

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

24 January 2023

“Everyone has the right to education.” This 24 January, it is more important than ever for UNESCO to remind everyone of the value and importance of these few words taken from article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Despite the importance of this statement, the fundamental right to education is still far from being a reality for all the girls and boys in the world. According to our data, 244 million of them are still out of school this year.

In particular, UNESCO would like to dedicate the fifth edition of this International Day to all the girls and women in Afghanistan, who have been denied their right to learn, study and teach. The Organization condemns this serious attack on human dignity and on the fundamental right to education. UNESCO has been tirelessly calling for the immediate restoration of the right to education for all girls and young women in Afghanistan.

Our organization, in close liaison with the country’s communities, continues to work in Afghanistan to secure the continuity of education, whether by means of literacy courses or by mobilizing the power of radio, a medium able to reach people directly in their homes. UNESCO also remains the primary source for the monitoring of education data in Afghanistan, particularly data related to higher education. We will continue to mobilize the international community in order to uphold Afghan girls’ and women’s right to education.

We must not forget, however, that throughout the world, even for those fortunate enough to be in school, grave concerns persist. For example, in low- and middle-income countries, seven out of ten children are still unable to read and understand a simple text at the age of 10 years.

This is why, in recent months, UNESCO has been working to strengthen international mobilization to ensure the quality of education. We need to adapt education to the challenges of our times, particularly by acting on the conclusions stemming from the Futures of Education initiative, which calls for a new social contract through and for education.

At the World Conference on Higher Education held in Barcelona last May, the International Conference on Adult Education held in Marrakech last June, and the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education held in Tashkent last November, UNESCO and its Member States together made new commitments to transforming education for every age.

In September, this international mobilization culminated with the Transforming Education Summit (TES), which was convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres. The TES led more than 130 States to make firm commitments.

Now we must translate these commitments into action – and UNESCO will continue to coordinate the international community’s efforts to ensure quality education for all.

On this day, UNESCO is urging one and all to defend – everywhere and always – a universal and fundamental right which is the best lever for ensuring development: education.