**Dear delegates,**

As president of the 26th International Conference on Early Childhood and Preschool Education, held from **November 5 to 7, 2026** in the halls of CINTERMEX, I hereby report on how the goals set for these three days were met, before the full authority of this academic and scientific-pedagogical community made up of everyone present.

The adjective scientific-pedagogical is no mistake, nor is it meant as disrespect for the many specialties each of you represents. On this occasion, as on the 25 before it, we have gathered for a greater purpose: to keep working and preparing so that our most precious treasure, as the philosopher José Martí said, may be placed at the level of its time and rise above it.

That conscious intention to develop the full potential of our boys and girls is deeply pedagogical, but achieving it requires the involvement of all of society, and specifically of everyone whose professional work points in this direction.

When one has reported 25 times, there is a risk of repeating what has already been said, so on this occasion we will try to present a report different from those traditionally given. There are several reasons for this:

1.º The events of these days, the interactions and the affection shared are still fresh in our memories.
2.º The speakers who enrich our scientific program keep growing in number and depth, so we run the unforgivable risk of leaving out a name or missing the essence of a contribution.
3.º Likewise, the aim is not to give a chronological account of the 15 conferences, 5 panels, 2 presentations and 28 workshops held, along with presentations, working groups, book and video launches, well-deserved tributes and the medal award, but to stress that they represent 100% of the planned activities and a higher figure than last year, with a greater role for national scientific capacity. They also reflect the sincere and committed interest of the authorities, speakers, directors and educators who have remained here despite their many commitments.
4.º Finally, we aim to be briefer so as to bring out, in general terms, the essence of our analyses, because this will also allow us to begin preparing for the 27th International Conference on Early Childhood and Preschool Education. So, as you can see, we never tire. That makes 26, and we are going for more!

Contrary to what one might think, the activities of the scientific program began before the first scheduled panel took place. The children of the CENDI gave true master classes, presenting their needs and rightful aspirations in the clearest, most heartfelt and direct scientific vocabulary. More than one speaker felt challenged by the ease with which they expressed what we politicians, specialists and adults in general often find so hard to convey and argue. That is why our first reflection is this: if we are already convinced that girls and boys should be active participants in their own learning, they should also be active participants in claiming their legitimate rights.

The analyses centered on seven thematic areas:

1. Technological Mediation, Digital Citizenship and Generative Artificial Intelligence in Early Childhood Care and Education.
2. Inclusive Learning Environments, Neurodiversity, Universal Design and Space as the Third Teacher.
3. Reclaiming and Championing Play as the Organizer of Child Development.
4. The Impact of Demographic Change: Opportunity or Deepening Inequality?
5. Financing Early Childhood and Preschool Education: The Role of States, Financial Institutions and Development Agencies.
6. Teacher Well-being and Leadership in Early Education.
7. Early Childhood, Family and Community: Building Multisectoral Learning Ecosystems.

The invited speakers contributed to these seven thematic areas through the conferences, panels and workshops held. The main conferences and panels served as a reference for the active participation of the delegates, especially the teachers from every Mexican state represented at the event, in the 28 workshops.

**Technological Mediation, Digital Citizenship and Generative Artificial Intelligence in Early Childhood Care and Education**

The main scientific sessions stressed that before learning with artificial intelligence, we learn through relationships. Relational health in early childhood is expressed in warm, stable and responsive bonds between girls, boys and adults, which are the foundation of human

development and of abilities such as language, emotional regulation, curiosity and empathy; technology must therefore be a mediator, not a substitute for human relationships.

A transformative education for children, in times that are complex for everyone and highly technological for some, faces challenges arising from historical, social, cultural and technological change, particularly the use of screens and artificial intelligence and their influence on communities, families and children. This transformative education needs to be driven forward, centered on the human condition, values and sustainable development, in order to guide curricula and educational practice effectively.

The importance of regulating the use of new technologies was also reaffirmed, so that they do not displace essential experiences of early childhood education such as play, exploring nature, handling concrete objects and emotional bonds. Finally, there was a warning about the risk of widening social inequalities if the benefits of technological progress are only within reach of certain groups, and a call to guarantee more equitable educational opportunities.

