



INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

This document provides an overview of the provisions of the international human rights framework linking the right to education with issues related to the environment and climate change.

The international legal framework listed below encompasses treaties, which create binding obligations to States, and other sources of 'soft law' that are not binding, such as declarations and resolutions, frameworks for action, interpretations of the treaties by UN treaty bodies and UN Special procedures (through general comments and recommendations) or human rights guiding principles. Those non-binding instruments are significant for various reasons - for example, a non-binding instrument may constitute authoritative interpretation which provides guidance to states regarding implementation of a binding instrument; indicate evolving practices or emerging consensus on particular issues; and/or they be subject to structured follow up and review processes which provide space for dialogue about rights in practice

Binding instruments

Note: The General Comments added under each treaty and convention listed below are not binding instruments. Issued by the UN treaty Body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the treaty or the convention, they provide an interpretation of their provisions and guide States' implementation.

- [**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\), 1992**](#)
(Article 4(1)(i), Article 6(a)(i)(iii), Article 6(b))
- [**Paris Agreement, 2015**](#)
(Articles 11 and 12)
- [**International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\), 1966**](#)
(Article 13, [General Comment No. 13 : The right to Education](#))

- [Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989](#)
 (Article 24.1, Article 24.2(c)(e)(f), Article 28 and Article 29.1(e)), [General Comment No. 26 : on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change](#)

Non-binding instruments

- **UN Human Rights Council Resolutions**
[Resolution 47/6. The right to education](#) (July 2021);
[Resolution 52/22. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law](#) (April 2023);
[Resolution 53/7. The right to education](#) (July 2023);
[Resolution 54/7. World Programme for Human Rights Education](#) (October 2023)
- **Sustainable Development Goals, 2015**
[SDG 4](#), Target 4.7
[SDG 13](#), Target 13.3
- [Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, 2015](#)
 (Sections 4, 26, 63)
- [Transforming Education Summit, Education in Crisis Situations: A Call to Action, 2022](#)
 (Sections 14, 17, 18(d), 19(k), 24(d), 24(g), 24(l), 24(m), 25(f), 30(j), 33(c), 36(a)(ii), 48(c))
- [Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development; Learn for our planet: act for sustainability, 2022](#)
 (Sections 2, 3, 4, 6.a, 6.e, 6.g)
- [UN Declaration on the Common Agenda for Education and Climate Change at COP28, 2023](#)
- [Baku Guiding Principles on Human Development for Climate Resilience, 2024](#)
 (Principle 1, Principle 3, Principle 4, Principle 9, Principle 10, Principle 11)
- [UNESCO Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change, 2017](#)
 (Preamble, Article 11)
- [Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment, 2018](#)
 (Principle 6)
- [UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Education 2015-2030, 2015](#)
 (Sections 14, 17, 18(d), 19(k), 24(d), 24(g), 24(l), 24(m), 25(f), 30(j), 33(c), 36(a)(ii), 48(c))
- [Comprehensive School Safety Framework for Child Rights and Resilience in the Education Sector, 2022-2030](#)

BINDING INSTRUMENTS

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 1992

Article 4 (Commitments)

4.1. All Parties, taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and their specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances, shall:

- (i)** Promote and cooperate in education, training and public awareness related to climate change and encourage the widest participation in this process, including that of non-governmental organizations

Article 6 (Education, training and public awareness)

In carrying out their commitments under Article 4, paragraph 1 (i), the Parties shall:

- (a)** Promote and facilitate at the national and, as appropriate, subregional and regional levels, and in accordance with national laws and regulations, and within their respective capacities:

- (i)** the development and implementation of educational and public awareness programmes on climate change and its effects;
- (iii)** public participation in addressing climate change and its effects and developing adequate responses; and

- (b)** Cooperate in and promote, at the international level, and, where appropriate, using existing bodies:

- (i)** the development and exchange of educational and public awareness material on climate change and its effects; and
- (ii)** the development and implementation of education and training programmes, including the strengthening of national institutions and the exchange or secondment of personnel to train experts in this field, in particular for developing countries.

Paris Agreement, 2015

The Parties to this Agreement,

(...)

Affirming the importance of education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and cooperation at all levels on the matters addressed in this Agreement,

(...)

Have agreed as follows:

Article 11

1. Capacity-building under this Agreement should enhance the capacity and ability of developing country Parties, in particular countries with the least capacity, such as the least developed countries, and those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, such as small island developing States, to take effective climate change action, including, *inter alia*, to implement adaptation and mitigation actions, and should facilitate technology development, dissemination and deployment, access to climate finance, relevant aspects of education, training and public awareness, and the transparent, timely and accurate communication of information.

Article 12

Parties shall cooperate in taking measures, as appropriate, to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognizing the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions under this Agreement.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966

Article 13

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

See below the interpretation of Article 13 given by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

► General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education, 1999

1. Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Education has a vital role in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth.

