

GWI United Nation Representative Advocacy Report 2022 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

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 are should always promote all GWI key messages and represent GWI professionally.*

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City of UN Representation: UN Headquarters/NY

Session/meeting attended: 2022 Session of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development. The 2022 HLPF, Under the Auspices of the Economic and Social Council, took place at UN Headquarters/NY, on 5 July – 7 July and 11 July – 15 July. Several hundred side events, special events, Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) Labs, and exhibitions took place in-person and on-line during the HLPF. The HLPF was attended by six Heads of State and Government, more than 120 deputy prime-ministers, ministers, and vice-ministers, as well as other representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society.

Subject of session/meeting: The theme for the 2022 HLPF session was “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The HLPF is designated as the main forum for sustainable development issues within the UN. The annual meeting serves to review the status of the 2030 Agenda along with an in-depth review of specific SDGs. 2022 served as the first in-person meeting of the HLPF in three years.

Sustainable Development Goals addressed: The 2022 HLPF reviewed five SDGs in-depth: SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 15 (life on land), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals). Consideration of the impacts of the COVID-

19 pandemic across all SDGs and the integrated, indivisible, and interlinked nature of the Goals was an important underlying theme throughout the meeting. With a focus on Building back better and advancing the SDGs, discussions during the session also focused on addressing the needs of developing countries, including how a long-discussed Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) might assist policy makers to incorporate risk assessments into their decision making.

Relevant treaties/conventions/resolutions referenced/addressed:

[GA resolution 70/1](#) - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

[GA Resolution 75/290B](#) - Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions [67/290](#) on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and [70/299](#) on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level

[GA Resolution 66/288](#) - The future we want

[GA Resolution 70/299](#) - Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level

[GA Resolution 67/290](#) - Format and Organizational Aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

[GA Resolution 72/305](#) - Review of the implementation of GA Resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council

[GA Resolution 74/298](#) - Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution [67/290](#) on the high-level political forum on sustainable development, resolution [70/299](#) on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level and resolution [72/305](#) on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council

[GA Resolution 74/4](#) - Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly

Summary of session/meeting: Forty-four countries presented Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) during the HLPF 2022. These sessions facilitated the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned. The HLPF 2022 also began planning for the second “SDG Summit”, which takes place every 4 years. The SDG Summit will take place in September 2023 during the UN General Assembly.

At the close of the session, the HLPF adopted a 142-paragraph Ministerial Declaration that had been negotiated by Member States over a period of six months. Although there is disagreement among delegates regarding approach to sustainable development on specific aspects of the declaration, Member States did reach consensus in adopting the Declaration.

Advanced Draft of the 2022 HLPF Ministerial Declaration can be found at the link below:
<https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/HLPF%202022%20MD%2013%20July.pdf>

Highlights from the Advanced Copy of the 2022 HLPF Ministerial Declaration

SDG4: Quality Education

1. COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities between countries and between and within educational systems in terms of access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. These discrepancies include but are not limited to the digital divide, the rural-urban divide, and the gender divide.
2. Governments are urged to invest in resilient, inclusive, and shock-responsive funding, including early childhood development and care and pre-primary education; funding in these areas will directly reduce women's unpaid childcare work.
3. There is a need for international funding for education to help close the widening gap between resources and expected outcomes in developing and least developed countries.
4. We must prevent a multigenerational crisis in education. Reopen schools, provide a safe learning environment, ensure qualified teachers, and scale up efforts for remedial, accelerated learning and catch-up strategies to provide children and adolescents with functional literacy and numeracy skills.
5. Stress the key role teachers play in improving the quality of education and learning at all levels of schooling, formal as well as informal. Promote teachers' continuous professional development, including digital competencies and learner-centered pedagogies, and seek to invest in teachers' well-being and decent working conditions.
6. Member States, youth, and civil society must work towards the transformation of education systems to achieve SDG4 and better prepare our societies for the future. Such a transformation would include:
 - * Inclusive and equitable quality education
 - * Affordable technical, vocational, and higher education
 - * Promotion of universal literacy and numeracy
 - * Education for sustainable development and global citizenship
 - * Building and upgrading inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
 - * Expanding higher education scholarships for developing countries
 - * Increasing the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries

SDG5: Gender Equality

1. Address structural barriers such as discriminatory laws and policies, gender stereotypes, harmful practices, and negative social norms and attitudes.
2. Ensure access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, and other resources. Likewise, provide access to credit, financial resources, and services.
3. Confirm that all women and girls play a vital role as agents of change for sustainable development.