In this regard, the workshop leaders focused on the effects of screen use on the developing brain in early childhood and on new tools, such as the AI Educational Advisor in early childhood education, for strategic decision-making.

**Inclusive Learning Environments, Neurodiversity, Universal Design and Space as the Third Teacher**

This important and timely thematic area explored the contributions of neuroscience, neurodevelopment and the neurodiversity paradigm to move toward education systems that recognize and value human diversity. In turn, recognizing diversity calls for inclusion, but inclusion means much more than guaranteeing access. One of the ways to guarantee that access is the timely assessment of child development.

An experience of neuropsychological assessment and neurocognitive stimulation using digital tools, carried out with CENDI children and involving teachers and families, was proudly recognized. It allowed an initial screening as a practical result and drew a theoretical distinction between detection and diagnosis.

This research builds and broadens our teachers' research skills so that they learn to document behavior in useful ways, supporting early detection with families as co-facilitators.

Assessment of child development should therefore serve to guide and support, not to label. Whatever the result of that assessment for each individual, there will always be dendritic arborization and therefore a potential for learning, regardless of specific changes in synaptic structures. This understanding of neurodiversity and of the brain's potential places us in a committed and hopeful position: recognizing the epigenetic nature of brain development leads us to seek the best ways and means to promote the development of all girls and boys.

Play, communication and interaction were reaffirmed as the main sources of learning experiences, along with the need for balanced screen use under conscious and healthy adult mediation.

Autism as a neurodevelopmental condition remains a field of research. Its multifactorial origin, in which genetic and environmental factors interact, leaves a research gap, reflected in its possible relationship with epigenetics, the gut microbiota and the manifestations of ASD, although more scientific evidence is still needed.

A large group of workshops addressed the contributions of neuroscience to early child development, highlighting the importance of sensory integration, neuropsychology applied to early childhood education and the role of play as a driver of neurodevelopment. They also encouraged critical reflection on the line between appropriate stimulation and overstimulation, and on the need to understand the diversity of children's developmental paths.

Likewise, the sessions stressed the importance of recognizing neurodiversity and implementing inclusive teaching strategies that support the participation, learning and well-being of all boys and girls. At the same time, they highlighted the importance of self-regulation, socio-emotional care and the mental health of teachers and of education and health professionals.

**Reclaiming and Championing Play as the Organizer of Child Development.**

There was unanimous agreement that play is a fundamental path to children's holistic development, as it supports well-being, communication, creativity, getting along with others and learning. Hence the need to reclaim and champion it.

Play makes an important contribution to emotional relationships and co-regulation; through it, adults help girls and boys manage stress and develop self-regulation. There was therefore a strong call to protect and enrich play, respecting individual differences and supporting inclusion, resilience and healthy development.

Digital games, when well designed and suited to children's ages, can strengthen these skills and support teachers' work, but what matters most is not the technology but its intentional pedagogical use.

On this essential topic, several workshops reaffirmed the value of play as a cornerstone of holistic development in early childhood. The sessions explored how playful experiences help build secure emotional bonds during the first separations from the family, strengthen imagination and symbolic thinking, and support the cognitive, psychomotor and socio-emotional development of boys and girls.

The potential of play as a tool to promote inclusion, participation and equal rights was also highlighted, through strategies that combine body expression, music, drama, movement and mathematical exploration. Together, these sessions consolidated a vision of play as a learning ecosystem that drives the development of cognitive skills, executive functions and the core competencies needed to take full part in educational and social life.

**The Impact of Demographic Change: Opportunity or Deepening Inequality?**

Demographic change was not among the most discussed topics during the conference, compared with the scale that global phenomena such as climate change, armed conflict and human displacement have reached today.

Unlike other thematic areas, this one was covered more widely in the workshops, which reflected on the role of parenting skills and protective environments in contexts marked by violence, the breakdown of the social fabric and other contemporary challenges. The discussions stressed the need to strengthen the capacity for care, support and upbringing as essential factors for the holistic development of young children.

