

SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee

Virtual meeting on “Safeguarding investment in education in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis”

4 June 2020



Welcome remarks by the Co-Chairs

Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

Opening the meeting, the Assistant Director-General highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has moved into a new phase, underscoring that while confinement rules are easing and schools reopening gradually, some 1.2 billion students continue to be affected by closures in over 140 countries. Ms Giannini emphasized that today's radically altered educational universe remains heavily reliant on distance learning alternatives. With more than 457 million students being unable to access online learning platforms and having no other options to pursue their education, inequalities are deepening, jeopardizing the future of young generations. The COVID-19 health crisis is as such about to lead to an amplified humanitarian and learning crisis, which calls for urgent strategic collective action.

The Assistant Director-General warned that the global economy is projected to contract sharply, which calls on governments all across the globe to build the resilience of national education systems, notably by capitalizing on the wave of innovations that have been transforming teaching and learning over the past months. Ms Giannini underscored that to ensure learning continuity, safeguarding investment in education and unlocking new funding sources will be vital. In ending, she highlighted that all responses to the pandemic require unity and solidarity, partnership and new forms of cooperation to join forces and mount a global campaign to keep learning upfront – on political agendas, and in society at large.

Mr Kazuhiro Yoshida (Japan), Co-chair of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee

Mr Yoshida emphasized that the international community is at a critical juncture in the middle of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, with education itself being at risk of being left behind. He warned that in times of crisis the risk of selfish action is considerable and underscored that the most vulnerable and marginalized are at greatest risk of being forgotten. He further underscored that the Steering Committee together with its partners must continue to work to convince governments to prioritize those in greatest need and to advocate for the centrality of education for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety. In addition, Mr Yoshida highlighted that resources available are indeed scarce and must consequently be used efficiently. Finally, Mr Yoshida called on the Steering Committee to see the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to make use of innovation, knowledge and technology to genuinely transform education and strengthen the resilience of national education systems.

Keynote address by Mr Gordon Brown, United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education

Mr Brown highlighted that the international community is currently facing a common enemy, a common disease and a common economic and social challenge in the form of a global recession, all of which call for a joint global response. In this regard, he notably stressed the importance of elaborating an economic plan for recovery at the heart of which must be an education recovery plan. In addition, the Special Envoy recalled that in the context of the pandemic, the severity of the digital divide became obvious with too many people being denied their right to education and severe consequences for the most vulnerable.

Mr Brown emphasized that today, all stakeholders must do their part to make sure that the international community is able to finance the Sustainable Development Goals and support those in greatest need. He underscored that hope dies when children and young people cannot plan and prepare for the future because they have no school to go to, emphasizing that school closures have dramatic consequences, resulting in an overall increase in child labor, marriage and trafficking. He also underscored that when children go back to school, the latter will have to be organized differently to respond to a new reality. Overall, needs in the area of education will be greater, calling for the mobilization of additional resources.

With regard to the effects of the crisis on education, the Special Envoy outlined five ways education is being hurt in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Education is hurt because growth has stalled or gone into reverse.
2. Tax revenues are falling in almost all countries around the world.
3. Less money is available for public services.
4. Aid for education is also not available as it has been in the past in some countries, because it is crowded out by the need to spend on health and on social safety nets.
5. The IMF and the World Bank are under considerable pressure, as well as the regional development banks and all multi-development facilities because they are being asked to spend on health and social safety nets, putting education at risk of being left behind.

Looking at the facts, he explained that last year and probably this year, USD 1.2 trillion were due to be spent in middle and lower income countries on education. This figure is under the current circumstances likely to be reduced to USD 1.1 trillion, consisting in a cut of nearly 10% in the education budget. This cut is greatest in the middle-income countries (USD 96 billion) and less in the low-income countries (2 billion) but in low-income countries it would mean that less than USD 200 per year are spent on a child's education.

Moving on to concrete solutions, the Special Envoy highlighted that governments that are aid donors must be persuaded that to help health and the social protection services of poorer countries, they must not cut into the education budget. In addition, debt relief for the poorest countries will have to be a central part of the solution to the crisis, putting as a condition that the resources are allocated to both health and education. Mr Brown furthermore advocated for enhancing the funds going to the World Bank and the regional development banks, as well as institutions that are dealing with education in its own right, to avoid that funding is cut in one area, for example education, to be spent on health and social safety nets. The scale of money needed by the countries most in need, requires the creation of new international money which can be done by decision of the IMF Board to increase special drawing rights. In this regard, he suggested the creation of an extra trillion, which should be made available for improvement of education systems in the poorest countries.

