

III REGIONAL MEETING OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

"The Right to Education in Context: Recovering and Transforming"

Concept Note and Agenda



26-27 May 2022, Buenos Aires - Argentina

There are global definitions that seek to prioritise education and the imperative investment on it towards the global recovery from COVID-19, the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda implementation and for transforming the futures of education. Within this context, it is important to create a space to deepen policy and technical dialogue in Latin America and the Caribbean and to enhance education cooperation at the regional level.

Regional Context

Education is a fundamental human right, an enabler of other rights, a key to individual and collective well-being, an essential condition for peace and a catalyst for sustainable development. Therefore, education plays a significant role in the 2030 Agenda, being one of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to SDG4 "Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", which is composed of seven targets and three implementation measures, five other goals mention education, or make direct reference to it. Education is thus a structuring process

of the immense challenge of equity, mobility, justice and social cohesion that sets the horizon of this global agenda.

Based on the *Incheon Declaration "Education 2030"*, adopted by UNESCO Member States in May 2015, and the *Framework for Action "Education 2030"* of November 2015, a coordination mechanism for education cooperation was established in the Latin American and Caribbean region to support countries in their efforts towards the achievement of SDG 4 targets and to monitor the respective regional progress and challenges.

In January 2017, the *First Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean* was held in Argentina, where more than 170 representatives from 26 countries signed the [Buenos Aires Declaration](#), which sets out the regional vision for education towards 2030, reaffirming the commitment to SDG 4. This declaration highlights commitments such as the development of inclusive policies to improve the quality and relevance of education throughout life, from early childhood to higher and adult education, the expansion of coverage at all levels, and the commitment to enrich the curricula and practices of education systems for the development of 21st century skills.

The Declaration also includes a commitment to strengthen and diversify national and regional mechanisms for the evaluation and monitoring of the 2030 Education Agenda, in accordance with the different realities of the countries, with special attention to school climate and the active participation of the education community in order to achieve consensual progress and objective accountability for citizens. In this area, the role of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM) was highlighted; and the commitment to strengthen the current regional learning assessment system coordinated by the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) was established. In addition, the role of regional coordination of the Education 2030 Agenda assigned by countries to the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago) was ratified.

The Buenos Aires Declaration ends with the commitment to develop a common roadmap, including coordination, communication and monitoring mechanisms, to support the work of countries in meeting the SDG4 targets. Subsequently, in April 2017 and February 2018, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago organised two Technical Follow-up Meetings to the Buenos Aires Ministerial Meeting in order to develop the proposed Roadmap for the implementation of SDG4-E2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In July 2018, the II Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Bolivia, which resulted in the [Cochabamba Agreements: Regional Solidarity for the achievement of SDG 4-E2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean](#). This declaration led to the approval and launching of the *Regional Roadmap for the implementation of SDG 4 - Education 2030*, as well as to the creation of a coordination mechanism. The mechanism comprises a Regional Steering Committee (RSC), composed of 11 countries and 9 intergovernmental and civil society organisations; an Executive Secretariat, in charge of OREALC/UNESCO Santiago; and 4 working groups on the themes of: (i) Review, monitoring and reporting; (ii) Policies and strategies; (iii) Awareness-raising and communication; and (iv) Financing and governance. These working groups would contribute to the implementation of the Roadmap, as well as to the identification of other priority and emerging issues.

The II Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education highlighted four priority issues for the region: quality of education; equity and inclusion; teachers and education personnel; and lifelong learning. In addition, the RSC, with the support of the Executive Secretariat, was mandated to prepare a progress report for the next regional meeting of Ministers of Education, to promote articulated work, to develop proposals for the mobilisation of financial, technical and human resources to foster regional cooperation, to develop awareness-raising strategies, to explore modalities to engage young people and to maintain close coordination with GRULAC¹ and the *Global Steering Committee of SDG4 - Education 2030*.

During 2019, two meetings of the Regional Steering Committee were held in order to formally install the SDG4-E2030 coordination mechanism, formulate action plans for the period 2019-2021 in line with the thematic areas prioritised in the Roadmap, and analyse the progress of the implementation process of the Education 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. As part of the agreements of these meetings, Colombia was designated as co-chair of the Committee.

