

**Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action for
Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education
16 November 2022**

Declaration

Preamble

1. We, Ministers, heads and members of delegations, representatives of United Nations (UN) agencies, development cooperation agencies, civil society organizations, education agents and experts, have gathered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on 14-16 November 2022, at the invitation of the Director-General of UNESCO for the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE).
2. Thanking UNESCO and the Government and people of the Republic of Uzbekistan for having hosted this event that aims to: (1) reaffirm the right of every young child to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) from birth to 8 years of age, (2) renew and strengthen political commitment and action, and (3) further rally Member States and the international community to develop rights-based and inclusive ECCE policies and programmes; put in place effective and accountable ECCE systems and multi-stakeholder partnerships; and increase equitable and effective investment in ECCE, including overseas development aid (ODA), as an essential and integrated part of strategies to advance lifelong learning, sustainable development and gender equality.
3. Noting that this conference is the first high-level intergovernmental education event following the September 2022 Transforming Education Summit (TES) and acknowledging the United Nations Secretary General's Vision Statement, the Youth Declaration and the six Calls to Action emerging from the TES.
4. Acknowledging the relative neglect of ECCE in many national and international policy agendas on education, and the inadequate progress made in achieving commitments endorsed by Member States in the Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation adopted at the first WCECCE in 2010 and those adopted in 2015 in the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) - Education 2030 Agenda, specifically SDG Target 4.2.
5. Recognizing that as inequalities and disparities in development and learning start early and often persist throughout life, access to inclusive and quality ECCE is an important enabler of well-being and holistic development, foundational and lifelong learning, gender equality and social equity, and sustainable development where all children can have the opportunity to reach their full potential.
6. Recognizing the increasing severity and frequency of conflicts, emergencies and crises, which weaken communities and families, threaten the well-being of young children, limit ECCE provision and quality, and reduce enrolment in early childhood programmes, especially among already disadvantaged groups, notably: (1) the COVID-19 pandemic which has resulted

in substantial development and learning losses and made essential urgent and comprehensive learning recovery strategies, and (2) the impacts of climate change which are seriously disrupting the nurturing care and foundational learning of young children and therefore require both their empowerment as lovers of nature and future agents of the planet and the knowledge, skills, and values needed to face the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

7. Noting the achievements, challenges and prospects that were identified during the regional consultations and in the WCECCE Background Report, including the important progress which has been made towards achieving SDG Target 4.2, and the remaining challenges such as: fragmented policies, limited regulation and coordination of ECCE providers, insufficient public provision and chronic underfunding.
8. Recalling (1) existing international normative and standard-setting instruments concerning ECCE that include the protections and rights of young children¹, (2) international declarations, including the World Declaration on Education for All, established in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, which stressed that “learning begins at birth”, and the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal which committed the international community to “expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children”, and (3) a wide range of other pioneering international and regional initiatives and statements.²
9. Clarifying the scope and definition of ECCE as follows: (1) early childhood encompasses the period up to age 8, (2) ECCE recognizes the holistic nature of child development, encompassing early cognitive and social development, which requires foundational learning, responsive care, nutrition, health, safety, protection, and play, and (3) ECCE contributes to an individual’s well-being and capacity to learn, school readiness, academic achievement, lifelong learning, and meaningful employment and, within society, greater gender equality, sustainable development, and global citizenship.

Guiding principles and strategies for transformational ECCE

10. Building on the strength of the global consultations and the findings presented in the WCECCE Conference Background Report, we adopt the following guiding principles and strategies for the urgent transformation of ECCE.

¹ Including, among others, the UN conventions on: the Rights of the Child, the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and accompanying Recommendation No. 165.

² Including, among others, the G20 Initiative for Early Childhood Development, the affirmation of universal access to early childhood development programmes in the African Union’s Agenda 2063, the Abidjan Principles, The Paris Declaration, the Incheon Declaration, the Kathmandu Statement of Action (2018), the Putrajaya Declaration and Pasifika Call to Action (2017) for the Asia-Pacific Region, the Buenos Aires Declaration I (2017) and II (2022) in the Latin America and Caribbean region, the Dubai Declaration (2019) and the European Union Council Recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care systems, including the European Quality Framework for ECEC (2019), the European Council Child Guarantee (2021), and the ILO Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel (2013).

