and 781 million in 2012. Progress proved uneven, however, across regions and countries. Three quarters of the global non-literate adult population lived in South Asia, West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Women still constituted two thirds of the world’s non-literate population. Low literacy skills were also a concern in many high-income countries. The European Commission, for example, noted that in Europe, an estimated 20 per cent of adults lacked the literacy skills they needed to function fully in a modern society. Based on the prevailing trends, it was projected that 751 million adults, including 103 million young people aged between 15 and 24 years old, would lack basic literacy skills by 2015, and only 36 countries and territories were likely to achieve or exceed Education of All (goal 4)—achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. The Director-General stressed that literacy was a global challenge and an unfinished agenda item that had to be urgently addressed.

As part of its drive to continue playing a catalytic role in the global literacy agenda, UNESCO proposed five strategic themes for the period subsequent to the 2003–2012 Literacy Decade: developing the capacities of Member States in the areas of policies, programme delivery and literacy assessments; scaling up literacy actions for girls and women; reinforcing innovative modes of literacy delivery, including through the use of information and communication technologies; expanding the knowledge base and monitoring and evaluation; and advocating for literacy on the global agenda and ensuring synergies between different actions, including through a multi-stakeholder partnership and networks.

The Director-General proposed that the General Assembly consider the following six recommendations: recognize literacy as a foundation for lifelong learning, as well as a building block for achieving basic human rights and sustainable development; encourage Governments to seek innovative solutions to accelerate literacy efforts and create institutional frameworks and systems for literacy and lifelong learning, and translate political commitment into dependable financing, robust programming and improvement-oriented monitoring; call upon countries, development partners, UN system entities and civil society to promote literacy and literate environments; express its support to the five strategic axes proposed for the global literacy agenda; urge countries to consider integrating literacy into the post-2015 global development and education agenda as an education and development imperative; and encourage UNESCO to continue to strengthen its role in coordinating and catalysing global efforts towards scaling up literacy in the period subsequent to the United Nations Literacy Decade.

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION**

On 18 December [meeting 73], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Third Committee [A/69/480], adopted resolution 69/141 without vote [agenda item 26 (d)].

**Literacy for life: shaping future agendas**

*The General Assembly,*


Recalling also the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in which Member States resolved to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys would have equal access to all levels of education, which requires a renewed commitment to promote literacy for all,

Reaffirming the Education for All goals, in particular goal 3, on ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes, and goal 4, on achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults,

Convinced that literacy is crucial to the acquisition by every child, young person and adult of the essential life skills that will enable them to address the challenges that they may face in life and represents an essential condition of lifelong learning, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the knowledge societies and economies of the twenty-first century,

Reaffirming the right of indigenous peoples to have non-discriminatory access to all levels and forms of education provided by States, and recognizing the importance of effective measures to promote access for indigenous individuals, in particular children, to education in their own language, whenever possible, as addressed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

Deeply concerned that, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 781 million adults do not have basic literacy skills and 58 million children of primary and 63 million children of secondary school age remain out of school, that an estimated 250 million children of primary school age are failing to acquire basic literacy skills, that millions more young people leave school without a level of literacy adequate for productive and active participation in their societies, that the issue of literacy may not be sufficiently high on national agendas to generate the kind of political and economic support required to address global literacy challenges and that the world is unlikely to meet those challenges if present trends continue,

Recognizing that literacy is a foundation for lifelong learning, a building block for achieving human rights and fundamental freedoms and a driver of sustainable