

UNITED NATIONS



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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
AFFAIRS**

Opening Remarks

**56th session of the Commission on Population and Development
10 April 2023, 10:00 a.m.**

**Madame Deputy Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

**It is an honour and a pleasure to speak at the
opening of this 56th session of the Commission on
Population and Development.**

**The theme of this year's commission is perfectly
timed. It follows the Transforming Education
Summit, held last September, at which Member
States committed to prioritize education, recognizing
its central role in achieving the SDGs.**

Education is one of the best investments that societies can make to build a more sustainable and prosperous future.

A quality education enables us to develop our mental and physical abilities and provides us with the information and skills to make well-informed individual and collective decisions.

It teaches us to respect the opinions and values of others, even when they differ from our own, and widens the avenues for the participation of all, in more inclusive societies.

Education can provide a path for individuals to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

It can equip us with the knowledge and tools to safeguard the environment, and to anticipate and address the negative consequences of global warming and climate change.

It is clear why education is recognized as a fundamental human right.

Yet 244 million children and youth today are out of school, and more than half of children and adolescents are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics.

The reasons for these gaps are many but we would be remiss not to look at the impact of population dynamics.

In some parts of the world, where fiscal capacity is limited, a rapidly growing school-aged population makes it more difficult to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Yet, in other places, declines in the proportion of children and adolescents in the population, are easing the pressure on education budgets and opening opportunities to boost the human capital of young people and adults alike.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fault lines of our education systems.

Children and young people in low and lower-income countries were deprived of access to learning as these countries saw large cuts in public spending on education.

We must support these countries to resume progress towards the universal completion of primary and secondary education by 2030.

This will require investing in digital literacy and closing the digital divide, drawing the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. And we must continue expanding access to the internet and digital technologies for education.

Lastly, we have to ensure that no one is left behind. This includes providing migrants access to

basic education and recognizing their credentials, which are key to their integration in host countries and to maximize the development benefits of migration. It also means pushing even further to ensure access to a quality education for girls and young women.

Despite the significant progress in the gender gap in school enrolment to date, much more remains to be done to improve school completion, the quality of education and to translate the gains into women's improved access to decent jobs.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Let us use this session to add momentum and build on the commitments made at the Transforming Education Summit. Let us identify lasting solutions to the education crisis, which put people at the centre. Let us work together to reach

the breakthrough we need to rescue the SDGs, for people and planet.

I thank you for your attention and wish you every success in your important deliberations this week.
