

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO,
on the occasion of the International Day of Education**

24 January 2022

As we mark the fourth International Day of Education, our world stands at a turning point.

Glaring inequalities, a damaged planet, growing polarization and the devastating impact of the pandemic present us with a generational choice: continue on an unsustainable path or radically change course.

Education can help us solve all of these issues – but it faces serious challenges.

We have yet to deliver on our commitment to ensure the right to quality education for all. COVID-19 disruptions have only exacerbated an educational crisis that, even before the pandemic, excluded 268 million children from school, especially girls. As a result of this exclusion, millions of children, youth and adults are exposed to poverty, violence and exploitation.

In these exceptional times, business as usual is no longer an option. If we are to transform the future, if we are to change course, we must rethink education.

This means forging a new social contract for education, as called for by the UNESCO report on the Futures of Education, released last November. We need to repair past injustices and orient the digital transformation around inclusion and equity. And we need education to fully contribute to sustainable development – for instance, by integrating environmental education in all curricula and by training teachers in this field.

To do this, we need to support education financially, keeping in mind that it is not an expense, but an investment. This is why our Member States reaffirmed their commitment to devoting at least 4% of GDP, or at least 15% of public spending, to education, in the Paris Declaration adopted during UNESCO's Global Education Meeting last November.

We also need to strengthen international aid and global cooperation, because this pandemic is a stark reminder of just how fragile and interconnected our societies are. We can only effect this change together, through solidarity and cooperation.

This calls for a broad movement encompassing governments, civil society, educators, students and young people to mobilize our collective intelligence and reimagine our future together.

This is our message for this International Day of Education – because education is a common good, a fundamental right and the foundation of a sustainable future.