Increasingly, education is recognized as one of the best financial investments States can make. But the importance of education is not just practical: a well-educated, enlightened and active mind, able to wander freely and widely, is one of the joys and rewards of human existence.

Article 13 (1): Aims and objectives of education

5. The Committee notes that since the General Assembly adopted the Covenant in 1966, other international instruments have further elaborated the objectives to which education should be directed. Accordingly, the Committee takes the view that States parties are required to ensure that education conforms to the aims and objectives identified in article 13 (1), as interpreted in the light of the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) (art. 1), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 29 (1)), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (Part I, para. 33 and Part II, para. 80), and the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (para. 2). While all these texts closely correspond to article 13 (1) of the Covenant, they also include elements which are not expressly provided for in article 13 (1), such as specific references to gender equality and respect for the environment. These new elements are implicit in, and reflect a contemporary interpretation of article 13 (1). The Committee obtains support for this point of view from the widespread endorsement that the previously mentioned texts have received from all regions of the world.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

Article 24

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate Measures:

(c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;

(e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;

(f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.

Article 28

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the *education* of the child shall be directed to:

(e) The development of respect for the natural *environment*.

See below the interpretation of these Articles given by the Committee on Rights of the Child relevant to the right to education.

► [General Comment n°26 : on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change, 2023](#)

I. Introduction

A. Child rights-based approach to environmental protection

8. A clean, healthy and sustainable environment is both a human right itself and necessary for the full enjoyment of a broad range of children's rights. Conversely, environmental degradation, including the consequences of the climate crisis, adversely affects the enjoyment of these rights, in particular for children in disadvantaged situations or children living in regions that are highly exposed to climate change. The exercise by children of their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, to information and education, to participate and be heard and to effective remedies can result in more rights-compliant, and therefore more ambitious and effective, environmental policies. In this way, children's rights and environmental protection form a virtuous circle.

B. Evolution of international law on human rights and the environment

9. The Convention explicitly addresses environmental issues in article 24 (2) (c), by which States are obliged to take measures to combat disease and malnutrition, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution, and under article 29 (1) (e), by which they are required to direct the education of children to the development of respect for the natural environment. Since the adoption of the Convention, growing acceptance has emerged of the wide-ranging interconnections between children's rights and environmental protection. Unprecedented environmental crises and the resulting challenges for the realization of children's rights require a dynamic interpretation of the Convention.

II. Specific rights under the Convention as they relate to the environment

13. Children's rights, like all human rights, are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. Some rights are particularly threatened by environmental degradation. Other rights play an instrumental role in safeguarding children's rights in relation to the environment. The right to education, for example, is a right that has both dimensions.

D. Right to be heard (art. 12)

27. States must ensure that age-appropriate, safe and accessible mechanisms are in place for children's views to be heard regularly and at all stages of environmental decision-making processes for legislation, policies, regulations, projects and activities that may affect them, at the local, national and international levels. For free, active, meaningful and effective participation, children should be provided with environmental and human rights education, age-appropriate and accessible information, adequate time and resources and a supportive and enabling environment. They should receive information about the outcomes of environment-related consultations and feedback on how their views were taken into account and have access to child-

sensitive complaint procedures and remedies when their right to be heard in the environmental context is disregarded.

H. Right to the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24)

41. Another concern is children's current and anticipated psychosocial and mental health conditions caused by environmental harm, including climate change-related events. The clear emerging link between environmental harm and children's mental health, such as depression and eco-anxiety, requires pressing attention, both in terms of response and prevention programmes, by public health and education authorities.

J. Right to education (arts. 28 and 29 (1) (e))

51. Education is one of the cornerstones of a child rights-based approach to the environment. Children have highlighted that education is instrumental in protecting their rights and the environment and in increasing their awareness and preparedness for environmental damage; however, the right to education is highly vulnerable to the impact of environmental harm, as it can result in school closures and disruptions, school dropout and the destruction of schools and places to play.

52. Article 29 (1) (e) of the Convention, requiring that the education of a child be directed to the development of respect for the natural environment, should be read in conjunction with article 28, to ensure that every child has the right to receive an education that reflects environmental values.

53. A rights-based environmental education should be transformative, inclusive, child-centred, child-friendly and empowering. It should pursue the development of the child's personality, talents and abilities, acknowledge the close interrelationship between respect for the natural environment and other ethical values enshrined in article 29 (1) of the Convention and have both a local and global orientation. School curricula should be tailored to children's specific environmental, social, economic and cultural contexts and promote understanding of the contexts of other children affected by environmental degradation. Teaching materials should provide scientifically accurate, up-to-date and developmentally and age-appropriate environmental information. All children should be equipped with the skills necessary to face expected environmental challenges in life, such as disaster risks and environment-related health impacts, including the ability to critically reflect upon such challenges, solve problems, make well-balanced decisions and assume environmental responsibility, such as through sustainable lifestyles and consumption, in accordance with their evolving capacities.