11. Equitable and inclusive quality ECCE services for all

- I. *Improve the relevance and quality of ECCE curricula and pedagogy:* Given the importance of ECCE in laying the foundations for flourishing lives and societies, ECCE curricula and pedagogy should build on local knowledge to develop child-centred, play-based, fully inclusive, and environmentally and gender-responsive learning approaches that affirm multilingual education and the promotion of mother tongue language of instruction. Curricula and pedagogy should be informed by the latest developments in science and culture on how children develop and learn.
- II. *Ensure equitable and inclusive quality ECCE services for all children, prioritizing the most vulnerable:* Programmes and services should reach and adapt to the needs of vulnerable and marginalized children, their families and communities.
- III. *Protect and guarantee the right to ECCE in and after emergencies and protracted crises:* Children and ECCE services are hugely vulnerable to crises, including conflicts and natural disasters. All efforts should be made to protect them. Programmes should support psycho-social and emotional well-being as well as education and care, and trauma-informed pedagogy. All programmes should help children and their families to build resilience to navigate future crises.
- IV. *Ensure all children receive nurturing care:* Early childhood is a crucial time for physical and socio-emotional growth and development. Nurturing care encompasses the needs for good health, optimal nutrition, security and safety, early learning and responsive caregiving by primary care providers.
- V. *Establish relevant ECCE monitoring and evaluation systems.* ECCE policies, settings, services, programmes and practices should be monitored and evaluated and guided by national standards and regulations that incorporate rights, scientific evidence and the viewpoints of all stakeholders and children.
- VI. *Introduce and strengthen early childhood interventions that recognize the challenges and needs of all children and enable them to thrive and fulfil their potential.* More inclusive policies should be designed and implemented by investing in early childhood interventions for at-risk learners and connecting them with immediate and relevant support and follow-up services. These interventions should focus on targeted support that flexibly responds to children's specific abilities and needs without stigmatising or medicalising them. The active participation of the family in such early childhood interventions, including follow-up, is essential.
- VII. *Improve the transitions within ECCE and into primary education:* Quality ECCE programmes provide foundational learning and social-emotional skills that support children's development, learning and well-being. Ensuring at least one year of quality, free and compulsory ECCE can help disadvantaged and vulnerable children transition into primary education.

VIII. *Strengthen education for peace and sustainable development from early childhood.* Young children are naturally curious about how the world works and engage in an intensive process of making sense of themselves and their environment. Developing knowledge, skills, values and attitudes about the causes and impact of climate change will empower learners as present and future agents of peace and sustainable development.

12. ECCE personnel³

- i. *Strengthen the education and training systems of ECCE personnel.* The training of ECCE personnel should be integrated within a framework of high-quality teacher education and continuous professional development and ensured by standards and qualification frameworks that allow for the certification of ECCE professionals, including through alternative pathways like the recognition of prior and experiential learning. Curricula and pedagogies to train ECCE personnel should incorporate the latest developments of education sciences and be evidence-based, inclusive, intercultural, and gender-responsive. They should be contextually situated and culturally relevant yet responsive to global challenges like climate change, conflicts and crises. The training of ECCE personnel should support them to identify and attend to and safeguard victims of cases of abuse including physical, psychological and sexual violence on children, and educate children, especially girls, about their sexual and reproductive rights.
- ii. *Enhance the attractiveness of the ECCE profession and provide opportunities for career advancement.* The status and social standing of the profession should be enhanced in order to attract new, talented individuals and to curb attrition. The wages and working conditions of ECCE personnel should be at least on a par with those of primary education teachers, and contractual conditions should be stable and provide pathways for career growth. Promoting the organization and representation of ECCE personnel as well as their right to social dialogue and collective bargaining can play an important role in promoting decent work for ECCE personnel. The profession should mirror the diversity of societies and communities, including under-represented groups. Likewise, the feminisation of the ECCE sector should be examined critically to address gender biases related to the responsibilities of the care, education and upbringing of children in society.
- iii. *Regulate ECCE personnel in the non-state sector.* Many countries rely on non-state actors to provide ECCE, especially for children under 3; however, the sector is poorly regulated concerning the quality of the services and the qualifications, contractual and working conditions of personnel.
- iv. *Enhance support to parents, families and other caregivers.* Learning begins at home and in the community. Parents, families and other caregivers should be valued and supported, including through evidence-based parenting support programmes, work-home conciliation measures, financial support and educational opportunities to establish enabling environments in households and communities. Public family-friendly policies and community-based services

³ ECCE personnel includes teachers, educators, aides, caregivers, and related personnel.

should be available, especially for parents facing difficulties, including awareness-raising for parents and families on the importance of ensuring quality ECCE for later schooling and lifelong learning, and support to fathers and male engagement in responsive caregiving.

