



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

24 August 2017

Excellency,

I am pleased to enclose herewith the summary of the High-Level SDG Action Event on Education, held on 28 June 2017.

The summary contains the main conclusions from the views shared by Member States, civil society representatives, educators and young participants from the Ministerial Dialogue segment, the four panel discussions, and the youth-led roundtable discussion session. Following the SDG Action Event on Education, I hope Member States and partners take forward the collective recommendations on how to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 4.

I take this opportunity to again express my sincere gratitude to the institutions and entities which partnered with the OPGA to organize the SDG Action Event on Education and to all who supported and participated in the event.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson'.

Peter Thomson

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York



## HIGH-LEVEL SDG ACTION EVENT **EDUCATION**

28 June 2017, UN Headquarters, New York

### **President's Summary of Key Messages and Recommendations**

On 28 June 2017, the President of the 71<sup>st</sup> United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, convened a High-Level SDG Action Event on Education to engage Member States, civil society, young people, innovators and subject matter education experts in a frank discussion about the ways to meet the targets outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education.

The event followed a series of collaborative engagements between the Office of the President of the General Assembly and UNESCO, UNICEF, FAO, ILO, the Global Partnership for Education, the Global Commission on Education, the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee and other key stakeholders in education, especially youth from around the world.

The objective of the event was to highlight and continue to strengthen momentum around the full implementation of SDG4, including learning about the Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting sought to galvanize the efforts of the world's leading education stakeholders and to raise awareness about the achievements, opportunities and obstacles for achieving universal access to quality education and lifelong learning including through technical and vocational education and training. The event also outlined the case for more and improved financing to achieve SDG4 through domestic resource mobilization bilateral aid and multilateral efforts and new direct education investments.

Also identified as necessary was strong political will for and good policies towards the education enterprise as well as the need for integration of innovative technologies in teaching and learning so as to close the global gap in access and quality education.

The event also further highlighted the importance of addressing challenges young people are facing in accessing and completing basic and higher education, under conditions of poverty, social and geographic fragmentation and in post-conflict and post-disaster regions. A highlight was also placed on the importance of raising awareness and teaching about the SDGs including among the 126 million children who will be eighteen years old in 2030.

The event comprised an informal breakfast discussion, in collaboration with Save the Children, on "*Accelerating Progress on SDG4 for the most Marginalized and Vulnerable Children*", and included an informal panel discussion on "*Evidence, Solutions and Youth perspectives*"; an opening segment, High-level Ministerial Dialogue entitled "*What does it take to achieve SDG4?*", which included interventions from the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson; Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Irina



Bokova; and founder of Building Africa's Future Foundation, Mr. Saul Mwame. Twelve Ministers and Deputy Ministers intervened during the High-level Ministerial Dialogue followed by three other panel discussions consisting of experts, decision makers and High-level representatives from the education sector. UNESCO's MGIEP programme hosted an iTAGe (Talking across Generations) youth roundtable discussion during the event to engage young people and career experts in a candid discussion about education. Another key aspect of the event was an "*Innovations in Education*" marketplace that allowed over a dozen exhibitors the opportunity to share their innovative solutions to providing equitable, affordable and accessible education to all.

The following are the main takeaways from the SDG Action Event on Education:

### **Official Opening:**

- President Thomson identified steps to "*get the wheels of implementation turning faster*" and suggested the following: strategies to ensure universal completion of early childhood education; greater investments in training and developing teachers; capture greater innovation in learning and draw into technological advancements to ensure that educational opportunities reach learners including in rural and conflict zones.
- UN Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina Mohammed called for sustained efforts and investments in five key areas: financing of education; stronger use of innovation; strengthening girls' education; expanding life-long learning, and responding to the needs of children in natural disasters, humanitarian crises and conflict and post-conflict situations.
- UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova stressed the fact that without removing the barriers to children's education, girls' and children in conflict situations in particular, SDG4 cannot be achieved. Citing the report of the Commission on Financing of Education, Ms Bokova said that governments must allocate 4-6% of their GDP and 15-20% of total public expenditure exclusively to education, while humanitarian donors should increase the share of education in all assistance to at least 4%.
- Saul Mwame, age 18, founder of Building Africa's Future Foundation, said SDG4 is key to achieving Goals 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8. He urged educating both parents and youth on the importance of education, and said that sustainable development arises not only from development, but also from quality education. For him he said, "education is liberation".