With the arrival of COVID-19, the education systems in the region faced new challenges to meet SDG 4, so the cooperation priorities and actions of the RSC focused on supporting States in their responses to the continuity of education during the health emergency. Due to the mobility restrictions of the new context, the third meeting of the RSC was held in a virtual format on 3 June 2020, with the aim of specifying the role of the RSC in this scenario, country assistance strategies and providing a space for the exchange of information and experiences. As a result of this meeting, the following agreements were reached:

- Work on the development of a document that addresses key regional challenges within the context of the pandemic, highlighting the importance of protecting education budgets
- Explore opportunities for collaboration with the Global Education Coalition and work on defining a mechanism for identifying country-specific needs
- Organise a briefing on the Global Teacher Campus to learn more about the initiative.
- Prepare a follow-up report on the progress made by UNESCO Member States in Latin America and the Caribbean in meeting the goals of the Education 2030 Agenda.

The Global Education Meetings (GEM) in response to COVID-19

To monitor and advance the implementation of SDG 4, UNESCO regularly convenes Global Education Meetings (GEMs), aligned with the calendar of meetings of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). All member states and other stakeholders that make up the global education cooperation mechanism participate in the GEMs. The first ordinary GEM was held in December 2018 in Brussels, in preparation for the HLPF 2019. An extraordinary GEM followed in October 2020, to address the impact of COVID-19 on education. In 2021, the ordinary GEM took place in two segments: a ministerial segment in July 2021 and a high-level segment in November 2021, in preparation for the HLPF 2022 where SDG 4 will be reviewed.

¹ GRULAC: Latin America and the Caribbean Group

During the GEM held in October 2020, convened by UNESCO and the governments of Ghana, Norway and the United Kingdom, heads of state and government, ministers from more than 70 countries and international partners adopted the [GEM 2020 Declaration](#)². The Declaration consists of two sets of commitments. The first one is to protect education financing and includes three actions: a) increase or maintain the share of public spending on education towards at least 4-6% of GDP and/or 15-20% of public spending; b) ensure that stimulus packages for national recovery include allocations for equity-focused support measures and skills development; and c) increase the volume (ref. 0.7% of donor GNP for Official Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries), predictability and effectiveness of international aid to education.

While it is encouraging that government spending on education has increased steadily over the past decade, lower-income countries face a large financing gap to achieve the SDG4 targets, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. UNESCO estimates that the impact of the health emergency could increase the annual pre-COVID funding gap from USD \$148 billion to USD \$200 billion³. Furthermore, according to UNESCO's estimate, only 2.9% of stimulus package funding to address the effects of COVID-19 globally went towards education, and this was concentrated in high-income countries. The need for increased funding for education, both from domestic resources and from official development assistance, is therefore even more urgent for global recovery from the pandemic and accelerating progress towards the SDG4 targets.

Second, the following four priority actions were agreed:

- Safe reopening of education institutions through close inter-sectoral collaboration, restoring and strengthening access to services and ensuring that reopening plans are equitable, gender-sensitive, inclusive and adequately funded.
- Support all teachers and education staff, ensuring their safety, welfare and decent working conditions; consult their representatives in decision-making; and provide them with urgent professional development.
- Invest in skills development, including learning and socio-emotional well-being of students, teachers and education personnel, for inclusive recovery, decent work, improved employability and sustainable development.
- Bridging the digital divide in education, developing quality open educational resources and building digital commons as a complement to face-to-face learning.

In March 2021, the RSC published the declaration ["Prioritising the right to education will save the present and future of Latin America and the Caribbean"](#), which reflects the regional perspective on the challenges of COVID-19 and the commitments made in the framework of GEM 2020⁴. The commitment to prioritise education during the health emergency as a central strategy for sustained recovery, was reflected in six regional commitments: safeguarding education funding; reopening schools safely and gradually; strengthening and dignifying teachers, school managers and other education workers; recovering

² <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374704>

³ https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/default/files/covid_cost_Press_Release_EN.pdf

⁴ This document was the result of work done around the commitment of the June 2020 RSC meeting to produce a document addressing the main regional challenges to the pandemic.

learning and reducing gaps; reducing the digital divide and promoting connectivity as a right, deepening cooperation and solidarity between countries, developing partnerships and regional and intersectoral coordination.

GEM 2020 also initiated a dialogue to enhance the Global Cooperation Mechanism (GCM) as a means to promote cooperation and create an enabling environment to facilitate global recovery from the pandemic and accelerated country progress towards SDG4. To this end, GEM 2020 commissioned the development of a proposal to strengthen the SDG4-Education 2030 Steering Committee to effectively guide and coordinate the GCM, and convened a multi-stakeholder consultation process.