54. Environmental values should be reflected in the education and training of all professionals involved in education, encompassing teaching methods, technologies and approaches used in education, school environments and preparing children for green jobs. Environmental education extends beyond formal schooling to embrace the broad range of lived experiences and learning.

Exploratory, non-formal and practical methods, such as outdoor learning, are a preferred way of delivering this aim of education.

55. States should build safe, healthy and resilient infrastructure for effective learning. This includes ensuring the availability of pedestrian and biking routes and public transportation to school and that schools and alternative learning facilities are located at safe distances from sources of pollution, flooding, landslides and other environmental hazards, including contaminated sites, and the construction of buildings and classrooms with adequate heating and cooling and access to sufficient, safe and acceptable drinking water and sanitation facilities. Environmentally friendly school facilities, such as those with lighting and heating sourced from renewable energy and edible gardens, can benefit children and ensure compliance by States with their environmental obligations.

56. During and after water scarcity, sandstorms, heatwaves and other severe weather events, States should ensure physical access to schools, especially for children in remote or rural communities, or consider alternative teaching methods, such as mobile educational facilities and distance learning. Underserved communities should be prioritized for the climate-proofing and renovation of schools. States should ensure alternative housing for displaced populations as soon as possible to ensure that schools are not used as shelters. When responding to emergencies caused by severe weather events in areas already affected by armed conflict, States should ensure that schools do not become targets for armed groups' activity.

57. States should recognize and address the disproportionate indirect and knock-on effects of environmental degradation on children's education, paying special attention to gender-specific situations, such as children leaving school due to additional domestic and economic burdens in households facing environment-related shocks and stress.

K. Rights of Indigenous children and children belonging to minority groups (art. 30)

58. Indigenous children are disproportionately affected by biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change. States should closely consider the impact of environmental harm, such as deforestation, on traditional land and culture and the quality of the natural environment, while ensuring the rights to life, survival and development of Indigenous children. States must undertake measures to meaningfully engage with Indigenous children and their families in responding to environmental harm, including harm caused by climate change, taking due account of and integrating concepts from Indigenous cultures and traditional knowledge in mitigation and adaptation measures. While children in Indigenous communities face unique risks, they can also act as educators and advocates in applying traditional knowledge to reduce the impact of local hazards and strengthen resilience, if this knowledge is passed on and supported. Comparable measures should be taken regarding the rights of children belonging to non-Indigenous minority groups whose rights, way of life and cultural identity are intimately related to nature.

III. Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

63. Children have the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. This right is implicit in the Convention and directly linked to, in particular, the rights to life, survival and development, under article 6, to the highest attainable standard of health, including taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution, under article 24, to an adequate standard of living, under article 27, and to education, under article 28, including the development of respect for the natural environment, under article 29.

66. Procedural elements, including access to information, participation in decision-making and child-friendly access to justice, with effective remedies, have equal importance to the empowerment of children, including through education, to become agents of their own destiny.

67. States should incorporate children's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment into their national legislation and take adequate measures to implement it in order to strengthen accountability. This right should be mainstreamed across all decisions and measures concerning children, including policies related to education, leisure, play, access to green spaces, child protection, children's health and migration, and national frameworks for the implementation of the Convention.

IV.General measures of implementation (art. 4)

A. Obligation of States to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights

74. States should ensure the collection of reliable, regularly updated and disaggregated data and research on environmental harm, including the risks and actual impacts of climate change-related harm on children's rights. They should include longitudinal data on the effects of environmental harm on children's rights, in particular on health, education and standard of living at different ages. Such data and research should inform the formulation and evaluation of environmental legislation, policies, programmes and plans at all levels and must be made publicly available.

V. Climate change

B. Adaptation

101. Since climate change-related impacts on children's rights are intensifying, a sharp and urgent increase in the design and implementation of child-sensitive, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive adaptation measures and associated resources is necessary. States should identify climate change-related vulnerabilities among children concerning the availability, quality, equity and sustainability of essential services for children, such as water and sanitation, health care, protection, nutrition and education. States should enhance the climate resilience of their legal and institutional frameworks and ensure that their national adaptation plans and existing social, environmental and budgetary policies address climate change-related risk factors by assisting children within their jurisdiction to adapt to the unavoidable effects of climate change. Examples of such measures include strengthening child protection systems in risk-prone contexts, providing

adequate access to water, sanitation and health care, as well as safe school environments, and strengthening social safety nets and protection frameworks, while giving priority to children's right to life, survival and development. Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity also play an important role in supporting resilience and disaster risk reduction.

