

# GWI United Nation Representative Advocacy Report 2020

## GWI advocacy goals

1. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to policy, legislation, budget and infrastructure to facilitate transition of girls from primary to secondary school and ensure gender parity and gender equality throughout secondary education by 2030.
2. By 2030 100% of United Nations low income Member States have increased access to tertiary education for girls and women by 50%.
3. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to and implement policies for continuing education to empower women throughout the life course, within the formal and informal economies.
4. Influence the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.
5. All 17 SDGs will include girls' education targets.

**Please bear in mind these five overarching, long-term goals during any United Nations intervention that you make on behalf of GWI. Any intervention should push these five goals further.**

**NB:** *Although these goals represent GWI's mission, our United Nations Representatives should always promote all GWI key messages and represent GWI professionally.*

---

**Name:** Maryella Hannum, GWI UN Rep/NY

**City of UN Representation:** UN Headquarters, New York, NY

**Session/meeting attended: (place, date, time, name of meeting)**

International Day of Education, UN Headquarters NY, Trusteeship Council Chamber  
High-Level Interactive Dialogue in observance of International Day of Education – January 24, 2020, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Convened and organized by the President of the General Assembly, H. E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, and in close collaboration with UNESCO.

**Subject of session/meeting:** *Aligning Inclusive Quality Education Policies with Sustainable Development Goals*

**Sustainable Development Goals addressed:** Focus on Member States to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; and on the importance of education to achieve all SDGs and Agenda 2030; and, particularly on SDG 4, 5, 8, 16.

## **Relevant treaties/conventions/resolutions referenced/addressed:**

UN Resolution A/RES/73/25 International Day of Education

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; The right to education; The Declaration calls for free and compulsory elementary education

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); Stipulates that countries shall make higher education accessible to all

SDG 4 calls on Member States to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Priorities of the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly: 1) poverty eradication and zero hunger 2) quality education 3) climate action, and 4) inclusion

“Progress in the area of quality education is crucial to progress in all priority areas, as well as Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Concept Note on the International Day of Education).”

## **Summary of session/meeting:**

International Day of Education took place on 24 January with a High-Level Interactive Dialogue at UN Headquarters in NY with a call to increase political commitment to education as a means to attain all SDGs. An acknowledgement of education as essential for the success of sustainable development and for the achievement of all 17 SDGs was emphasized; the recognition that education plays a key role in building sustainable and resilient societies; “education increases the productivity of individuals and strengthens the potential for economic growth, develops the skills needed for decent work, develops the professional skills needed for sustainable development, including in the fields of water and sanitation, green energy and the conservation of natural resources, helps to eradicate poverty and hunger, contributes to improved health, promotes gender equality and can reduce inequality, and promotes peace, the rule of law and respect for human rights” (A/RES/73/25).

Topics for panel discussions included *The Learning Crisis, Effectiveness of Contemporary Responses, and Pathways to Innovative Solutions (Moderator: Ms. Jo Bourne, Chief Technical Officer, Global Partnership for Education); Panel representation by Ireland, Kuwait, UNESCO, Education International, and Global Education Monitoring Report.*

Panel was followed by an interactive session of comments and statements by Member States and selected UN Agencies. Delegation time limitations: 3 minutes for statements by individual Member States and 5 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of group of States.

Following the morning presentations a professional networking lunch for attendees took place at the Delegates Dining Room.

Topic for the afternoon panel session: *Matching the Imperative of Inclusiveness with the Quest for Quality Education: Policy Choices and Action Priorities*

The afternoon panel was followed by interactive session of comments and statements by Member States and selected UN Agencies. Delegations time limit: 3 minutes for statements by individual Member States and 5 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of group of States.

