



Regional Ministerial Conference on Education Post-2015

European and North American States

19 – 20 February 2015

Paris Statement

Preamble

1. We, Ministers of Education, high-level government officials from Ministries of Education and of Cooperation and Development, and representatives of UN agencies, civil society organizations and development partners of European and North American States, gathered at the Regional Ministerial Conference on Education Post-2015 of European and North American States, in Paris, France, from 19 – 20 February 2015;
2. Having deliberated on the status of EFA in Europe and North America as well as on lessons learnt; on challenges and priorities in education that will shape the post-2015 education agenda and on the implementation and monitoring requirements of the future agenda; we endorse the principles, goal and targets set forth in the Muscat Agreement, and support the proposed education goal and targets outlined in the Report of the United Nations General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG) for Sustainable Development Goals.
3. We take note of the Synthesis Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the post-2015 agenda 'The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet.
4. We support the proposed goal of the future education agenda: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", which reflects the aspiration of the European and North American States for education and development and adopt the present statement. Accordingly, we support a single, integrated education agenda, which is fully aligned with the post-2015 SDG framework.
5. We reaffirm that education is a fundamental human right, a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights, and essential for peaceful and inclusive, equitable and sustainable development and poverty reduction in Europe and North America and globally. We reaffirm that education should be at the heart of the future global development agenda, given its central role in achieving sustainable development and in forging more just, peaceful, democratic, tolerant, resilient, transformative and inclusive societies and in providing people with the understanding, competencies and values they need to resolve the challenges that our societies and economies are facing.

Priority Areas for European and North American States

Equity, inclusion and gender equality

6. We are committed to the principles of non-discrimination in education¹ and recommend addressing all forms of exclusion, disparities and inequalities in education, based on differences in age, gender, wealth,

¹ See Convention against Discrimination in Education adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1960; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of racial Discrimination, 1969;

nationality, religion, language, geographical location, disability, identity, culture, citizenship status, socio-economic background and health condition among others.

7. Addressing inequities in access, participation and learning outcomes by developing comprehensive inclusive education strategies is a vital consideration to ensure a transformative post-2015 education agenda. This requires a focus on the quality of education which should be addressed from an equity and inclusion perspective in particular for vulnerable and marginalized groups. We remain committed to enhancing education systems which reflect and welcome cultural diversity and foster intercultural dialogue, thus achieving social cohesion.

8. We recognize the importance of gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment for sustainable development. We therefore commit to supporting gender sensitive policies and planning; mainstream gender issues in teachers' training; eliminate school-related gender-based violence, provide age-appropriate reproductive health and comprehensive sexuality education², link women's literacy and adult education programs with women's rights, leadership, health, nutrition, peace and security, entrepreneurship skills etc.; and ensure gender sensitive learning environments.

Quality of education

9. We are committed to the quality of education for all, with attention to improving and measuring progress across inputs, processes including functioning and governance of the system and learning outcomes. Special focus should be put on gender equality and the most marginalized so as to improve overall levels of student learning and reduce achievement gaps.

10. We consider it crucial that all learners are taught by professional, competent, committed and well-supported teachers at all levels of education who are able to respond to diverse learning needs. Appropriate systems and policies on teacher pre- and in-service training, recruitment, certification, deployment, professional development, career advancement, accountability, remuneration, as well as an enabling working environment and conducive conditions of service are essential for ensuring teacher effectiveness and teacher status. Given the critical importance of teachers for the realization of quality education, teachers should remain key actors and a central focus of the post-2015 education agenda.

11. We stress the importance of curricula and of diverse learning materials and tools to reflect the needs of multi-cultural and multi-lingual societies and knowledge-based economies and the changing skills demands for life and the labour market. This includes better alignment of pedagogical practices to the needs of increasingly diverse student populations and to enable the achievement of relevant learning outcomes including non-cognitive skills and competencies essential for life. Quality learning through learner-centred approaches also needs to be supported by effective and safe learning environments, competent school leadership and parental and community participation; and should be underpinned by cutting-edge findings of scientific research on learning. We also acknowledge the importance of ICTs and the need for harnessing their full potential in the teaching and learning process for improved learning outcomes, and to facilitate the entry of young people in the workplace and to improve the quality of life.

