

National Speech by the Head of the Delegation of the Argentine Republic
Dr. Alejandro Finocchiaro, Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Technology,
in the General Policy Debate at the 40th session of the
General Conference of UNESCO
14 November 2019 in Paris

Mr. President of the General Conference

Mr. Chairman of the Executive Board

Ms. Director General

Messrs. Ministers

Messrs. Ambassadors and Delegates

It is a **great honor** for me to be here today, with you, for the second time, representing the Argentine Republic at this 40th UNESCO General Conference.

We live in a time of great transformations and **challenges for the planet, for the world peace and prosperity and for the world population.**

In order to deal with these challenges, we have the most powerful tools: **education, culture and science.**

But, fundamentally, we have got the **transformative power of education**, education that must be inclusive and of quality. Education as a fundamental human right. Education that is a prerequisite for human development.

From the Argentine Republic, we support the **strategic relevance that education has for the achievement of each one of the Objectives of the 2030 Agenda.**

Our country has been making efforts **for this to happen:**

AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL,

1. Argentina has had a constructive role in the **World Education Conference** and in the **2030 Education Steering Committee**, where we have been representing Latin America and the Caribbean since 2016 to date.

2. During the Argentine presidency of the **G20**, in 2018, we decided, for the first time in history, to place education at the center of the debate, and to organize its First Meeting of Ministers of Education. An event that enabled the unprecedented participation of UNESCO, through its Director General.
3. In October this year we renewed the agreement for the **International Center for the Promotion of Human Rights**, based in Buenos Aires, a UNESCO Category 2 Center that constitutes a global public asset, that has developed an intense, diverse and comprehensive agenda.
4. Likewise, this November, we have launched **Global Challenge**, the first multi-platform and multilingual digital game designed to teach the SDGs. It is an initiative of Argentina that aims to promote a global citizenship capable of building a sustainable world.

AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL,

1. We have organized in 3 years, 3 major conferences that have set the region in motion. In 2017, the First Meeting of Ministers of Education under the 2030 Agenda. In 2018, the Third Regional Conference on Higher Education. And in 2019, the International Conference that enabled the adoption of the **Regional Convention for the Recognition of Studies** or "Buenos Aires Convention". This historic agreement places the Region in a position to adopt this week the Global Convention, integrating us into the world.
2. We have also worked closely with the **International Institute for Educational Planning "IIEP Buenos Aires"**, renewing in 2017 its seat agreement, as well as with the **UNESCO Regional Office** in Montevideo, with which we will next December celebrate a 70-year history of cooperation with our countries.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL,

During the past four years accompanying President Mauricio Macri, at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology we have succeeded in making these international commitments have concrete impact, in the shape of deep reforms for the benefit of all those who live in Argentine soil.

The management account of these past years of work is significant. We have restored the capacity of the State to design public policies in education.

With regard to **quality education**:

1. We have created the “**Learn Assessments**”, a national device for assessing students’ learning, that we have been continuously conducting since 2016.
2. Based on active policies, we have achieved improvements in **reading comprehension**, and we have developed a new method for teaching and learning **mathematics**, which is more dynamic, attractive and innovative.
3. In order to strengthen digital skills, **we have connected 60% of schools** throughout our territory to internet, and we have developed the **Learn Connected** program, recognized by UNESCO, which integrates programming and robotics into the curriculum and school practice from preschool to high school.
4. In order to strengthen soft skills, we developed the **2030 High School** model that seeks to adapt the school to the challenges of the 21st century and promote a suitable transition to higher education and the labour market.

In the field of **inclusion**, we designed active policies for vulnerable and underrepresented groups:

1. We elaborated the program **I Will Attend**, which guarantees the right to education of teenagers and youngsters, through prevention and early action on dropout.
2. We developed the **Advance Scholarships** program, to give studying opportunities to more than 500,000 people in vulnerable situation, providing incentive for courses with better perspectives in terms of employment and needs for the country.
3. In order to promote gender equality, we have encouraged new ways of teaching that eliminate disparities and prejudices, and we have promoted **Comprehensive Sexual Education**.
4. Finally, we created the **Beacon Schools** program, focused on the 3,000 schools having lowest learning outcome, according to our assessments. Thanks to an active teaching policy, pedagogical resources and a new institutional project, we managed to reverse the trend and we have achieved improvements in learning, above the national average, proving that education remains a tool for transformation, enabling upward social mobility.

Finally, I want to highlight and thank the Director General and her team, as well as all Member States for working along with Argentina **in order to achieve sustainable development and peace**.

Thank you.