



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,  
Director-General of UNESCO  
on the occasion of International Day of Education**

**24 January 2019**

Today marks the first International Day of Education, as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly last December. This significant decision recognizes the capital role of education in “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

Without inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all, countries will not succeed in breaking the cycle of poverty that is leaving millions of children, youth and adults behind. We will not succeed in mitigating climate change, adapting to the technological revolution, let alone achieve gender equality, without ambitious political commitment to universal education.

This day is the occasion to reaffirm fundamental principles. Firstly, education is a human right, a public good and a public responsibility. Secondly, education is the most powerful force in our hands to ensure significant improvements in health, to stimulate economic growth, to unlock the potential and innovation we need to build more resilient and sustainable societies. Lastly, we urgently need to call for collective action for education at global level.

Headline figures point to the challenges: 262 million children and youth do not attend school; 617 million children and adolescents cannot read and do basic math; less than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete lower secondary school while some 4 million children and youth refugees are out of school, their lives disrupted by conflict and loss.

Because the world is not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, we need a surge in global cooperation and collective action. Our challenge is to make education work for everyone, by promoting inclusion and equity at every level, to leave no one behind.

This calls for special attention to girls, to migrants, displaced persons and refugees; to support teachers and make education and training more gender responsive. It urgently requires scaled up domestic resources and international aid, because the cost of not investing will dig divides, inequalities and exclusion across societies.

Invited to facilitate the observance of International Education Day, UNESCO calls on governments and all partners to make education a leading priority.

We all have a stake in education, let's act together to fulfil its promise.