4. There must be gender-responsive and disability-inclusive disaster risk-reduction policies, plans, programs, and financing, and an acknowledgement of the importance of women's leadership in gender-responsive risk governance.
5. COVID-19 resulted in a disproportionate loss of job and education opportunities for women and girls while their already unequal, unpaid care and domestic work increased. Safety nets must be strengthened through social protection systems and measures.
6. Commit to eliminating, preventing, and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls, in public and private spaces, both in person and in digital contexts. Violence against women and girls is a major impediment to the achievement of gender equality, empowerment, and the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
7. Women and girls should have full access to justice, effective legal remedies, and health care and psychosocial services, including protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration.
8. Commit to universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.
9. Recognize the important roles and contributions of indigenous women and girls, women and girls living in rural and remote areas, women with disabilities, women smallholders and family farmers and entrepreneurs, and women in fisheries, as guardians of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems and agents of change in responding to climate change, and ensuring food security and nutrition.
10. Recognize and value women's and girls' disproportionate share of paid and unpaid care and domestic work and adopt measures to reduce and redistribute this work, as well as the need to reward and represent paid care work, including improved wages and working conditions. This requires promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities within the household, accessible, affordable and quality social services, including but not limited to care services, childcare and maternity, paternity or parental leave.
11. Fully engage men and boys as agents and beneficiaries of change and as strategic partners and allies in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
12. Strengthen and implement gender-responsive planning and budgeting processes and develop and/or strengthen methodologies and tools for the monitoring and evaluation of investments related to gender equity. Reaffirm the importance of collection, analysis, and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data to develop and strengthen evidence-based public policies and programs.
13. Reaffirm the full, equal, effective, and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This is one of the essential factors for the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

Salient Points Made During HLPF (7/5/22 – 7/7/22)

Education:

1. It is estimated that as many as 70% of 10-year-old students are currently unable to read at an acceptable level. Raising performance to functional levels could increase global GDP by 17%. If girls and women were educated to the same level as boys and men, countries would see a 20% increase in GDP.
2. We will be unable to achieve SDGs 4, 5, and 8, as well as any others, if we don't eliminate the inequities in education. Education investment is highly unequal both between and within nations. High-income nations currently spend an average of \$8,500 per student; middle-income nations \$1,000; low-income nations \$275, and very poor nations \$50. If we know investment makes a difference, why aren't we doing it? The lack of universal equality is the main obstacle to education truly becoming a human right.
3. Many country representatives and speakers spoke about the need to ensure adequate pay for teachers, improve teacher training, and acknowledge in both words and actions the value of educators.
4. Member States and NGO reps were surveyed on how best to achieve SDG 4.7 by 2030. The top four choices were: (1) political will, (2) collaboration, (3) money, and (4) inclusion.
5. UNESCO urged a reimagining of our future together and a new social contract for education, beginning at the Transforming Education Summit to take place in NYC September 2022.
6. School fees continue to be problematic for poor families. For example, one member state said that parents should not have to choose between food and education fees.

Finance:

1. There has been a deceleration in financing of the SDGs from the private sector. One speaker (Ms. Fourie) stated that if we want to see an increase in private financing then investors need to see the results of their investments. She recommended that member states adopt a uniform, standardized approach to measuring the SDGs.
2. Small states are at very high risk in part because they must rely on exports, thereby exposing them to economic downturns. How do we provide buffers, especially as the world is facing a new era in which economic shocks may not be infrequent events? One solution offered was risk free, low interest funding.
3. Least developed countries are overwhelmed by their debt burden – a solution is needed for this. There is a massive debt crisis in the global south that impedes progress and investment. Sixty percent of low-income countries are in high debt distress, making it all the harder for them to invest in the SDGs. Recommendations included debt restructuring, more effective development funding, an increased role for public

development banks, and creation of SDG bonds for private fund raising. <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2020/10/28/public-development-banks-gateways-to-transformative-sdg-financing/>

4. The global tax standard needs a correction. Recommendations included having the UN sponsor an international convention to address the tax system.
5. Developed countries need to meet their aid commitments. Member states have not delivered on their promises. In addition, there were calls for the North to pay its energy debt.

Food & Agriculture:

1. The war in Ukraine has resulted in a crisis in food access and availability. One solution is to improve food production at the country level. Likewise, the agricultural food chain must be strengthened. Both solutions, however, require time, money, and political will.
2. School feeding programs have been a significant help; investment is needed to make sure it continues.

Gender:

1. There was a call for a Parliament of Young Girl Leaders. Youth advocates called for a security and legal framework to allow girls to develop free of HIV, rape, early marriage, FGM, and STIs. They called on the UN and Member States to make this commitment.
2. Youth Advocate (Ms. Rabanal) proudly announced that Chile, her home country, is the first nation to incorporate gender parity into its Constitution. She urged attendees to never take women's rights for granted, as crises are a fervent enemy of girls' and women's rights.

