New York, 19 September 2022

• The vision for a peaceful and sustainable future starts with education as a fundamental human right and a public common good. Free, universal, equitable and inclusive quality education for all is a prerequisite to equip young generations to address the most pressing challenges of our time: threats to peace and democracy, poverty, growing inequalities, including deepening gender inequalities, climate change and protecting the environment, health security, the digital revolution, and global supply chains. Quality education for all is key for the personal, civic and professional development of young people and is at the heart of societal, economic, and technological progress and every Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda.

• Yet, we are tremendously off track for achieving SDG4 by 2030. We face a global education crisis that has deepened at an alarming rate, driven by the COVID pandemic and the looming global crises in food, energy, and finance due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. These have amplified the existing shortcomings of education systems, their structural deficiencies, and divides, also widening the equity, gender equality and financing gap, exacerbating disparities, and most of all impacting those already vulnerable and jeopardising learning outcomes. While governments, local education actors, donors, and development partners have continued efforts to deliver on education, we must do more. It is time to step up our efforts to reach those furthest behind; ensure that children are not only in school, but also learn; realise gender equality in and through education; and deliver on what the current and future generations of learners need and deserve to grow and thrive together.

• The EU and its Member States, in a Team Europe approach, welcome the UN Secretary General’s Transforming Education Summit as a moment to elevate our commitment to education to the highest political level, guided by the Secretary General’s vision set out in “Our Common Agenda”. Team Europe embodies the spirit and added value of strong partnership and a coherent approach in and beyond Europe, providing a strategic response to the multiple challenges our education systems and societies face. We draw on the richness and diversity of European education systems, and on the principles, achievements, lessons learnt and good practices of our regional approach in the European Education Area (EEA). The EEA embraces a future-looking, human rights-based, holistic and people-centred framework for cooperation and actions, reforms and investment in education. It contributes to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and strengthens cooperation in the continent in support of quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training for all, as well as the digital and green transitions.

• We are committed to gender transformative and inclusive education for all, with special attention to girls and women, learners with disabilities, those living in extreme poverty, as well as those affected by (post-)conflict situations and humanitarian crises, refugees and internally displaced, and those in marginalised or hard to reach communities. We stress in particular the gravity and impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and its consequences, directly and indirectly, to education and its continuity in Ukraine and beyond.

• We will prioritise achieving improved learning for all, from the earliest years and throughout life, including in basic, social, digital and green skills and competences, protecting education from attacks, reinforcing vocational education and training (VET), developing higher education, valorising the education profession and recognising the pivotal and inspiring role of teachers for quality education, and improving health and wellbeing of students including through school meals.

• We stress the transformative role of life-long education for sustainable development, citizenship and peace as a central tool for the achievement of the SDGs, empowering children, youth, and people of all ages across the world to actively contribute to the green and digital transitions, and reconciliation in conflict areas. We welcome in this regard the adoption of the Council conclusions in June 2022 on “the transformative role of education for sustainable development and global citizenship as an instrumental tool for the achievement of the SDGs”, and the ongoing process towards a new Declaration on Global Education in Europe to 2050 due for finalisation at the Dublin Congress in November 2022.
• We support youth and student engagement in reimagining and transforming education to ensure it responds to their demands and needs. We cannot improve education for youth – we need to do it with youth, including by building on intergenerational partnership and dialogue at all levels from the classroom to international fora.

• We closely and actively engage in strengthening global coordination in education and lead the way in fostering partnerships and providing much needed funding. Globally, the EU and its Member States are the largest development partner to education and training, underpinning our commitment to the 2021 Paris Declaration on Investing in the Futures of Education. Our funding through a variety of modalities at the national, regional, and global levels accounts for over 55% of official development assistance.

• The EU has pledged to substantially increase education funding from 7% to at least 10% for its cooperation with Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU dedicates 10% of its humanitarian aid budget to education in emergencies. Recognising the fundamental importance of domestic resource mobilization and quality spending, we work closely with government partners for more sustainable, efficient and equitable public financing for education. We continue to raise more revenues and increase education budgets through innovative financing measures, notably in a Team Europe approach, and through public-private cooperation in partner countries worldwide, especially low income countries and the most fragile ones.

• The EU’s Global Gateway strategy further strengthens our investments by mobilising much needed additional resources for enabling environments for teaching, training, and learning at all levels. As evidenced by the Global Gateway Investment Package on Education, Skills and Technical and Vocational Training announced at the 2022 EU-Africa Summit, Global Gateway promotes inclusive, equitable and quality basic education, VET and tertiary education, regional and international mobility for learners, and lifelong learning in pursuit of full and equal participation in social, economic, and political life.

• The European Union remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.

• The European Union and its Member States, in a Team Europe approach and in close collaboration with partner countries, the international community, and education stakeholders at all – including local – levels, will live up to our commitments to education in the follow up of the Summit to ensure the realisation of the right to education for all, everywhere.

For more information
Transforming Education - factsheet

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