

## **Toyama-Kanazawa Declaration by G7 Education Ministers' Meeting**

We, the G7 Ministers responsible for education, met for our G7 Education Ministers' Meeting from 12 to 15 May 2023 in Toyama and Kanazawa, chaired by the Japanese Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

1. The world is facing various crises around education. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on social and economic systems in all countries. Education being no exception, many schools and other educational institutions were forced to close for long periods and learning opportunities of children, students and learners were at stake.

In addition, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has deprived children and students of their rights to education and stagnated international exchange. While resolutely denouncing Russia's aggression, which violates international law, we will continue to advocate for access to inclusive and equitable quality education for all, including children and students in Ukraine and in crisis situations around the world, particularly girls.

We uphold the universal value of education as a foundation of democracy, freedom, the rule of law and peace. In the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, we will encourage Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and foster people who can create a sustainable society, and we will collaborate to promote access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, as well as international exchange.

2. The education crisis caused by the pandemic brought to the surface existing vulnerabilities of educational systems, while also offering opportunities to rethink and enhance the future of education and learning systems. We underline the need to work towards building more resilient educational systems to meet the needs of the post-pandemic world and recover learning losses, to help provide all learners with access to inclusive and equitable quality education, and opportunities to pursue their well-being in the social and economic context of every country, while working towards achieving well-being in educational settings. We also recognize that recent development of digital technologies, including generative artificial intelligence (AI), provide learning and teaching opportunities while posing challenges to educational systems.

In this meeting, we discussed how to achieve these goals and agreed to continue working toward this end in our respective countries by promoting the following policies, recognizing the importance of voices and participation of children, students, learners, teachers, school leaders and all the people concerned.

3. Firstly, since schools are critical infrastructure to build a diverse and inclusive society, it is crucial to maintain and develop the essential functions of schools highlighted by the pandemic. Schools provide in-person education, opportunities for collaborative learning, and also a place where children feel safe and accepted, as well as a safety net. This enables schools to play a role

in enhancing the well-being of children, which includes supporting their physical and mental health. We will continue to do our best to support these functions.

With the goal to recovering the functions of school education that could not be sufficiently attained due to school closures and various restrictions on educational activities during the pandemic, we will work to promote cooperation and collaboration between schools and the wider community to expand opportunities for children's experiences in nature, culture, and art, thus supporting the development of social-emotional skills. It is also important to support children's mental health and well-being as "a team" through cooperation between teachers and other school professionals such as counselors.

In addition to traditional in-person education, we will continue to work to improve Information and Communications Technology (ICT) environments to promote education that effectively integrates digital technology to support in-person education, as accelerated by the pandemic. We also aim to promote improved ICT skills of teachers and enhanced education for digital literacy to help children become responsible and informed digital users capable of addressing new opportunities and challenges.

4. Secondly, we will aim to help ensure access to inclusive and equitable quality education, which contributes to the well-being of all children, starting in early childhood education. In order to achieve this goal, we will continue to promote personalized and self-regulated learning and provide opportunities to learn from one another. We will also encourage age- and developmentally-appropriate use of digital technology as a complement to – but not as a replacement of – in-person education since face-to-face teacher-student interaction remains paramount to the future of education. While not exacerbating the digital equity gap, we recognize the importance of continually assessing the challenges and mitigating risks of promoting digital technology in education; these include, but are not limited to, the use of generative AI for educational purposes.

In addition, we will strive to promote cooperation and connection between educational stages as well as between schools and the wider community. We recognize the value of a qualified and well-supported teaching profession, and will work to give teachers access to world-class training and professional development to enhance their skills and support high quality early years provision, resulting in highly qualified, competent and motivated teachers and the improvement of instruction. We will also work together with schools to have cultures that support the well-being of teachers, and aim to foster environments that allow teachers to focus on their main professional duties. This could include promoting small class size and allocating teachers duties in a fair way and providing them with supportive working conditions including the treatment of teachers as appropriate in national, regional and local contexts.

While respecting the differences in our educational systems, we will take steps to realize education that unlocks the potential of all children regardless of disabilities, language and culture, geographical or cultural origin, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and gender

identity, and challenges such as bullying or long-term non-attendance. Regarding education of children with disabilities, we recognize the particular importance of providing collaborative learning environments for children with and without disabilities to spend as much time as possible together, as well as providing opportunities for learning that meet the needs of individual children.