13. Innovation for advancing transformation

- i. *Harness scientific evidence for innovating and transforming ECCE policies and practices.* The importance of early childhood for life outcomes in education, health and employment and in reducing poverty is shown by accumulated evidence from cognitive and developmental psychology, economics and the social sciences. More recently, neuroscience is contributing to a greater understanding of how young children develop and thrive by showing the significant brain development that occurs in the earliest years of life. Transforming ECCE requires a stronger partnership between researchers, policy-makers, practitioners and families to enable continued innovation and prioritization in policy formulation and programme development based on research, evidence and local knowledge.
- ii. *Make access to digital technology equitable, inclusive, non-intrusive, secure and ethical, and ensure the protection of children's rights in the digital environment.* Digital technology has the potential to innovate and transform ECCE, especially to reach marginalized and hard-to-reach children. However, as research showed during the COVID-19 pandemic, unequal access to digital technology can exacerbate existing educational and social inequalities, and excessive exposure to screens can affect the mental health and well-being of children. Likewise, digital misuse can mean new threats, such as cyberbullying, online abuse, and exposure to illegal or hateful online content. The ethics around the collection and sharing of personal information and the safety of children should be in the foreground when designing both governance frameworks protecting children's personal data, and policies, practices, and programmes involving digital technology.
- iii. *Diversify ECCE learning spaces, practices and provision.* All children should be able to learn in and beyond schools, including in households, communities, playgrounds, museums, libraries and other places in their immediate environments. Children who are marginalized or in a vulnerable situation, such as those living in poverty, in remote or rural areas, indigenous children, nomadic children, children with disabilities or affected by crises, may need adapted models of quality ECCE provision that better fit their particular conditions and needs.

14. Policy, governance and finance

- i. *Ensure a whole-of-government, multi-sectoral and integrated approach to ECCE policy development, provision and coordination.* The multiple dimensions of ECCE require a coordinated approach to governance, financing, and policy development, including with inter-ministerial bodies. ECCE should be embedded within education, health and social development policies, at national and subnational levels, and be costed and financed accordingly.

- ii. *Protect and mobilize financial resources for ECCE.* New measures are needed to increase funding for ECCE through increased public expenditures and well-regulated partnerships, including with the non-profit, private and social sectors. Additional investments are needed to enhance ECCE public services and to allocate them more equitably and efficiently, targeting underserved populations and exploring innovative financing mechanisms. Legal frameworks should be built to ensure ODA is used to support the implementation of public policies and strengthen State responsibility for ECCE.
- iii. *Improve data, monitoring and evaluation of ECCE policies, practices and programmes.* Monitoring of SDG Target 4.2 will require improving national and sub-national education management information systems (EMIS) to reflect the diversity of service provision and to assess the equity and efficiency of ECCE financing. More reliable data are needed to monitor progress in a timely and accurate manner.
- iv. *Enhance policy and legal frameworks to ensure that the right to education includes ECCE.* ECCE is key to achieving the right to education for all and to enable the fulfilment of other social rights. Thus, the availability, accessibility, adaptability and acceptability of ECCE services must be reflected in policies and legal frameworks. This includes the right to at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary quality education for all children.

Commitments to Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education

We, the participants of the WCECCE, in alignment with the principles and strategies encapsulated in the Tashkent Declaration, commit, as appropriate, to the following actions for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education, that will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated.

We recall and acknowledge the high-level policy dialogue convened by UNESCO in January 2021 that provided a platform for national and international partners to discuss the strategic priorities for ECCE outlined in the Global Partnership Strategy (GPS) for Early Childhood 2021-2030.