Approaches focused on building a culture of peace and on promoting alternative paths of human development that foster coexistence, participation and collective well-being were also explored. These perspectives reinforced the idea that early childhood funding must go

beyond providing educational services and also contribute to safer, more cohesive communities committed to the holistic development of girls and boys.

This remains a topic we must address in our analyses, so that the scientific proposals emerging from our discussions become ever more relevant and sustainable.

**Financing Early Childhood and Preschool Education: The Role of States, Financial Institutions and Development Agencies.**

Funding for early childhood and preschool education is a strategic element in guaranteeing children's holistic development and promoting educational equity from the first years of life. Both scientific evidence and the experience gathered in many national and international contexts have shown that investing in early childhood brings significant social and economic returns, with a positive effect on learning, health, social inclusion and people's future opportunities. This view was broadly supported by the speeches of government representatives, including the Constitutional Governor of the State of Nuevo León and the Secretary of Public Education, who reaffirmed the value of early care as a public policy priority. Of particular importance was the reflection on the risks of early and excessive exposure of children and adolescents to mobile phones, tablets and social media, as well as the measures to restrict their use in schools to protect emotional development and support healthier learning. The commitment to maintain budget support for the CENDI and for actions aimed at the holistic development of early childhood was also reaffirmed.

In this context, the fundamental role of States in designing public policy, allocating sufficient resources and guaranteeing universal access to quality educational services was highlighted. However, the statistics and analyses presented during the conference showed that, globally, major challenges remain regarding insufficient and even declining levels of investment in early childhood. This is especially worrying given that funding should not be limited to sustaining educational services, but should extend to creating the right conditions for a dignified, healthy and safe life for girls and boys.

The discussions also stressed that children's well-being depends to a great extent on the quality of the environments where their daily lives unfold. Environmental pollution, exposure to toxic emissions, proximity to industrial hazards and limited access to essential resources such as clean water, clean air and healthy food are factors that seriously compromise

children's health and development. Consequently, the responsibility of governments and public authorities to implement preventive and environmental protection policies was emphasized, since we cannot speak of fully protected children when the places where girls and boys live, play and learn are affected by multiple forms of pollution.

Although the responses to these challenges vary according to each country's circumstances and capacities, the experiences shared during the conference showed that progress is possible when there is political will, transparent management of resources and a clear focus on the best interests of children. Examples presented from Vietnam and from the CENDI network show that sustained investment, better environmental conditions and the systematic incorporation of scientific knowledge into educational practice can translate into concrete improvements in the quality of care. The recent opening of new centers, the measures to improve air quality in the facilities and the constant updating of teaching practices show how funding becomes meaningful when it turns into better development opportunities for children.

Finally, the contribution of organizations, foundations and other stakeholders committed to early childhood development was highlighted. In this context, the career of Mary Young was recognized with the “Fraser Mustard” Medal for her outstanding research, leadership and social commitment to the well-being of girls and boys worldwide. Her recognition symbolizes the importance of cooperation among governments, development support organizations, the scientific community and civil society to guarantee sustained and effective investment in early childhood.

An especially illustrative example was the presentation of the *Aprendiendo Juntos* (Learning Together) experience, whose journey showed that educational quality does not depend solely on the amount of resources available, but also on clear purposes, continuity in public policy and institutional commitment to early childhood. The experience showed how a project sustained over time can renew and strengthen itself through continuous improvement strategies, even with limited funding.

The initiative also highlighted the decisive role of political will in prioritizing early childhood and preschool education, as well as the value of international cooperation and solidarity networks between countries as ways of supporting development. From this perspective, educational quality was presented as the result of bringing together public leadership, responsible management of resources and solidarity-based collaboration, showing that significant change for the benefit of girls and boys is possible even under financial constraints.

**Teacher Well-being and Leadership in Early Education.**

This thematic area had a strong presence in the workshops, where well-being was addressed as an essential condition for the quality of educational processes and as a capacity that can be strengthened through training, reflection and professional support. The experiences shared highlighted the importance of caring for those responsible for educating and supporting young children, promoting practices of mindful presence, emotional balance and leadership aimed at building healthy learning environments.