Health:

1. Only 58 countries have vaccinated at least 70% of their population.
2. Only 20% of Africa is vaccinated. Urgent action is needed. We will never be a COVID-free world if 80% of Africa is not vaccinated. No one will be safe unless everyone is safe.
3. As with education, vaccine access is a human right. The European Union said that for every dose provided in Europe, there will be one shipped to Africa. China has shipped 2.3 billion doses to 120 countries free of charge.
4. The medical supply chain is extremely fragile. Local production and distribution of pharmaceuticals is needed, especially in the low-income nations. The EU is working with African states to develop, produce, and distribute pharmaceuticals to their people.

Highlights of Individual Country Comments on Education

1. *Antigua and Barbados* reported that they are trying to transform education into a STEAM-based curriculum while also including a schools' uniform grant, school meals for all primary students, psycho-social support, behavior management programs, and technology and vocational training.
2. *Sierra Leone* has pledged to use 22% of the national budget to fund education.
3. *Finland* emphasized that teachers in its country are viewed as "pedagogical experts" and were the country's greatest asset during COVID-19. It has provided free school meals to its students for 70 years, something many can only aspire to do. Finland urged us to think of learning in terms of flexible, life-long education systems that would allow citizens to constantly re-skill and up-skill.
4. *Madagascar* recommended local control and a greater voice for parents, unions, and teachers. The country pledged to increase education funding to 20%. Children in Madagascar get 1 year of pre-school education, begin primary school at age 5, and have mandatory attendance through 10 years of age.
5. *The Czech Republic* reported that teachers in its country are not held in high regard. As a result, there is a shortage of qualified teachers. In addition, there is a high dropout rate during the first few years of teaching. The country needs to provide the necessary support to attract and maintain high performing teachers.
6. *Malawi* reported a sharp increase in child marriages in the rural areas that will have a negative impact for decades. Further, it said the country lacks the necessary infrastructure for Pre-K and low access to quality education for special education students at all grade levels.
7. *Iran* recognized the right to free, public, Islamic education in 2011 and described schooling as family-oriented. It proudly stated that a half million non-Iranian refugee children are being provided an education.
8. *Vietnam* stated that the government must increase educational funding to 20% of its national budget. Current enrollment rates are above the 90th percentile for Pre-K and Primary school. The nation is on track to reach SDG4 by 2030.
9. *Azerbaijan* reported that there is a need for blended education and teacher training. Currently 50% of children have no access to the internet.
10. *Nepal* indicated that enrollment is 97% for Primary School and 70% for Secondary school. The gender ratio is 1:1.4 females to males. Unfortunately, only 13% of schools were able to stay online during COVID-19. As a result, the country is seeing increased school dropouts.

11. *France* reported its nurseries are adopting a green global approach. Teaching is done by education teams and there is a concerted effort to work with parents, combat bullying, and use organically grown local produce to feed students.
12. *Ethiopia* stated that disparities in educational access was stark during COVID-19; digital learning never reached many children.
13. *Congo* closed all schools during the pandemic. Students had no education. The country is working on increasing the number of teachers available.
14. *Cuba* stated that it allocates 23.7% of their GDP to education.
15. *Qatar* indicated that their education institutions are cutting edge and that the country has donated \$977 million to help educate 10 million children around the world.

Key Points from the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 – Secretary General’s SDG Progress Report on SDG4 and SDG5 (7/22) <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>

SDG4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for all

1. *Prolonged school closures have heightened the risk that children will not return to school.*
2. *COVID-19 has cast a shadow on an already dire picture of learning outcomes. Less than 60% of students in low- and middle-income countries can meet the minimum required proficiency in reading at the end of lower-secondary school. If this does not change, it will have negative consequences for both the individual and the state.*
3. *Entrenched inequalities in education have only worsened during the pandemic.* Disparities in attendance are based on gender, urban or rural location, and household wealth. Children living in rural areas and the poorest households are consistently more disadvantaged in terms of education participation and outcomes. Of particular note, in 2019-20 one-fourth of primary schools world-wide lacked access to electricity, drinking water, and basic sanitation facilities.
4. *Online schooling offers Ukrainian children a sense of normalcy in the chaos of war.* Two-thirds of Ukrainian children have been displaced from their homes. Nevertheless, nearly three million students, the majority of school-age Ukrainian children, showed up for online classes. Video lessons are also being broadcast on television. Remote schooling has offered them a safe ‘space’ and a semblance of normalcy. World-wide, approximately 130 million children and youth are in a similar situation due to war and other crises – providing safe, inclusive, and continuous education is one of the soundest and most important investments

