



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Regional Ministerial Conference on Education Post 2015 European and North American States (Group I and Group II countries)

UNESCO, Paris, 19 - 20 February 2015

Concept Note

Introduction

As the 2015 target year for the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) draws near, several multi-layered inter-linked processes were launched, aiming at shaping the post-2015 development agenda. Consultations and debates have equally been undertaken on the vision, shape and scope of the post-2015 education agenda as part of the broader development agenda. UNESCO, in close collaboration with its partners and in particular with UNICEF, has been facilitating the debate of Member States on the post-2015 education agenda.

The most recent milestone with regard to the post-2015 development agenda is the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group which represents a Proposal for the Sustainable Development Goals. This Proposal contains 17 goals, one of which is on education. The proposed education goal 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all' is translated into 7 targets and 3 means of implementation.¹

The most important and most recent outcome of the global consultations regarding education is the *Muscat Agreement*, which is the result of consultations led by UNESCO and the broader EFA community. This Agreement represents the current shared vision of key stakeholders of the international education community for the post-2015 education agenda. It outlines a proposal for a holistic post-2015 education agenda of universal relevance and with a focus on equity, quality, learning outcomes and lifelong learning. The Agreement proposes 'Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030' as the overarching goal for education, which is translated into 7 targets covering early childhood care and education; basic education; adult and youth literacy; skills for work and life; skills for global citizenship and sustainable development; teachers; and financing of education².

Rationale

One of the new features of the future education agenda is its universal relevance for all countries. Contrary to the current MDGs and the EFA agenda, which were perceived to be solely relevant for developing countries and less so for middle and high-income countries, the future agenda aims at responding to the education requirements of all countries. Universality is understood as an agenda for all, owned by all, to be implemented by all, and to which all are accountable. Differentiation needs to be reflected in national tailoring.

The process of the development of the broader development agenda is ongoing. On 10 September 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted the "Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/288" (document A/68/L.61). The Assembly decided that the outcome document from the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals would be the

¹ Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E

² Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002281/228122E.pdf>

main basis for integrating the sustainable development goals into the future development agenda. The resolution also states that other inputs would also be considered during the intergovernmental negotiation process. During the General Debate of the 69th General Assembly of the UN, countries underlined the importance of a transformative, universal and inclusive post-2015 agenda which should provide a global and concerted approach to eradicate poverty and reach sustainable development, building on the achievements and lessons learnt from the MDGs. The importance of education for achieving sustainable development was highlighted by numerous countries. In its implementation, the agenda must be flexible and should reflect the needs and priorities of countries. The sustainable development goals of the post-2015 development agenda deserved strong support and adequate and timely resources. The adoption of the post-2015 development framework should lead to the establishment of a global partnership for sustainable development as well as participatory monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure appropriate follow-up. The Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary-General on the post-2015 agenda was published on 4 December 2014.³ The report welcomes the proposal on SDGs by the Open Working Group (OWG) and introduces six essential elements for delivering on the SDGs. Education is included under the element 'People: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children'. The intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 agenda have started in January and will continue until July 2015.

In addition to these negotiations, consultations on the post-2015 education agenda are also continuing, facilitated by UNESCO in close collaboration with its partners. The consultations on the future education agenda will culminate in the World Education Forum (WEF) 2015 (Incheon, Republic of Korea, 19-22 May 2015). The Forum aims at agreeing on a joint position for the education goal and targets in the post-2015 development agenda, and on a comprehensive Framework for Action. It is UNESCO's aspiration that this agreed position be fully aligned with the education goal and targets of the global development agenda to be adopted at the UN High-Level Summit in September 2015, so as to have one single education agenda for 2015-2030. This will require continued strong engagement and support of all Member States and the different ministries responsible for the development of the future agenda throughout the process.

An important platform of these consultations are the regional ministerial conferences which aim at reviewing and analysing the EFA experience in the region, developing a regional perspective on the emerging post-2015 education agenda and reflecting on future priorities and strategies of the region to achieve the future agenda, taking into consideration existing national plans and national/regional benchmarks. These conferences are being held in all regions, to ensure that the future education agenda reflects the requirements of all countries.

Objectives

The objectives of the conference are to:

- 1.) review and analysis of the EFA experience in the region, including achievements, challenges and lessons learned and discussion of priorities for education beyond 2015;
- 2.) identification of regional perspectives on the proposed post-2015 education goals and targets, making reference to what has been proposed so far, i.e. the education goal and targets of the Muscat Agreement and that of the Open Working Group Proposal on Sustainable Development Goals;
- 3.) provision of regional contributions to the development of the post-2015 Framework for Action in terms of implementation of the future education agenda, including cooperation, partnerships, financing and monitoring.
- 4.) reflections on the implications of the post-2015 education agenda from an aid perspective.

Expected Outcomes

- A regional synthesis report of the EFA experience in Group I and Group II countries
- A Conference Statement including recommendations on the future education agenda from the regional perspective and its implementation

³ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/700&Lang=E

Format and participation

This Conference will bring together some 250 participants, including ministers of education and of development, senior representatives of ministries of education and ministries of foreign affairs as well as bi-lateral development agencies supporting global education development of UNESCO Member States from Group I and Group II countries; the EFA convening agencies; the Global Partnership for Education; United Nations and regional organizations; OECD; the teaching profession; civil society organizations (CSOs); youth; the private sector; research institutes; foundations and experts.

Working languages are English, French and Russian.

Venue

UNESCO, 75007 Paris, 7, place de Fontenoy, Room IV.