C. Loss and damage

105. The manner in which climate-related loss and damage affect children and their rights may be both direct and indirect. Direct impacts include instances where both sudden-onset extreme weather events, such as floods and heavy rains, and slow-onset events, such as droughts, lead to the violation of rights under the Convention. Indirect impacts may include situations in which States, communities and parents are forced to reallocate resources away from intended programmes, such as those for education and health care, towards addressing environmental crises.

NON-BINDING INSTRUMENTS

UN Human Rights Council Resolutions (extracts)

Resolution 47/6. The right to education (July 2021)

The Council recognized that the negative impact of climate change, natural disasters, conflict and crisis on the full realization of the right to education, the fact that a large proportion of the world's out-of-school population lives in conflict-affected areas, and that crises, violence and attacks on and the military use of educational institutions, natural disasters and pandemics continue to disrupt education and development globally.

Resolution 52/22. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law (April 2023)

The Council recognized that climate change and its impact are among the greatest challenges of the day, directly and indirectly affecting the full enjoyment of human rights, that States should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations with regard to human rights, to ensure more sustainable and effective climate action, and that the impact of climate change affects individuals and communities around the world, especially in developing countries, in particular small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, and in different ways, owing to factors such as geographical location, economic condition, poverty, gender, age, Indigenous or minority status, where applicable, national or social origin, birth or other status and disability.

Resolution 53/7. The right to education (July 2023)

The Council recognized the negative impact of climate change and natural disasters on the full realization of the right to education, and also the role of education in promoting awareness about climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Resolution 54/7. World Programme for Human Rights Education (October 2023)

The Council believed that human rights education and training are essential to the effective realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including in the context of advances in digital technologies, climate change and other environmental crises, and gender equality, and contribute significantly to the promotion of equality, the prevention of conflict and human rights violations and abuses, and the enhancement of participation and democratic processes with a view to developing societies in which all human beings are valued and respected, without discrimination or distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, disability, age, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Sustainable Development Goals, 2015

SDG 4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Target 4.7

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Target 13.3

Improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.

Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, 2015

I. Vision, rationale and principles

4. Education is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and essential for the success of all SDGs. Recognizing the important role of education, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights education as a stand-alone goal (SDG 4) and also includes targets on education under several other SDGs, notably those on health; growth and employment; sustainable consumption and production; and climate change. In fact, education can accelerate progress towards the achievement of all of the SDGs and therefore should be part of the strategies to achieve each of them. The renewed education agenda encapsulated in Goal 4 is comprehensive, holistic, ambitious, aspirational and universal, and inspired by a vision of education that transforms the lives of individuals, communities and societies, leaving no one behind. The agenda attends to the unfinished business of the EFA goals and the education-related MDGs, while effectively addressing current and future global and national education challenges. It is rights-based and inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development, based on the principles of human rights and dignity, social justice, peace, inclusion and protection, as well as cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity and shared responsibility and accountability.

II. Goals, strategic approaches, targets and indicators

26. Countries must, therefore, institute measures to develop inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems to meet the needs of children, youth and adults in crisis contexts, including internally displaced persons and refugees. The principles of prevention, preparedness and response, and established international guidelines such as the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards, should guide planning and response. Education sector plans and policies should anticipate risks and include measures to respond to the educational needs of children and adults in crisis situations; they should also promote safety, resilience and social cohesion, with the aim of reducing the risks of conflict and natural disaster. The capacity of governments and civil society for disaster risk reduction, peace education, climate change adaptation and emergency preparedness and response should be strengthened at all levels to ensure that risk is mitigated and education maintained during all phases, from emergency response to recovery. Well-coordinated national, regional and global responses and systems are needed to prepare for and respond to emergencies and to 'build back' better, towards safer and more equitable education systems.

Target

4.7:

63. Indicative strategies:

- Develop policies and programmes to promote ESD and GCED and bring them into the mainstream of formal, non-formal and informal education through system-wide interventions, teacher training, curricular reform and pedagogical support. This includes implementing the Global Action

Programme on ESD14 and addressing themes such as human rights, gender equality, health, comprehensive sexuality education, climate change, sustainable livelihoods and responsible and engaged citizenship, based on national experiences and capabilities.

Transforming Education Summit, Education in Crisis Situations: A Call to Action, 2022

Education is under threat

The world is witnessing an alarming increase in the number of people affected by armed conflict, forced displacement, including large-scale refugee displacement, health and climate-induced disasters, and other crises. This means disrupted education for 222 million school-aged children and youth and education systems pushed to the brink of their capacities to deliver. Girls and children with disabilities, together with many other vulnerable and marginalized groups including but not limited to indigenous communities, ethnic and religious minorities and LGBTQI individuals are disproportionately affected in many crisis contexts. In 2022 alone, forced displacement reached a record high of 100 million people, over half of whom are children and youth in need of access to relevant quality education. (...)

