

## Transforming Education Summit, September 2022

convened by the UN Secretary-General

### Draft Concept Note on Summit Work Streams – for Member State Consultation

24 February 2022

#### I. Background

1. Recognizing that education is a foundation for peace, tolerance, human rights and sustainable development, the UN Secretary-General announced in his report to the UN General Assembly on Our Common Agenda his intention to convene a Transforming Education Summit (TES) in September 2022. The Summit is aimed at mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity and solutions with a view to transforming education between now and 2030.
2. The Summit will require a focused, intensive, and inclusive preparatory process that is built from the ground up, responds to member state priorities, is supported by the Summit secretariat and UN system and ensures the meaningful engagement of young people and the full set of education stakeholders.
3. The Summit preparatory process will be advanced across three intersecting and reinforcing workstreams:
  - a. National Consultations
  - b. Thematic Action Tracks
  - c. Public engagement and mobilization
4. Building on the preparatory document shared with Member States in February, the purpose of this note is to set out proposed parameters of each workstream for member state initial reflection and consideration.

#### II. Work stream 1: National consultations

##### Objective

5. National consultations aim at developing a shared vision, commitment and alignment of action across constituencies to transform education between now and 2030. Under the leadership of Member States, national consultations are intended to put focus on the policy, planning and budgetary changes needed to recover learning losses, get SDG4 back on track and reimagine education into the future.

##### Approach

6. Inclusive dialogues on the transformation of education require broad public engagement and mobilization. Government-led national consultations would seek to ensure meaningful engagement of the full set of education stakeholders, including students and youth organizations, networks of adolescent girls and young women, feminist movements, civil society groups, teacher associations, the private sector, development partners, education advocates, traditional and religious leaders, academia and research institutions, parliamentary networks, as well as other education influencers. Such an approach may require dedicated exchanges with various constituencies, prioritizing youth and student movements, teacher associations, as well as civil society organizations.
7. Transforming education starts with young people as agents of change. A dedicated global youth engagement strategy is being developed in consultation with key youth-led networks to ensure that young people are involved in the Summit at all levels and empowered to develop and drive initiatives around the Summit. Connecting global and local youth dialogues, the strategy will enable youth and student-led priorities to be proposed and advanced leading up to the Summit.



8. Given the interconnectedness of education and broader development efforts, government participation should ensure cross-sectoral representation beyond the education sector, including health, social protection, food and nutrition, and labour. To the extent possible, national consultations should leverage existing sector coordination mechanisms. Active participation of finance ministries in these national dialogues is also critical.

### **Substantive Focus**

9. National consultations could be comprised of four components with the following objectives:
  - Inspiring targeted action in the lead up to the Summit to ensure full educational recovery from the impacts of the pandemic, building on the available evidence of the multifaceted impacts of the educational disruption (on nutrition, protection of girls, health and well-being, learning loss, disengagement drop out/push out of students, non-reenrollment etc).
  - Reviewing or identifying national education targets and benchmarks in light of the impacts of the pandemic and the ambition needed to maximize progress by 2030, drawing on the seven global and thematic benchmark indicators recently endorsed by the 2019 Global Education Meeting.<sup>1</sup>
  - Identifying a package of levers and priority actions to transform education and accelerate progress towards shared education commitments, by building on lessons and insights gained from educational response and innovation during the pandemic, integrating new thinking, approaches, learning resources and methods in education policy and practice and drawing on the findings of the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education.
- Generating commitment to increased and more effective public financing of education, which ensures greater equity in resource allocation, and more efficiency in use. It would be important to identify additional innovative and cross-sectoral mechanisms that can ensure sustainable domestic financing of education.

### **Support**

10. National consultations will be led by a government-selected convenor. Guidelines will be provided to Member States to support the process.
11. In addition, under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs), where they exist, will be mobilized to support this process, with UNICEF and UNESCO playing a key role in in-country consultations, depending on the local context. Technical advice and seed funding will be made available to UNCTs where possible. National Commissions for UNESCO can also help support government-led national consultations.
12. The Special Adviser will work to mobilize global and regional level networks and platforms, including those organized by and for civil society organizations and youth organizations, to support and facilitate the in-country consultations within and beyond their constituencies.