During the first half of 2021, a working group led by UNESCO and the Norwegian Ministry of Education, with Colombia as the representative of the region, developed such a proposal. At the regional level, the efforts of CDR and OREALC/UNESCO Santiago focused on facilitating and providing technical support to Colombia to provide feedback from Latin America and the Caribbean on the proposal to strengthen the JAG.

This initiative was finally approved and endorsed by the two segments of GEM 2021, giving way to the formation of a new *SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC)*, which is the reference body for global education. The HLSC is composed of 28 members, co-chaired by a Head of State/Government and the Director-General of UNESCO and supported by a dedicated inter-agency secretariat hosted by UNESCO. The representatives for Latin America and the Caribbean in the HLSC are Colombia, Argentina and the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI).

The HLSC will provide technical-political leadership on global education priorities, enabling the effective operation of the GCM in its functions of: promoting evidence-based policy formulation and implementation, monitoring progress and improving the availability/use of data, and driving the mobilisation of domestic and international funding and improving alignment.

Finally, it is worth noting that GEM 2020 participants agreed to follow up on the implementation of the commitments made, collect and exchange good practices, and report on the implementation of the commitments at GEM 2021. Since then, UNESCO has twice brought together the world's ministers of education to share innovative responses to transforming their education systems in the midst of crisis, and discussed lessons learned that could help countries accelerate their progress towards SDG 4: in March 2021, one year after the pandemic, and in July 2021, at the ministerial segment of GEM 2021.

In this regard, GEM 2021 also reviewed financial commitments to education and building on the Global Partnership for Education's replenishment campaign, the "*Paris Declaration*" was adopted by GEM 2021 to renew leaders' commitment to invest in education, and to push for policy measures to accelerate progress towards the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda.

The contents of the Declaration were based on UNESCO and OECD monitoring data, and the joint UNESCO/UNICEF/World Bank/OECD report on the [Global Survey of National Education Responses to School Closure by COVID-19](#), among others, as well as individual country reports on the implementation of the GEM 2020 Declaration.

In 2022, the international community and the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism will deepen their efforts to promote education recovery and accelerated progress towards the achievement of SDG 4. Three milestones are planned to drive joint action and accountability: *the SDG 4 - Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee* meeting in June; the High-Level Political Forum reviewing progress on SDG 4 in July; and the Transformative Education Summit, convened by the UN Secretary-General in September.

Progress in Latin America and the Caribbean towards SDG 4

Since the Cochabamba Agreements, the region has made two progress reports on SDG 4 commitments, based on global inputs, such as the *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016*, the first document that reported on the baseline of the seven education-related targets and the three means of implementation that correspond to SDG 4, as well as on the financing of education and education systems.

At the I Meeting of the RSC, held in Santiago de Chile in January 2019, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) presented a brief overview of the state of development of the SDG 4-Agenda 2030 targets in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the following points:

- Regarding target 4.1, 4.7% of children in the region were out of school. This figure has been fluctuating between 4 and 5% since 2000. It is noted that while there are some improvements in the region, they are not sufficient.
- There are problems in terms of learning outcomes. Despite an overall improvement in primary, there was slow progress and significant proportions at the lowest performance levels, according to the Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE). Partial improvement was observed in lower secondary, but still at insufficient levels. The disadvantage of adolescent females in Mathematics widened; and disadvantages persisted for ethnic groups, as well as for those in some situation of human mobility.
- In relation to target 4.2 (early childhood development), the region reached almost 95 per cent access, placing Latin America and the Caribbean above developing regions.
- In higher education (target 4.3), the region went from 11.4 million students in 2000 to 27.4 million in 2017. This is significant growth, although wide gaps persist.
- In youth and adult literacy, an intergenerational gap persisted, and a slight disadvantage of women in adult literacy rates.
- Regarding educational investment, 17 countries in the region invested 5.2% of GDP; however, this did not mean that education was prioritised, but was associated with a greater presence of the public sector in the economy.

In 2019, in the framework of the III Meeting of the Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development held in Santiago de Chile, ECLAC published [an analysis on the fulfilment of the SDGs](#) which warned that in the region there were 2.8 million children (4.7% of the total) not attending primary school, 2.6 million (7.1% of the total number of young people) not attending lower secondary education and 7.2 million (22.8% of the total number of young people) not attending upper secondary education. Reinforcing the above, 1 in 3 children and adolescents (36 per cent) did not reach minimum proficiency levels in reading, and 1 in 2 (52 per cent) in mathematics. At the same time, the secondary completion rate of the first income quintile in the region (35.4 per cent) was less than half the rate of the

top quintile (83 per cent). These figures were already indicative of the remoteness of the horizon of SDG4 target 4.1.