Partnership for Transformation: A Call to Action

Building on promising practices, we, the Member States and partners, seize the opportunity of the UN Secretary-General's Transforming Education Summit to launch 'Education in Crisis Situations: A Call to Action.'

We commit to working together to transform education systems, so they are able to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from crises. In order to enable all crisis-affected children and youth, including refugees and stateless populations, to continuously, equitably and safely access inclusive, quality, safe learning opportunities.

In particular, we commit to improving access, quality, equity and inclusion for the 222 million children and youth whose educations have been interrupted or who are not learning due to armed conflict, displacement internally and across borders, and health or climate-induced disasters. In order to realize this commitment, we call on Member States, multilateral organizations, donors and education partners to work towards this commitment with a first reporting in 2025 before the 2030 target, and to hold each other accountable for the following actions:

1. Improve equitable inclusive education access and learning outcomes
2. Protect and improve external financing
3. Work together in the spirit of international cooperation to build crisis-resilient education systems
4. Take into account diverse crisis affected contexts, scale and mainstream high impact and evidence-based interventions into policy and programming efforts

Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development; Learn for our planet: act for sustainability, 2022

2. We are convinced that urgent action is needed to address the dramatic interrelated challenges the world is facing, in particular, the climate crisis, mass loss of biodiversity, pollution, pandemic diseases, extreme poverty and inequalities, violent conflicts, and other environmental, social and economic crises that endanger life on our planet. We believe that the urgency of these challenges, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, requires a fundamental transformation that sets us on the path of sustainable development based on more just, inclusive, caring and peaceful relationships with each other and with nature.

3. We are confident that education is a powerful enabler of positive change of mindsets and worldviews and that it can support the integration of all dimensions of sustainable development, of economy, society and the environment, ensuring that development trajectories are not exclusively orientated towards economic growth to the detriment of the planet, but towards the well-being of all within planetary boundaries.

4. We are confident that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), anchored in SDG 4.7 and as an enabler for all 17 SDGs, is the foundation for the required transformation, providing everyone with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to become change agents for sustainable development. ESD enables learners to develop their cognitive and non-cognitive skills, such as critical thinking and competences for collaboration, problem solving, coping with complexity and risk, building resilience, thinking systemically and creatively, and empowering them to take responsible action as citizens, fulfilling their right to quality education as defined in SDG 4 - Education 2030. We believe that ESD must be based on and promote respect for nature, as well as human rights, democracy, the rule of law, non-discrimination, equity and gender equality. In addition, it should promote intercultural understanding, cultural diversity, a culture of peace and non-violence, inclusion and the notion of responsible and active global citizenship.

6. We, within our respective mandates and in our areas of responsibility, taking into account our needs, capacities, available resources and national priorities, commit to the following:

a. Ensure that ESD is a foundational element of our education systems at all levels, with environmental and climate action as a core curriculum component, while maintaining a holistic perspective on ESD that recognizes the interrelatedness of all dimensions of sustainable development

e. Promote a whole-institution approach, recognizing that learners and the school community become meaningfully engaged in sustainable development through democratic participation when their institutions become living laboratories for participation and active citizenship, equity and gender equality, health, connections with nature and respect for the environment, energy

efficiency and sustainable consumption, and where learning is experiential, action-oriented, localized and culturally specific, allowing learners to learn what they live and live what they learn

g. Also recognize the crucial role of teachers to promote ESD and invest in the capacity development of teachers and other education personnel at all levels and to ensure a whole-of-sector approach to the necessary transformation of education;

UN Declaration on the Common Agenda for Education and Climate Change, COP28, 2023

Building on the achievements at COP26 and COP27, we, as committed member states, adopt this declaration on the common agenda for education and climate change in advance of/at the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in December 2023.

Recognising that the climate crisis disproportionately impacts children, especially girls and marginalized groups, and weather-related disasters are already causing mass disruption to learning, education systems must urgently adapt to ensure children and young people can survive and thrive in our changing world.

Emphasising that Education for Sustainable Development as part of SDG 4 on quality education from early childhood to lifelong learning provides the knowledge and skills required for a changing world and plays an essential role to powering the shift at scale to more sustainable, equitable, just, and climate-resilient societies, as highlighted in the Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development, we must maximize the co-benefits of efforts to achieve inclusive quality education for all and advance environmental sustainability.

Recalling Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, we call upon countries to enhance climate change education to support transitions to low-carbon and climate-resilient economies and societies.

Acknowledging the concerning funding gap in climate education and emergency preparedness planning compromising the ability to develop adequate education strategies to tackle the climate emergency, we welcome existing efforts of international education funds and climate education mechanisms - including multilateral development banks, the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, and the UN-Multi Partner Trust Fund for the Greening Education Partnership – in supporting sustainable education systems and getting every learner climate ready.

Recognising the focus on education, youth, and skills at COP28 and future COPs, we mobilize opportunities to redress the above issues by driving cohesion, deepening collaboration, and securing tangible commitments on education as a tool to mitigate the climate crisis on a global scale.