SDG5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all women and Girls

1. *Awareness of violence against older women is growing, but data remain limited.*

2. *The nature, scale, severity, and complexity of such violence may be underestimated.* Further, older women may be subjected to specific forms of violence not usually measured in surveys, such as economic exploitation, ostracization, and neglect.
3. *Child marriage and female genital mutilation are persistent human rights violations holding back progress for girls and women.* The highest rates of child marriage are in Africa (35%) and Southern Asia (28%) although world-wide the prevalence has declined by about 10% in the last five years. COVID-19 may have changed that. In terms of FGM, 200 million girls and women alive today have been subjected to this practice in the 31 countries that continue the practice. Progress would need to be 10 times faster to eliminate FGM by 2030. Education is key to its elimination – opposition to having the procedure is highest among educated girls and women. Girls whose mothers have at least a primary education are 40% less likely to be mutilated.
4. *Progress in women’s access to leadership positions, in both political and economic spheres, remains sluggish.* As of 1-1-22 the representation of women in national parliaments reached 26.2%, up from 22.4% in 2015. At this rate, it would take another 40 years for women to reach par with men in national parliaments. Locally, women fill about one-third of the leadership positions.
5. *In many countries, women still lack the legal right to autonomy over their own bodies.* Only 57% of women aged 15-49 who are married or in a union make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health care. During the first year of COVID-19 there were 1.4 million additional unintended pregnancies in lower- and middle-income countries.
6. *Protection of women’s land and property rights still has a long way to go.* Progress has been greatest in terms of succession rights and in protection from being dispossessed in land transactions.
7. *Accelerated progress is needed to align public financing with gender equality objectives.*

General Take Aways :

1. If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is that we need to unite.
2. We are at a turning point in terms of achieving the 2030 SDGs. We need action not words.
3. Education is a human right not a privilege.
4. More money is needed to finance quality, equitable education.
5. Students’ voices must be included when determining the future of education.

Civil Society Participation at the 2022 HLPF:

As GWI UN Representatives we thought it important to point out our experience as UN Representatives on site during the 2022 HLPF session as it relates to Civil Society access at High-Level Political Forum meetings. We were preregistered and confirmed in writing to attend the high-level meeting. We had previously obtained UN grounds passes earlier in the year. We did not anticipate any issues accessing the meeting. However, once we arrived at the designated meeting room we were abruptly turned away by security guards and told we needed to obtain a secondary pass in order to enter the meeting room. We were not told where exactly but retraced our steps to below the main lobby area and found a small room near to the UN Bookstore where a group was giving out passes to attend the meeting. We obtained passes and walked back to the meeting room entrance but were turned away a second time. This time we were told that we were not permitted to enter at that location and instead were to enter at the mezzanine level off of the front entrance for seating to the side of the meeting room as observers. This was frustrating as the communication could have been clear prior to and/or upon arrival at the UN rather than sending us back and forth to various locations. Once we entered the mezzanine level all the seats were marked off for either Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) or Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) only—nothing was labelled for NGOs, however, MGoS is made up of various NGOs and Civil Society.

The second day of the conference was particularly frustrating because we had to go back and repeat obtaining secondary passes to attend the meeting. The people giving out the passes did not have procedures in place to figure out who should get the passes and how many passes each person should get. Therefore, people were coming in and picking up large quantities of meeting room passes and leaving with the passes. There was no accountability and as a result they did not have many passes left. The passes were not being distributed by name but by Major Group. There were a number of passes for each civil society major group and when they ran out there were no more passes. We had to push to receive passes, which was uncomfortable, although we were registered to attend and had traveled to attend the meetings. Our sense of this was that Civil Society was being pushed out and limited; that the process was not communicated well in advance; and that the process was not managed well on site. We can also point out that UN Grounds Passes are still limited to two passes for each accredited NGO, down from the five passes pre-pandemic.

Upcoming Meetings:

SDG Moment: The third SDG Moment of the Decade for Action to deliver the Global Goals will convene as part of the 77th session of the UNGA. **dates:** September 2022 (TBD) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sdg-moment

Transforming Education Summit: The UN Secretary-General will organize this event as part of the 77th session of the UNGA. **dates:** 19 September 2022 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/en/transforming-education-summit

HLPF 2023: The 11th session of the HLPF will take place to review implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. **dates:** July 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** hlpf.un.org

UN SDG Summit: September 2023 location: UN Headquarters, New York

Submitted by: GWI UN Representatives/NY

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