### **Ministerial Dialogue: What Will It Take to Achieve SDG 4?**

Panelists expressed an understanding that progress toward SDG4 is too slow, and, in some cases, being reversed. While inviting support for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and other investment means, panelists cautioned that financing

education is necessary, but not sufficient and identified the critical need for mobilizing people, and supporting innovation and leaders to believe in the importance of education. The panel argued that challenges remained even for countries that have made remarkable progress. For example, for those that have made strides on access to education, the next challenge is to raise the quality of education. Speakers also noted the need to reach children in humanitarian or natural disasters and conflict or post-conflict situations to enable children in those communities to continue their development and be ready for the future, despite catastrophic events.

Among government initiatives highlighted by ministers were the following: the Republic of Korea has created a network of “Education Champions” to promote investment in education; Portugal plans to fund scholarships for refugees through an “academic solidarity levy” from the academic community; and the Dominican Republic extended the school day to provide increased protection and school meals for students and will give 90,000 computers to students in 2017; Qatar and South Korea launched an initiative to form Group of Friends of Education for Global Citizenship; Ghana will extend full funding to 100,000 of the country’s most vulnerable young learners to be able to attend school; Slovakia has adopted the SDGs into their school curricula this year; The Philippines will bring computers into schools in remote areas via helicopter and will work to get computer buses to bring technology into the hands of young learners; Norway announced that it will continue to support the Global Partnership for Education. Several ministers and other officials noted recent increases in educational investment by the government, and supportive legal frameworks.

### **Innovations in Education**

Panelists on this topic considered both non-technological and technological innovations valuable for improving education. They assessed online education as a way to reach students who lack time or financial resources, but stressed that education needs to be context-specific, and that innovation should be based on cognitive science and neuroscience. Some called for investing in training teachers and improving teacher recruitment and retention rates; almost going against the call for greater innovation in teaching and learning, a theme on the innovation panel was that children and youth need human empathy, not only apps.

Speakers also highlighted that basic numeracy and literacy and cognitive learning are not sufficient; education must also include emotional learning and respect for the rights of everyone, which also helps to end cycles of violence. Speakers also added that government’s role is to help scale up innovations, to invest in teachers’ professional development, and empower and mobilize innovators. A respondent said nomads and pastoralists tend to be left behind due to their constant moving from and lack of basic services; he shared his organization’s innovation of solar powered night tents to provide students and their families with power.

Leading educators proposed special actions including continued efforts to prioritize the debate on education through convening Ministers of Education, participating in the Safe

Schools Declaration, and teaching the Sustainable Development Goals to students (Argentina); they also highlighted the Yeshiva-style approach to education encourages debate, questioning of authority, and mutual respect between teachers and students (Israel); and the value of encouraging teachers and students to become innovators in education (Qatar).

### **Education in Vulnerable and Humanitarian Situations**

The panelists in this session identified several challenges to education in the context of conflict and crisis, in particular the growing number of children unable to access formal education due to emergencies and increasing attacks on schools. They also noted that a child not in school has increased chances of becoming a victim of terrorism and human trafficking and that the education sector is particularly non-resilient to external shocks, and as such requires stability and continuity. At the same time, cycles of violence and poverty are perpetuated when conflict takes away educational opportunities.

In combating challenges to learning, The Philippines informed about a national law against bullying and a campaign to prevent discrimination against children. Australia, along with Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, and Turkey have launched the Education in Emergencies Challenge, an initiative to find new solutions for delivering education in emergencies.

The discussion also highlighted the Education Cannot Wait Fund, the first-ever global fund to prioritize education at the onset and or during an emergency or crisis, and response by investing in children. Speakers invited signatures to the Safe Schools Declaration, and called for schools to meet higher building codes to withstand major earthquakes and floods. The need for non-conventional, informal forms of education was also highlighted.

### **Education for Sustainable Development and Education for Global Citizenship**

Speakers, including H.E. Han Choonghee, Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Education for Global Citizenship, called on participants to: help learners become active and aware global citizens; empower learners to face and solve global challenges; cultivate values and attitudes to build a better and more peaceful world; and rethink the entire curricula to teach sustainable development through all subjects. They also said education is essential to strengthening the nexus between peace, development, and human rights, and in tackling climate change. In addition, participants urged that learning needs to become a more prominent discussion at the United Nations.