To further global efforts to build climate-smart education systems through the four pillars of action of the Greening Education Partnership (Greening schools, Greening curriculum, Greening teacher training and education system's capacities, and Greening communities), we commit to targeted actions to adapt, mitigate, and invest, including:

Commitment Area 1: ADAPT

1.1. We pledge to identify vulnerabilities and implement national education strategies to address climate risk, adopt adaptation measures and build more resilient education systems. We will evidence our commitment by including education in our national adaptation strategies.

1.2. We pledge to emphasize the role of education in supporting all learners to develop adequate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to adapt to new climate realities and develop innovative solutions for a sustainable future.

Commitment Area 2: MITIGATE

2.1. We pledge to develop comprehensive education sector strategies to build climate-smart and resilient education systems that prepare all learners to actively engage in climate mitigation. We will evidence our commitment by encouraging the inclusion of education in our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

2.2. We pledge to leverage the role of education to achieve net zero emissions in the education sector.

Commitment Area 3: INVEST

3.1. We pledge strong cross-sectoral collaboration in support of increased global finance for education including through climate funds and institutions, to support education recovery and promote climate adaptation and mitigation measures in and through education systems.

3.2. We pledge to encourage both domestic and international education financing that helps address existing gaps and creates systems and learners that are climate-ready, including through investing in global education funds, partnerships, and innovative financing mechanisms.

We stand united in our commitment to listen to and respond to the demands of children and youth related to education and climate change and commit to revisiting the implementation of this declaration at subsequent Conference of the Parties. We call on other states/governments to endorse this declaration, to accelerate country-level implementation, and to enhance international cooperation towards our shared objectives of a more just, safe, sustainable, prosperous planet through securing every learner's right to quality climate education fit for the needs of the 21st century.

Baku Guiding Principles on Human Development for Climate Resilience, COP29, 2024

The Baku Guiding Principles are one of the main outcomes of the Baku Initiative on Human Development for Climate Resilience launched at the COP29. The Baku Guiding Principles are a comprehensive framework outlining 12 actionable principles which aim to integrate human development into climate action. It recognizes that education must empower individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to create sustainable solutions.

Principle 1 – Align climate action with human development for a resilient future

This principle emphasizes integrating human development as a cornerstone of climate action to strengthen resilience. It calls for national climate policies, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), to prioritize human development through greater focus on education, (...), with specific attention to the needs of children and youth in the vulnerable communities. By aligning these priorities with economic and climate objectives, policies can drive the creation of quality jobs, and support just transition to low-carbon, resource-efficient economies.

Principle 3 – Invest in integrating quality climate change education at all levels and regularly assessing student competencies to address climate change

This principle aims to ensure that all learners, including children, youth, adults, in particular girls and women, migrants, and vulnerable groups, acquire essential knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes on climate action and resilience, addressing the cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral domains of learning. It seeks to integrate climate change education across all relevant subject areas, including social, economic, and environmental dimensions, at all levels of formal, informal, and non-formal education and learning, including knowledge and values from indigenous systems and practices, from early childhood to technical and vocational education and training, and higher education. Achieving this requires collaboration on greening curriculum, schools, teacher training and education systems' capacities, and communities. Assessment plays a key role in guiding educational priorities. It is crucial for education systems to gather data on learning outcomes related to environmental sustainability and climate change. Through the integration of climate literacy into national and international assessments, countries can monitor progress against benchmarks and learn from the practices of top-performing Systems.

Principle 4 – Build climate-resilient and low-carbon education systems

This principle aims to enhance the climate resilience of education systems, including schools and other educational infrastructure. It seeks to both ensure that education systems will continue to function or quickly recover from disruptions caused by climate events through resilience-strengthening measures (adaptation) as well as reduce emissions from the education sector, encouraging low-carbon facilities, activities and supply chains (mitigation). Strategic investments in green, safe and adaptive educational infrastructure and systems are crucial for enabling undisrupted access to essential services for the most vulnerable and shielding them from further harm.

Principle 9 – Prioritize children’s unique vulnerabilities in climate action, including through investment in climate-resilient and sustainable essential services

Children are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to their unique physiological development, behavioral traits, and dependence on caregivers. There are unique and differentiated impacts for both girls and boys, although young and adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable. Ambitious and child-responsive climate policies, actions, and climate finance are necessary to meet their specific needs, including targeted measures that ensure continued access to climate-resilient and sustainable essential services, which children rely on to survive and thrive. These services include health, education, water and sanitation, nutrition, child protection, and adaptive social protection. Additionally, empowering children through education, meaningful participation in climate decision-making processes, and access to justice – while promoting the interests of present and future generations – is essential to promoting the rights of children in climate action.

