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CONVERSATIONS IN CYBERSPACE

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Education on the Move series

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Conversations in cyberspace**

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FOREWORD

Education for All requires innovation and there is no innovation without knowledge sharing. Stark contradictions characterize our societies: on one end of the spectrum, over 70 million children are out of school and one adult in five lacks basic literacy skills. On the other, globalization and the rise of the knowledge-intensive world economy call for an increasingly skilled labour force. Expanding the reach of education and improving its quality are the two major challenges facing countries today if they are to be full partners in development.

The expansion of education systems will not suffice to reach the ambitious Education for All goals and to strengthen the knowledge base. New solutions will have to be found. Since the advent and expansion of the internet and the World Wide Web, many have looked to information and communication technologies to offer some of these solutions. These technologies have the potential to increase access to knowledge, and to contribute to building educated and engaged populations worldwide.

The Open Educational Resources (OER) movement offers one solution for extending the reach of education and expanding learning opportunities. It seeks to make educational content from institutions and individuals all over the world available freely and openly online for use, adaptation and reuse. Open sharing and collaboration offer real potential for enhancing both teaching and learning. And by promoting and facilitating the adaptation and translation of resources, it upholds education that is meaningful and relevant to an individual's environment and needs.

It was at a UNESCO meeting in 2002 that Open Educational Resources was first coined as a term. Since then, UNESCO has made an important contribution to building global awareness about OER, through organizing a series of online discussion forums on the theme, and creating and sustaining an online community of interest. These actions have connected and given a platform to a diverse range of individuals around the world, enhancing their ability to make informed choices about OER and empowering them to participate in this important new development. In publishing the papers and reports from two years of community dialogue, UNESCO seeks to

encourage an even wider audience to engage with the Open Educational Resources movement, and further strengthen its potential to expand learning opportunities around the globe – a fundamental human right and key component of social and economic development.

Nicholas Burnett

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