

EASG

Education & Academia Stakeholder Group

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2024



What is HLPF?

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2024 was held from July 8 to July 17, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This annual event features a three-day ministerial segment and serves as the platform for reviewing global progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2024 theme, "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions," underscored the urgent need for action amidst global challenges.

Each year, the HLPF reviews a number of SDGs. This year, it focused on ending poverty (Goal 1), achieving food security (Goal 2), combating climate change (Goal 13), promoting peaceful societies (Goal 16), and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Goal 17). This HLPF also supported the implementation of outcomes from the 2023 SDG Summit,

Once again, EASG took on the responsibility of ensuring that SDG 4 was not forgotten.





EASG Side-Event

On July 10, the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group (EASG) hosted an official side event, focusing on the theme "Building Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions through Education." The event was moderated by Grant Kasowanjete (GCE), and featured presentations from Jacob Blasius (GSF), Vernor Muñoz (GCE), Israel Coelho (CLADE), and Katarina Popović (ICAE), who discussed the transformative power of education in fostering peace, democracy, and social justice. Key discussions revolved around innovative curriculum approaches, the role of open-source technologies, and the importance of education in promoting human rights and international understanding. An engaging panel discussion allowed participants to explore solutions for integrating peace education into various educational contexts. The event underscored the critical need for collaboration, increased financing and prioritization of education to break cycles of violence, empower marginalized communities, and promote sustainable peace.

Presentations from Katarina Popović (ICAE) and Israel Coelho (CLADE) can be found in [The EASG Document Library](#).

Special Event on Transforming Education

On July 11, 2024, the UN Secretary-General, in collaboration with the President of the GA and the President of the ECOSOC, convened a Special Event on Transforming Education. The event highlighted the crucial need for significant investment in education, particularly in developing countries, where the annual investment gap has reached \$100 billion. The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and various global conflicts, including the war in Ukraine, has exacerbated financial challenges for these nations, further hindering their ability to finance education.

The high-level opening included speeches from UN SG, President of the GA Dennis Francis, and President of ECOSOC Paula Narváez. Keynote addresses emphasized the urgency of addressing educational disparities and the importance of lifelong learning systems.



The event featured two main panels. The first panel, "Overcoming Obstacles: Transforming Education Financing" focused on innovative financing solutions and the need for international cooperation to bridge the education funding gap.

The second panel, "Towards a True Learning Society" underscored the importance of inclusive and equitable education systems. Panellists discussed the transformative potential of education in promoting peace, human rights, and sustainable development.

While the event underscored the critical importance of education and lifelong learning, it remains unclear how these discussions will translate into concrete follow-up actions or be integrated into the Pact for the Future and other UN processes. Despite the emphasis on their necessity, clear commitments to coordinated international engagement and actionable outcomes are still missing.



From the left, UN Secretary General, António Guterres, President of ECOSOC, Paula Narváez, Student representative from Commonwealth Students Association (CSA), Christina Williams.

A range of different events

During the HLPF, members of the EASG took part in a range of events. Rene Raya from [ASPBAE](#) and Grant Kasowanjete from [GCE](#) spoke at the side event with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), “[Advancing climate action through education](#)”, while Vernor Muñoz from GCE contributed to an event on addressing hate speech through education for more inclusive and peaceful societies. Before the HLPF event started, Katarina Popović from [ICAE](#) was a speaker at the [Youth Blast preparatory event](#). Katarina also spoke at the side event of the Brazilian government, “[SDG 18-Ethnic-Racial Equality in the 2030 Agenda](#)”, from which the picture below is from. These are just a snapshot of the many EASG contributions to this year’s HLPF.



Civil Society Weekend

The Civil Society Weekend Workshop, held on July 13, 2024, at Scandinavia House, was sponsored by Action for Sustainable Development, the NGO Major Group, CIVICUS, and the Global Call to Action Against Poverty. The workshop facilitated informal exchanges, networking, and dialogue on key issues for civil society engagement in the 2030 Agenda.

- In Session One, moderated by Mandeep Tiwana from CIVICUS, speakers emphasized the need to address digital gaps, remove language barriers, and create tools like a “How to UNMUTE Manual” to enhance civil society participation at the UN. The discussion highlighted the importance of strategic alliances, engagement with member states, and follow-up on agreements.
- Session Two, moderated by Nelya Rakhinova, featured ten panel members sharing national experiences with Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), focusing on including grassroots organizations in dialogues.
- Session Three involved small group dialogues on improving UN access and preparing for future summits, with feedback collected on enhancing civil society engagement in global forums.