In ending, Mr Brown recognized that in the context of the pandemic, with health being the priority and social safety nets being destroyed, the public perceives spending on any other area as problematic. Mr Brown emphasized that this mindset needs to be changed to make people recognize that spending on education is not the problem but the actual solution. In this regard, the Special Envoy highlighted that investment in education increases information and knowledge about health, as well as economic opportunities for countries to get back to growth as quickly as possible and contributes to the creation of more cohesive societies in which every single individual has the chance to develop his or her talents. In this spirit, Mr Brown underscored that world leaders must agree to make education investment a priority at the center of any economic and social strategy for recovery, warning that the cost of inaction is considerable.

Part 1: Mitigating the impact of economic crises on domestic education finance in the aftermath of COVID-19

Discussion questions:

- 1) *What are the lessons learnt from the past crises that countries can consider to minimize the negative impact on their education finance (both public and private)?*

- 2) *What strategies and priorities are being considered by governments to protect and mobilize domestic financing for post-COVID-19 education recovery and further development (“build back better”), particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners?*

Overview presentation by UNESCO - Ms Yano Satoko, Programme Specialist, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems

Ms Yano started her presentation with an outline of the experiences from the 2008 financial crisis, illustrating that the latter had a severe impact on global GDP, leading to a “big dip” in 2008 and 2009, as well as a long-term slow-down in economic growth. With regard to education finances after the 2008 economic crisis, findings from a UNESCO 12-country case study conducted in 2009 showcase that in the aftermath of the crisis, the education budget was resilient in terms of the share of education in government expenditures. Overall, the effects of the 2008 crisis on education were most visible at household level, with vulnerable households facing difficulties in meeting school costs and an overall increase in absenteeism, school dropouts and child labour.

Moving on to the potential impact of COVID-19, Ms Yano outlined that even if countries maintain their current budget allocations to education as a percentage of GDP, available resources will decrease by USD 210 billion in 2020 compared to what would have been available without the pandemic. Should this share be cut by 5%, losses could increase to USD 337 billion. As the economic impact of the pandemic is still evolving, recovery is likely to take time and require the mobilization of additional resources to 1) introduce safety and sanitary measures; 2) to provide re-enrolment and remedial programmes and 3) to prepare for resurgences. To effectively respond to the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, concrete action on the side of governments is consequently urgently required on several fronts.

Concluding her presentation, Ms Yano put forward a set of concrete policy recommendations through which the impact of the current crisis should be mitigated:

In the short term:

- The impact of COVID-19 on education finance on both governments and households needs to be assessed;
- Targeted support for the most vulnerable has to be provided;
- Governments should be pressured to support education through stimulus packages.

In the medium term:

- The education budget must be safeguarded;
- More resilient education finance systems must be developed, notably by integrating the contingency funding mechanism into the national education finance system.

In the long term:

- Governments must invest in the long-term transformation of education systems based on lessons learned and innovations that emerged from the crisis.

Argentina - Mr Pablo Gentili, Secretary of Educative Cooperation and Priority Actions, Ministry of Education

Mr Gentili highlighted that the world is facing considerable challenges, underscoring that in the aftermath of the pandemic no return to normal will be possible. He advocated for immediate action based on the principle of solidarity and creativity, emphasizing that across countries the crisis revealed considerable inequalities in the area of education, with school closures affecting the poorest in particular. He further stressed that the financing of public educational policies cannot be postponed, emphasizing that the fiscal crisis cannot serve as an alibi for the reduction of investment in education. Mr Gentili emphasized

that maintaining education budgets at current levels will however not be sufficient, since the reopening of schools compels governments to ensure that the health of the community, the learning needs of all, and the working conditions of the teachers are adequately protected. He emphasized that the current situation should not be considered as a temporary emergency and highlighted that long-term commitment will be needed to overcome existing challenges and lay the foundations for a sustainable future.

