

SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee Meeting

14 January 2021 - 12:00 – 15:00 CET (online)

Background and context

Following the launch of a Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the year 2020 opened with enthusiasm, a sense of urgency and a renewed commitment to mobilize financing, strengthen partnership and enhance national implementation. The world was then hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a health crisis quickly becoming a human and socio-economic crisis, exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and threatening the progress towards SDGs. The education sector was hard hit with millions of learners losing access to quality education and other essential services due to school closures. The UN Secretary-General warned of education catastrophe, pointing to UNESCO's estimate of 24 million learners at risk of dropping out. Yet, education received a negligible portion of neglected in COVID-19 response funding and recovery packages.

To respond to this unprecedented global crisis, the international education community has come together and engaged in a series of joint campaigns and initiatives. This was culminated at the extraordinary session of the 2020 Global Education Meeting (2020 GEM), which was organized by UNESCO and co-hosted by the Governments of Ghana, Norway and the United Kingdom on 20 and 22 October 2020. Building on the spirit of cooperation and solidarity, the 2020 GEM provided a unique opportunity to protect and promote education as the most powerful catalytic force for the advancement of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety. The 2020 GEM mobilized commitment at the highest level, expressed by 14 Heads of State and Government and 68 Ministers, and resulted in the endorsement of a set of global priority actions for the recovery and strengthening of national education systems.

The commitment to protect education finance and accelerate progress in areas considered central for recovery is captured in the meeting's outcome document, the 2020 GEM Deceleration, which furthermore paves the way for a genuine reform of the global education cooperation mechanism. UNESCO has been tasked to lead this consultation process in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders to elaborate a proposal to improve the efficiency, synergies, accountability and transparency of the global education cooperation mechanism and strengthen the Steering Committee, to be adopted at the 2021 GEM.

Meeting objective and expected outcomes

The objective of this Steering Committee meeting is to ensure the timely follow up to the 2020 GEM as an integral part of overall acceleration for the advancement of the Education 2030 Agenda at the global, regional and country levels.

The 2020 GEM made an urgent call to re-commit to education and priority actions, with a view to accelerating progress toward SDG 4 in the COVID-19 context and beyond. This meeting will discuss strategies and actions to take forward the commitments made in the 2020 GEM Declaration. In particular, the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee is expected to lead and support the actions over the next 12 months to:

- assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on progress towards the achievement of the Education 2030 Agenda;
- examine strategies and identify priorities for recovery and the acceleration of progress;

- propose relevant and realistic benchmarks of key SDG 4 indicators for subsequent monitoring.

The meeting will zoom on the five priority actions to accelerate progress towards SDG 4 in the COVID-19 context and beyond, captured in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the 2020 GEM Declaration:

1. **Protect education finance** – in public expenditure, national recovery stimulus packages and development aid, with equity, inclusion and gender equality as the guiding principles.
2. **Safe school reopening** – and the restoration of access to essential services such as school meals, health, WASH, social protection etc.
3. **Support of teachers and educational personal** – with emphasis on ensuring well-being, decent working conditions, inclusion in decision-making, as well as training and development opportunities to address a new educational reality.
4. **Skills development** - including social and emotional learning and well-being, skills for inclusive recovery, decent work and enhanced employability, and sustainable development.
5. **Connectivity** – to narrow the digital divide, develop quality open educational resources and build digital commons as a complement to face-to-face learning.

Nearly one year into the outbreak of the pandemic, this Steering Committee meeting will provide an opportunity to take stock of concrete actions and initiatives being undertaken in these critical areas of education response, but also to bridge the education sector’s COVID-19 response and recovery to the broader education goals and targets. Moreover, based on evidence and analysis provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR), the Steering Committee will deliberate on acceleration strategies at the global and regional levels.

Finally, the meeting will also anticipate key milestones for education in 2021, such as the launch of the Working Group on the reform of the global education cooperation mechanism, the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), and the launch of the strengthened SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee.

Draft agenda

12:00 – 12:10	<p>Welcome and Introduction by the Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO • Prof. Kazuhiro Yoshida, Co-Chair, SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee (Japan)
12:10 – 13:10	<p>Part I. Follow-up to the 2020 GEM Declaration commitments</p> <p><i>Discussion questions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>How can the five priority action areas of the 2020 GEM Declaration be taken further in the respective countries or regions in 2021?</i> 2) <i>How can we ensure strong ownership of all relevant UN, international and regional organizations for the GEM follow-up?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction - Ms Maki Katsuno-Hayashikawa, Director, Division for Education 2030 • Open discussion (max. 2 minutes per intervention) - <i>moderated by Mr Kazuhiro Yoshida</i>

13:10 – 14:10	<p>Part II. Monitoring and accelerating progress towards SDG 4 in the post COVID-19 context</p> <p><i>Discussion questions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>How can the impact of the pandemic on SDG 4 be monitored?</i> 2) <i>What relevant regional benchmarks can be set up to accelerate progress toward SDG4?</i> 3) <i>What roles regional organisations and regional SDG-Education 2030 coordination mechanisms can play in accelerating post-COVID recovery and progress towards SDG 4?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory presentation - Mr Manos Antoninis, Director, UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report • Updates on regional benchmarking on SDG 4 indicators, Ms Silvia Montoya, Director, UNESCO Institute for Statistics • Open discussion - moderated by Mr Kazuhiro Yoshida
14:10 – 14:50	<p>Part III. Improving the global education cooperation mechanism</p> <p><i>Discussion questions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>How should the global coordination look like in order to steer a transformative policy agenda, mobilize partnerships, as well as financial resources for education to accelerate progress toward the SDG-Education 2030 Agenda?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction by Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO • Discussion on education financing within the global cooperation mechanism • Open discussion - moderated by Ms Stefania Giannini
14:50 – 15:00	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Kazuhiro Yoshida, Co-Chair, SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee (Japan) • Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO