

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **African Education Leaders Chart Path for Sustainable Education Financing at Continental Education Conference**

The urgent need to revolutionize education financing in Africa took center stage at the Continental Education Conference, as ministers and international experts gathered to tackle one of the continent's most pressing challenges: how to sustainably fund quality education for Africa's growing youth population.

During back-to-back sessions on education financing and governance, ministers shared successful national approaches while international experts outlined new funding tools. Zimbabwe's Minister of Education announced an increase in education spending to 26.2% of the national budget, while Zanzibar reported allocating 21% of its budget to education and implementing a new skills development tax on the tourism sector to support technical education.

"Traditional funding approaches alone cannot meet Africa's educational needs," noted H.E. Prof. Mohamed Belhocine, African Union Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, who moderated a high-level ministerial exchange between Mauritania's education and finance ministers. The exchange highlighted how countries are working to improve efficiency in education spending while increasing available resources.

Tunisia's Minister of Education shared the country's constitutional commitment to free and compulsory education until age 16, demonstrating how multiple ministries can coordinate to support education funding. Meanwhile, the World Bank introduced new financing instruments, including a "Data for Development Support" mechanism that has already helped Côte d'Ivoire free up significant resources through debt refinancing.

Economist Jeffrey Sachs, addressing the conference virtually, brought a provocative perspective to the discussions, challenging conventional wisdom about education financing. His argument that African countries need to invest 10-15% of GDP in education, rather than the traditionally recommended 4-6%, sparked important conversations about rethinking funding models. His proposal for future earnings-based funding and international tax arrangements for educated professionals working abroad offered innovative solutions to the financing challenge.

The sessions revealed a growing consensus that education financing must be viewed as an investment in Africa's future rather than a current expense. This perspective shift is crucial for implementing sustainable funding mechanisms that can support the continent's educational transformation over the long term.

These financing discussions form a crucial part of the Continental Education Conference, which concludes today in Nouakchott. The proposed solutions aim to

support the conference's broader goal of transforming African education under the theme "Educating and Qualifying Our Youth for a Prosperous Integrated and Dynamic Africa."

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