

Statement on behalf of the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning

FfD4 Second Preparatory Committee

3rd December 2024; 3.00 – 6.00 pm

4th December 2024; 10.00 – 11.30 am

Venue: Conference Room 4

Dear co-facilitators,
Excellencies,
Delegates,

I have the pleasure to deliver a statement on behalf of the following countries, members of the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Andorra, Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Brazil, Canada, Cabo Verde, Colombia, Denmark, France, Finland, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malta, Moldova, Mongolia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, Togo, Viet Nam and my own country, Czechia.

Let me start with sharing a few striking yet up-to-date figures from the education financing nowadays:

1. Only 17% of the education-related targets are likely to be achieved by 2030¹, with half either stagnating or regressing further. Achieving SDG4 would require an annual investment of US\$461 billion from 2023 to 2030 across 79 low- and lower-middle-income countries
2. **Yet, the costs of not investing in education are colossal. Governments stand to lose out on US\$1.1 trillion in foregone revenue each year for early school leavers and US\$3.3 trillion per year for children without basic skills.**²
3. Low- and lower-middle-income countries spend inadequately on education, with about **41% not meeting the benchmark of allocating 4-6% of GDP or 15-20% of public expenditure on education**³.

¹ United Nations. 2024. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. June 2024. Available at:

² UNESCO, OECD and Commonwealth Secretariat. 2024. *The Price of Inaction: The global private, fiscal and social costs of children and youth not learning*.

³ UNESCO. 2023. Global Education Monitoring Report 2023. *Technology in education: A Tool on Whose Terms?*

4. Financial support for Education through the ODAs has been on the decline since 2002, plummeting **from 12% to 7.6%.** ⁴

Excellencies,
Delegates,

Without a dedicated effort to bolster education financing, the global education crisis is poised to intensify, jeopardizing the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

This is why, today, we put forward the following proposals, with strong hope that they will be reflected in the zero draft of the outcome document.

- Governments should be strongly encouraged to prioritize domestic resource mobilization to generate additional funding for education, with a key emphasis on expanding tax bases and increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio to at least 15%. At the same time, they should aim to **allocate 4-6% of GDP or 15-20% of total government expenditures to education.**⁵
- **Finance ministries and education ministries should be invited to work together** to devise and implement long-term sustainable financing strategies for the education sector, optimizing the mix of financing options available.
- International financial institutions and regional development banks should expand low-cost lending to **increase investments in education.** They should reassess public sector wage constraints that prevent increased spending on education, and advocate for policies that will allow **recruitment of teachers** to meet service delivery standards and improve educational outcome.
- Donor countries **should** be invited to respect their commitments to provide **at least 0.7% of their GNI**⁶ as ODA to developing countries, increase ODA in education, and allocate such aid to the countries furthest behind on reaching SDG4.
- Debt relief and restructuring can, where applicable, be an effective way to free up fiscal space for education and improve long-term spending capacities. Debt swaps for education have shown promise, while recognizing that debt swaps are voluntary and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. **Innovative financing mechanisms** offer further potential.

I thank you for your attention.

⁴ UNESCO and the World Bank. 2024. *Education Finance Watch 2024*.

⁵ Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of SDG4.

⁶ Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of SDG4.