

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Kimihiro Ishikane**  
**Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations**  
**Co-Chair of the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning**

**HLPF session on “SDG4 and interlinkages with other SDGs – Quality education”**

9 AM – 12 PM, 06 July 2022, Conference Room 4  
3 min speech

Madame Moderator,

I am honored to join the SDG4 review event on behalf of the five Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning. In recent months, the Group has been actively engaged in the preparatory process of the Transforming Education Summit to be held September, and we have expanded our membership reflecting the growing momentum towards the Summit.

I would like to share a few points that have been discussed in our Group to contribute to today’s SDG4 review, which we consider very timely.

First, we urgently need to recover from the unprecedented learning losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The negative impacts have disproportionately affected marginalized populations without access to remote learning. Lost educational opportunities will have lasting negative impacts on future generations, and on the future of every nation. This adds to the challenges from the pre-pandemic period: many children and youth, particularly in conflict-affected countries, remain out of school, and many students who are in school are not achieving minimum learning levels in reading and mathematics.

Second, there is an urgent need to improve the quality of education in a transformative manner. Japan, as the current lead Co-Chair of the Group of Friends, is serving as co-lead of Action Track 2 of the Summit preparatory process on “Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development”. The discussion looks into how quality education can empower learners with the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to face an uncertain and complex future, including rapidly changing economies and mounting problems to achieve sustainable development.

In this regard, we consider Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – as enshrined in Target 4.7 of SDG4 – to be an integral element to bring forth transformative changes in education. We will share innovations in and benefits from integrating ESD into all levels of education during a side-event to be organized by the Group of Friends on July 12th.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that in an age of uncertainty, the best way forward is to invest in people and education is the most powerful tool that helps people to make the right decisions to tackle our common agenda and achieve the SDGs. We, as the Group of Friends, remain committed to achieving SDG4 and bringing forth transformative changes in education.

Thank you.

(383 words)