Referring to the Argentinian experience, Mr Gentili informed that the government designed a diversified plan to support public education, which notably includes the program “Seguimos Educando” which focuses on providing education during school closures. In addition, the government is developing a major national agreement for the reopening of educational institutions. Finally, Argentina is also working closely with UNESCO to build a portal for online educational resources in Latin America and supporting the construction of a platform for collaboration among the region’s Ministries of Education.

Kenya - Ms Nelly Marete, Ministry of Education

Ms Marete informed that education in Kenya is financed to 53% by the government, followed by parents who contribute at the rate of 33%. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, government funding has been shifted from non-essential sectors to essential sectors such as health, social safety and security. Education financing is as a result at its lowest, mainly affecting public schools. Private schools on the other hand, are also facing major challenges as their income depends on school fees being paid by households. In light of the current financial crisis, teachers employed in private schools are at great risk of losing their jobs and have not been paid their salaries since the beginning of school closures in March.

Moving on to key lessons learnt from past crisis, Ms Marete underscored the importance of both speed and flexibility to adjust programs, policies, resources and portfolios to support learner’s most urgent educational needs. In this regard, she outlined the importance of prioritizing short-term impact, notably through support for distance learning, the establishment of social safety nets, as well as support for schools to ensure health and safety compliance in the context of school reopening. Ms Marete highlighted that intensive policy dialogue and coordination among all stakeholders will be essential to support governments in shifting their budgetary priorities in response to these critical needs but also to help “build back better”, improve and innovate education and training systems and strengthen overall crisis preparedness for the future. In this spirit, the Kenyan government has implemented a series of targeted interventions. The latter notably include a COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan, a COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy covering all sectors, which is currently in preparation, economic stimulus packages, as well as active support of UNESCO’s Global Education Coalition for COVID-19 response.

Philippines - Mr Nepomuceno Malaluan, Undersecretary, Department of Education

The Undersecretary reiterated that previous crisis have not prepared the international community for a crisis of the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. Physical distancing and quarantine as a major part of containment has disrupted operations of all sectors of the economy. This has resulted in intense competition for resources among sectors and government agencies, for recovery and adjustment measures. Mr Malaluan argued that in this intense competition, education is placed at a disadvantage in relation to the emergence of health, social amelioration and economic recovery drivers. He emphasized that the challenge for the education sector is to defend learning continuity and to show that doing so is a critical investment rather than a simple emergency response.

Referring to the Department of Education’s strategy in the crisis, the Undersecretary explained that the Department’s priority is to protect the education budget by emphasizing that learning continuity can be ensured in a safe manner. In addition, the Department advocates for the recognition that education financing in the context of the pandemic is not mere emergency response but a necessary investment for the overall transformation of education for the future. Finally, the Department actively leverages

partnerships, putting particular emphasis on the equity dimension of education financing to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized.

World Bank - Mr Jaime Saavedra, Global Director for Education

Mr Saavedra highlighted the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring that the international community has never before experienced a twin shock in education as it is the case today. He explained that the uniqueness of the current crisis lies in the fact that the world is confronted with school closures across almost all countries and at the same time experiencing a major economic recession. Mr Saavedra outlined that this twin shock experienced at global scale at the same moment in time, is in fact generating a triple shock on the financial side: Public budgets and family disposable incomes are constrained and financial aid is likely to be cut. The battlefronts the education community is confronting are thus multiple, calling for concrete actions across all levels.

Mr Saavedra expressed concern that even if in the short run education budgets may be protected, in the long run, governments will be putting in place austerity measures which are likely to have severe repercussions for social sector spending. Moreover, he underscored that it will be essential to work on inefficiencies in expenditures in education across all countries through a coalition of Ministers of Education and Ministers of Finance that joins forces to make sure expenditures in education are as efficient as possible and not only protected but further increased. Mr Saavedra moreover stated that it is critical to recognize that today the investments made by governments to mitigate the effects of the crisis on education, notably on the disruption of learning, are essential to get back on track and tackle the digital divide. In this spirit, Mr Saavedra warned that the cost of inaction is considerable. He underscored the international community has a true responsibility to invest in the human capital and education of those young people who will be paying for the debt incurred in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, warning that these young people should not be the victims of the crisis by losing out on their education.

