

JOINT RESPONSE TO FOCUS AREA 4 ON EDUCATION

On behalf of Workers and Trade Unions, Women, Children and Youth, NGOs, and Indigenous Peoples' Major Groups;

We welcome the changes made to focus area 4 and providing “quality education and life-long learning for all” reflects the broad consensus on the importance of a stand-alone goal on quality education. Looking at the priorities proposed, there are, however, still important gaps to address in order to ensure the right to education for all.

Education is a primary means to realising lasting social change and sustainable development, but this requires qualitative as well as quantitative targets on access and attainment. In brief, *what* people learn, *how* they learn, *where* they learn, *in what context* and *with whom* they learn are all critical for the achievement of quality education and sustainable development.

On priority A, we welcome the addition on equitable access and completion as well as learning outcomes. However, instead of effective learning outcomes, we suggest “relevant learning outcomes”, which we understand as those that enable all children to achieve their full potential and positively contribute to the social, political and economic progress of society, and as corresponding to national standards.

On priority B, while we appreciate a focus on disabled persons, we are concerned about the deletion of the other groups previously covered by target B. We propose broadening this priority and the new text would read as follows: “ensure that persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups including indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, migrants, and persons living in rural areas, and conflict-or-emergency-affected countries have access to inclusive education, skills development and vocational training”

Moreover, all targets must be disaggregated according to at least sex, socio-economic background, age and location, and priority should be given to reducing the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. None of the targets should be considered “achieved” unless it is reached at every income quintile.

On priority C, “pre-primary education” is not sufficient as it often refers to only 1 year of education and should therefore be replaced with universal access and completion of early childhood education; comprehensive early childhood education is vital to on-time primary school enrolment and success later in school and life, and especially important to disadvantaged children.

On priority D, we particularly appreciate the focus on women and marginalized groups.

On priority E, while welcoming the proposed language, we suggest adding equitable access to higher education and lifelong learning to this target. Currently there is no reference to higher education,

despite the higher education and research sector being necessary for finding solutions to the most pressing challenges we face today, particularly within the context of sustainable development. Moreover, lifelong learning is mentioned in the headline, but not supported by any priority and we would suggest adding it here.

On priority F, we suggest that evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education is added, as well as traditional knowledge and global citizenship education, which includes human rights and intercultural education, problem-solving skills and collaborative and participatory learning. The priority would read as follows: Integrate relevant knowledge and skills in education curricula, including traditional knowledge and ICT skills, evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education, education for sustainable development and global citizenship, and awareness raising on culture as fundamental dimension of sustainable development

On priority G, we welcome this new target on safe, healthy and supportive learning environments. However, the environment is only one of the necessary enabling factors for education of quality, and this priority should also ensure that all children are taught by qualified and well-supported teachers. Only at primary education level is the global shortage of qualified teachers exceeding 5 million and this constitutes a significant obstacle to quality education for all. We, therefore, suggest that qualified teachers are added to priority G.

Finally, we suggest an additional priority that would read as follows: by 2030, sustained and sufficient financing is in place to guarantee free quality education for all, including in emergencies. We consider this a precondition for the right to education to be guaranteed for all, and suggest a particular focus on emergencies, as half of the 57 million children that remain out of school live in conflict-affected areas and emergencies.