



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

22 November 2019

Excellency,

It is my pleasure to inform you that I will organise a High-level Interactive Dialogue on the occasion of the International Day of Education. The event will take place from 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. on 24 January 2020, in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

The theme of the event will be, “*Aligning Inclusive Quality Education Policies with Sustainable Development Goals*” and will, inter alia, provide a forum for strengthening partnerships, exchanging ideas and experiences. The concept note for the event is attached.

Further information regarding the event will be communicated in due course. Meanwhile, enquiries on the event may be directed to the focal points in my Office, Special Adviser on Quality Education, Prof. Jide Balogun (+1 (917) 496-5514; murtala.balogun@un.org) and Mr. Yazid Abdull (+1 (917) 892-9052; yazid.abdull@un.org).

While looking forward to your participation, please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest regards.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



CONCEPT NOTE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION

Date: Friday 24 January 2020
Time: 10:00 - 13:00
Venue: Trusteeship Council Chamber

On the International Day of Education (A/RES/73/25), which takes place on 24 January 2020, the President of the General Assembly will convene a High-level Interactive Dialogue, in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York. The theme of the event will be, “*Aligning Inclusive Quality Education Policies with Sustainable Development Goals*”.

Background

The right to education is enshrined in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration calls for free and compulsory elementary education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, goes further to stipulate that countries shall make higher education accessible to all.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 calls on Member States to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The priorities of the 74th session of the General Assembly are poverty eradication and zero hunger, quality education, climate action and inclusion. Progress in the area of quality education is crucial to progress in all priority areas, as well as Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Global literacy rates have steadily increased since 1970. However, we cannot appreciate the gravity of the education challenge facing the world until we go beyond the figures. The recorded literacy and enrolment rates do not give insight as to the level of *access* to quality and inclusive education in different parts of the world.

Today, we face a learning crisis. Latest figures indicate that 262 million are out of school. For one in three of these children this is due to humanitarian crisis including conflict and natural disasters compounded by climate change. Nearly 60% of children and adolescents are unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in literacy and mathematics; even though one third of them are in school. A lack of trained teachers, inadequate learning materials, sanitation facilities and infrastructure impact the ability of children to learn. For some, their ability to learn is undermined by poverty, hunger, and illness.

There can be no barriers to education. Universal access to education is essential to ensuring quality education for all. We must take targeted action to facilitate the learning of those marginalized, including children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, girls, children on the move, and those at risk of being left behind. We must bridge urban-rural and socio-economic divisions to ensure inclusive education.

Investment in inclusive quality education underpins the success of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Education has the power to lift people out of poverty and is a key enabler for decent work. Quality inclusive education fosters self-esteem, skills in entrepreneurship and innovation while promoting full and productive employment opportunities for all, including learners with disabilities. Youth need skills that will equip them to navigate a rapidly changing world, this includes technical and vocational training.

Education must hone skills, including: critical thinking; creativity; communication; and decision-making. This will ensure that graduates are prepared to fully engage in society throughout their lives and are prepared for jobs in a rapidly developing world. Quality teacher training, strong curricula, and effective monitoring and evaluation of learning are integral to quality education. Moreover, it is crucial to promote tolerance through intercultural understanding and dialogue, in order to ensure well-rounded youth who are capable of reaching their full potential as global citizens.

Digital culture and literacy have changed the way we live, work, play and learn. It is essential to ensure the acquisition and effective transfer of knowledge and capacity-building between governments, civil society, and all stakeholders. To make gains, we must invest in infrastructure, including electrification, internet access, and the full integration of Information and Communications Technology in teaching and curricula, to facilitate access to education through internet-based learning programmes. We cannot allow the digital divide to deepen. We must ensure equal access to ICT for all.

Today, one billion girls and women do not have the skills required for an increasingly digitalized world. Girls' access to education is compromised due to gender-based violence, early or forced marriage, insecure routes or long distances to school, lack of sanitation, as well as cultural norms and practices. A holistic approach to inclusive quality education should address these issues and ensure that every girl, everywhere can fulfill her potential.

According to the Global Education Monitoring Report, the annual financing gap for reaching SDG 4 is \$39 billion. In order to make quality education a reality for all we need to close this financing gap. Partnerships and collaboration are fundamental to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. International entities, civil society, governments, and the private sector need to work together effectively for progress at national, regional, and global levels.

On the International Day of Education, it is incumbent upon all stakeholders to recommit to SDG 4. It is only through multilateral action that we will ensure that everyone, everywhere has equal access to quality education.

Objectives

The High-Level Interactive Dialogue will seek to:

- (a) Promote a common understanding of, and raise awareness about, the real meaning, benefits, and essentials of inclusive quality education and lifelong learning;
- (b) Highlight the progress attained and the challenges encountered in implementing inclusive quality education within and across countries;
- (c) Focus the participants' attention on the link between inclusive quality education and lifelong learning, and effective implementation of the SDGs;
- (d) Provide a forum for exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences on approaches for bridging the resource gaps in, and for establishing networks and strengthening partnerships for, the implementation of inclusive quality education; and
- (e) Build a broad measure of consensus around the practical measures that need to be instituted, the resources to be mobilized, and the partnerships to be forged, within and across countries, to realize the underlying aims of inclusive quality education and lifelong learning.

Launch of the Beyond the Basics Global Network on Inclusive Quality Education and Lifelong Learning

The Beyond the Basics (BTB) Global Network on Inclusive Quality Education and Lifelong Learning will be launched, in concert with partners, on 24 January 2020.

BTB will connect stakeholders including educators, experts in education, philanthropists, policy makers, students and youth.

This initiative will provide a platform to facilitate the exchange of best practices and experiences to catalyze dialogue in order to achieve progress on SDG 4 targets. Through advocacy, BTB, will galvanize multilateral action and financing to ensure that everyone, everywhere has equal access to quality education.

Participants

All stakeholders are invited to participate in this High-level Dialogue, including: UN Member / Observer States; UN Agencies; intergovernmental organisations; regional organisations; civil society organisations; educators; students and youth.

Format

The High-level Dialogue will take place in the Trusteeship Council Chamber from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on 24 January 2019. There will be two sessions of interactive discussions between key actors in the education space.

Expected Outcome

The conclusions and recommendations emerging from the day's deliberations will be reflected in the President's summary, which will be shared with Member States and other stakeholders.