

**RELEVANT, EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL:  
AN IMPERATIVE FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**15 July 2019, 18:30 – 20:00**

**United Nations Headquarters, Trusteeship Council Chamber**

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**Side-event to the 2019 High-level Political Forum co-organized by UNESCO, SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee and the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning**

**Background**

The 2019 High-level Political Forum's in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goal 4 builds on an international momentum that has ascertained the centrality of education for peace and security, human rights and development.

This year the UN marked the first International Day of Education (24 January), recognizing the key role that education plays in building sustainable and resilient societies, and in achieving all the other Sustainable Development Goals.

Education transforms lives. Robust evidence demonstrates the catalytic impact of education on eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, improving health, driving economic growth and achieving gender equality. Education provides the knowledge and skills for decent work, sustainability, climate change awareness and global citizenship. It contributes to building more peaceful and inclusive societies and promoting respect for human rights. The SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee's report to the High Level Political Forum reaffirms that education has the potential to be a great equalizer in society, to improve personal and social well-being and drive national progress towards sustainable development. However, it warns that on current trends, the world is not on track to achieve the SDG4 goal and targets.

Significant challenges remain with 262 million children, adolescents, and youth still out of school, while more than 617 million are not learning, achieving only minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. The Global Education Meeting in Brussels, organized by UNESCO (December 2018), identified critical policy gaps and priority areas for action in order to accelerate progress towards SDG4.

Building on this, in recognizing the urgent need to increase investment and improve the quality and universality of education at all levels, the HLPF can strengthen the international mobilization around this global imperative and fundamental human right.

In this framework, at the margins of the 2019 High-Level Political Forum under the theme "Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equity", the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning, together with the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee and UNESCO, will organize a side-event on "Relevant and inclusive quality education for all: an imperative for the 21st century".

**Objectives**

The event will highlight the transformative power of education within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, looking in particular at the role of education for the achievement of the other goals under review, namely SDG 8 on decent work, SDG 10 on inequality, SDG 13 on climate action, and SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies. It will present some key recommendations on how to drive the global commitment to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In particular, the side event will seek to:

- Reaffirm the right to equitable and inclusive quality education and the fundamental role of education, skills training, lifelong learning, higher education and research as key drivers for sustainable development, including for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and call for strengthened collective action on SDG4 within the 2030 Agenda.

- Reaffirm the importance of universal access to relevant education to fulfill human potential and to provide people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to act for a more sustainable, equitable and peaceful world.
- Outline gaps and challenges countries are facing in ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all
- Highlight important and relevant policy measures needed to unlock progress on education, paying particular attention to synergies with other goals under review, including the recommendations to the HLPF by the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee and those of the Global Education Meeting's 2018 Brussels Declaration.

### **Format**

The 90-minute long event will feature an inclusive multi-stakeholder panel discussion bringing together high-level representatives of Member States (represented on the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee and the Group of Friends), the UN system, as well as key actors in the field of education from academia and civil society. The event will conclude with key recommendations building on the SDG-Education 2030's submission to the HLPF and the UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report's special HLPF publication on SDG4.

- Opening remarks by the Director-General of UNESCO
- Statements by Ministers from Member States co-sponsoring the event
- Panel discussion with government, private sector, civil society and youth representatives.

The discussions will focus on the following themes:

1. Interlinkages
2. Equity and Inclusion
3. Skills for Life and Work

### **SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee**

The SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee is a unique multi-stakeholder group entrusted with the coordination and follow-up of SDG4 and other education-related targets of the global agenda, as it is mandated to play a key role in the global review of progress on education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its primary objective is to harmonize and strengthen support to countries and their partners for the realization of the global education goal and targets. The Steering Committee is composed of members representing a majority from countries, the World Education Forum 2015 convening agencies (UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UN Women, ILO, the World Bank), the Global Partnership for Education, the OECD, regional organizations, teacher organizations, civil society networks, the private sector, foundations and youth organizations.

### **Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning**

Established in January 2019, the Group of Friends is chaired by the Permanent Missions of Argentina, the Czech Republic, Japan, Kenya and Norway to the United Nations, and advocates for the centrality of education for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The New York-based Group of Friends works to ensure enhanced outreach on the relevance of education and lifelong learning to the three pillars of the United Nations (Human Rights, Peace and Security, and Development) at the UN decision-making bodies such as the UN General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary organs and other United Nations forums.

The Group also raises visibility on key policy recommendations from the [SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee](#), the [Brussels Declaration](#) and other global agreement on education.