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Organización
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Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Irina Bokova,

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on the occasion of the “Supporting Syria and the Region Conference”

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Today is the first time the international community addresses the comprehensive impact of the crisis on education at all levels, inside Syria and host countries.

This is essential.

There are 2.1 million children and youth inside Syria out of school – there are 0.7 million Syrian children and youth in five host countries out of school.

Breaking this down further, some 83% of Syrian refugee youth aged 18-24 is without education (compared to 48% aged 5-17).

This is why we are here, and I thank the United Kingdom, the Emir of Kuwait, Germany and Norway.

This Conference occurs in the framework of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* – the new agenda will not hold its promise without dramatically scaled-up support to educating displaced Syrian children and youth.

Building lasting peace requires investing in the future of Syrian society, in children, young women and men.

This is a development imperative and a security imperative – for Syria, the region.

This raises a host of complex issues.

This is about supporting host community education systems. This is about hiring teachers. This is about textbooks. This is about psycho-social support.

Moving forward requires far more investment in education, integrated into all humanitarian and development efforts.

Moving forward requires leadership -- and UNESCO welcomes the collective sense of responsibility demonstrated by the range of stakeholders present -- with national authorities, public and private donors, United Nations agencies.

Supporting education in emergencies and protracted crises should take the comprehensive vision of SDG4, focusing from pre-primary to secondary, technical and vocational training, higher and non-formal.

The focus on secondary, technical and vocational and higher education is especially important.

This is where youth are falling out of the system, where they are most vulnerable to violence and radicalisation, as well as to false ideologies.

Secondary and higher education is vital, to provide Syria's young women and men with skills for lives of dignity and peace, to find jobs, to participate fully in their societies.

This is why UNESCO is acting across the board to bridge learning gaps for Syrian youth, in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as inside Syria:

- Expanding access to education beyond primary: secondary, technical and vocational and higher education;
- Improving quality and relevance of education, for students to be equipped with skills for decent employment;
- Strengthening the resilience of national education systems to cope and manage with the crisis.

The stakes are high.

Losing this generation will throw a shadow over the country and region's future.

Education cannot wait until the conflict is over – the seeds of peace must be sown now, to protect against abuse, to invest in stability, recovery and reconstruction, as well as durable solutions for refugees.