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## Zambia: Cooperating Partners Pledge US\$211.25 million in Support of Zambia's Education Sector

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LUSAKA, Zambia, 20 September 2012 – The Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training, and Early Education has received \$211.25 million in renewed funding commitments from the Cooperating Partners (CPs) who gathered at the Ministry of Education Headquarters last week during a colourful signing ceremony.

The Minister of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, Honourable Dr. John Phiri, MP, said at the ceremony that the signing of the Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF) of the Third National Implementation Framework of the Education Sector (NIF III) signifies a renewed partnership between the Government and the CPs for the advancement of the education sector in Zambia. The MAF serves as the guiding instrument of cooperation between the Ministry and its CPs during the implementation of the NIF-III through 2015.

“Government has prioritised education to be among the key sectors for increased investment during the period of the Sixth National Development Plan and beyond. I need not over-emphasize the fact that education is the foundation stone in the construction of a self-reliant nation and for development. It is also the engine to modernisation. It is not a secret that it is a sound quality and relevant education that has catapulted all emerging economies in the world today into economic giants,” said the Honourable Minister. He also said that his Ministry is applying for a further US\$35.2 million in support from the Global Partnership for Education.

Speaking on behalf of the CPs, UNICEF Zambia's Officer-In-Charge Shaya Asindua said, "The Mutual Accountability Framework being signed today clearly provides an opportunity for strengthening the Cooperating Partner-Government relationship. "The Ministry and CPs have one common goal: to enable Zambian children to claim their right to quality and equitable education services that provide the foundational skills they need to reach their full potential. To achieve that goal and deliver better results for children, we must work together to strengthen our cooperation, policy dialogue and coordination as envisioned in the Mutual Accountability Framework we are signing this morning."

Asindua also said on behalf of the CPs, "We would like to reassure you that there remains a strong commitment by all the CPs signing this MAF today to support the education sector. We are pleased to welcome Japan who has come on board as a contributor to the sector pool and DFID who are re-entering the sector after five years of absence."

The Cooperating Partners who signed the MAF are the Embassy of Japan, the Government of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development, UNICEF (on behalf of the United Nations), the African Development Bank, and Irish AID. The Netherlands contributes through UNICEF.

The funding commitments will prioritise the following areas: introducing an effective policy to promote reading; improvement in reading programmes for early learners ; textbook procurement and distribution; strengthening teachers' continuing professional development; reforming policy on teacher recruitment, deployment, and incentives to ensure both male and female teachers are retained in rural schools; decentralising the responsibility for planning and decision making to the provincial and district levels where schooling takes place; ensuring the timely disbursement and increased funding for districts, especially the non-wage expenditures used by schools to deliver results; improving public financial management and accountability; and introducing an effective child protection policy that protects and empowers girls and children with special needs and reduces the high pregnancies rates among school age girls.

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