



## **SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee's key messages for the Pact for the Future**

Education is a fundamental human right and a public good. Quality education and lifelong learning provides individuals with knowledge, skills, and values to lead a meaningful and productive life, and thus it is essential for personal development, empowerment and wellbeing.

Education has a transformative power and drives progress across all Sustainable Development Goals. Investing more, more equitably and more efficiently in education transforms the future of humanity and the planet. The Pact for the Future must put education at its centre.

We are alarmed by the severity and urgency of the global education crisis. A staggering 250 million children and youth remain out of school. Nearly 40% of primary-school-age children worldwide and 84% of children in sub-Saharan Africa do not have basic reading skills. There is an estimated 44 million teacher shortage. Low- and lower-middle-income countries face a shocking financing gap of USD 100 billion annually to reach their national SDG 4 targets by 2030. Political will and targeted actions are crucial to reverse these trends.

### **Chapter 1. Sustainable development and financing for development**

Education is the foundation for the three pillars of the United Nations – development, peace and security, and human rights. It enables and accelerates progress across all Sustainable Development Goals by enhancing productivity and employment, driving economic prosperity, raising women and men out of poverty, reducing inequalities, promoting gender equality and cultural diversity, and improving health and wellbeing. Education can promote climate awareness, sustainable practices and climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. We need a transformative approach to achieve gender equality in and through education.

Recognizing education as a catalytic investment in society's and the planet's sustainable future, the Pact should urge all countries to scale up whole-of-government efforts to widen fiscal space and free more resources for education, including via tax reforms, innovative financing, debt relief and public-private cooperation.

We also urge all donors to scale up funding for long-term investments in education and to support countries in enhancing their own domestic resource mobilization capacity to widen fiscal space to adequately fund public education.

### **Chapter 2. International peace and security**

We reaffirm that equitable and inclusive education and lifelong learning for all can help reduce inequalities and promote peace, respect for human rights and the rule of law by challenging prejudice and violent extremist narratives; promoting cultural diversity and gender equality; and fostering critical thinking, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and mutual understanding. In this regard, we welcome the 2023 revised UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development and invite countries to apply its provisions.

The Pact should stress the imperative to foster safe and inclusive learning environments. We express concern about violence and attacks directed against learners, teachers, and schools and the use of schools for military purposes in contravention of international humanitarian law. We reaffirm our commitment to promote safe and inclusive schools, and defend the right to education, including in armed conflict and humanitarian situations.

### **Chapter 3. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation**

International cooperation in science, technology, innovation is critical in addressing multiple global challenges and bringing scalable solutions towards sustainable development. We encourage countries to invest in inclusive science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, while upholding humanities and social sciences, to cultivate talents and minds for a sustainable future. We

also urge countries to promote women's and girls' participation in STEM education and harness the potential of technology and innovation to improve their lives.

We call on countries to share knowledge and solutions for inclusive and equitable access to high-quality digital learning and to provide open educational resources, safe use, and data protection. We thus call upon countries to create common frameworks and standards for digital public infrastructure and services, in line with commitments made at the Transforming Education Summit. We commit to closing the digital divide, including the gender digital divide, and to addressing the risks associated with the use of technologies.

#### **Chapter 4. Youth and future generations**

We value young people as rights-holders but also as critical agents of change for realizing sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights. We are concerned about their well-being and personal development, as well as the challenge of generating decent work and quality employment for young persons. Education is the primary source of hope and solutions for young persons and future generations to lead dignified and fulfilled lives. Education provides individuals with the skills and knowledge to participate meaningfully in society and the workforce, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation.

We commit to the meaningful, inclusive engagement of young people in decision making in education and other domains affecting their lives and those of future generations. We welcome the progress at the United Nations to promote meaningful youth engagement, including through the establishment of the United Nations Youth Office, as well as the development of a global indicator to monitor youth engagement in educational decision-making processes, led by the SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee.

#### **Chapter 5. Transforming global governance**

To effectively deliver on our global and national commitments towards the 2030 Agenda, global governance structures must become more responsive to the multiple crises the world faces today by improving their alignment with country priorities and strengthening the coordination, effectiveness and efficiency of multilateral financing efforts, including the financing of education.

New global financing instruments and country-specific financing approaches are needed to close the financing gap for achieving SDG 4. In particular, multilateral financing of education must be geared towards increasing fiscal space for countries, stimulating and accelerating long-term investments in education, and providing affordable access to long-term capital targeted at improving inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.