### **Youth iTAGe Roundtable Discussion**

During the iTAGe youth roundtable discussion, youth participants came from around the world to call for an increase of funding for education and access to quality education for all learners. The iTAGe participants noted that education must meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's and that the private sector should be involved in this process. They further

noted that there needs to be a development of both soft and hard skills. The participants called for safe learning environments across the world, improved technology in education to reduce inequalities, and impactful support of youth-led groups and youth in decision-making. By way of making progress on the targets of SDG4, the following solutions were highlighted:

Videos of the event can be found online by following these links:

- [Informal Breakfast on the occasion of the SDG Action Event on Education](#)
- [iTAGe youth roundtable discussion](#)
- [Press conference](#)
- [SDG Action Event on Education Part I](#)
- [SDG Action Event on Education Part II](#)

Supporting documents will be added to the SDG Action Event on Education website found [here](#). Full statements from Member States can be found on [PaperSmart](#).

#### **A note regarding participation**

The High-Level event attracted 500+ participants and was well subscribed throughout the entire day.

The event was the first-ever High-level meeting of the General Assembly to be streamed on three platforms simultaneously (UN Web TV, Facebook Live, and YouTube). Combined, these platforms reached over half a million timelines and viewers.

Immediately following the High-Level SDG Action Event on Education, the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee held its biannual meeting on 29-30 June 2017. The Committee is a coordination mechanism to support Member States and partners to achieve the education targets of SDG4 and other education-related targets of Agenda 2030. This was the first meeting of the Committee held in New York. A summary report from the meeting is annexed.

## Annex 1

### Report of the 3rd Meeting of the SDG – Education 2030 Steering Committee New York, 29-30 June 2017

As an inclusive high-level multi-stakeholder partnership [The SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee](#) provides a global forum for consultation and a mechanism to coordinate and harmonize global education efforts. It is mandated to provide strategic guidance to Member States and the education community, make recommendations for catalytic action, advocate for adequate financing, and monitor progress toward [SDG4 targets](#) through the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Global Educational Monitoring \(GEM\) Report](#).

The third global Steering Committee was organized in New York on 29-30 June 2017 back to back with the [High-Level Action Event on Education](#) convened by Peter Thomson, the President of the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in partnership with key SDG4 stakeholders, to drive a new push for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.

The global Steering Committee examined successes and challenges in the implementation of SDG4 targets and commitments since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. After highlighting the critical role of regional organizations as policy peer learning mechanisms to enhance effective implementation of SDG4 Education 2030 targets and commitments, the Steering Committee endorsed a set of recommendations for improved implementation in 2018 and 2019.

These recommendations relate to the following areas:

#### **Policies and strategies**

The Steering Committee endorsed the following specific messages and actions: *Strengthening national ownership* of the SDG4 targets and commitments, *coordination* and *national implementation efforts as well as national and sub-national capacities* on monitoring and evaluation, and the use of data. partners committed to develop *technical guidance materials to support implementation*. *Special attention* for countries affected by conflict and crises, with an initial focus on 4.1 (free universal primary and secondary education), crosscutting targets 4.5 (equity and gender equality) and 4.7 (citizenship) and the means of implementation target 4.c (teachers).

#### **Financing of education**

This included calls for increased domestic financing, improving financing data, strengthening ODA (bi-lateral and multilateral donors), support for replenishment of the Global Partnership on Education and for the Education Cannot Wait Fund.

#### **Review, Monitoring and Reporting of SDG4-Education 2030**

The Steering Committee first provided an update on the development of global frameworks to monitor the SDGs and SDG4 (IAEG; the UN Statistical Commission; the

Technical Cooperation Group; the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning), and the UN reporting process through the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), before reviewing follow-up to the 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report recommendations.

The Steering Committee also examined the criteria and issues to be considered for the possible prioritization of indicators and the development of a global lead indicator for education. In doing so, it examined the question of benchmarking and thresholds for global education indicators. Finally, the session also considered the role/status of regional monitoring mechanisms based on ones already underway, and consider possible ways of supporting those efforts, and their applicability for other regions.

These key strategic messages/recommendations for the implementation of education targets and commitments aim to provide strategic guidance for Member States and to maintain the momentum for strengthened engagement towards education in the 2030 Agenda through key global and regional processes.