### **Outputs**

13. Outcomes from the national consultations could be consolidated in a National Roadmap for Transforming Education Systems, capturing national commitments and consensus on priority

---

<sup>1</sup> [National SDG 4 benchmarks: Fulfilling our neglected commitment, UNESCO GEM and UIS](#)

actions, building on existing plans, programmes, and initiatives. Heads of State and Government will be encouraged to report on progress made in addressing pandemic-related learning losses and to present their national roadmaps at the Summit in September. In some countries, national consultations could also continue after the Summit to further deepen the national reflection for transforming education. Follow-up and accountability for implementing these roadmaps will be undertaken through existing SDG4 monitoring processes, including the SDG4 High Level Steering Committee.

### III. Work stream 2: Thematic Action Tracks

#### Objective

14. The objective of the Thematic Action Tracks work stream is to place a spotlight on a small number of areas that require greater attention and action and that can accelerate progress on education and the 2030 Agenda and transform education. Action tracks will identify evidence-based examples of successful policy interventions and mobilize new commitments to action, building on and strengthening existing initiatives, partnerships and coalitions, including those that emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Approach

15. The thematic action Tracks will be guided by the 2030 Agenda and its education-related goals and targets. They will seek to respond to the Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda, as well as the Report of the International Commission for the Futures of Education, *Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*, convened by UNESCO.
16. Action tracks will build on global commitments made through the 2015 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action on Education 2030 and the UNESCO Global Education Meetings (GEMs). Synergies will be sought with the Focus Areas of the SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee.
17. Action Tracks address key accelerators across the education cycle. The COVID-19 crisis heightened the sense of urgency to tackle the educational inequalities and learning crisis while reaffirming the universal relevance of the 2030 Agenda and its SDG 4: *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. On the other hand, the historical educational disruptions invited us to rethink and reimagine the purpose, content and delivery modes of education—in other words, to *transform education* toward peaceful, inclusive and sustainable futures of humanity and the planet.
18. Action tracks will be convened at the global level and will make full use of existing coalitions and networks, as well as available virtual platforms and tools to allow for engagement and input from across the world. They will ensure consistent engagement with member states and shall be open to all stakeholders, including donors, policy-makers, civil society groups, young people, teachers' networks, education advocates, academia, the private sector and philanthropies. Education-related convenings over the course of 2022, including at the regional level, will also be leveraged. Action tracks will seek to complement and be informed by the National Consultations workstream and the Public Engagement and Mobilization workstream.

#### Substantive focus

19. The following five thematic action tracks build on the priority actions identified in the 2020 Global Education Meeting Declaration, to which national political leaders and the global community committed to accelerate progress towards SDG 4 in the COVID-19 context and beyond. They are further guided by the vision, principles and proposals contained in the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda and UNESCO's Report on the Futures of Education.