Global Campaign for Education (GCE) - Mr Refat Sabbah, President

In his intervention, Mr Sabbah warned that despite their serious consequences, health emergencies have not always received the same attention as disasters and conflicts, and in fact are not often offered as examples of good humanitarian responses. He underscored that no matter the type of emergency, the right to education must be recognized, protected and guaranteed at all times by governments and the international community as a whole.

Mr Sabbah further highlighted that to protect and mobilize domestic financing for post-COVID-19 education recovery and further development, action at both national and global levels needs to be taken to unlock additional resources. He emphasized that immediate solutions notably have to include debt relief and increased official development assistance. In addition, Mr Sabbah advocated for the cancellation of external debt payments of low-income countries to reduce the risk of debt distress and unlock funds in developing countries' budgets. Finally, he underscored the importance of upholding and increasing national education budgets, public school funding, support for teachers and development assistance for education throughout the pandemic, and the economic crisis to follow.

Discussion

Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) - Mr Abdusalam Aljoufi, Advisor

- *There is general agreement that the world is currently facing a major crisis calling for concrete action. Who is supposed to take this action and how?*

In response to the question, Mr Brown reiterated the need for the international community to raise additional resources, stating that educational investment is part of the international community's

responsibility to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. He underscored that every individual country should maintain and if necessary increase the domestic budget for education. He emphasized that developing countries should be actively supported in these efforts. Mr Brown highlighted that to address the crisis, it will be essential to raise more international money, to increase the grant and lending ceilings of World Bank and the regional development banks, and to implement a programme of debt relief to allow countries to spend money on education *now*. Finally, he pointed out that the key message of the recent “Black Lives Matter” movement clearly is that the importance of every single person must be recognized, and emphasized that education is truly vital to every young person’s future.

Mr Aljoufi also proposed a report to document the impact of learning losses.

Council of Europe - Mr Sjur Bergan, Head of the Education Department

- *Social inclusion is a central part of the quality of education. This includes educational opportunities for refugees and displaced persons. How can we convince governments at a time when we see populist reactions against refugees that inclusion must be on top of the agenda?*
- *The current crisis clearly highlighted that the broader development of a culture of democracy is at the heart of education. How can we convince governments that this is what education should aim to achieve?*

Mr Brown recalled that half of the world’s refugees and displaced children were not in school before the COVID-19 crisis and that Education Cannot Wait has been created to respond to emergencies of this nature to ensure that every child has a chance to learn. Looking at what happened in Syria, Mr Brown explained that educating a Syrian refugee in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan or even within Syria would amount to USD 500 per child per year, notably through the use of the double shift system. He further elaborated that if this child happened to come to Germany or another European country his or her education would be multiplied by ten and amount to USD 5,000 a year. As such, Mr Brown emphasized the importance of building facilities in the vicinity of crisis affected countries. He underscored that this requires the international community, notably the western countries, to mobilize additional resources.

China - Mr Changwei Qin, Secretary-General, Chinese National Commission for UNESCO

Mr Qin highlighted the importance of persuading governments to prioritize education because in the context of the current crisis, as well as in its aftermath, all sectors will need and request additional financial resources. He underscored that education must be placed on top of every agenda, as it plays a central role in the recovery phase. Mr Qin stressed the importance of protecting the right to education of all learners, notably that of the most vulnerable. In addition, he recalled the importance of TVET education for re-skilling and finding a job in the context of the current crisis

Youth Representative – Victoria Ibiwoye – Founder of One African Child Foundation

Ms Ibiwoye presented a joint statement prepared by the global youth community, emphasizing that “youth and students are the first touched by this crisis and they must have a voice in defining their educational future.” The joint statement identifies two challenges and two opportunities for stakeholders to work together with young people. As Ms. Ibiwoye stressed, “the crisis is an opportunity to redefine the relevance of education and prioritize investment in youth.” The youth statement presents a 9-point Call to Action to governments, donors, and decision-makers, including a call for leaders to aim for a #BetterNormal with sustainability being the leading principle.

