



24 January 2023
10.00 am – 1.00 pm (EST)
Trusteeship Council Chamber, UNHQs

The year 2023 marks the mid-point since the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for people, planet and prosperity, with a set of 17 interlocked goals that will come up for review at the SDG Summit in September on the theme of investing in people

Education must be prioritized to accelerate progress towards all the SDGs against the backdrop of a global recession, growing inequalities and the climate crisis. Building on the global momentum generated by the UN Transforming Education Summit (TES) in September 2022, this year's International Day of Education will call for maintaining strong political mobilization around education and chart the way to translate commitments and global initiatives into action.

The Summit was the largest convening of education in recent decades, resulting in national commitments from 133 countries to recover learning losses from the pandemic and transform their education to make them fit for the future - more inclusive, relevant and resilient to future shocks.

The international community rallied around six calls to action that each carry the potential to accelerate change. Led by coalitions of partners, these global initiatives span critical areas: foundational learning; the green and digital transitions; gender equality; education in crisis and financing.

These national commitments and calls to action are buttressed by a youth movement that co-created the Summit. Their Youth Declaration affirms that “If we are to survive and thrive in planetary peace and righteous equality, then education is our primary source of hope and resolution.” Their Declaration captures all the links between education, climate justice, gender equality, inclusion, jobs, and sustainable development.

Three World Conferences, organized by UNESCO in 2022 on early childhood care and education, adult learning and higher education, further set out a common vision and commitments for driving progress in the next decade. Only lifelong education starting in the earliest years in life can break the cycle of poverty, improve health outcomes, prepare people for decent jobs with opportunities to reskill and upskill, and mitigate the climate crisis.

Now all governments and partners must be held accountable for their commitments. We need a solidarity pact going forward to translate commitments into action and strengthen the capacities of policy makers, teachers and educators to make education transformative.

The cost of under-investment in education imperils our common future. Education remains in a situation of crisis: six out of 10 children cannot read and understand a simple story at age 10; 244 million children and youth are still out of school while the number of young people in employment fell by 34 million in 2020 at a higher percentage rate than that for adults.

Fulfilling the right to education requires bold action in the areas outlined in the Secretary-General’s vision statement to ensure inclusive, safe and healthy learning environments; empower teachers, harness the digital revolution for the benefit of public education and invest more equitably and efficiently.

It is only by equipping youth for the future that we can transform the future. Building on the momentum of the TES and advancing towards the Summit of the Future in 2024, this International Day for Education will press for society-wide engagement to meet our education goals and drum up awareness on the six global initiatives to transform education.

With this purpose, the event will also highlight one of the most challenging crises of our times, in Afghanistan where girls and women are deprived of their fundamental right to education. Since the political shift in Kabul in August 2021, access to education beyond primary level is indefinitely suspended for all Afghan girls above the age of 12. Currently, 2.5 million (80%) of school-aged Afghan girls and young women are out of school, 1.2 million of whom were denied access to secondary schools and universities following the decision of the de facto authorities.

On 20 December 2022, this unacceptable situation was brought to another level following the announcement of the suspension, until further notice, of women’s access to universities, affecting over 100,000 female students attending government and private higher education institutions. The achievements made in the countries during the last 20 years are at stake. During this period, the number of women in higher education increased by almost 20 times and before the recent suspension one out of three young women were enrolled in universities.

The spotlight session on Afghanistan is timely as the international community will explore how best to support Afghan girls and women through innovative and impactful solutions. Panelists from Afghanistan will share their experiences as education leads, women’s rights activists and negotiators, with a focus on the current status of higher education and women’s role as

university students, professors and university staff. The session will set out the risks related to the suspension of secondary education, higher education and access to work, as well as the impact of women's exclusion from participation in society on the national economy. The session will conclude with recommended follow-up actions both at technical and political levels within the framework of the Transformative Education Summit and in line with the Call to Actions.

The International Day will call on governments, the international community and key stakeholders to stand by their commitments to prioritize investment in education and educational transformation in order to reverse the down sliding on the SDGs and unlock accelerated progress. This call will be supported by a social media activation that will rally global influencers, including youth champions.

It will also include the launch of the first SDG4 benchmark publication by UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report and Institute for Statistics, which monitors country progress towards the benchmarks, including those discussed at the Transforming Education Summit.

Featuring leaders and champions from across government, civil society, the teaching profession, international and regional organizations, youth, the private sector and academia, IDE 2023 will be a global platform to sustain political mobilization, take forward national commitments and global initiatives, and step up public engagement in favour of education as the path to peace, sustainable development and individual and collective well-being.

International Day for Education 2023 aims to:

- Generate visibility from local to global level on prioritizing education to reach the SDGs ahead of the SDG Summit, building on the outcomes of the TES
- Promote and showcase the national statements of commitment at country level and mobilize political and financial support for translating them into action
- Encourage wide take-up of the global initiatives launches at the TES to accelerate foundational learning, get every learner climate ready through greening education, promote public digital learning, advance gender equality in and through education and ensure learning continuity in situations of emergency and protracted crisis
- Advocate for higher levels of domestic and international financing, including through innovative sources, building on commitments at the TES.
- Provide youth a platform to build on the TES youth declaration, relay their demands and showcase their initiatives and innovations to advance the right to education
- Rally influencers to push forward the global education movement calling on world leaders to stand by their commitments and prioritize investment in education and educational transformation