20. Endorsed by the SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee, these thematic action tracks are universally relevant, reflect the lifelong learning perspective of SDG 4 and spotlight the areas that require urgent and concerted action of governments and the global community. As such, they integrate two approaches—focus on the urgent need to address educational inequalities and learning crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis on one hand, and forward-looking aspiration for system-wide transformation on the other. Equity and gender equality in and through education will be proactively mainstreamed in each thematic action track:
- i. Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools: The school closures during the pandemic resulted not only in learning disruptions for many learners, but also in a wide range of costs and threats to their health and well-being, including increased exposure to violence and exploitation, poor nutrition due to school meals disruption, as well as mental health of learners and educational personnel. Protection from gender-based violence, child marriage, child labour, as well as prevention of early pregnancy and school dropouts have also been major concerns from the onset of the pandemic-induced lockdowns and school closures. An integrated and inter-sectoral approach to learning environments — gender, health including sexual and reproductive health, school nutrition, social protection, psychosocial support, etc. — is essential to learners’ holistic development and learning. Educational inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, including those affected by crisis and displacement, should also be a permanent characteristic of schools and education systems.
  - ii. Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development: Transforming education means empowering learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to be resilient, adaptable and prepared for the uncertain future while contributing to human and planetary well-being and sustainable development. However, some 773 million youth and adults still lack basic literacy skills, two-thirds of whom are women; the proportion of children in low- and middle-income who cannot read a simple text by age 10 may increase from the pre-pandemic 50% to potentially up to 70%. Foundational learning, including literacy and numeracy, is indispensable for lifelong learning while life skills are essential to be able to live a healthy and productive life in a changing environment. Moreover, curricula must emphasize ecological, intercultural and interdisciplinary learning, so that all learners from early childhood through adulthood not only acquire relevant knowledge, but also are empowered to take action and contribute to global peace, sustainable development and societal transformation. Unemployment is affecting youth, in particular, and the transition from school to work is disrupted by sluggish economies and changing labour markets. To enhance employability and enable ecologically sustainable transition, young people and adults also need continuous reskilling and upskilling for rapidly changing labour markets affected by increased digitization and the greening of economies.
  - iii. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession: Teachers are the backbone of every education system and frontline workers. Accelerating toward SDG 4 and transforming education is only possible when teachers are professionalized, trained, and supported — in all settings and all levels of education from early childhood care and education, TVET, adult education and higher education. Through high-quality initial training and continuous professional development, teachers need to be equipped with learner-centred, inclusive, gender-sensitive and effective pedagogical skills, including socio-emotional learning and action learning, and trained in digital pedagogies to facilitate remote and hybrid learning. They also need to enjoy decent working conditions and labour rights, including freedom of association and collective bargaining.
  - iv. Digital learning: During the COVID-19 crisis, we witnessed impressive creativity, innovation and collaboration to provide remote learning, using diverse technologies. However, the pandemic illuminated the connectivity and digital divides within and across countries, with more than two-thirds of school-age learners (1.3 billion children) lacking internet access at



home.<sup>2</sup> Digital divides also mean many are left out of remote learning opportunities, including girls and young women who are less likely than boys and men in their households to have digital skills, access to computers and the internet to benefit equally from remote learning, and to access information and social networks. Inclusive, equitable and sustainable approaches to digital technologies as well as safe and productive use of online learning are a key strategy for educational recovery and resilience and for the future of education and learning. In this regard, the Rewired Global Declaration on Connectivity for Education presents concrete actions to commit to under three core principles: center the most marginalized, expand investments in free and high-quality digital education content, and move education to digital spaces through pedagogical innovation and change.

- v. **Financing of education:** Education is an investment that requires sustainable funding and domestic resources remain the primary source of funding for education. The 2021 GEM Paris Declaration urges all governments to develop strategies to increase resources for education and use these resources effectively. Aid to education remains essential in some contexts as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could increase the pre-COVID annual funding gap of US\$148 billion in low and lower-middle income countries to as much as US\$200 billion.<sup>3</sup> The summit seeks to advocate for greater domestic and international investment in education, including through innovative financing mechanisms and investments from other sectors, and promote greater harmonization, alignment and accountability of development partners' support to governments.

### Support

21. Each action track will be co-led by a member state champion and a leading stakeholder, with substantive support provided by one or more UN or multilateral entity and the Special Adviser.
22. Leads will be responsible for developing a discussion paper that synthesizes the research evidence, situation analysis, good practices and innovations, and recommendations on the key issues identified, for discussion with member states and education partners. They will also be responsible for ensuring the quality and consultative processes in developing the initial paper. The Summit Secretariat will provide a template for the discussion paper and coordinate and support the consultation processes, with a view to maximizing coherence across different action tracks.