Principle 10 – Strengthen adaptive social protection systems to build resilience for all, especially for the most vulnerable

Climate change exacerbates the vulnerabilities and risks people face throughout their lives and erodes progress in education, healthcare, and employment, with differentiated consequences for children, youth, women, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. Governments should provide access to universal child-sensitive social protection systems to reduce inequalities, eliminate exclusion, prevent poverty, and protect vulnerable groups from the impacts of climate change and workers’ transition to climate-resilient development. Social protection systems should be adequate, flexible, crisis-ready and coordinated with care services and learning provisions for climate resilience, including psychosocial support and risk-informed education. It is also critical to provide income security for people of working age, including caregivers, and to ensure that education, healthcare, and income support are sustained to facilitate the empowerment of both current and future generations. Such strategies and associated investments can shield households, enterprises, workers, and communities from the impacts of climate shocks and stressors, thereby enhancing adaptive capacity and human development.

Principle 11 – Invest in solutions for communities and migrants affected by climate change

It is critical to prioritize comprehensive adaptation planning and implementation to enhance climate-resilient development, ensuring access to education and other essential services, so that people have the choice to live in dignity and safety in their areas of origin, including areas affected by disasters and conflicts, as underlined in the COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace. Ensuring the right to education, decent work and facilitating pathways for safe, orderly and regular migration is essential for strengthening people’s resilience. To enable this, it is necessary to facilitate countries’ and communities’ access to finance for responding to climate mobility, and to promote the participation of migrants and displaced persons in decent work, including in climate action, paying particular attention to the needs and priorities of women and girls. This involves planning for skills anticipation, training and retraining while ensuring access to essential services, including health and education along the migration routes and in destination countries, and investing in migrant-sensitive health systems.

UNESCO Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change, 2017

Preamble

The Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (...) emphasized the fundamental importance of science, technological innovation, relevant knowledge, and education for sustainable development for responding to the challenge of climate change, including appropriate local, traditional and indigenous knowledge, (...)

Article 11: Education

1. Advance curricula, as appropriate, taking into account UNESCO's work and initiatives on Education for Sustainable Development and Education for Climate Change, Article 6 of the UNFCCC, and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement adopted under the Convention, so that they build awareness and knowledge about humankind's relation to the Earth's climate system and ecosystems as well as about present generations' responsibilities to future generations, and so that they promote the principles of this Declaration.
2. Ensure that, in accordance with national laws, all people, irrespective of gender, age, origin, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous people, children, and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them to acquire and update the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to respond to climate change and contribute to sustainable development.
3. Promote formal, non-formal, and informal education with regard to climate change challenges and solutions, and encourage retraining for professionals in line with these objectives.
4. Encourage educational institutions and educators to integrate these principles in their teaching activities from the pre-school to university levels.
5. Promote, in accordance with national laws, at all levels and in all forms of education, that the recognition of cultural, social, and gender diversity is valuable and is an important source of knowledge with which to promote dialogue and the exchange of knowledge indispensable to responding to climate change.
6. Support developing countries through educational and scientific capacity-building, as well as financial means and facilitation of environmentally sound technological development.

Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment, 2018

Principle 6

States should provide for education and public awareness on environmental matters.

UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Education, 2015-2030, 2015

14. (...) In order to reduce disaster risk, there is a need to address existing challenges and prepare for future ones by focusing on monitoring, assessing and understanding disaster risk and sharing such information and on how it is created; strengthening disaster risk governance and coordination across relevant institutions and sectors and the full and meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders at appropriate levels; investing in the economic, social, health, cultural and educational resilience of persons, communities and countries and the environment, as well as through technology and research; and enhancing multi-hazard early warning systems, preparedness, response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. To complement national action and capacity, there is a need to enhance international cooperation between developed and developing countries and between States and international organizations.

17. To attain the expected outcome, the following goal must be pursued:

Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience.

18. To support the assessment of global progress in achieving the outcome and goal of the present Framework, seven global targets have been agreed. These targets will be measured at the global level and will be complemented by work to develop appropriate indicators. National targets and indicators will contribute to the achievement of the outcome and goal of the present Framework. The seven global targets are:

(d) Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030.

19. Drawing from the principles contained in the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action¹⁰ and the Hyogo Framework for Action, the implementation of the present Framework will be guided by the following principles, while taking into account national circumstances, and consistent with domestic laws as well as international obligations and commitments:

(k) In the post-disaster recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, it is critical to prevent the creation of and to reduce disaster risk by “Building Back Better” and increasing public education and awareness of disaster risk;

Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

National and local levels

24. To achieve this, it is important:

(d) To systematically evaluate, record, share and publicly account for disaster losses and understand the economic, social, health, education, environmental and cultural heritage impacts, as appropriate, in the context of event-specific hazard-exposure and vulnerability Information;