1. Member States

- I. Ensure further improvements and implementation of policy and legal frameworks to guarantee the right of every child to inclusive, quality care and pre-primary education, with special reference to the most disadvantaged children. Recalling the Incheon Declaration commitment to encourage at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education for all (SDG Target 4.2), and progressively increase ECCE provision, prioritizing inclusion and gender equality by providing equitable and adaptive support to the most vulnerable and marginalized children.
- II. Strengthen ECCE systems including the recruitment, qualifications and working conditions of all ECCE personnel and improve regulatory and quality assurance frameworks, striving towards policies and interventions on equal qualifications, certifications, wages and status between ECCE and, at least, primary school teachers. Increase access to evidence-based parenting support programmes for all parents and caregivers.
- III. Ensure quality learning for all children, including foundational literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills, to facilitate their development and transition to formal primary education with attention to mother tongue language of instruction.
- IV. Ensure ECCE supports children in developing the skills, values, and attitudes to tackle current and future global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, health pandemics and the erosion of democratic values and human rights.
- V. Engage with the international community to harness scientific evidence and digital technologies to further transform curricula and pedagogy and to develop the skills children need in a rapidly changing and increasingly digitalised world in the absence of adequate progress on sustainable development.
- VI. Recall the Incheon and the Paris Declarations' commitments to public funding in education, increase financing for ECCE to a level sufficient to achieve SDG Target 4.2, in particular, working towards the allocation of at least 10 per cent of education expenditures to pre-primary education, and prioritize and reorient public expenditures for ECCE to focus on the poorest and most disadvantaged.

VII. Integrate and strengthen ECCE policies and strategies into whole-of-government, inter-ministerial and multi-sectoral approaches to ECCE planning and budgeting covering all domains of quality ECCE provision, services and programmes.

VIII. Enhance capacity and improve regular reporting on progress towards the achievement of SDG Target 4.2, especially the national SDG 4 target on ECCE, and other ECCE-related SDG indicators to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

2. The international community and non-governmental stakeholders

- i. Develop and strengthen interagency collaborations and partnerships in the spirit of the Global Partnership Strategy (GPS) which was jointly developed and launched in 2021.
- ii. Initiated by governments' formal request, mobilize and strengthen international aid to support ECCE and ensure it is further included in global initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait.
- iii. Promote and support international innovative financing mechanisms, with State consent, that mobilize additional, more equitable and efficient allocation of financial resources for ECCE and/or the scale-up of cost-effective and evidence-based ECCE interventions.
- iv. Support national ECCE systems to ensure the quality, timely, and reliable reporting and monitoring of the guiding principles and strategies of this Declaration, developing capacities, tools and guidelines for countries in need of support, and providing advice and support for data-informed and evidence-based policy formulation and implementation.
- v. Examine the feasibility of supporting and enshrining the right to ECCE in a legal international instrument including in the context of the Evolving Right to Education Initiative led by UNESCO.
- vi. Advance dialogue for international cooperation and solidarity, reinforcing the participation of civil society, and facilitating and supporting international, regional, and national networks and platforms dedicated to ECCE, such as those in Europe, Central Asia, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa.

3. UNESCO

- I. Mobilize countries and the international community to operationalize these Commitments to Action and ensure visibility of the work of civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations as crucial partners and innovators for advancing ECCE.
- II. Include ECCE in the SDG 4 Global Coordination Mechanism and advocate for its insertion in the work and programmes of TES initiatives and flagships.
- III. Stimulate and facilitate coordinated and synergized actions by international and regional organizations and networks and support countries, especially those most in need, to achieve SDG Target 4.2.
- IV. Mobilize development partners to operationalize the GPS by implementing its Results Framework.
- V. Explore the feasibility of establishing an ECCE Prize to showcase and advocate for promising practices and innovative solutions for scaling-up services and programmes.

- VI. Work with the SDG Technical Advisory Group to improve monitoring of SDG Target 4.2 by further developing the Early Child Development Index (or another suitable index).
- VII. Engage with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank and other organizations in preparing a joint, biannual review to report on progress made on SDG Target 4.2, complementing the Global Education Monitoring Report and other ECCE-related indicators.
- VIII. Examine the feasibility, suitability and necessity of enshrining the right to ECCE in an international normative instrument.