UNESCO Lifelong Learning Exhibition

On July 11, UNESCO and the United Nations Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning launched an exhibition inside the UN headquarters. Titled "Lifelong Learning for All – Empowering Individuals, Transforming Societies," the exhibition highlighted lifelong learning's crucial role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Featuring powerful testimonials and personal stories, it showcased how continuous education empowers societies to combat poverty, climate change, and foster peace. EASG supports this initiative, emphasizing that education must be a lifelong pursuit to truly transform our world and make the right to education a reality for all.





Half of Denmark's time

Civil society faces increased limitations in the UN space. It was therefore a welcomed opportunity when Global Student Forum's Jacob Blasius spoke for half of Denmark's time during the general debate. [Read the speech.](#)



Intervention on SDG 16

GCE's Vernor Muñoz delivered a statement during the SDG 16 panel discussion. He underlined: "We hold the conviction that the surge in violence, authoritarianism, and threats to democracy must be addressed at their roots." [Watch the video of the intervention.](#)

Meeting the president(s) of ECOSOC

One organizing partner from each of the major groups and other stakeholders had a chance to meet the outgoing and incoming presidents of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was a welcomed opportunity to thank outgoing president Paula Narváez for her support of civil society engagement and start conversations with the new ECOSOC president, Bob Rae, on how to continue and build on the excellent work.



Discussing the value of representation with the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs

GSF's Jacob Blasius and Henry Wright had the chance to discuss meaningful student representation with the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, Felipe Paullier. At the one hour meeting, they discussed barriers to youth engagement at the United Nations, bridging the gap between the global youth, the global student movement, and global governance, and opportunities for democratic, intergenerational action.

After the HLPF, it was announced that Jacob Blasius will be one of only 12 global youth representatives joining the UN Youth Office's Core Group, which will advise the office on their strategic development.



Outcomes

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2024 produced several significant outcomes. The most important formal outcome is the adoption of the Ministerial declaration. This declaration, adopted after extensive negotiations and some last-minute adjustments, includes new paragraphs. One of the two paragraphs put to a vote recognized that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security. The other, newly proposed paragraph drew attention to the impact of unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions) on poverty and food security, among other SDGs. The Ministerial Declaration adopted at the end of the Forum “identifies the current situation and challenges, alongside future actions and investment pathways needed to reinforce the 2030 Agenda and deliver on the SDGs.

These additions sparked further discussions, as some countries viewed them as an attempt to push narrow political agendas, while others deemed them necessary. Ultimately, the Ministerial declaration was adopted by the HLPF and later endorsed by ECOSOC, which was again a precedent in a procedure.

While the Declaration itself may not drastically alter the implementation dynamics, it remains a crucial outcome amidst the current focus on the Summit for the Future.

Another significant outcome was the recognition of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic era. The three years of disrupted in-person interactions, including two years of online HLPF meetings and one year of hybrid formats, have led to a loss of advocacy spaces and dynamics, particularly affecting civil society. This reduction in space for civil society engagement was a major concern, and efforts were made by the EASG and MGOs to address and counteract this trend

A prevailing sentiment at the HLPF was the recognition that the world is not on track to meet the SDGs, necessitating new measures and efforts beyond business as usual. This sense of urgency and the call for transformation were evident throughout many of the sessions and reflected in the forum's outcomes.

The Secretary-General's report remains also an important element of the HLPF 2024, and it is worth noted that it emphasized the critical role of education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), presenting key data indicating that only about 17% of SDG targets are on track for achievement by 2030. This alarming statistic underscores the need for urgent action and heightened efforts, particularly as preparations for the Summit of the Future, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and the Second World Summit for Social Development are underway.

Education featured prominently in the Secretary-General's report and in many HLPF sessions, despite not being under review this year. Significant efforts were made to ensure that education and lifelong learning are included in the draft for the Summit for the Future. While some progress has been made in compensating for the lost time and opportunities, there is still much work to be done to ensure that education remains an important role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In summary, the HLPF 2024 outcomes reflect a clear understanding that the current trajectory is insufficient to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The forum highlighted the need for transformative actions and renewed efforts, particularly in education, to foster the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

The organising partners wants to say thank you for a great HLFP

Global Campaign for Education

Vernor Muñoz

International Council for Adult Education

Katarina Popović

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