

FINANCING EDUCATION 2030: REVISITING THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY
In the region of Middle East & East Europe
1-3 May 2018

Opening Speech by Global Campaign for Education
Monique Fouilhoux, GCE Board Chairperson

Your Excellency Fadi Yaraq, General Director of the Ministry of Education and Higher education, representative of his Excellency Marwan Hamadeh, Minister of Education and Higher Education of Lebanon,

Dr Hamed Al Hammami Director of UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut

Mr Zahi Azar, General Secretary of the of the Arab Network for Popular Education and Chairman of the Lebanese Coalition for Education

Dear David Edwards, General Secretary of EI

Dear Friends Mubarak Abbas and Refaat Sabbah

On behalf of the GCE Board I would like to thank the Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA) for organizing this important Conference and inviting us to be part. This conference is indeed a significant step because it allows today not only to bring together the members of ACEA but also the whole family of the Global Campaign for Education, and I note with great pleasure the important participation of the unions of teachers in the region but also world leaders of EI and this is a first that is important to highlight. We will also note that the other regions are also represented by their leaders, alongside members of the GCE Board of Directors. At their side, to share, discuss, confront points of view, improve working relationships, many partners are there with us today and we are pleased.

ACEA is a key member of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), both working within the Right to Education Framework and fully subscribing to the Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDG4 and the Education 2030 Agenda.

Allow me to greet the entire team of ACEA and especially the one who is the soul of the organisation, **Refaat Sabah**.

It will be three years in a few days for the international community in Korea to set a new agenda by adopting the Incheon Declaration, then adopted SDGs with Goal 4 and finally the Framework for Action.

Today

- 230 million children and young people are out of school

Poverty is the major cause of exclusion in education. But inequalities are compounded by other disadvantages: gender, cultural and economic background, nationality, geography, health, sexual orientation and disability

- Half of children in low and middle income countries are not taught in a language they speak
- Low income countries spend 46% of their education budgets on the top 10% most educated students.
- More than 130 million children worldwide cannot read or write, despite having spent at least four years in primary school

If current trends continue, in 2030 only 1 out of 10 children from low income countries will be on track to gain basic secondary education skills.

Without a significant change of scale in funding, no progress will be made

This is an important Conference I said because it will allow us during these three days to discuss implementation, how to make these changes, what ways and means for more funding to be directed to education and properly used.

GCE has been advocating for several years and is campaigning for the financing of education. And in this frame we advocated and supported the recent GPE replenishment process that came to fruition at the Dakar Conference last January. It was a success in particular because developing countries have made important commitments.

BUT it is very important to make sure that these resources reach those who need it most, ensuring that over the next three years, more boys, girls, youth and adults – particularly those from disadvantaged groups – can ensure their right to education is fully met. We were pleased to see that the discourse about inclusion

and equity were pushed to the forefront of this year's Replenishment. These words must be translated into meaningful action over the next years.

We acknowledge the challenges this entails, but we must use this momentum to affect positive change. This is why we, as civil society, will remain active and vigilant in tracking GPE pledges and monitoring SDG 4 implementation.

It will be important to follow up on the commitments made at all levels, but we will have to ensure that more funding will be allocated to education and, above all, that they are allocated to those who need it most. Civil society and citizens must be able to demand accountability.

Accountability is very important that is why our Global Action Week for Education 2018, which took place last week, focused on **accountability for SDG 4 and citizen participation**, a follow-up of the theme addressed in 2017.

In this context GCE applauded the 2017/8 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report for placing national education monitoring reports as a critical tool for citizens to hold governments accountable.

And we will join the movement initiated by the GEM with the #MakeitPublic campaign asking governments to provide a progress report on education commitments to their citizens.

For our movement, the Global Action Week for Education 2018 will also continue to reassert the importance of ensuring countries develop credible roadmaps for implementing the full SDG 4 agenda, but also reverse the shrinking space for civil society, highlight public education and the central role and responsibility of governments in its provision and demand for visible and meaningful youth participation in decision making.

Colleagues and friends **all together** we intend to remain mobilized and continue our advocacy efforts.

Right to education can only be realized if public education systems have these necessary resources to respond to the diverse needs of students. And I repeat, GCE call on governments and the international community to make this step-

change in financing now to deliver free, inclusive and quality education ensuring resources are utilised to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and equitability of public education systems.

Rather than a good will initiative, education financing - both for national governments and international community- , is a key obligation enshrined in the international human rights law and programmatic framework, applicable for all contexts, including emergencies and fragility contexts.

In the Middle East region this crucial obligation has a key importance, given the huge impact of protracted crises to the detriment of the lives, rights and livelihoods of millions of displaced persons and communities as well as those in host countries affected by crises.

To conclude

As members of the Campaign, our movement is unique and we must be proud of it. We must continue to make our voices heard at all levels, national, regional and global because by a phenomenon of capillarity we are able to irrigate our movement from national to global and vice versa, to make it more credible and to reinforce. Things are not perfect and there are many room for improvement but we are determined to continue along this path, especially through our exchanges with our external partners.

To our Lebanese Colleagues, ACEA and all coalitions and members in this region for welcoming us for this Conference today, shokran jazeelan.