Virtual side event to the ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum

PROTECTING EDUCATION FROM ATTACK:
A call for improving data monitoring and policy response
7:30 am-9:00 am (EDT), Thursday, 7 July 2022

Background
Attacks on education have harrowing effects, ranging from tragic deaths on account of damage to physical infrastructure, psychological injuries and threats that lead to school disruption and loss of learning over time. Long recognized by the international community in Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Right to Education obliges Member States to ensure its protection, respect, and fulfilment for all. In contexts of armed conflict, this inalienable human right has been further reiterated and reinforced by international humanitarian law and other prominent soft law mechanisms and tools, such as the Safe Schools Declaration and its guidelines, which aim to protect schools from military use. However, as it stands, the right to education is denied for many conflict-affected children and other vulnerable populations who fall victim to attacks on education. To this end, much needs to be done to ensure stronger evidence-based policies and conducive environments at national level for the effective implementation of legal international frameworks.
In July 2011, the UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted landmark Resolution 1998, highlighting the detrimental impacts of attacks on schools on children’s safety, education, and health during armed conflict and called for greater action to ensure that schools have no part in warfare. In its subsequent Resolution 2143, adopted in 2014, the UNSC reiterated the call to safeguard children’s right to education in times of conflict and prevent the military use of schools. More recently, UNSC resolution 2601, adopted on October 2021, renewed the global impetus to ensure the full protection of the right to education. Recalling international humanitarian legal obligations to protect schools and educational facilities in situations of armed conflict, the resolution emphasized the need for States to foster enabling and secure environments to ensure safe access to education; and underlined the importance of coordination between UN organizations in preventing violations and abuses against children affected by armed conflict, including supporting national authorities to develop and establish appropriate strategies.

Furthermore, recent data from the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) shows persistent gaps in the implementation of existing commitments in protecting schools from attack. Despite prolonged closures of schools due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic attacks on education, the military use of schools increased in 2020-21 compared to the previous two years. This indicates the dire need for robust data and policy measures to effectively respond to these attacks and to ensure systems are better prepared to prevent, mitigate and effectively respond to attacks on education in the future.

In furtherance of the UNSC Resolution 2601 and the call therein for greater UN coordination to address attacks on education, UNESCO is partnering with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC) to jointly ensure prevention of violations and abuses against children affected by armed conflict. UNESCO is the lead UN agency mandated to coordinate and monitor progress on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of the 2030 Agenda to ensure quality, equitable and lifelong learning opportunities for all, including in times of armed conflict. In this substantial undertaking, while some progress has been marked, challenges and setbacks faced by armed conflicts and attacks on education are working directly against the fulfilment of SDG 4.

In this regard, the initiatives taken to establish Qualifications Passports for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants are also highly relevant. This includes both the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees by Council of Europe in which so far 17 Member States are participating in and UNESCO’s Qualifications Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants which has been introduced in Zambia and Iraq. The tool is established to secure that refugees and vulnerable migrants with higher education will have opportunity to have their qualifications and competences assessed in a professional and transparent manner, even when documentary evidence of their qualifications are missing.

In addition, UNESCO continues to support governments in the provision of education services in full respect of the right to education for all, including through its flagship initiative ‘Revive the Spirit of Mosul’ in Iraq, the “Li-Beirut” initiative in Lebanon, as well as in crisis situations such as Afghanistan. OSRSG-CAAC is the lead UN advocate for the protection and well-being of children affected by armed conflict and through their work on monitoring and reporting on attacks on schools, engaging in dialogue with parties in conflict to end and prevent such practices, they further contribute to the realization of SDG4.
**Objectives**
Organized at the margins of the ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the virtual side-event will underscore the need for Member States to ensure full protection of the right to education in times of armed conflict, and will particularly aim to enhance government capacities to formulate and implement evidence based policies on attacks on education within national data systems to better guide their actions towards realizing SDG 4.

More particularly, this virtual event will bring together UN Member States, UN agencies and education stakeholders to highlight key challenges and promising practices around the following objectives:

- Inform key stakeholders on data, policy measures and tools needed to strengthen national capacities in order to effectively review, respond, prevent, and mitigate occurrences of attacks on education and military use of schools to better deliver and accelerate progress towards SDG 4.
- Identify linkages for Member States to strengthen national action on data collection and analysis on attacks on education as enhanced data collection and management will allow for better-informed robust policies to prevent, mitigate and respond to attacks on education and ensure educational continuity for all during times of peace and war.
- Promote greater quality and institutionalization of attacks on education data into national education systems to foster greater national ownership and increased harmonization and integration into education sector policies and plans. This will further enable inclusion of the most vulnerable populations in crisis contexts while bridging the humanitarian-development divide in delivering education for all.
- Secure further introduction of tools especially designed to assist refugees and vulnerable migrants, in particular Qualifications Passport for Refugees as a recognition tool particularly designed for these individuals.
- Identify key recommendations on how to engage with international actors and mechanisms and optimize national actions in line with ongoing preparations for the Transforming Education Summit (TES), which aims to strengthen and accelerate the implementation of existing multilateral agreements, particularly the 2030 Agenda framework, and galvanize action towards meeting SDG4 goals at the national and global levels.

**Organizers**
This virtual event is co-organized by Malta, Norway, the State of Qatar, Gabon, UNESCO and OSRSG-CAAC.

**Connection Details**
The event will be entirely virtual, with simultaneous translation provided in English and French. Please register here, by Tuesday, 5 July, to participate. The event will also be livestreamed on UN Web TV.
# Program

**Moderated by** Dean Brooks, Director of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies

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| 7.30 – 8.15 (45 min) | **Opening remarks**  
H.E. Mr Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of ECOSOC  
H.E. Mrs. Vanessa Frazier, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations  
H.E. Mr. Michel Xavier Biang, Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations  
H.E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations  
H.E. Ms. Mona Juul, Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations  
Mrs. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict  
Mrs. Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO |
| 08:15 – 08:55 (40 min) | **Panel Discussion: Improving data monitoring and policy response for the Protection of Education from attack**  
Representative from Nigeria (Safe School Declaration)  
Representative from Iraq  
OSRSG-CAAC (Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism)  
UNESCO (Education in Emergencies)  
GCPEA, Executive Director, Diya Nijhowne  
Education Cannot Wait Representative |
| 08:55 – 09:00 (5 min) | **Closing remarks**  
By Moderator (TBC) |