

Open Letter #EducationDay 2023

Leaders,

We write to you on this International Day of Education to underscore the gravity of the learning crisis that the COVID-19 pandemic only made more acute. This crisis is the result of deepening inequalities, and it is imperilling the future of an entire generation and stalling the transition towards more green, just and sustainable societies.

Education systems are failing an entire generation. Today, 244 million children and youth are still out of school, deprived of their most fundamental human right to a quality education. Two-thirds of 10-year-olds are unable to read and understand a simple story and 840 million young people will leave school in their teens with no qualifications for the workplace of the future. Yet, education is not being prioritized in most national budgets and military expenditures are still 8 to 10 times higher than education.

The Transforming Education Summit convened by the UN Secretary-General in September 2022 was a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change this course. Bringing together Governments, UN agencies, civil society, teachers, youth, students, and the private sector, it resulted in national commitments from 133 countries to recover learning losses and make education systems fit for the future. These education systems should equip children and young people with skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and empathy. This requires innovative pedagogies taught by well-trained, valued and motivated teachers.

It also rallied various Governments and partners around six calls to actions that became Global Initiatives with the potential to accelerate change: foundational learning; the green and digital transitions; gender equality; education in crisis and, of course, the adequate financing of educational investment. Finally, it ignited a youth-led global movement that culminated with the launch of the Youth Declaration.

Through the Youth Declaration, young people all over the world committed to lead the way in transforming education. With the Global Youth Initiative, launched today at the occasion of International Day of Education, young people are reiterating their support and commitment to the cause and are urging all world leaders to turn words into action by investing in concrete, transformative actions for education.

We urge every world leader to unlock the full potential of every learner, especially the most disadvantaged, by investing in education, living up to commitments made during the Transforming Education Summit.

We ask that world leaders protect and increase international and national education financing, effectively collaborate across sectors and ministries, and ultimately reach the benchmark of 20% of government budgets for education – instead of 5% on average today. In his Vision Statement, the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, puts it clearly: the cost of not financing education is much higher than the cost of financing it. Donors also have the power to reverse current trends by repositioning education in their development cooperation and by allocating increased official development assistance (ODA) to education.



We urge decision-makers and donors to consider young people as partners and ensure meaningful youth engagement and participation in transforming education, as outlined by the Global Youth Initiative.

We are committed to work from the grassroots to the global level to continue growing a youth-led Global Education Movement and will hold decision-makers accountable to their commitments in the follow-up to the Transforming Education Summit.

Education is a high-yield development investment for individuals, economies and societies. Unless every child around the world enjoys access to inclusive, playful, healthy and safe learning environments, the entire world will pay a high price for our neglect.

**It's high time to consider the education crisis an emergency.
We are in this together.
The time to act is NOW.**

Signatories:

- **Ahmad Alhendawi**, Secretary General of World Organization of the Scout Movement and Former UN Youth Envoy
- **Gordon Brown**, UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Education Commission Chair, and former Prime Minister of the UK
- **Leonardo Garnier**, Special Adviser to the United Nations' 'Transforming Education Summit'
- **Stefania Giannini**, Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, and Co-Chair of the SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee Sherpa Group
- **Robert Jenkins**, Global Director, Education and Adolescent Development, UNICEF, and SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee member
- **H.E. President Jakaya Kikwete**, Global Partnership for Education Board Chair
- **Jørgen Vig Knudstrup**, Deputy Chairman of the Board, LEGO Foundation
- **Chido Cleopatra Mpemba**, African Union Youth Envoy
- **Yasmine Sherif**, Director, Education Cannot Wait
- **Simon Sommers**, Co-CEO of the Jacobs Foundation, and SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee member
- **Jutta Urpilainen**, European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships, and SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee member
- **Jayathma Wickramanayake**, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
- **Kenisha Arora and Doris Mwikali**, SDG4 Youth Network leaders, and SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee members