

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

Sustainable development is not only a legal obligation, resulting from international agreements. It is a necessity resulting from our moral obligations towards the next generations. Polish government, aware of these obligations, implements a long-term concept of sustainable development on the basis of a national document: Strategy for Responsible Development. This strategy consist of a set of priorities and instruments for their implementation, covering many aspects of life, and in every case taking into consideration the SDGs.

One of the conditions for reaching SDGs is providing access to education to every member of the society. Equality of opportunities is a key success factor in the contemporary world. Such equality cannot only refer to the stage of life identified as childhood and youth. Accelerated development of modern technologies makes life-long learning more and more necessary, in order to ensure social inclusion throughout the lifetime.

Usually, when we think about the benefits of education, we consider them from the point of view of economy, politics, and society. Education is important for the economy because it allows for productivity increase due to technological advancement available for everyone. Its importance in politics is connected with civic awareness and civic participation. Positive impact of education for the society is viewed from the perspective of its influence on the value system, the ability of critical thinking, lower poverty prospects, health, fitness, and communication skills. Education is not only an important factor influencing the economy, politics, or society but also – and maybe first and foremost – a tool allowing individuals to achieve wellbeing.

The Polish government is trying to reorganise the whole school system so as to meet the requirements of the present and the future. We are slowly leaving behind the model of the 19th century school with its focus on gaining encyclopaedic knowledge, promoting learning by doing and learning useful hard and soft skills. We are trying to make school a more friendly place for students, their parents and teachers. We are facilitating obtaining higher professional qualifications, including digital skills, to teachers. The period of Covid-19 pandemic was in this respect a time of accelerated changes. Last year Polish government started equipping students with free tablets, being aware of the unavoidability of the process of digitalisation in education. There have been a lot of new programs implemented to achieve objectives conforming with SDGs in the scope of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics) in education, in organisation of extracurricular and out-of-school classes, in cross-generational education, in support of non-governmental organisations dealing with education of children and teenagers, as well as in the scope of projects aiming to improve the teaching ICT infrastructure or the school infrastructure allowing for provision of hot meals.

There are also various initiatives aiming to increase the number of school trips for students, allowing them to get to know the most important monuments and places valuable from the point

of view of Polish history and nature, and also to learn about scientific and technical achievements in the newly-created small science centres.

Such initiatives are undertaken not only in case of primary and secondary education, but also higher education, where most important programs aim at assisting the best students in a form of supporting student research clubs, providing financial solutions to facilitate the start of students' scientific careers, especially for those involved in implementation research.

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Poland now belongs to the countries affected by depopulation, which additionally increases the importance of investment in human capital. Such investment partially compensates for the decreasing human resources. At the same time education makes it possible to maintain better health, resulting in better and longer life. From the point of view of the population, the increased share of well-educated people, who also tend to be more active on the job market, makes it necessary to make available a wider scope of social services which would make it possible to combine family and professional duties as well as consumer, recreational and tourist aspirations. The Polish government takes such actions, involving all the citizens, hoping this will also result in taking up family responsibilities earlier, so as to improve the demographic situation in the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year was a time when due to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Poland offered shelter to hundreds of thousands of war refugees from the brotherly country. Suddenly, in the middle of the school year, Polish schools had to face the necessity to take up a variety of actions to make it possible for Ukrainian students to continue their education. It was up to their parents to decide whether they would study on-line according to the requirements of the Ukrainian system of education or join Polish classes. It was not an easy experience, which led to an important conclusion for the international society, namely that it is necessary to prepare tools to enable compulsory education in a new place of residence in the situation of mass war migration.

Finally, I would like to plead for peace, a state which, from the European perspective, until quite recently seemed so natural.

Thank you for your attention.