12. We highlight the importance of monitoring and assessing the process and outcomes of learning. Ways to measure not only academic performance but also other outcomes such as critical thinking, innovation, entrepreneurship, flexibility, cooperation, etc. need to be developed. It is important that we further develop and improve global, regional and country or sub-national- based evaluation systems that consider

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, [CEDAW], 1979; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 1981 and Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990 among others.

² In acknowledging the call for sexuality education one country delegation indicated that it should be noted that the provision of sexuality education should be provided in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities and the appropriate direction and guidance from parents and legal guardians.

various quality dimensions including literacy and numeracy, and generate sound evidence for policy formulation and the management of education systems.

Lifelong learning for all

13. Inclusive and equitable access to quality education should be ensured for all - children, youth and adults, at all levels of education, from early childhood care and education (ECCE) to higher education, offered formally, non-formally or informally. As quality ECCE plays a crucial role in building strong foundations for learning and development, the continued expansion of quality ECCE services should be provided to all with emphasis on the holistic development of children. We also acknowledge that poor and disadvantaged children benefit most from quality early childhood education. Timely and appropriate early detection and intervention in early childhood can reduce and prevent learning difficulties and disabilities. Therefore, early childhood education should be considered one major strategy for effectively addressing equity issues in education.

14. We recommend the provision of at least 12 years publicly funded quality formal education for all by 2030 that includes at least 9 years of free and compulsory primary and lower secondary education and at least one year of pre-primary education. The equitable expansion of higher education with quality programs and the strengthening of science and technology, including research and innovation should also be a priority for the region. We further recommend mechanisms that support flexible learning pathways, credit transfer and the recognition, validation and accreditation of knowledge, skills and competencies through non-formal and informal learning

15. We recognize that adequate and advanced life and work skills including functional literacy and numeracy are essential for effective participation in a changing life and work context. Yet many adults lack these skills. Such skills are necessary and relevant life and work competencies to boost innovation, prosperity, social participation, cohesion and democratic citizenship. Demographic changes, which include migration and aging populations poses opportunities and challenges that require us to provide well-designed continuing education opportunities to enable adults to maintain and develop new skills. Well-designed education systems should be put in place to enable adult workers to keep their skills up-to-date and improve the quality of life and their productivity, and thereby contribute to extended careers of productive employment in a life-long learning perspective.

Skills and competencies for life and work

16. We recognize that in light of the rapid social, economic and environmental transformations in Europe and North America, there is an acute need to identify policy options that effectively enlarge the relevant skill sets of children, youth and adults, to manage and attain a better quality of life and realize their full potential. We acknowledge that beyond mastering work-specific skills, there is need for information-processing skills and other high-level cognitive and interpersonal skills. Therefore, we recommend that education and training opportunities should provide learners with those knowledge, skills and competences needed to be creative and innovative, able to initiate, adapt to and assimilate change and to continue learning, and navigate a technology-intensive world.

17. Attention is also needed to strengthen work-related skills in order to improve education to work transitions, and enhance adult up-skilling and reskilling. Reducing the mismatch between qualifications and credentials supplied by education and training systems and the required skills and competencies in the current labour market is particularly important. Developing lifelong learning frameworks is important to improve the linkages between education and training and employment and to enhance a dialogue between governments and social and economic partners to facilitate the transition of young people from education to work. We recommend the establishment of flexible education systems which facilitate pathways between different education streams and the transition between school and work.

