Introduction

This meeting focused on reviewing the progress made so far in preparing and developing education targets and concomitant indicators for the post-2015 education agenda and Framework for Action to be adopted at the World Education Forum (WEF) in the Republic of Korea in May 2015. The UN Secretary-General’s Synthesis Report is expected to be issued in November 2014. The EFA Steering Committee (SC) will meet again in January 2015 and will return to proposed text amendments for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and Muscat-agreed targets in light of the content of this report.

UNESCO and the EFA SC Chair opened the meeting by underlining the importance of the Education for All Steering Committee’s work in the context of the post-2015 education agenda, both ahead of the WEF as well as in regards to establishing the post-2015 development agenda. Attendees acknowledged the importance of having presented the EFA Joint Proposal in New York to the Open Working Group (OWG), given that the OWG has adopted many of the targets from the Muscat Agreement, and the fact that the EFA SC represents the global education community as a whole, with representatives from Member States, UN agencies, CSOs, the private sector, and Oman and the Republic of Korea.

The 2014 United Nations General Assembly

During the most recent United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2014, it was decided that the proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would be the main basis for integrating SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda. Member States welcomed intergovernmental negotiations, which are due to begin in January 2015. The Secretary-General will issue a Synthesis Report in November which will set the tone for these intergovernmental negotiations. There are two lobby groups with regard to the selection of goals and targets: one in favour of reducing the number of and the other reluctant to reopen what is a contentious debate. The G77 + China leads on the latter position. There is a strong recommendation for Member States not to cherry pick goals and targets, and to adopt and respond to the full agenda. It is worth noting that an inter-agency committee on indicator development for the SDGs will be established by the UN, which is due to begin work in early 2015. A key message coming from sidelines of the UNGA is that we should NOT lower our ambitions, and not reduce our ambitions in the quest of easiest measurability.

Going forward, it was stressed that the EFA SC must be proactive in working with Member States, partners and civil society, in order to assume a key role in influencing the final definition of goals, targets and indicators - not only in regards to the EFA process (culminating in the World Education Forum), but also the New York (NY) process (culminating in the adoption of SDGs).

Considerations on the current text of proposed education targets

Re: amendments required to the current SDG text:

- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): explicit reference to one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education as it stands in the EFA SC proposal should be incorporated in the SDG text. Furthermore, the SDG text must retain the notion of ECCE (recognising it as the first stage of education,
as an integral part of the right to education, as was framed in the UNESCO ECCE conference in Russia in 2010), which is currently not the case.

- The notion of “affordable” education in reference to higher education in the SDG text is unclear and must be removed.
- In the Means of Implementation section (4c) teachers are only referred to superficially. A fundamental change is required to the final SDG text on this issue. Ideally, the reference to teachers will be recognised as a separate/stand-alone target, and not as a means of implementation.
- There needs to be a target on financing.

Re: amendments required to the EFA SC text:

- Currently, the EFA SC targets make references to ‘X’ and ‘Y’, leaving the percentage that targets aim to reach open-ended. The EFA SC recommended deleting such references and instead take on a perspective of “ALL” (in other words, 100%) in the targets. Other mechanisms to identify national nuances will then be put in place.
- The OWG Means of Implementation (4a) makes reference to educational facilities which are gender and child sensitive, and which provide safe, non-violent and inclusive learning environments. Reference to these dimensions must be made in the new Framework for Action being developed for approval in Korea.

Many important points were made during the debate. Of particular note were the following: (a) GRULAC stressed that UNESCO must be the leading agency in the implementation of the post-2015 education agenda. While the NY SDG process examines the development agenda, the EFA SC is discussing the global education agenda, from a broader and deeper perspective, and this should be the reference point for the education community. As education is a priority, the education agenda must be holistic by nature, and we must not accept a reduced version, even if that is what is approved in New York. Nevertheless, we must obviously incorporate positive elements of the NY agenda into our global education agenda; (b) Also on the subject of the NY process, the E-9 Initiative countries would like us to refer to the harmonisation of both frameworks as opposed to alignment (assuming the EFA Steering Committee puts forward a broader agenda); (c) Education International (EI) reiterated the importance of remaining ambitious: We must send a clear message to NY that we will not lower our expectations; (d) ASPABE pointed out that the regional EFA consultation in Asia outlined a more ambitious goal on adult education (100% adult literacy was put forward as an objective), and also on financing targets (6% of GDP and 20% of public expenditure); (e) GCE noted that in the Framework for Action we should ensure that the issue of education in conflict-affected situations is addressed, as it is not referred to in any of the current targets; (f) The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) pointed out that universal targets are helpful and that we should provide a definition of stepping stone targets in the Framework for Action; (g) UNESCO concluded by advising that the Muscat Agreement be used as a reference document. It is expected that the outcomes of the World Education Forum will form an integral part of the development agenda.

