that event. It will be further refined at similar policy forums in all UNESCO regions and the resulting text will then be reviewed by the IALG when it meets on May 11, 2012 prior to submission to the Congress. Successive drafts will be posted on the UNESCO-CI and Commonwealth of Learning websites (http://oercongress.weebly.com/paris-declaration.html).

*The IALG to the COL/UNESCO project Fostering Governmental Support for Open Educational Resources Internationally *is composed of up to 15 members identified by UNESCO's regional electoral groups and representatives from NGOs and other IGOs (e.g. OECD, Creative Commons, OER Africa). It is co-chaired by the UNESCO ADG/CI and the President of COL.*

Preamble

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26.1) states that: "Everyone has a right to education".

In 2000 the Millennium Declaration and the Dakar World Forum on Education for All defined a challenging agenda for the expansion and improvement of education and training, setting a number of targets to be achieved by 2015.

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) can help to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities throughout the world. Having learning materials freely available for adaptation and repurposing can reduce the cost of expanding educational opportunities.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open licence that permits access, use, repurposing, reuse and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. The term OER was coined in 2002 at a UNESCO Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries.

In 2003 the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) adopted specific targets in its Action Plan, namely by 2015:

- To connect universities, colleges, secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs

- To adapt all primary and secondary school curricula to meet the challenges of the Information Society, taking into account national circumstances; and,

- To encourage the development of content and to put in place technical conditions in order to facilitate the presence and use of all world languages on the Internet.

The steady expansion of the availability of ICTs can contribute to the attainment of these goals, in particular by facilitating the creation, distribution, repurposing and use of OER.

In 2007 over 2,000 institutions and individuals signed the Cape Town Open Education Declaration which included a call for governments and instituitions to make open education a

high prirority. In 2009 the Dakar Declaration on OER (La déclaration de Dakar sur les REL), supported by UNESCO, l'Agence universitaire de la francophonie (AUF) and the Organisation Internationale de la francophonie (OIF) emphasised 'awareness raising among policy makers …to promote the emergence of regulation on OER'.

These declarations attest that OER can contribute to human development by:

- assisting the achievement of Education for All;

- giving greater impact to public funds invested in education; and

- facilitating the creation of a global intellectual commons

The roles of governments/competent authorities in education and their relationships with institutions in different education sectors vary widely from country to country. However, governments/competent authorities usually have an important policy-setting role in their education systems.

In this context, governments/competent authorities may choose to require that educationally useful material developed with public funds be made available under open licences. Sharing educational materials widely has significant potential to improve the quality, transparency, accessibility and local relevance of learning resources. Likewise, governments/competent authorities can use open licensing regimes to increase the leverage of public investments in learning resources by facilitating their widespread re-use with minimal additional investment.

In this context, governments/competent authorities attending the UNESCO World OER Congress declare that they will:

a. *Contribute to raising awareness of key OER benefits*. The use of OER can help to widen access to education at all levels and contribute to social inclusion, gender equity and special needs education. Greater use of learning resources can improve both cost-efficiency and learning outcomes.

b. *Create enabling environments for the use of ICTs.* Adequate infrastructure, especially affordable Internet connectivity, widespread mobile technology and reliable electrical power is essential for the effective use of ICTs. Encouraging the development and use of learning materials in digital formats as OER will foster quality teaching and learning.

c. *Promote and adopt open licensing frameworks.* An open licensing framework could form part of an overall policy framework on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and copyright in education spanning both research and teaching activities. It might also cover the copyright and IPR status of educational materials produced by government departments and agencies. In order to use learning resources confidently, education communities need to understand intellectual property rights and the nature of open licensing.

d. *Promote and adopt open standards.* Adopting appropriate open standards can help to facilitate sharing of educational resources by ensuring the availability of editable electronic documents in diverse media regardless of changing software. Such standards could cover educational materials produced by government departments and agencies and government-supported institutions that develop educational resources.

e. *Support the sustainable development, quality and sharing of learning materials.* Education institutions need supporting, individually or collectively, in their efforts to produce and share high quality educational resources. This could include initiatives to develop local content and regional/global efforts to develop OER repositories and directories, as well as fostering quality assurance mechanisms to promote quality and relevance in OER.

f.   *Encourage development of OER in a variety of languages.* Although, as in earlier Internet-related developments, many of the first generation of OER were created in English they are now appearing in many languages. Authorities should encourage the production and use of OER in local languages and intergovernmental organisations should encourage the sharing of OER across languages.

g.   *Foster the emergence of new business models for OER.* As technology creates new opportunities for sharing materials in diverse media, new business models, involving partnerships between the education, industry, media and telecommunications sectors are required to ensure sustainability.

h.   *Encourage research on the use of OER.* More research on the production, use and re-purposing of OER is required to provide a solid evidence base to support public investment in OER.

i.   *Require open licenses for educational materials produced with public funds.* Governments/competent authorities may require that educationally useful material developed with public funds be made available under open licenses

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