Part 2: Maintaining aid to education – accelerating progress toward SDG 4 in the COVID-19 recovery phase

Discussion questions:

- 1) *What are the foreseen and potential impacts on aid to education in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis?*
- 2) *What are the opportunities and innovative approaches to maintain and increase aid to education?*

Presentation of a preliminary study on the impact of COVID-19 on aid to education by the Global Education Monitoring Report and the World Bank – Mr Manos Antoninis, Director, Global Education Monitoring Report

Mr Antoninis first presented the trend in aid to education: despite a return to growth in the post-2015 period reaching a historic high at US\$15.6 billion in 2018, the share of education in total aid has declined significantly throughout the 2000s, with a mere 10.8% in 2018. The Great Financial Crisis of 2008 was associated with a lagged decrease in aid and the recovery of aid to education took longer mainly due to the latter’s decreasing share. Basic and secondary education received only 6.3% of direct aid against the GEM Report’s recommendation that it should be at least 10% to fill the critical financial gap.

With COVID-19 projected by IMF to have a bigger impact on GDP globally (-6.2%) than the 2008 Great Financial Crisis (- 3.2%), Mr Antoninis stressed that a decline in aid to education was highly probable but not inevitable if donor countries maintained – if not increased – education’s share in total aid, responded with more flexibility and aligned aid with national education sector plans to increase aid effectiveness.

Global Partnership for Education – Ms Alice P. Albright, Chief Executive Officer

The CEO of GPE underscored that in order to help build back the education systems following the COVID-19 crisis, GPE would work closely with the international community to safeguard investment in education; improve the use of domestic education budgets; and boost international aid to help fill the gaps. Education spending is likely to stagnate as countries prioritize the health and social protection sectors. In order not to turn the current health crisis into a long-term education crisis, funding decisions should not come down to a choice between health or education. Education should be the central part of the COVID-19 response because investing in education would enable economies to reopen, prevent inequalities from further widening and help deliver better outcomes for poor children, young women and girls.

With domestic resources and budgets getting tight, Ms Albright stressed the need to focus on efficiencies by addressing high repetition rates and waste in procurement and making sure that teachers are paid transparently and on time. Given that every dollar on debt servicing is one dollar less spent on learning, she urged further debt suspensions, with restructuring and debt relief for lowest income countries. Moreover, we must show to the international community that investing in education now is building resilience for the future. GPE has recently made available rapid, flexible funding support of USD 500 million to support countries' COVID-19 education response and recovery. However, this is a drop in the ocean in view of the existing financing gaps, and therefore GPE is committed to work with others to help advocate for increased and sustained international aid along with efficient use of domestic funding with focus on the poorest and most vulnerable countries and populations.

Education Above All (EAA) – Mr Fahad Al Sulaiti, Chief Executive Officer

Referring to the scale of needs in developing countries, Mr Al Sulaiti highlighted the significance of the recently established International Day for the Protection of Education under Attack, spearheaded by Qatar, recalling that conflict and violence has not abated under Covid-19 and much aid is directed to education systems affected by crises. Conflict and violence are not decreasing and we cannot protect the investments and support provided for schools affected by them without strong protection mechanisms in place.

Mr Al Sulaiti stressed the foundation's commitment to multilateral cooperation and advocacy for maintaining ODA for education. The foundation is joining forces with development banks in efforts to increase funding.

OECD – Mr Michael Ward, Senior Policy Analyst, Directorate for Education and Skills

Noting that 90% of aid comes from OECD-Development Assistance Committee countries, Mr Ward highlighted that for 2020, there will be declines in annual GDP growth in all OECD-DAC member countries and this would put pressure on their aid budgets. OECD and DAC are currently working on future aid simulations with three scenarios in view: (1) countries maintaining ODA as a share of GNI (i.e. average 0.3%), (2) countries maintaining the same levels of ODA (approx. USD 195 billion) and (3) countries increasing ODA to meet developing countries' needs. At the moment, there is no indication of which scenario is most likely, but all three are plausible.

Referring to the OECD-DAC's joint statement issued on 9 April 2020, Mr Ward emphasized that the DAC members recognizes ODA as an important means of supporting national responses to the COVID-19 crisis and would strive to protect ODA budgets. He also confirmed that OECD would continue to support the DAC members' efforts to protect aid budgets and to make the case for at least maintaining the education share in these budgets.