5. Thirdly, we aim to support education and the development of human capital, with a view to promoting innovation and sustainable economic growth that can contribute to addressing global social changes such as demographic change, digitalization, and decarbonization. The pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have heavily impacted the world's economy, and we acknowledge that education can greatly contribute to poverty eradication, inclusive economic growth, and addressing climate change, as mentioned in the United Nations Transforming Education Summit (TES). In addition, as education is foundational to the achievement of all the SDGs, we encourage ESD and recognize the need to foster citizens who have global and cultural competencies, such as critical thinking, communications and language skills, so learners are prepared to fully engage in an interconnected world and to act on issues of global significance.

To support this, it will be important to ensure that education addresses the needs and promotes the development of skills required now and in the future. We will therefore promote a broad and balanced interdisciplinary education, which includes the fundamentals and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) education for all students at every level of education.

Moreover, we encourage developing learners' skills in growth fields such as digital and green technologies and fostering entrepreneurship. We recognize the importance of providing equitable, inclusive, and accessible opportunities for continuing education for all, at all life stages, including for those who are employed and unemployed, to equip learners for lifelong pursuit of relevant competencies in the context of rapidly-changing societies and economies. We emphasize the importance of gender equality in and through education and eliminating barriers in education.

Promoting these efforts requires collaboration among not only teachers and educational professionals and administration, but also actors outside of schools, to build educational systems that are linked to the broader societal context and provide children, youth and adults with needed support and diverse educational opportunities.

6. Fourthly, while the world faces challenges that no single country can solve, there is an opportunity to collectively make positive changes. To achieve this, we will aim to promote international student mobility as well as international talent mobility and circulation in education and research, which plays an essential role in building relationships and mutual trust, sharing diverse perspectives, and supporting the foundation of universal values such as democracy, human rights, freedom, and peace. The exchange of pupils, students, researchers, scholars, and educators, strengthens relationships between current and future leaders. These relationships are necessary to address shared challenges, enhance prosperity, and contribute to global peace.

In particular, we acknowledge the importance of resuming student mobility and interactions in primary, secondary, technical and vocational and higher education between G7 countries to pre-pandemic levels, and beyond. In addition, we aim to encourage other initiatives such as deepening inter-university and school partnerships, supporting study-abroad programs, leveraging ICT to facilitate exchanges, and sharing learning contents online among higher-education institutions and across borders. However, we acknowledge that online learning does not replace in-person teaching and learning, which remains invaluable.

We affirm that promoting people-to-people exchange and mobility at earlier educational levels is crucial to develop intercultural competencies and build underlying networks and skills and can serve to strengthen the foundation of universal values such as democracy. Also, encouraging such international exchanges and mobilities can provide an opportunity to create new ideas and perspectives, which can lead to innovations. In addition, we acknowledge that educational exchanges by G7 countries will promote democracy by fostering the development of globally and culturally competent citizens not only in G7 countries but all over the world.

7. In pursuing the efforts noted above, we recognize the importance of investing in people as recalled at TES, which urges countries “to invest more, more equitably and more efficiently in education”. We will work to deepen cooperation and collaboration encompassed in the core elements which we have discussed in this Ministers’ Meeting.

G7 Education Ministers’ Meetings were not held regularly. Through the experiences of pandemic, Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and other crises, every country has been reminded of the universal value and importance of education in the face of many common challenges. Thus, we will continue to encourage high-level educational discourse across the G7 countries with respect to each chair country’s leadership.

We acknowledge the approach to well-being based on balance and harmony as expressed in the Chair’s summary statement of the G20 Educational Ministers’ Meeting held in Bali, Indonesia in 2022. We are committed to ensuring schools and colleges are safe and supportive learning environments which promote and support mental well-being. We also recognize the importance of evidence-informed approaches when taking into account the well-being of children.

Recalling previous G7 commitments, we will continue cooperative and collaborative efforts toward solutions to challenges facing education so that outcomes from the G7 Education Ministers’ Meeting will also contribute to non-G7 countries as well. We will share our commitment to work together with the global community.