With regard to target 4.3, which refers to equal access for all men and women to quality technical, vocational and higher education, including university education, there was gender segmented access to quality technical, vocational and higher education, with women accessing literacy programmes and men accessing vocational and technical programmes.

With the arrival of the pandemic, the challenges deepened in the region. According to studies by UNESCO, UNICEF and the OECD, school closures have had an impact on the learning, mental and physical health and socio-emotional development of children, adolescents and young people, with Latin America and the Caribbean being one of the regions that accumulated the most days without classes, the second highest value globally.

In 2020, the *Global Education Monitoring Report* highlighted the following data for Latin America and the Caribbean:

- About 63% of young people completed secondary school, but in 20 countries, students from the richest 20% were five times more likely to do so than those from the poorest 20%
- Half of 15-year-old students in Latin America did not reach the minimum level of reading literacy proficiency
- School attendance rates were lower for young people with disabilities, indigenous language speakers and Afro-descendants

In 2022, the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago), the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNICEF LACRO) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) will publish the SDG4-Education 2030 Regional Monitoring Report. This document responds to the mandate established at the meetings of Ministers of Education to strengthen regional and sub-regional monitoring mechanisms.

The starting point of the Report is the warning that the achievement of the 2030 targets is not assured, due to the slowdown or even stagnation in the improvement of certain indicators since the last decade. In addition, it recognises that the global health emergency caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the duration and impact of which are not yet precisely estimated, will impose new challenges on countries to ensure compliance with the agreed international goals and to sustain the educational achievements of recent years.

Report "Re-imagining our futures together: a new social contract for education"

UNESCO's International Commission elaborated this report on the Futures of Education. It was launched on 10 November 2021, in the context of UNESCO's 41st General Conference and as a prelude to the World Education Meeting 2021. The Report invites governments and the world's citizens to forge a new social contract for education, governed by two fundamental principles: ensuring the right to quality education throughout life and strengthening education as a public and common good. A new social contract for education requires a renewed commitment to global partnership, on the premise of fairer and more equitable cooperation between state and non-state actors.

During the presentation, it was emphasized that the report is not a blueprint, but rather an invitation for continued engagement and a call for further dialogue and action, on the premise of fairer and more equitable cooperation between state and non-state actors. These proposals are linked to the UN Secretary-General's report "*Our Common Agenda*" and to the upcoming summit on Transforming Education, to be held in September 2022. The summit invites states and key sector actors to address educational inequalities and the learning crisis with a sense of urgency and to rethink and reimagine the purpose, content and modes of delivery of education, i.e. "*transforming education towards a peaceful, inclusive and sustainable future for humanity and the planet*"⁵.

III Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean

As we approach the mid-term deadline for the achievement of the targets proposed in SDG4, at the regional level, the different monitoring reports and studies on education show that Latin America and the Caribbean face significant challenges to achieve the goals set for 2030. Considering also that the impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated educational inequalities and limited the right to education of the most vulnerable populations, it is pertinent to increase collective efforts to achieve SDG 4. In this sense, there is an opportunity to renew commitments to coordinate educational cooperation, integrating the new educational context resulting from the effects of the pandemic, revitalizing spaces for political and technical dialogue and enhancing the possibilities for regional educational cooperation.

In this regard, in light of the evidence presented in *the SDG4/E2030 Regional Monitoring Report, the results of the ERCE 2019 study*, and the good practices of regional education cooperation on issues such as human mobility, the ministers of education are asked to consider initiating a process to update, reform and strengthen the Regional Steering Committee.

The Ministry of Education of Colombia, Co-Director of the RSC and OREALC/UNESCO Santiago as Technical Secretariat, with the support of the intergovernmental organisations and co-organising agencies that are members of the Committee, proposed the Ministries of Education of the region and sector partners the holding of a "*Consultation on the regional coordination mechanism for the achievement of SDG4 - Education 2030*", which took place from 15 November to 15 December 2021. With the initial information obtained in the survey and other inputs derived from the own dynamics of global and regional education cooperation, focus group were offered, as well as the participatory development of the *Regional Roadmap Proposal for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Education 2030*, for the period 2022-2025, which will be presented for consideration at the III Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this regard, the objectives and expected outcomes of the III Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean are as follows:

⁵ Concept Note on Summit Working Procedures - Transforming Education Summit.

