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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
Minister for Education
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Minister for Social Inclusion

THE HON KAPIL SIBAL
Minister of Human Resource Development

JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Between the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations of the Government of Australia and the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India

8 April 2010

We, the Education Ministers of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Republic of India, reaffirm our commitment to continue to expand collaboration in education, training and research between Australia and India.

We acknowledge our ongoing bilateral cooperation in education and training through the *Education Exchange Program Between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of India on Cooperation in the Fields of Education and Training*, signed on 23 October 2003. This Joint Ministerial Statement supplements this Exchange Program.

We reaffirm our agreement at our meeting in New Delhi in August 2009 to meet annually.

Through this Joint Ministerial Statement, we mutually consent to expand the existing exchange program agreement to include greater cooperation across all education sectors – schools, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education including technical and professional education through:

- (i) Sharing expertise in qualification and quality frameworks and standards for education, research and training;
- (ii) Providing mutual assistance in fields of agreed benefit, with a particular focus on skills demand and emerging needs areas;
- (iii) Working together to evolve credit transfer arrangements between Australia and India;
- (iv) Actively initiating and supporting formal working groups, such as the Bureau for Vocational Education and Training Collaboration (BVETC), to improve understanding of our respective education and training systems and to discuss and periodically review progress on mutually agreed activities;

- (v) Strengthening lines of communication for exchange of information on new policy initiatives and opportunities for development of education, training and research activities of both countries;
- (vi) Supporting the exchange of government officials and educationists for continuous professional development;
- (vii) Agreeing to establish a Memorandum of Cooperation to progress common interests in developing and monitoring standards and regulations applicable to the operations and activities of education agents and the movement and wellbeing of Indian students to Australia;
- (viii) Enabling the participation of a third party on joint activities upon mutual agreement;
- (ix) Mutual agreement on funding arrangements to cover expenses for cooperation activities, subject to availability of funds; and
- (x) Exploration of the possible agreement to set-up an India-Australia Education Council as a bi-national body with representation from academia, policy makers and industry to interact on issues related to education and to further collaboration between both sides.

This Joint Ministerial Statement supplements the *Education Exchange Program between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of India on Cooperation in the Fields of Education and Training* and should be read in conjunction with it.

Context

India and Australia are at an exciting time in their relationship. As envisaged in the Joint Statement of both Prime Ministers in 2009, India and Australia are building a broad knowledge partnership, including developing collaborative projects in education. The higher education institutions (universities and vocational training institutions) in both nations have an important role to play in such partnership including cooperation in science and technology. We recognize that education is central to sustained, inclusive and equitable growth.

People-to-people contacts are at the heart of the bilateral relationship. Students studying in both countries play an important role in building bridges of friendship and understanding and are a significant resource for future development of the relationship. Both countries attach high priority to the safety and wellbeing of students as they play an important part in the knowledge partnership envisaged between the two countries.

Schools

India and Australia are both embarking on significant education reforms focussed on developing curriculum to meet the needs of 21st century learners in a rapidly globalising world.

Implementing significant reforms requires capacity building of school leaders including the exploration of relevant research and exchanging best practices. Both sides recognise the importance of Australia-India Principals/Teachers Exchange Program organised through the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) with support from Australian Education International (AEI) India. The program focuses on school leadership, school management and innovation, curriculum and assessment. Australia and India agree to examine expanding the existing program to provide more scholarships and a greater degree of exchange of principals, teachers and administrators dealing with school education.

Melbourne City Council, with the assistance of AEF and AEI India, will support eight scholarships for School Principals from Delhi (government and non-government schools) to visit Melbourne schools for two weeks in 2010 to further their professional development and links between Australia and India.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), India and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate in programs and initiatives which will apply international best practices in educational research and assessment to support educational development.

Vocational Education and Training

India and Australia recognise the valuable contribution that vocational education and training plays in improving skills to enhance employability, increase productivity, strengthen national competitiveness and support sustainable development to adapt to climate change.

The Australia – India VET Mission (31 January – 5 February 2010) was the first high level delegation of Indian government officials and industry representatives focusing on vocational education and training to visit Australia. The mission achieved its aim to increase understanding about vocational education and training in both countries and to assist in long-term engagement in vocational education and training.

Both countries are keen to build on the success of the mission and achieve progress in the identified areas of cooperation and opportunities for collaboration. The Bureau of Vocational Education and Training Collaboration (BVETC), established out of the Australia-India Joint Working Group in October 2009, will direct and facilitate continuing collaboration in vocational education and training between the two countries, including the following activities:

1. Government to government

Both Governments will work towards supporting quality vocational education and training systems in India and Australia. Australia will collaborate with India in the systemic development of National Quality Assurance arrangements. These may include developing a national qualifications framework and training quality standards.