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education

18. We acknowledge the need to strengthen the contribution of education to the fulfilment of human rights, peace, responsible citizenship, gender equality, sustainable development, health, respect for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Programs in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), stated and reinforced in the Nagoya Declaration and the Global Action Programme, and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) that include attention to human rights education and gender equality and among other priorities are needed to empower learners to contribute to sustainable development and take responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and just democratic societies for present and future generations, and to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world and counter violent extremism. In line with this, curricula, textbooks and educational materials and tools should promote mutual respect, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. ESD and GCED are holistic concepts and key components of adult learning systems in addition to education for the arts, education for community development and intergenerational understanding.

19. We recognise that the participation of children, students and young people in education governance, can help develop skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making, and strengthen the behavioural capacities required to effectively engage in society. We commit to strengthen existing and emerging education governance processes in formal and non-formal contexts and ensure the active involvement of children, students and young people, parents, families and communities and work with them to monitor the quality of educational services.

Education in Crisis Situations

20. Conflict, crises, natural disasters and global pandemics are major challenges with significant consequences for education and development globally. We underline the importance of education being maintained during emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations and for reconstruction. We recognize the important role education plays in preventing and mitigating conflicts and crises and for reconciliation and in addressing the needs of displaced persons. We fully recognize the need to ensure the protection of education personnel, students and school infrastructure in times of conflict and emergency situations with particular attention to girls and women, develop plans for preparedness and response, as well as promote education for a culture of peace and non-violence, and intercultural dialogue and understanding. In the spirit of disaster risk reduction, we acknowledge the need for inclusion in education policies, sector plans and budgets relevant risk assessment and planning. We recognize the need for multi-year funding for education in humanitarian and protracted crises.

Governance, Coordination and Partnerships, Financing and Monitoring

21. Governments are the primary duty-bearers and custodians for efficient, equitable and sustainable management and financing of public education and schools. At the same time, we underline the importance of partnerships between governments and key stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector, parents, school administrators, teachers, children, students, young people, and the wider community and aim at enhancing these, with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities.

22. We emphasize that strong public financing of education is crucial for the success of the education agenda and recommend that education should be a priority in governments' budgets. We recommend that action should be taken to improve the efficiency of educational financing and that there should be an enhanced focus on diversified financing that supports quality public education.

23. Given the greater ambition and increased scope of the post 2015 agenda there is a need to mobilize funding and resources from multiple sources, and pay attention to more efficient use of resources, an enhanced focus on innovative financing and strengthened partnership, including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In accordance with the country contexts, we recommend that governments consider adherence to the international benchmarks of 4 - 6% of GDP and/or 15 - 20% of total public expenditure for education for domestic investment in education. At the same time we reiterate the commitment to the

international target of providing 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) as official development assistance (ODA)³. We also call for international financing mechanisms that support the implementation of all the targets of the post-2015 education agenda according to the needs and priorities of the respective countries.

24. We are determined to uphold accountability and transparency in the provision of education, supported by strengthened monitoring and evaluation. We further recommend regular and independent monitoring to track progress at global, regional and country and sub-national mechanisms; therefore mechanisms such as the current EFA Global Monitoring Report should be maintained in the form of a Global Education Monitoring Report, with regular opportunities to discuss results at a high political level. As needed systems may have to be developed or improved and supported at these levels.

Towards the World Education Forum, May 2015

25. We request UNESCO, along with UNICEF and with the support of the EFA co-convening agencies, as well as civil society, and the international, regional and sub-regional groups and partners, to continue leading the coordination of the development of the post-2015 education agenda, and the development of the corresponding Framework for Action and of indicators drawing on the contributions of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). We further recommend that UNESCO continue to lead, coordinate and provide technical support together with other partners for the implementation, monitoring and accountability for the post-2015 education agenda.

26. We are committed to promote a single, integrated future education agenda in upcoming intergovernmental negotiations, and to facilitate the alignment of the Framework for Action, to be agreed upon at the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea on 19-22 May 2015, with the global post-2015 development agenda to be adopted by the UN Special Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015. We believe that education has a fundamental role to play in the transformation of people's lives and we look forward to meeting at Incheon to set this agenda for that transformation.

Paris, 20 February 2015

³ Noting the ongoing discussions on Financing for Development in the framework of the SDG.