

Global Education Meeting 2018

Brussels Declaration

We, Ministers, and other heads of delegations, as well as representatives of multilateral organizations, civil society, the teaching profession, youth and the private sector, met in Brussels, from 3 to 5 December 2018.

Recalling Transforming World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Developmentⁱ, the 2015 Incheon Declaration, the Education 2030 Framework for Action, and drawing on a review of progress since the adoption of Agenda 2030, regional consultations on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) conducted in 2018ⁱⁱ, as well as deliberations at this Global Education Meeting, we call for strengthened collective action to achieve SDG 4, **“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all”**.

In noting that, despite some progress, globally, **we are not on track to achieve the SDG4 targets by 2030**, we agree to the following key messages for the 2019 High-Level Political Forum and the United Nations General Assembly:

Key Messages

- We reaffirm the right to inclusive quality education and the fundamental role of education, training, lifelong learning, higher education and research as key drivers for sustainable development, including for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and call for strengthened collective action on SDG4 within the 2030 Agenda.
- We commit to eradicate illiteracy through formal and non-formal education and training.
- We commit to instituting and strengthening legislation, policy measures and strategic approaches to make education and training systems more equitable and inclusive “leaving no one behind”, including in contexts of protracted crises and humanitarian emergencies.
- We call for a commitment to include migrants, displaced persons and refugees in our education and training systems and to facilitate the recognition of their qualifications, skills, and competencies, in line with national legislation and international agreements.
- We commit to quality gender-responsive education and training to achieve the empowerment of all women and girls.
- We commit to strengthening education for global citizenship and for sustainable development to promote values of respect for life, dignity and cultural diversity and contribute to social cohesion, democracy, peace and social justice and to improving the accountability of education as a public good.
- We commit to open, flexible and responsive education and training systems that support the development of a broader range of knowledge, skills and competencies, from early childhood to adulthood, to contribute to sustainable, peaceful, inclusive and just societies, and to engage in decent work in rapidly changing labor markets.
- We call for ensuring publicly funded, relevant initial and continuous professional development, and appropriate recruitment processes, decent working conditions, professional autonomy and career pathways for teachers, educators, trainers and school leaders.
- We call for strengthened domestic resource mobilization and increased international cooperation, solidarity and aid to improve education quality, equity and inclusion, while prioritizing resources to those most in need, including in contexts of protracted crises.

1. **We note that despite some progress, globally, we are not on track to achieve the SDG4 targets by 2030.** There are still 750 million youth and adults who are not literate, two thirds of whom are women, and 262 million children and youth who do not attend school. Equally worrying, 617 million, or 58% of children and adolescents, are not able to read and do basic mathematics, of which a large share is in school. Half of pre-school age children are not enrolled in early childhood education programs, despite their importance for health, equity and future learning. Only half of all adolescents and youth complete secondary school, with only 18% in low-income countries – and 1% of the poorest girls.
2. **We reaffirm the universal relevance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the centrality of education for reaching all SDGs.** Noting the linkages between education and the goals being reviewed at the 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), Goal 13 (Climate action) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), under the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, **we call on the HLPF, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2019 and governments to take all measures to step up progress on SDG4, by reflecting education, at all levels and contexts, as essential to achieving Agenda 2030.**
3. Noting that inclusion and equity in and through education and training is vital to ensuring a transformative agenda, **we reaffirm the right to safe, quality education and learning throughout life**, based on the principles of non-discrimination, gender equality and equal opportunity for all. **We further commit to strategic context and culturally sensitive legislation and policies to make our education and training systems more equitable and inclusive “leaving no-one behind”.** This requires that all children and youth have access to quality early childhood development, care and education, encouraging at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education, and complete 12 years of free publicly funded quality primary and secondary education, of which at least nine years are compulsory. It also requires enhanced access to post-secondary education, including technical and vocational education, further and tertiary education, including university, accessible to all. Particular attention will be given to those in vulnerable situations, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, those in remote rural areas, ethnic minorities, the poor, women and girls, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons, whether as a result of conflict or natural disasters.
4. **We reaffirm that teaching is a profession and that teachers, school leaders, educators and trainers all play a vital role in our collective responsibility to prepare future generations.** Accordingly, we call for greater support and resources for relevant initial and continuous professional development, efficient and effective policies, appropriate recruitment and deployment processes, decent working conditions, and opportunities for sharing promising practices, professional autonomy and career pathways for teachers. We also call for measures to prevent teacher attrition to ensure a motivated, supported, highly skilled, qualified, adequately resourced and empowered teaching force. **We also commit to value our teachers and raise their status and work to involve them and their organizations and institutions in the development, monitoring and evaluation of education policy.**
5. Highlighting that literacy, including functional literacy, is still a major challenge, **we reaffirm our commitment to eradicate illiteracy through formal and non-formal education and training** and ensure equitable access to digital literacy, as well as media and information literacy as a continuum of proficiency levels within a lifelong learning perspective.
6. Education affects the aspirations, beliefs and attitudes of migrants, refugees and displaced persons and their sense of belonging in host communities. Investing in the inclusion of migrants and displaced persons in education systems also helps host communities to understand and fight stereotypes and discrimination and promote cohesive societies. Recognition of higher education

qualifications of refugees and migrants through the UNESCO Regional Conventions, and other mechanisms such as the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, are important instruments to meet the aspirations of individuals and are beneficial to both host countries, as well as countries of origin. **We recognize the need to include migrants, displaced persons, returnees, asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons in our education and training systems and to facilitate recognition of their qualifications, skills and competencies,** taking account of national context, national legislation and international agreements.