Objetives:	Expected results:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about the progress made in achieving SDG 4 of the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean and review the achievement of the proposed targets and the challenges to achieve them, considering the profound impact of the pandemic on education systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>SDG4/E2030 Regional Monitoring Report</i>, presented.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and agree on regional strategies to accelerate the achievement of SDG 4 and the recovery and remediation of the impacts of COVID-19 on education in LAC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buenos Aires Declaration, adopted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss and approve the instrument proposed by the <i>SDG 4 - Education 2030 Regional Steering Committee</i> to strengthen and consolidate an effective and relevant education cooperation mechanism in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Regional Roadmap for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Education 2030, for the period 2022-2025</i>, approved.

Preliminary agenda

HORA	ACTIVITY
26 MAY 2022	
09:30 – 10:00	Registration of participants and welcome coffee
10:00 – 10:45	Official opening ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Santiago Cafiero, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Republic of Argentina Marcela Losardo, Ambassador of the Republic of Argentina to UNESCO María Victoria Angulo González, Minister of Education of the Republic of Colombia Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO Jaime Perczyk, Minister of Education of the Republic of Argentina Sahle-Work Zewde, Chairperson of the International Commission on the Futures of Education, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Alberto Fernández, President of the Republic of Argentina
10:45 – 11:00	Photo of the Ministerial meeting
11:00 – 11:15	Objectives of the Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation by Claudia Uribe, Director of OREALC/UNESCO Santiago
11:15 – 13:15	SESSION 1: The Right to Education in Context: Recovering, Repairing and Transforming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of the Futures of Education proposal, Ms. Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO Invitation to Ministers to be part of the Education Transformation Summit, Leonardo Garnier, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General for the upcoming Education Transformation Summit. Dialogue of Ministers around the following questions:

	- What are the changes needed in the medium term to advance SDG 4, and the transformations to be undertaken in education systems for the long term, taking into consideration the 4 thematic areas of the Global Partnership Mechanism (inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools; learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development; teachers, teaching and the teaching profession; learning and digital transformation)?
13:15 – 15:00	Lunch
15:00 – 17:00	<p>SESSION 2: Progress made by Latin America and the Caribbean in the fulfilment of SDG 4 of the 2030 Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the <i>SDG4/E2030 Regional Monitoring Report</i> (UNESCO, UNICEF, ECLAC) • The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of SDG4 in Latin America and the Caribbean • Dialogue of Ministers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the immediate actions to be taken in order to ensure educational access and inclusion? - What are the short-term commitments to address learning recovery? - How to ensure financing for education?
17:00 – 17:15	Recess
17:15 – 18:45	<p>SESSION 3: Regional Roadmap 2022-2025 - Political-technical dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on LAC participation in the High-Level Steering Committee for SDG4. • Presentation of the Regional Roadmap Proposal (2022-2025) for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Education 2030.
19:00 – 19:30	Transfer
19:30 – 21:00	Welcome cocktail dinner
21:00	Transfer to “Palacio de San Martín”
27 MAY 2022	
08:00 – 08:30	Registration of participants
08:30 – 10:30	<p>SESSION 4: Continuation - Regional Roadmap 2022-2025 - Political-Technical Dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the proposals for endorsement
10:30 – 11:00	<p>SESSION 5: Adoption of the Declaration and Closure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the conclusions of the meeting of LAC Ministers of Education. • Reading and adoption of the Buenos Aires Declaration, by the Minister of Education of the Republic of Argentina, Jaime Perczyk.

Venue of the meeting

“Palacio San Martín” - Ceremonial Headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.

Participants and observers

- Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean
- Heads of UN agencies in the region, international and regional organisations and their respective teams
- Teachers' organisations
- Civil society organisations in the education sector
- Permanent Delegations of UNESCO Member States
- Secretariats of the National Commissions of UNESCO Member States

Format

The III Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 26 and 27 May 2022.

Working languages

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in Spanish and English. Working documents will be available in English and Spanish.

Information and contact

For more information on the meeting, please visit the event's website (<https://es.unesco.org/III-Reunion-Ministros-Educacion-ALC>) or contact the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, by sending an email to LACministerseducationmeeting@unesco.org