



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO launches Futures of Education global initiative at United Nations General Assembly



UNESCO, launched the *Futures of Education* initiative to reimagine how knowledge and learning can shape the futures of humanity in a context of increasing complexity, uncertainty and precarity during a high level event at the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 25 September.

The initiative aims to reconsider how knowledge and learning can contribute to the common good of humanity, said UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay. Speaking of UNESCO's leadership role in education, Ms Azoulay said "Our deeply humanist DNA cannot let us reduce education to a technical or technological issue, nor even to an economic one."

The event was marked by the presence of President Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa of Portugal, President Rumen Radev of Bulgaria and the Prime Ministers of Norway and Andorra, Erna Solberg, and Xavier Espot respectively.

"UNESCO has an important role to play in visioning and strategizing on what should be the role and purposes of education," said the President of Ethiopia. "This new initiative brings that global intellectual leadership into a new era. As we face the profound challenges and exciting opportunities before us, we have a deep obligation to listen to children and youth and fully involve them in decisions about the future of our shared planet"

In his keynote address, Professor Arjun Appadurai stressed that "a vital task for educators in the next few decades will be to build the capacity of the young, the poor, and the marginal to imagine, to anticipate, and to aspire."

Educators, representatives of civil society, technology, academia and business also shared their diverse perspectives on the policy challenges and opportunities for learning systems of the future.

The establishment of an independent International Commission on the Futures of Education was announced during the launch. Under the chair of Ethiopian President Sahle-Work Zewde, the

International Commission is mandated to develop a flagship global report on the futures of education for release in 2021.

The Director-General said the project would engage “a global conversation as well as a report on the future of education, drawing on the diverse and fruitful ways of learning practiced around the world, resolutely forward-looking, yet grounded in human rights at the service of the dignity of all.”

[VIDEO](#)

The members of the Commission are: Masanori Aoyagi, Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo(Japan), Arjun Appadurai, Professor, New York University, and Hertie School,Berlin); Patrick Awuah, Founder and President, Ashesi University (Ghana); Abdel Basset Ben Hassen, President, Arab Institute for Human Rights ; Cristovam Buarque, Emeritus Professor, University of Brasilia (Brazil); Elsa Guerra Cruz, Founder, Colegio Valle de Filadelfia (Mexico); Badr Jafar, CEO, Crescent Enterprises (United Arab Emirates); Doh-Yeon Kim, President, Pohang University of Science and Technology (Republic of Korea); Justin Yifu Lin, Dean, Professor, Institute of New Structural Economics, Peking University; Evgeny Morozov, writer; Karen Mundy, Professor, Ontario Institute for the Study of Education (Canada); António Nóvoa, Ambassador of Portugal to UNESCO; Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Chair of the Board, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance and African Risk Capacity; Fernando M. Reimers, Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education (USA); Tarcila Rivera Zea, Executive Director, Centro de Culturas Indigenas del Perú (Peru); Serigne Mbaye Thiam, Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senegal; Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President, World Leadership Alliance/Club de Madrid, Former President of Latvia; and Maha Yahya, Director, Carnegie Middle East Center (Lebanon).

Futures of Education: Learning to Become: <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/>

UNESCO Press Contact for more information: Roni Amelan, r.amelan@unesco.org