(g) To build the knowledge of government officials at all levels, civil society, communities and volunteers, as well as the private sector, through sharing experiences, lessons learned, good practices and training and education on disaster risk reduction, including the use of existing training and education mechanisms and peer learning;

(l) To promote the incorporation of disaster risk knowledge, including disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation, in formal and non-formal education, as well as in civic education at all levels, as well as in professional education and training;

(m) To promote national strategies to strengthen public education and awareness in disaster risk reduction, including disaster risk information and knowledge, through campaigns, social media and community mobilization, taking into account specific audiences and their needs;

Global and regional levels

25. To achieve this, it is important:

(f) To develop effective global and regional campaigns as instruments for public awareness and education, building on the existing ones (for example, the “One million safe schools and hospitals” initiative; the “Making Cities Resilient: My city is getting ready” campaign; the United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction; and the annual United Nations International Day for Disaster Reduction), to promote a culture of disaster prevention, resilience and responsible citizenship, generate understanding of disaster risk, support mutual learning and share experiences; and encourage public and private stakeholders to actively engage in such initiatives and to develop new ones at the local, national, regional and global levels;

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

National and local levels

30. To achieve this, it is important:

(j) To strengthen the design and implementation of inclusive policies and social safety-net mechanisms, including through community involvement, integrated with livelihood enhancement programmes, and access to basic health-care services, including maternal, newborn and child health, sexual and reproductive health, food security and nutrition, housing and education, towards the eradication of poverty, to find durable solutions in the post-disaster phase and to empower and assist people disproportionately affected by Disasters;

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

National and local levels

33. To achieve this, it is important:

(c) To promote the resilience of new and existing critical infrastructure, including (...) educational facilities, (...), to ensure that they remain safe, effective and operational during and after disasters in order to provide life-saving and essential services;

Role of Stakeholders

36. When determining specific roles and responsibilities for stakeholders, and at the same time building on existing relevant international instruments, States should encourage the following actions on the part of all public and private stakeholders:

(a) Civil society, volunteers, organized voluntary work organizations and community-based organizations to participate, in collaboration with public institutions, to, *inter alia*, provide specific knowledge and pragmatic guidance in the context of the development and implementation of normative frameworks, standards and plans for disaster risk reduction; engage in the implementation of local, national, regional and global plans and strategies; contribute to and support public awareness, a culture of prevention and education on disaster risk; and advocate for resilient communities and an inclusive and all-of-society disaster risk management that strengthens synergies across groups, as appropriate. On this point, it should be noted that:

(ii) Children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula;

Support from international organizations

48. To support the implementation of the present Framework, the following is necessary:

(c) The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, in particular, to support the implementation, follow-up and review of the present Framework by: (...) reinforcing a culture of prevention among relevant stakeholders through supporting development of standards by experts and technical organizations, advocacy initiatives and dissemination of disaster risk

information, policies and practices, as well as by providing education and training on disaster risk reduction through affiliated organizations; (...)

Comprehensive School Safety Framework for Child Rights and Resilience in the Education Sector, 2022-2030

Pillar 1 : Safer Learning Facilities

Key Responsibilities :

- Define minimum performance standards within the legislative framework for physical assets. This should address life safety, gender responsive water and sanitation facilities, heating, cooling, and ventilation systems, and providing a healthy learning environment fit for climate impacts.

Recommended strategies :

- Make safety considerations integral to all investments in school infrastructure. Maximize the efficiency of these investments with tailored mitigation strategies to achieve multiple benefits: reduce risks, ensure education continuity, provide protective healthy and inclusive learning environments, improve quality of learning facilities, mitigate and adapt to climate change (e.g., reduce building carbon footprint and use of non-renewable resources).

Pillar 2 : School Safety and Educational Continuity Management

Recommended strategies :

- Seek integration and harmonization of school safety management and local community development, disaster risk management, climate change adaptation, and child protection plans.

Pillar 3 : Risk Reduction and Resilience Education

Key Responsibilities :

- Advance policies to ensure integration and infusion of formal and non-formal child-centred and context sensitive curriculum content and guidance for:
 - disaster risk reduction (including risk assessment, risk reduction, and response preparedness);
 - climate change adaptation, mitigation, and environmental sustainability;
 - school health and nutrition;
 - social-emotional learning (SEL) and life skills;

- child protection, violence prevention, peace education, and conflict resolution.
- Develop quality teaching and learning materials for students and teachers related to life skills, risk reduction, safety, climate change action, health and hygiene, and social cohesion. Support peer-to-peer awareness-building, fostering leadership, cultural expression, and psychosocial support.

Recommended Strategies :

- Conduct curriculum reviews to infuse knowledge and skills across the formal curriculum. Include: gender equality, child rights, risk identification and reduction, safety, health and hygiene, climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental sustainability, social-emotional learning, violence prevention, peace education, and critical thinking.
- To address issues of climate change, roll-out green school strategies and transformative actions within society to address climate change.