

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

My main message today, on behalf of EA SG, is the remainder of the SDG 4, which is not under the review this year, but it is crucial for the SDGs we do consider, especially for ending poverty, ensuring healthy lives and achieving gender equality. We believe that there is no better and more sustainable way to increase prosperity for the people and planet, than to invest in the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for this important task, and to promote these values through all levels and all fields of education. Yes, skills are very important, but globally we don't have the crises of skills, but crises of values, and that can be changed through education and learning.

There are many examples showing the contribution of education and lifelong learning to the implementation of the other goals, let me mention only a few:

- **POVERTY:** Vocational training can help people to increase income and break the poverty cycle, as it is the case with non-formal training for farmers in several countries in central Asia;
Further on, education of refugees in Europe and Middle East could mitigate some consequences of the refugee crises and provide them both short-term and long-term escape from poverty;
- **GENDER EQUALITY:** there are countless studies proving positive impact on education to gender equality! In numerous African countries education of women and girls reduced harmful practices such as early marriage, gender-based violence and discriminatory laws and policies and many others;
Education proved to be crucial for the empowerment, inclusion and participation of further vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities or ethnical minorities.
- in the field of **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION** and sustainable development examples are numerous, such as: use of clean and renewable energies. Let me mention education and training within the global network of low- and middle-income communities using solar energy, or education for the reduction of climate change and disaster risk in South Asia pacific region.
- Not to forget **PARTNERHIP** – It's great to see how education coalitions in Middle East brought all stakeholders together around the discussion of education budget.

Yet obstacles exist! Although most of the goals reviewed this year rely on education for their realisation, education is still underfunded. Worrying tendencies include:

- Freezing the budget for education for the next 20 years in Brazil;
- Total lack of funds or any plans to tackle the problem of 800 million illiterate adults world wide, and cutting adult education from the programmes of international development cooperation;
- Plans to eliminate gender equality from Peruvian education curriculum;
- In Tanzania - regulation that prevents girls who are pregnant going to or returning to school;
- Last but not least: shrinking space and support for civil society, which is one of the main carriers of educational activities for broad range of societal groups.

Leaving no one behind means basically – make sure that everyone has quality and affordable education - no matter sex, age, nation or religion.

At the opening session a paradigm of lifelong-learning on the way to achieving global goals was mentioned. I cannot think of a better sailing companion on this journey than education and lifelong learning. Thank you.

[H.G. Wells said that “human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe”. The choice is ours.]