EI World Congress 2024



The 2024 Buenos Aires Education International (EI) World Congress was anticipated to be a special event for any member of the Australian delegation following the retirement announcement of outgoing, long-serving and globally respected president, Susan Hopgood.

The deeply held respect for Ms Hopgood and her leadership was inescapable throughout the week, often recognised at the lecturn by speakers commenting their resolution interventions.

The affirmation of respect for the AEU was equally mirrored amongst the almost 200 countries represented and the approximately 1,200 delegates and observers who were in attendance.

It was an honour to welcome the new president of EI, Dr Mugwena Maluleke, a teacher, unionist and social justice activist. Dr. Maluleke was elected by delegates from around the world and assumes this role following an influential tenure as general secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU).

The beating heart of democratic values is at the core of Education International. Despite Israeli and Palestinian delegates challenging one another during debate on peace and Middle Eastern-related resolutions, the Congress reflected a shared ability to discuss matters intelligently and procedurally. Whilst protest was made, respect and unity always prevailed.

Education International led the 10th World Congress through diverse resolutions reflecting all of the struggles and challenges delegates face in their home countries.

Solidarity and support were strong and palpable at times for those resolutions, none perhaps more so than those related to climate, peace, the global teacher shortage and privatisation.

The United Nations has recognised the seriousness of the teacher shortage and the millions of students who have not returned to education following the pandemic.

Australia and indeed, WA, have their own issues on this point, but the worldwide scale is extraordinary.

UNESCO says 98 million children are out of school in Sub-Saharan Africa. As Ms Hopgood said in an inspirational speech, reported by EI, “in response to these challenges, UN Secretary General António Guterres established a High-Level Panel on

the Teaching Profession."

The "historic" panel's recommendations, released earlier this year, call for long-term funding for well-qualified teachers, competitive salaries and the end of precarious employment. They also support collective bargaining and social dialogue to place teachers at the heart of decision-making.

"The UN put the teaching profession front and centre as the critical element in addressing the education crisis," Ms Hopgood said. "This is a strong recognition and respect for the teaching profession, again, made possible because of our campaigning on a global scale."

The policies at the heart of EI's advocacy on critical issues like the teacher shortage, education financing, collective bargaining and other forms of social dialogue, education technology, refugees, child labour and more have been set as an active agenda for coordinated international action that matches our own, Ms Hopgood added.

Affirmation that teachers across the world face the same challenges can be both depressing and binding. Education International has been the voice that has fearlessly confronted all before it over the last 40 years.

To witness so many delegates from European, African, Asia-Pacific and American countries collaborate is difficult to describe. It is achieved through good process and a globally agreed and understood language of trade unionism founded upon similar values no matter how different the cultural understandings of delegates may be.

This alone provides fuel and hope to the successful execution of passed resolutions. Needless to say, should resolutions become actioned items, public education and the work of the teacher and perhaps even climate change and world peace related matters will be better for it.

A series of resolutions related to our immediate context in WA passed at the congress included those on:

- Technology, artificial intelligence and the future of the teaching profession.
- Tackling the teacher shortage.
- Data collection and privacy in education.
- Strengthening the status and quality of early childhood education in a post-Covid-19 pandemic world.
- Solidarity for education and education for solidarity.

As a first time Australian delegate, each day was a privilege to attend. If all the members of the SSTUWA could see this incredible event and this organisation at work, I am very confident they would be endorsing and proud of the contributions they too make towards it.

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