



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Globale Education Meeting 2018



Remarks by UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education Stefania Giannini

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Sa Majesté la Reine Mathilde de Belgique,

Monsieur Rudy Demotte, Ministre-Président

Madame Hilde Crevits, Vice-Ministre Présidente et Ministre de l'éducation

Excellences, Mesdames et messieurs

Permettez-moi de remercier chaleureusement le Royaume de Belgique pour son accueil de cette première réunion mondiale sur l'éducation depuis l'adoption de l'agenda le plus universel que le monde n'ait jamais défini pour forger un avenir meilleur pour les peuples et la planète.

Je salue les Ministres venus de près et de loin pour partager leurs expériences de mise en œuvre des engagements ambitieux de cet Agenda, ainsi que tous les représentants réunis ici aujourd'hui — nous sommes en présence d'une communauté unique d'acteurs du changement.

Nous venons enrichis par les conférences régionales, toutes co-organisées par l'UNESCO, qui se sont tenus cette année à Amman, Bangkok, Buenos Aires, Cochabamba, Nairobi et Strasbourg, et par le travail assidu du Comité Directeur ODD-Agenda 2030, établi en 2016 pour renforcer la mobilisation, la compréhension et l'action en faveur de l'objectif éducation.

Un tel dialogue est vital pour établir un diagnostic clair des enjeux et dessiner des stratégies qui s'ancrent dans une vision partagée du présent et des priorités sur lesquelles nos investissements doivent se concentrer.

C'est un très grand privilège de vous compter, Sa Majesté, parmi nous aujourd'hui.

Nous savons votre engagement notamment pour l'émancipation des filles et des femmes, pour leur éducation et leur santé. En tant que membre du Groupe des défenseurs des Objectifs de développement durable nommé par le Secrétaire Général de l'ONU, vous portez cet agenda transformateur par votre plaidoyer et le partage d'actions qui touchent la vie des populations les plus vulnérables.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human well-being and that of our planet stand at the center of this Agenda.

We are navigating in a world of increasing uncertainty and complexity, marked by accelerated migration, deepening inequalities, rising extremism and lagging progress in implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change as the COP24 opens in Katowice.

In the face of this, our existence depends on charting a radically new course for development.

The 2030 agenda is about transformation across the board, in how we create and distribute wealth, consume and produce, learn, live together and govern in an interconnected world.

It takes root in universal human rights adopted 70 years ago this month and sets ethical foundations for peace by addressing the injustices and inequalities that fuel fragmentation and conflict.

It calls for a surge in global cooperation that recognizes the interdependent nature of 21st challenges.

This Agenda sets a map for crafting global solutions that can work for everyone.

Our mission at this global meeting is not only to take stock of progress but to set the ground for the UN High Level Political Forum next July on the theme of empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.

This sums up our challenge – to empower, to build inclusive and just societies.

It is a golden opportunity to showcase the power of education to reduce inequalities, act on climate change, drive inclusive economic growth and build peace – to cite several of the other SDGs on the Forum's agenda.

Empowerment is defined as “a process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights; to promote the self-actualization of.”

Such a process only happens through gaining knowledge.

I would argue that education provides the infrastructure for all development.

Every education minister here today will concur that their portfolio touches on what is most critical to people's lives, to their future.

Yet the irrefutable evidence of education's impact across development does not translate into policy priority or sufficient investment.

This is why we must never tire in reaffirming the power of education for the development of all societies, regardless of income level.

We are speaking about enormous gains in reducing poverty, child mortality, early marriage, malnutrition and HIV/AIDS when individuals have a secondary education.

About the knowledge and attitudes to care for the environment, to drive innovation, to green our societies.

About critical mindsets to stand up to discrimination and prejudice, to nurture respect for diversity, to learn the language of peace and reconciliation.

Finally we are speaking about new skills – including digital – for emerging jobs and ones that don't even exist yet, driven by the ongoing technology revolution affecting every aspect of civilization.

The Human Capital Index launched earlier this year makes the case: countries that invest in education and health – in people - prosper most.

But we know that today, education is still failing too many children, youth and adults.

The starting point is to make inclusion the principle guiding every policy – to reach those who are missing out and to make education systems work for everyone – persons with disabilities, indigenous people, linguistic minorities...

This meeting places the focus on two facets of inclusion that require global solidarity and action.

First gender equality.

Today, to cite just one example, less than 40 percent of girls in sub-Saharan Africa even complete secondary education.

This is a violation of rights and a waste of talent and potential.

We need systemic and systematic attention to gender equality in every aspect of education policy, and more widely in society – it is a sine qua non for achieving the entire 2030 Agenda.

Second, the inclusion of migrants, refugees and displaced persons in education – an imperative for every society.

Half of the world's forcibly displaced people are under the age 18, many fleeing from harrowing experiences of conflict and loss.

Education is a lifeline for the future, it represents hope, stability and opportunity.

I recently launched the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, "Building Bridges, Not Walls" on two continents, in Kenya and Italy.

The perspectives may be different, but the challenges are not.

They are about integration, social cohesion and diversity.

The adoption of the two new Global Compacts for Migrants and Refugees represent a milestone. Both include recognition of the right to education for those on the move.

We must support this breakthrough, by ensuring that migrants and refugees are integrated into national education systems, and that these systems in turn, have the know-how to make diversity an asset, to combat prejudice and nurture all talents.

Fundamentally, inclusion is about opening up education systems to new ways of learning and teaching, to knowledge about other cultures, languages and religious beliefs, to global citizenship.

This inclusive approach makes societies stronger, safer and resilient

Evidence shows that the most inclusive systems are those that produce the best results.

To be inclusive, education systems themselves have to transform, to work better for all learners.

For this, teachers everywhere must be empowered throughout their careers – technology can enrich their practice, but in no way substitute them.

This leads us to investment – short and long term, sustainable and predictable.

Put starkly, education needs more money from all sources to fill an estimated USD 40 billion annual funding gap.

Leaders must be convinced to invest in what makes the ultimate wealth of our societies – the 4 billion plus under the age of 25 today who are the custodians of our common and fragile future.

The cost of inaction puts every society at risk of even greater divides.

UNESCO is convinced that authentic partnership and coordinated action is the only way to steer the global push for human rights and dignity that education represents.

Everyone here today plays a role in the global architecture set up right after the 2030 Agenda was adopted.

We are as determined then as now to ensure that it builds trust and dialogue for collaborative action.

This shared engagement is our greatest strength.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to many positive exchanges with you over the next days.

The **Global Education Meeting** is convened by UNESCO in its mandated role as lead agency and coordinator of the Education 2030 Agenda. The Meeting reviews progress towards the global education targets and commitments in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It brings the global community together to take stock of progress and identify strategic priority areas requiring political guidance and intervention for the effective achievement of the global Education 2030 Agenda.

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