Work on indicators

The development of indicators now presents a major challenge as we approach the World Education Forum. The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) has presented its work so far on indicators. The EFA SC noted that the formulation of indicators is political rather than technical, and that the final decisions should rest with the SC and not the TAG. Overall, it was felt that the TAG’s proposals on indicators do NOT reflect the broad nature of the education targets that have been presented. There is a risk that more limited or ‘reductionist’ indicators could diminish the scope of the targets themselves. It was reiterated that Member States must adhere to international standards, based on legally binding conventions that have already been signed (for example, there must be an indicator relating to free education). It was pointed out that in the current TAG proposals, there is a lack of attention to equity and a narrow interpretation of quality (read,
write and count), which contradicts the spirit of the targets. Furthermore, it was noted that the TAG’s current proposals focus too much on outcome targets, and that a much more balanced approach that takes account of inputs and process must be put in place. In fact, there are currently NO process indicators. It was also pointed out that the TAG should place greater emphasis on national and regional indicator development experiences, which are more aligned to national priorities. Furthermore, since we anticipate the post-2015 education agenda will be embraced by the post-2015 development agenda, inter-sectoral indicators should also be developed.

Follow-up includes:

- The CCNGO coordination group will submit a written contribution to the TAG’s indicator document;
- Brazil will join the TAG;
- Education International (EI) will hold a meeting on indicators and will share its recommendations;
- Other initiatives on indicator development will be shared with the TAG, such as those from a human rights perspective, which take the 4As as a starting point and look at indicators of structure, process and outcomes;
- The EFA SC will send a letter to Ban Ki-moon and leaders of the new negotiation phase in NY to reiterate the importance that UNESCO, in dialogue with the other EFA convening agencies, continue its coordination role in the implementation of the post-2015 education agenda, and that it shares its progress on indicator development (once the above-mentioned restrictions have been tackled).

**Benchmarking**

The TAG also presented different proposals regarding grouping countries with similar educational contexts. This is to acknowledge the fact that different countries have different starting points, and this must be taken into account when monitoring progress. Challenging contexts such as conflict must also be taken into account when monitoring progress, so that the monitoring process is fair, engaging and constructive for furthering the implementation of the targets. This proposal was well-received overall, but more work is needed to define specific criteria by which countries could be grouped.

**Framework for Action (FA)**

Participants clarified that the Framework for Action should include (a) an introduction; (b) an outline of our principles (c) our vision (d) the global goal and targets accompanied by a brief explanatory note (e) Governance, Financing, Civil Society Participation, Monitoring and Accountability (f) National level: considerations suggested on clustering and benchmarking according to national context.

Other recommendations include:

- Re: governance - the Framework for Action has to specify that UNESCO must continue its coordinating role, in the post-2015 era, alongside other EFA co-conveners;
- The governance architecture must take the current structure as a starting point and improve on it (retain EFA SC, CCNGO, etc.);
- A reference to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is required, which must deliver on the approved agenda from the WEF;
- A reference to EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) is required. The GMR was recognised in both the Muscat Agreement and the CCNGO statement, but we need further recognition in regional conferences, the Framework for Action and in the global SDG process in general. Editorial
independence and sustainable funding is crucial. It was suggested that the GPE could finance the GMR. Lastly, it was noted that the GMR’s output goes beyond monitoring. It produces opinion pieces, blogs and other forms of communication. The new Framework for Action must acknowledge its role in this broader sense;
• There must be an explicit/clear reference to civil society. The CCNGO will contribute a text that relates to participation in policy dialogue and policy-making.

Re: process, other recommendations include:

• The Framework for Action should be a concise document, but we should not pre-determine the size at this point;
• The process of developing the Framework for Action and indicators must be transparent and must involve all stakeholders, so there is more of a sense of ownership.

**World Education Forum (WEF)**

The objectives and agenda of the WEF were presented and were well-received overall. The aim is to have high-level figures present at the opening of the Forum, such as the Korean President Park Geun-hye, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The WEF will be preceded by a one-and-a-half day civil society conference, which will be convened by UNESCO. The CCNGO coordination group will be fully involved in the preparation of this conference.

Important points and recommendations to note:

• The Framework for Action will be circulated beforehand so that there is increased ownership of the process ahead of the WEF;
• The EFA SC should be the starting point of the drafting group at the WEF, and should invite other Member States to participate.