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We mark the fourth International Day of Education as our world stands at a turning point. Gaping inequalities, a damaged planet, growing polarization and the devastating impact of the global pandemic put us before a generational choice: Continue on an unsustainable path or radically change course.

Transforming the future requires an urgent rebalancing of our relationships with each other, with nature as well as with technology that permeates our lives, bearing breakthrough opportunities while raising serious concerns for equity, inclusion and democratic participation.

Education is key to charting the course towards more justice and sustainability, but it is failing millions of children, youth and adults, increasing their exposure to poverty, violence and exploitation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated a pre-existing education crisis. Reliance on digital technology for learning has deepened exclusion and gender inequalities. Without remedial action, better support to teachers and increased financing, learning losses and school dropout will continue to rise, reversing progress towards all the Sustainable Development Goals and depriving youth of a future of dignity and opportunity.

In November 2021, UNESCO released a new global report on the Futures of Education entitled [\*Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education\*](#). Two years in the making, the Report was prepared by an International Commission with the aim of catalysing a global debate and movement to forge a new social contract for education. Over a million people have taken part in the global consultation process that informed this long-awaited flagship publication which calls for a major transformation in education to repair past injustices and enhance our capacity to act together for a more sustainable and just future. The Report proposes answers to three fundamental questions: What should we continue doing? What should we abandon? What needs to be creatively reimagined? The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of our fragilities and interconnectedness. We can only transform together, through solidarity and cooperation.

This new social contract - an implicit agreement among members of a society to cooperate for shared benefit - is grounded in a reaffirmed yet expanded understanding of education as a human right, a public endeavour, and a common good. To redefine our relationships with each other, this contract calls for pedagogies of solidarity and cooperation that treasure diversity and pluralism. It requires scientific and digital literacies to counter the spread of misinformation and divisiveness plaguing every society. To redefine our relationship with the planet, learning must empower students with the mindsets and competences to care for it through education for sustainable development. Crucially, teachers are at the heart of education renewal. The pandemic has more than ever highlighted their irreplaceable role. Providing teachers with the recognition and professional support to collaborate and innovate will carry strong influence on the futures of learning. Finally, redefining our relationship with technology begins with ensuring that digital tools benefit all and are at the service of all, starting with the most marginalized. The digital transformation must be steered around inclusion and quality.

Empowering teachers, strengthening financing and providing opportunities to learn throughout life are conditions for forging a new social contract. But moving education to the epicenter of transformation and making it meaningful for every person involves a political and societal shift to strengthen the public functions of education as a shared endeavour. It calls for a broad movement encompassing governments, civil society, educators, students and youth to mobilize our collective intelligence and reimagine our futures together, building on acts of courage, creativity, care and resistance that each plant seeds of hope.

The call for a new social contract resonates with the UN Secretary-General's report, "Our Common Agenda" in which he refers to his intention to convene a Summit on Transforming Education in 2022, to accelerate progress towards SDG 4, building on the International's Commission's report and other recent progress, including the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education fund and the establishment of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism.

The UN Secretary-General referred to the Futures of Education Report as 'an important benchmark' giving "a vision of education that ensures justice, human rights and opportunities.... and will allow us to better respond to emerging challenges and better address the interests of future generations."

This year's International Day of Education (24 January) will be a platform to showcase the most important transformations that have to be nurtured to realize everyone's fundamental right to education and build more sustainable, inclusive and peaceful futures. It will generate debate around how to strengthen education as a public endeavor and common good, how to steer the digital transformation, support teachers, safeguard the planet and unlock the potential in every person to contribute to collective well-being and our shared home.

### **Objectives of the Day: Putting a new social contract in education in motion**

- Generate debate on the essential triggers of transformations to build more equitable and inclusive education systems that will accelerate progress towards SDG 4, taking on board findings of UNESCO's Futures of Education Report.
- Showcase transformations in action with potential for scaling to advance digital inclusion, green competences and skills, and gender equality
- Mobilize political will to address gaping inequalities in access and completion of education, in line with SDG4
- Spotlight student voices on what changes and innovations they want to see to make their education more fit for purpose
- Spotlight teachers' voices on the future of their profession, from integrating technology in their practice to orienting teaching and learning around new skills and mindsets for people and planet

## **#EducationDay**

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