The Australian National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and the National Council of Educational, Research and Training (NCERT) and the Central Staff Training and Research Institute (CSTARI) will collaborate on vocational training and research. Both sides will engage in joint activities to work towards developing a sound and evidence based system for providing information, data and policy inputs for policy makers in India and Australia in the areas of vocational education and training.

2. Industry to industry – Industry Skills Councils

Both sides are planning to better engage industry in their vocational education and training systems.

In the short term, Australian industry skills councils are keen to build mutually beneficial relationships with Indian industry as follows:

- Business Forums in India, with support from the Government of India, will link with Service Skills Australia, in the retail sector, to customise qualifications and competencies to meet the needs of the Indian industry.
- Service Skills Australia seeks to partner with Indian industry and government in the hospitality and tourism sectors,
- The Construction and Property Industry Skills Council will continue to link with the Confederation of Indian Industry and/or the National Academy of Construction, Hyderabad to further their already established relationship. The aim is to promote cooperation in areas such as setting up quality processes and staff training in the Indian building and construction industry.

The experience gained in these collaborations will form the basis for long term partnership between the Australian Government, Australian industry skills councils and the Indian Government and Indian industry to develop sector skills councils in India.

3. Institution to institution

Australian institutions are keen to work with comparable institutions in India to complement existing expertise, support innovation and implement projects. The training of teachers, organisational governance, recognition of prior learning and engaging youth through innovative models of training delivery are examples of areas of mutual focus. The intention is also to better integrate learning between vocational training sectors and higher education institutions.

The Bureau of Vocational Education and Training Collaboration (BVETC) will continue to bring together Australian and Indian institutes and identify suitable partner institutes for further development of collaboration at the institutional level.

Higher Education

The Governments of Australia and India recognise that the relationship between our higher education systems is a mature and productive one and is based on a long standing history of cooperation and exchange to the benefit of both countries.

We are pleased to be able to announce a range of collaborative activities to help build on this strong foundation and note that beyond those activities announced today, new institution to institution links will continue to develop and grow. We aim to ensure that our students, academics and institutions continue to reap the benefits of cultural and knowledge exchange and collaboration. Cooperation in quality assurance, dialogue between sector representatives, research collaboration and institutional partnerships will all help to progress this aim.

The Governments of Australia and India will work with UGC and other relevant bodies, including the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and Universities Australia (UA), in developing methods for facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications and credit transfer arrangements between Australia and India.

To encourage academic exchange, both sides agree to hold joint seminars on mutually agreed themes to be inaugurated in India in 2010 and coordinated by DEEWR and the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The UGC will provide necessary financial support on a reciprocal and sharing basis for the agreed schemes and programs for collaboration between India and Australia.

We agree to facilitate the organisation of an Australia-India Inter-University Convention of Vice-Chancellors and Academia to interact on issues of mutual concern among academics.

We are also pleased to note the commitment by Universities Australia to co-sponsor a national education forum in New Delhi in late 2010 with its partner organisation, the Association of Indian Universities and interested others to discuss a number of topics including regulation and governance, transnational education issues and collaborative research.

Australia and India also agree to continue to expand cultural and academic ties through the Australia India Institute (AII) and the Australia India Council (AIC) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India.

Australia's Group of Eight (Go8) universities have opened a dialogue with Indian Institutes of Technology about establishing a staff exchange program between the two groups of leading higher education institutions.

The Go8-IIT staff exchange program will underpin longer-term relationships, such as in research collaboration. It will also improve understanding between Australian and Indian universities and increase the level of student, staff and research exchange between our two countries.

In addition, we agree to facilitate the initiation of a Joint Faculty Development Program through regular exchange of faculty for mutual learning in areas of teaching, research and curriculum development.

Both sides acknowledge and support the increasing partnerships between our education institutions in research, such as:

- activities under the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF) – a joint undertaking of both governments which the Prime Ministers of Australia and India agreed in November 2009 to extend and expand with an Australian contribution of A\$50 million (Rs 200 crore) over the next five years, matched by the Government of India; and
- Australia and India agree to explore suitable partnerships with one or more of India's proposed 14 Innovation Universities and the proposed Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development to be set up in Delhi.

We are pleased to note that the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) will undertake joint research workshops, seminars and exchange of personnel for mutual learning and benefit on quality assurance in higher education. This builds on the strong relationship between AUQA and NAAC, as expressed through successive Memoranda of Cooperation.

Signed in Melbourne on 8 April 2010 in two original copies

For the Government of Australia

For the Government of the Republic of India

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Hon Julia Gillard MP
Deputy Prime Minister

Hon Kapil Sibal
Minister for Human Resource Development