



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

20 January 2020

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to inform you that the 2020 Parliamentary Hearing with the theme, “*Education as key to peace and sustainable development: Towards the implementation of SDG 4*”, is scheduled to take place on Monday, 17 February and Tuesday, 18 February 2020 in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

The event, which is organized in partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), will specifically call for greater political resolve to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goal 4, on education, is fully realized by 2030. Enclosed is a copy of the provisional programme for the hearing. Further information can be accessed on the IPU website at [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org).

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

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



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

## Education as a key to peace and sustainable development: toward the implementation of SDG 4

*Annual Parliamentary Hearing*

*United Nations Headquarters  
Trusteeship Council Chamber, Secretariat Building  
17 and 18 February 2020*



### Provisional Programme

Monday, 17 February	
10–10.30 a.m.	<b>Opening session: The 2020 Parliamentary Hearing and the 75<sup>th</sup> UN Anniversary</b>
	<p><b>Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande</b>, President of the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly</p> <p><b>Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron</b>, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union</p>
10.30–10.45 a.m.	<b>Keynote speech</b>
	<b>Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed: Realizing the SDGs is the only way forward</b>
10.45–11 a.m.	<b>Group photo</b>
11 a.m.–1 p.m.	<b>SDG 4: The central role of education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</b>
<b>1</b>	<p>This first panel will provide an overview of the role of education in the whole 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, highlighting interlinkages with the other SDGs, the main gaps in education delivery globally and regionally, and some of the key policy prescriptions that will be fleshed out further in the various sessions of the hearing.</p> <p>The panel will feature high-level officials from UNESCO and UNICEF as the UN specialized agencies for education, as well as other leading figures from parliaments and civil society.</p> <p>Leading questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the developmental potential of education in today's world?</li> <li>- How can quality education be democratized so that all people have an equal opportunity to happiness and prosperity?</li> <li>- How do we build political will for effective education policies?</li> <li>- How is the United Nations working to advance SDG 4?</li> </ul>
1–2.30 p.m.	<b>Lunch break</b>
2.30–4 p.m.	<b>Education for peace and democracy: Building the bonds of active citizenship</b>
<b>2</b>	<p>This panel will make the case for a more comprehensive view of education as something that must aim in the first instance at developing freethinking individuals who can contribute to their communities as responsible and engaged citizens in addition to providing for themselves.</p>

	<p>Education should aim beyond satisfying economic imperatives to supporting just, peaceful and sustainable societies, respectful of cultural diversity, human dignity, gender equality and solidarity as essential features of democratic life. Yet too many educational systems remain geared to meeting the needs of the economy or of the marketplace with only secondary attention paid to the common good and the social contract that should bind citizens together. In this regard, a special role must be played by civic education as well as the practice of politics, including through active engagement with elected representatives and the institutions of government at all levels.</p> <p>Leading questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can learners acquire first-hand experience of a just, inclusive, sustainable and peaceful society?</li> <li>- How can the transformational role of education be unleashed in difficult contexts marked by conflict or competition for resources?</li> <li>- What types of partnership are needed with communities to ensure education remains relevant to their well-being?</li> </ul>
4–5.30 p.m.	<p><b>Education as a key instrument to empower women and girls (Beijing +25)</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; color: #e67e22;">3</p>	<p>This panel will zero in on one of the most persistent gaps in education delivery around the world, namely the barriers that deny women and girls their human right to education at all levels and in all fields of knowledge. It will also look at the key role of SDG 4 in achieving gender equality in all areas of life as called for in SDG 5.</p> <p>The discussion will consider in particular the discriminatory policies, cultural norms and practices that keep millions of women and girls out of school, undermining their right to education, their economic and social well-being and that of their nation. Special attention will be paid to adolescent girls’ dropping out of school and how to prevent this. Sectoral segregation between girls and boys, and men and women, is another key obstacle to achieving equality in education. This is particularly true regarding girls’ and women’s underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).</p> <p>Education also conveys values at a very formative moment in the lives of boys and girls. Planting the seeds of gender equality from an early age, through formal education and other initiatives that engage teachers, learners, as well as families and communities, is of paramount importance.</p> <p>Leading questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the main barriers to equal access to education for boys and girls?</li> <li>- What policies and incentives have proven successful in achieving gender equality in education at all levels, especially in the secondary level?</li> <li>- How can targeted interventions best redress gender stereotypes that lead to imbalance across education fields?</li> <li>- What specific interventions are needed to ensure educational institutions foster a culture of gender equality among boys and girls, as well as in their families and communities?</li> </ul>
5.45–7.30 p.m.	<p><b>Reception at the Office of the IPU Permanent Observer: 336 E 45<sup>th</sup> Street (10<sup>th</sup> floor)</b></p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 18 February</b></p>	
9.30–11 a.m.	<p><b>Securing decent work for all through lifelong learning, training and vocational education</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; color: #e67e22;">4</p>	<p>This panel will look at education as a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for employment and sustainable livelihoods. It will consider why the mismatch between skills and labour market needs can leave many people unemployed even at times of prosperity, as well as the need to make education delivery systems more flexible and accessible to offer lifelong learning opportunities to keep up with a changing economy.</p>