The sessions also highlighted the close relationship between well-being, health and education, exploring teaching proposals that encourage healthy lifestyle habits. Together, the workshops reaffirmed that the well-being of school communities is an essential component in strengthening pedagogical leadership and ensuring more humane, sensitive environments that are conducive to learning.

**Early Childhood, Family and Community: Building Multisectoral Learning Ecosystems.**

This thematic area ran through the entire conference program, so it is hard to single out talks devoted exclusively to it. However, its principles and ideas were present, explicitly or implicitly, in most of the conferences, panels and workshops. The reflections agreed in highlighting the shared responsibility of families, institutions, communities and public bodies in building inclusive, protective and caring environments that support the holistic development of girls and boys from their first years of life.

The need to recognize girls and boys as rights holders, able to express their ideas, take an active part in the processes that affect them and help transform their surroundings, was also emphasized. From this perspective, building humanity begins with relationships based on care, attentive listening, respect and participation, strengthening bonds that allow children's agency and collective well-being to develop.

This approach made it clear that multisectoral learning ecosystems are not limited to links between sectors and institutions, but are built every day through relationships of care,

listening, participation and shared responsibility among families, educators, communities and public bodies, with girls and boys as the protagonists of their own development.

These thematic areas guided the direction of the topics and gave substance to the central theme of the event, "**Global Challenges in Early Childhood. New Demands, New Perspectives, New Opportunities”**

They make up an ambitious range of aims, made all the more complex because none of them appears alone or in pure form. They form a tangle of interrelations, a web of events, associated factors, manifestations and contexts, among other factors, that reveals the complexity described. But they confirm the conviction that a holistic approach is needed, not least because, in the end, that is how each child's development happens: holistically, with each dimension of development influencing the others and also being shaped by them.

Overall, a review of the content covered across the different formats shows clear consistency with current trends in education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Distinctive features and positions also emerge, such as:

- The undeniable link between scientific research and policy decisions on early childhood.
- The priority given to the holistic development of early childhood from a humanist perspective that fosters feelings, values, skills, behaviors, and a culture of citizenship and peace
- The view that only teaching and learning processes that are equitable, inclusive, caring and that generate well-being can be considered quality processes.
- Deeper neuroscience research through the lens of neurodiversity, and its extension into interdependent relationships with research in educational psychology and pedagogy
- The sluggish progress toward the goals of the 2030 Agenda, which require dismantling poverty and inequity in order to build futures. Education alone does not erase differences.
- The need for an interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and intersectoral approach to early childhood issues; a trend toward a sustainability approach, with an urgent call to place diversity, mental health and well-being at the heart of schools.
- The trend toward using technology to support learning and to place the most vulnerable at the center of attention:

- The undeniable presence of technology in the social life of all age groups and its potential benefit for teaching and holistic development, given timely and appropriate mediation.

Without a doubt, this Conference has reaffirmed the deepest meaning of love and of educational commitment, but also the strength of a community that thinks, feels and acts for its children.

The reflections shared showed the urgent need for coherent public policies, sensitive teaching practices, science-based innovation, a central place for well-being and mental health, attention to neurodiversity, play as a path to learning, sustainability, and the active participation of families and the community.

All of this confirms the need for an education that places equity, inclusion and socio-emotional well-being at its center as pillars of holistic development. This conference leaves us certain that early childhood demands a deeply humanist vision, able to honor the feelings, values and dignity of every girl and every boy, and it calls on us to keep building futures with hope, responsibility and unity.

As a result of the commitment of the international specialists gathered at the conference, an emergency declaration was signed, backed by more than 800 delegates, urging redoubled efforts to meet the urgent needs of early childhood in Latin America and the Caribbean. The statement stresses the importance of guaranteeing equitable access to education, health, nutrition, social protection and environments free of violence and pollution, recognizing that meeting these needs is an essential condition for the full exercise of children's rights and for the sustainable development of the region.

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