7. Social, political, environmental and economic changes, as well as accelerated technological innovations, have profound implications for education and training systems. Accordingly, **we commit to supporting lifelong learning opportunities for all to ensure necessary competencies for personal development, decent work and sustainable development, with attention to climate change, adaptation and mitigation.** Additionally, education institutions must provide children, youth and adult learners with the competences to be active citizens in democratic and sustainable societies. This includes efforts to promote education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, democracy and human rights, gender equality, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, physical education and sports, education in native language, peace and non-violence, global citizenship and active participation, appreciation for cultural diversity, multilingualism, intercultural dialogue, solidarity and more peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. This requires attention to pedagogy, curricula, teaching and learning materials, assessments, initial teacher training and continuous professional development, inter alia.
8. **We highlight the important role of higher education and technical and vocational education and training based on collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and the importance of regional and national mechanisms for the recognition of higher education and vocational qualifications.** We also recognize the importance of skills acquired through non-formal and informal education and learning.
9. We reaffirm children's and young people's right to learn free from violence. A safe learning environment, free of bullying and violence, including gender-based violence, is critical to improve educational and social outcomes. **We commit to address harassment and violence of all forms in education institutions.**
10. Attacks on education and training have damaging impact – with the potential to increase student dropout and teacher attrition, lead to extended school and university closures, diminish the quality of education and cause physical and psychological harm. In this regard, **we reaffirm that education and all its facilities and institutions should be protected from attacks and military use, and urge parties to armed conflict not to use schools and universities for military efforts.**
11. We urge adherence to the international benchmarks of allocating at least 4-6% of Gross Domestic Product and/or at least 15-20% of total public expenditure to education. We reiterate the need to ensure more efficient and equitable resource allocation and to improving accountability in expenditure including through legislation. Accordingly, **we call for strengthening domestic resource mobilization,** including through tax reform, anti-corruption measures and tracking of illicit financial flows, as agreed in the Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development. **We further call for increased volume and predictability of international aid** towards meeting the benchmark of 0.7 per cent of GNP, with active participation of governments, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and foundations to strengthen public education, and with a larger share of aid to countries with the greatest needs. Funding should prioritize resources to improve the quality of education and social outcomes in an equitable and inclusive way according to needs and priorities of countries.
12. Acknowledging that the international community has embraced the new monitoring framework, which calls on diversifying education and training data sources and the current review of progress through agreed national, regional and global processes, **we commit to strengthening monitoring**

of inclusion, equity and quality. This includes optimizing education governance systems and the use of existing indicators and ensuring more disaggregated data to better track inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, language, income, disability status, migratory status and geographical location. In recognizing the value and risks associated with Big Data, **we emphasize the importance of protecting personal data** of learners and teachers.

13. We commit to support meaningful involvement of youth, students, teachers, school and post-secondary institution leaders, and their representative organizations, as well as communities, parents, civil society and academia at all stages, from planning to monitoring progress in ensuring the right to quality education for all. In this regard, **we commit to strengthening the capacities of public authorities and stakeholders, to monitor and evaluate equity and quality in education and training and to ensure more transparent reporting for public accountability.**
14. **We commit to reinforcing national and regional SDG4 coordination and implementation mechanisms and to strengthening international cooperation, solidarity and partnerships** by learning from each other's experiences and developing joint initiatives ensuring complementarity and synergy in our efforts to meet our shared goals and commitments.
15. **We reaffirm that education is a public good and public responsibility, a fundamental human right and an important basis for ensuring personal fulfilment and for the realization of other rights essential for peace and sustainable development.** Governments have the primary responsibility to deliver on the right to education and a central role as custodians of efficient equitable and effective management and financing of public education accessible to all.
16. The messages and commitments presented in this outcome statement should be taken forward with the report to be submitted to the 2019 HLPF under the aegis of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee. In this regard, we reaffirm the lead role of UNESCO in the coordination, implementation and monitoring of SDG4.

ⁱ United Nations Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>; United Nations General Assembly (Distr. 25 January 2018) A/Res/72/222. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2017 [on the report of the Second Committee (A/72/420/Add.7)]. Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/72/222

ⁱⁱ Pan-African High-Level Conference on Education (Nairobi, Kenya, 25-27 April 2018); Asia-Pacific Education 2030 Consultation (Bangkok, Thailand, 12-14 July 2018); Latin American and Caribbean Ministerial Conference (Cochabamba, Bolivia, 25-26 July 2018); Europe and North American Education 2030 consultation (Strasbourg, France/Council of Europe, 24 October 2018) and Arab Education 2030 consultation (Amman, 4-7 November 2018).