	<p>The private sector has a role to play in defining and delivering technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes. The special educational needs of the informal economy, including apprenticeship and entrepreneurial skills development, preponderant in most developing countries, is critically important. Attention must also be paid to gender gaps and the exclusion of vulnerable groups from employment and training opportunities, so that no one is left behind.</p> <p>Leading questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can training programmes anticipate labour market needs and be age- and gender-responsive in their design and implementation?</li> <li>- How to develop flexible competency-based programmes and recognize non-formal and informal learning?</li> <li>- How to improve the quality and relevance of skills development in the informal sector?</li> <li>- What is the appropriate role of the private sector and of public-private partnerships in TVET policy and delivery?</li> </ul>
11–11.30 a.m.	<p><b>The United Nations in the twenty-first century</b></p>
	<p>A conversation with Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations</p>
11.30 a.m.–1 p.m.	<p><b>The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What does it portend for education systems?</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; color: orange;">5</p>	<p>This panel will focus on the growing challenge that education systems are facing with regard to new technologies commonly referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (nanotechnologies, artificial intelligence, internet of things, etc.) and the risk for further exacerbation of economic divides within and between nations. It will focus as well on the use of technology to improve access to quality education that is relevant for today’s new economy.</p> <p>Although entire sectors of the economy (education, health care, infrastructure, culture and hospitality) continue to depend mainly on traditional jobs where the human factor remains critical, it is true that, particularly in developed countries, many jobs will either disappear or change dramatically as a result of new tech. The advent of sophisticated new technologies will increasingly require a workforce that is well educated in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).</p> <p>Still, in the quest to educate for today’s high-tech world, a fine balance needs to be struck between learning-specific knowledge and “learning to learn” in a more personalized fashion that is at once more adaptable to market needs and more appropriate for human well-being.</p> <p>Leading questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How should schooling be adapted to emerging new technologies and corresponding labour market needs?</li> <li>- How can developing countries, where basic education needs remain unmet, cope with the demands of the new high-tech economy?</li> <li>- How to leverage technology to improve access to and the quality and relevance of education programmes?</li> <li>- What role is there for public-private partnerships in the transition to the Fourth Industrial Revolution?</li> </ul>

1–2.30 p.m.	<b>Lunch break</b>
2.30–3.45 p.m.	<b>Protecting our planet for future generations through education</b>
6	<p>This panel will consider the importance of education to protect the planet, in particular Education for Sustainable Development, as a key component of policies for sustainable development. It will look in particular at the ways in which formal, non-formal and informal learning can be used to raise awareness of the climate crisis and other environmental disruptions and to build support for the urgent actions required to save our planet.</p> <p>There has been a growing recognition that education is key in addressing the interlinkages between the environment and the other pillars of sustainable development – the economy and society. However, while a large majority of countries in recent UNESCO surveys shows a policy commitment to mobilizing education to protect the planet, implementation is often lagging behind. The panel will address this gap as well.</p> <p>Leading questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the core elements of a curriculum for environmental education?</li> <li>- How can we address the gap between policy commitment and implementation in mobilizing education for environmental preservation?</li> <li>- How can a whole-of-society learning process for sustainability be facilitated through linking formal, non-formal and informal learning?</li> </ul>
3.45–5.15 p.m.	<b>Strengthening public funding for better outcomes in education</b>
7	<p>Education is a public good and a human right. Well-funded public education mandated and paid for by the State remains an important tool in building successful, inclusive societies.</p> <p>Yet, public funding for education remains well below official targets of 4–6 per cent of GDP and/or at least 15–20 per cent of total public expenditure. Public spending on educational institutions is declining in more than one in three OECD countries. In low- and middle-income countries, the total annual financing gap between available domestic resources and the amount necessary to implement SDG 4 by 2030 is in the order of US\$ 39 billion. Despite this, aid to education in developing countries remains unpredictable and well below the required amount.</p> <p>Underfunding is affecting access to quality education at all levels and in almost all countries. Claiming budget constraints, governments are increasingly subcontracting education services to commercial interests or seeking to enter into partnerships with private sector education providers.</p> <p>This session will consider the ways in which education budgets can be scaled up and public expenditure made more efficient to achieve better results at all levels, from primary to post-secondary. The session will also look at how some nations have turned to the private sector to deliver education, highlighting the risks as well as the potential benefit of public-private partnerships in both developed and developing countries.</p> <p>Leading questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can parliamentarians help ensure education budgets are appropriately scaled up?</li> <li>- What possible trade-offs exist between education budgets and other priorities for sustainable development and how can they be addressed?</li> <li>- What is the appropriate role of private educational institutions and of public-private partnerships in education policy?</li> </ul>
5.15–5.30 p.m.	<b>Closing session</b>
	<p><b>Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron</b>, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union</p> <p><b>Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande</b>, President of the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly</p>