Key highlights and messages: First, acknowledging and emphasizing the many advances and progress made in accessing education including an increase in school enrollment rates worldwide with more children attending and staying in school longer and higher literacy rates within and across countries. However much is still unacceptable:

- Decline in the quality and standards of education
- Widening knowledge gap between students in technically advanced societies and those in developing countries
- Crisis of learning in conflict zones
- Growth of school bullying
- Declining esteem of the teaching profession
- Global learning crisis is a crisis for prosperity

Without inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities *for all*, countries will not succeed in achieving gender equality and breaking the cycle of poverty that is leaving millions of children, youth and adults behind

- 258 million children and adolescents around the world do not have the opportunity to enter or complete school
- 617 million children and adolescents who are in school cannot read and do basic math less than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete lower secondary school
- 4 million children and youth refugees are out of school
- Girls' access to education is compromised due to gender-based violence, early or forced marriage, insecure routes or long distances to school, lack of sanitation, and cultural norms and practices
- One billion girls and women do not have the skills required for an increasingly digitalized world

These realities are *a blight* on the progress made and “governments around the world are called upon to pay more attention and engender partnerships to ensure access to free and quality primary and secondary education as well as affordable and inclusive vocational and technical education.” There is a need to act now. A call is made to identify gaps and proffer answers to burning issues in education. Messages drew attention to a “learning crisis”. A call for policy choices and action priorities necessary to achieve the progress needed in the education sector” to address the significant gap between enrollment and acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Messages of vital contributions by teachers and youth representatives and other education devotees and supporters were presented and acknowledged for their work in addressing the need for accessible quality education.

To “fix” the crisis in learning, raise the standards and quality of education around the world, the President of the GA called for proposals to ensure that education systems respond to several issues and that address the tasks at hand. These include ensuring that:

- As school attendance is on the rise the ability to read, write and converse in basic languages of instruction does not decline;
- There must be no dissonance between school curricular and the world of work’s growing need for specialized competencies and skills;
- Education must promote gender equality, facilitate social mobility, foster inter-cultural understanding, and bridge the digital gap between learners in developed countries and their counterparts in under-developed nations;
- Effective partnerships are formed, to assist countries that are most in need of help with curriculum development, teacher training, provision of adequate infrastructure, scholarships and student exchange programmes;
- Persons with disabilities are included in the benefits of education and of living more broadly;
- Education authorities anticipate and respond to the challenges caused by conflict and extreme climatic fluctuations, as well as the hazards they pose to learning;
- Institutions of higher learning are provided with the resources which will enable them to overcome current knowledge imparting challenges, while at the same time performing the critical humanizing, professional, scientific, policy analytic and management capacities needed for economic growth and sustainable development;
- Governments around the world work in tandem with education planners and administrators, curriculum development specialists, and corporate bodies to enhance the capacities of their education systems;
- The current gender, digital and financing gaps in education is bridged. Access to education must be broadened, to allow currently excluded groups enjoy the benefits of learning;
- The international community pays more attention to the millions of children that are trapped in conflict zones through no fault of theirs. We must pay attention to their educational needs.

The role of partnerships was emphasized in addressing the educational crisis and for implementation and attainment of the SDGs. A call for concrete proposals to address the issues was made in order to alleviate the plight of refugees and displaced children. The need for the establishment of a network of education actors and stakeholders to share information and ideas, including sources of support, relating to all aspects of education.

In addition to the High-Level Dialogue commemorating the International Day of Education taking place at UN Headquarters, the day was celebrated globally with key celebrations taking place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris and with special programs organized at various levels and taking place at additional venues located around the world.

## **Intervention by GWI representative:**

### **How this serves GWI members:**

- a. Explain trends in development in this particular subject.
- b. Explain why these trends and developments are relevant to GWI and NFAs.
- c. Outline what needs to be done at international and national levels

### **Next steps: (What needs to be done)**

Call to Action:

*Education Pledge (distributed during the session): "Let's Deliver SDG4!" SDG 4 calls on Member States to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. What is your pledge to make this a reality? Share your best practices or commitments, by tagging @UN\_PGA and using the hashtag: #DELIVERSDG4*

And, by UNESCO for all Stakeholders:

*"Because, now more than ever, we need to mobilize. UNESCO, on the occasion of the International Day of Education, is issuing a call for action - action for education. High-level political authorities and citizens, States and associations, teachers and parents of students: everyone, in their own way, has a role to play in making the right to education a reality for all. It is our responsibility to future generations."*

**— Audrey Azoulay, Director General, Message on the occasion of the International Day of Education**

Submitted by:

Maryella Hannum  
GWI UN Representative/NY