### Outputs

23. Each action track shall develop an initial discussion paper, a set of ideas for action and an online catalogue of evidence-based good practices. Building on existing coalitions and networks, TES action tracks should also contribute to successful partnerships and opportunities for multilateral, multisectoral mobilization. These will be discussed initially at the TES Pre-Summit, with the final outputs presented and showcased at the Summit itself, and inform the Summit Summary.
24. Follow up implementation and monitoring will be within the framework of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism, spearheaded by the SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee.

## IV. Work Stream 3: Public engagement and mobilization

### Objective

25. Given the speed and scale of change needed to achieve SDG4 and reimagine education, deep and sustained public support and engagement, which translates into political debate at all levels, will be

---

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF and ITU. 2020. "How many children and young people have internet access at home? Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic."

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. 2020. "Act now: reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the cost of achieving SDG 4." GEM Report Policy Paper 42.

essential. Building off a range of existing efforts, the objective of the public engagement and mobilization work stream is to democratize dialogue around education and to grow a global movement for education transformation.

### **Approach**

26. The public engagement and mobilization workstream will be closely interconnected with the other work streams of the Summit – thematic action tracks and national consultations. It will take a two-fold approach:
27. *Placing youth and children to the forefront:* Transforming education starts with young people as agents of change. A dedicated youth engagement strategy is under development in consultation with key youth-led networks to ensure that young people are involved in the Summit at all levels and empowered to develop and drive initiatives around the Summit. The strategy will enable youth and student-led priorities to be proposed, supported and implemented leading up to the Summit. Guidelines for the national consultations will articulate how best to engage young people, particularly adolescent girls and young women, to contribute both to secure new commitments to achieve SDG 4 at the country level and to raise awareness among children, young people, communities and decision-makers around the importance of transforming education. Young people will also be centrally involved in Summit Action Tracks, as well as in the Pre-Summit and Summit itself.
28. *Increasing public support for education:* Building on existing global education movements and recent advocacy campaigns (e.g., the Save our Future campaign, the GPE replenishment “Raise your hand” campaign, the 100 Million campaign, Keeping girls in the picture, Education *Plus* Initiative, among others), and drawing on the themes identified through the Summit action tracks, targeted mobilization efforts at the global, national and local levels could help strengthen public awareness of, and demand for education and grow an unprecedented global movement for transforming education. Harnessing the power of civil society groups, young people, teachers’ networks, education advocates, academia, business and other education champions and influencers at the global, regional and country levels will be critical. This movement will be multi-sectorial in nature, and closely interconnected with other complementary sectors, in particular health, food, nutrition, child protection and social protection that are key to achieve SDG 4.
29. Public engagement and mobilization will be supported by broader public information and communication, through building a robust online and media presence. A dynamic and inclusive online platform will be designed to capture the Summit process, support knowledge exchange around all areas of work and track Summit outcomes.

### **Support**

30. This workstream will be facilitated by a Public Mobilization Hub involving key UN and other partners’ communications teams at the global and regional levels. It will serve to connect networks, align content and amplify dissemination, connecting the global, regional and country levels, and building in particular on the outcomes of the national consultations. Efforts will be made to identify and engage specific champions or influencers to manage media placements and/or help target specific markets that may be more difficult to reach (e.g., private sector and philanthropies). Youth engagement will ensure the participation of diverse networks of youth-focused organizations and will be facilitated by the SDG4Youth network, which aims to include young education activists in shaping global education policies.

### **Outputs**

31. Outputs from Public engagement and mobilization will include a dedicated online platform to capture the Summit process and outcomes and ensure that a broad range of stakeholders remain engaged throughout the process. A more detailed stakeholders’ engagement plan will also be

developed to clarify which groups will be informed, consulted or involved during the preparation phase and Summit itself, and ensure a truly inclusive mobilization process and sense of ownership.

32. Public engagement and mobilization efforts leading up to the Summit will be part of the broader communications and engagement strategy of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism (GCM) for the SDG4, to ensure that the global movement for education created in the lead up to the Summit is sustained and continue advancing efforts to transform education beyond the Summit.