Germany – Ms Barbara Malina, Head, Division of Education, German Commission for UNESCO

Ms Malina informed the Steering Committee that Germany was stepping up its support to mitigate the impacts that school closures will have on the most vulnerable populations in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, among others and that the country had provided EUR 25 million to GPE's COVID-19 emergency window out of EUR 50 million pledged for 2020.

Short-term measures should include support for the provision of distance and digital learning while addressing the challenge of equal access, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene measures. From the mid- to long-term perspectives, as schools reopen we must ensure reenrolment of every learner and increase school hygiene and other preventive measures. Education systems need to be supported

to increasingly become resilient to crises and in particular, education institutions need to develop capacity to ensure continued learning for all, including through gender-sensitive education planning as well as better linkages between short-term humanitarian responses and long-term development cooperation. In concluding, Ms Malina also stressed the importance of ensuring supply of education resulting in employment of sustainable key sectors and shared.

Norway – Mr Joakim Bakke, Director, Ministry of Education and Research on behalf of Ms Gerd-Hanne Fosen, Policy Director for Education, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)

The pandemic is likely to put both domestic and international financing to education under increased pressure, and remittances and the disposable income of families might also decline. Despite this negative backdrop for the Decade of Action, the COVID-19 pandemic could also be turned into an opportunity to rethink how we best work together as a community to advance SDG 4 within the wider 2030 Agenda. Education should not be treated as a victim of the pandemic – but as part of the solution.

The representative of Norway then highlighted the importance of demonstrating how education can alleviate the negative impact of COVID-19 in the health and other sectors, to make the case for prioritizing education in financing packages and in joint emergency funds. Moreover, improving tax collection systems and combatting illicit financial flows holds a potential for increasing public revenue in many countries. Most importantly, we need political commitment at the highest level to make education a priority of domestic resources in this time of crisis. Moving forward, the international education community must maintain the same spirit of urgency and collaboration as we have seen the last few months.

Discussion

Belgium - Ms Marie-Anne Persoons, Advisor International Policy, Department of Education and Training, Strategic Policy Unit, Flemish Community

The education community needs to work together through global and regional platforms and fora to make sure that we all serve the same purpose. Should the Steering Committee, as the only official political platform for the Education 2030 agenda, envisage the next Global Education Meeting to be dedicated to education finance in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 crisis?

Republic of Korea – Mr Kwangho Kim, Secretary-General, Korean National Commission for UNESCO

Distance learning will become a new normal even after the crisis and it is an opportunity to consider and support the establishment of national distance education centres in low- and middle-income countries as well as regional distance education support centres under the auspices of UNESCO. In terms of domestic resource mobilization, the Republic of Korea is increasing investment in education through strong coordination among the President, Prime Minister, the Ministers of Education, Health and Disease Control, and Finance as well as the Parliament, with education considered the country's priority.

CAMPE – Ms Rasheda K. Choudhury, Executive Director

To mobilize domestic funding for education, it is essential to encourage governments to collect taxes, stop illicit flows of money, increase corporate social responsibility and prioritize education.

Colombia – Mr Santiago Fernández de Soto, Head, Office of Cooperation and International Affairs, Ministry of National Education

The Regional SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee of Latin America and the Caribbean is developing a virtual platform to bring together knowledge, tools, resources and experiences produced by Member States, with a view to addressing the COVID-19 crisis and facilitating exchange and technical cooperation. The region is preparing a follow-up report on the progress made on the SDG 4-Education 2030 agenda, which includes an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the efforts and recommendations to protect the achievements. The region will focus on mobilizing allies to create a regional coalition for education with the objective of mobilizing greater financial and in-kind resources that promote for inter-sectoral and inter-institutional cooperation.

Closing remarks by Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education

Ms Giannini informed the Steering Committee that based on this meeting, the Secretariat would prepare recommendations to take forward to the High Level Political Forum next month. Moreover, the International Commission on the Futures of Education will be releasing a paper putting forth nine ideas for collective action on education, learning and knowledge in the post-COVID world. Commissioners would call on national governments, international organizations and citizens to mobilize around the protection of public education and its financing, and for revitalized global solidarity.

Ms Giannini also reflected on the momentum created by the COVID-19 crisis that requires political leadership and mobilization from grassroots to top decision makers to set education on course. It is also an opportunity to rethink the structure and functions of the Steering Committee, so that its decisions become the centre of the decade of action.