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Bologna Policy Forum
Louvain la Neuve, Belgium, 29 April 2009

Brief remarks by International Association of Universities (IAU), Secretary General, Eva Egron-Polak

It is an honor for the International Association of Universities (IAU) to be with you this morning. IAU is an association of universities and associations of universities from around the world - a sister organization to the European University Association (EUA) but we work at global level.

Allow me to add one more country to the impressive list of non-Bologna country representatives. I am joined here by the Vice-President of the IAU Board, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sains Malaysia, Prof. Abdul Razak Dzulkifli.

We have just returned from Guadalajara, Mexico, where more than 35 associations and networks of Universities met to discuss or make sense of the "Emerging Global Higher Education Space". This Bologna Policy Forum is another step towards the creation of such a space. IAU welcomes the Forum and we hope that it will become a regular feature of these important Bologna Ministerial Conferences. We also hope that IAU can be an active partner in the preparation of subsequent Forums.

It has already been said that this Forum is about mutual learning. Since the challenges facing the higher education and research systems around the world are many, opportunities for constructive dialogue are and will become ever more precious.

The Bologna Process is a unique experiment reflecting a specific reality, building on both unique features and specific needs and goals of this region, Europe. Thus, while it cannot be exported or imported into different contexts, the Bologna Process and the transformation it has brought higher education institutions in so many countries of Europe, spark intense curiosity. It is already acting as a veritable catalyst in other world regions.

I would argue that it is important to highlight and make known the key features of the Bologna Process. There are quite a few of these. Allow me to underline just three:

1. The political will that the Process has mobilized and which appears to be sustained over time;
2. The multi stakeholder engagement and approach it has adopted, actively involving, giving a strong voice and listening to institutional leaders, faculty members, researchers and students;
3. The persistent commitment to the public responsibility for higher education, seeing the sector not only as a key to this region's competitiveness but also as the glue for social cohesion and a platform for international cooperation.

There are other aspects that make this process unique and that could explain its success, but perhaps they are too long to list here.

On behalf of the IAU leadership, the President and Administrative Board, let me extend our sincere congratulations to the organizers of this first Forum for their initiative and express our hope to see such a Forum repeated in the future, perhaps with more time available to focused and specific topics. IAU looks forward to taking an active part.

Thank you.