

مِنْظَرَةُ الْعَالَمِ الْإِسْلَامِيِّ لِلتَّحْقِيقِ وَالرِّبَاةِ وَالرِّفْقَانِ
ISLAMIC WORLD EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION DU MONDE ISLAMIQUE POUR L'ÉDUCATION, LES SCIENCES ET LA CULTURE



Declaration of the Virtual Extraordinary Conference of the Ministers of Education in ICESCO Member States

The educational systems
facing crises and emergency situations - COVID-19

May 14th, 2020

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We, the Ministers of Education in the Islamic World, members and heads of the international and regional organizations participating in the works of the Virtual Extraordinary Conference of the Ministers of Education in ICESCO Member States;

As we thank **the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** and its **Director-General, His Excellency Dr. Salem bin Muhammad Al-Malik**, for calling the Extraordinary Virtual Conference of the Ministers of Education during this health emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and its ramifications and particularly the slump it has brought about in the educational sector as facilities and institutions have been closed.

As we extend our sincere expressions of thanks and appreciation to the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** and to the **Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz**, for accepting to embrace the initiative of holding and chairing the conference, as well as providing the technical support to it;

We declare the following:

1

We reiterate our support to the vision of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which consists in **guaranteeing the right to education as an essential human right and ensuring dignity, social justice and equality among learners**. We also renew our commitment to ensure that by 2030 our countries would achieve the fourth goal of our sustainable development agenda which is «**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.**»

2

We take note of the responses of the Member States to the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of the right to continued access to learning. We also value and draw lessons from their unrelenting vigor to mitigate the impact of the current global health crisis on the educational activity. In addition, we call on the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to prepare a **comprehensive document that gathers the mechanisms and procedures implemented by the Member States in order to lessen the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the education sector, and includes prevention mechanisms for future emergencies and crises;**

3

We note startling disparities between the Member States in mitigating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their educational systems. While some countries have handled the slump thanks to the readiness of their educational systems other countries have faced serious material and technical challenges to ensure continued access to learning.

Therefore, the **Member States commit, as far as possible, to deploy their resources and skills for mutual support and deeper coordination, cooperation and communication to guarantee the right of every child within the Islamic World to education, especially in emergencies and crises.**

4

We take note of the Member States plans and best strategies for school reopening amid a ceaseless spread of the coronavirus and serious concerns about a second wave outbreak coinciding with the school return.

We call for coordinating efforts and ensuring intervention effectiveness and expertise exchange between the Member States under the auspices of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization which we entrust with the task of **preparing guidelines that aim to inform the decision-making process regarding safe school reopening.**

5

We warmly welcome the pivotal role played by artificial intelligence and its applications, as stated in the report, in promoting the educational systems on the one hand, and in implementing the principles of education quality, fairness, equality and inclusion during emergencies and crises on the other hand.

We also commit ourselves to **harnessing the material and technical capabilities to benefit, as much as possible, from the advantages provided by these smart applications in the education sector.**

6

Based on our belief in the importance of Information and Communications Technology as it provides teaching alternatives to ensure continued access to learning especially in crises and emergencies, we commit ourselves to providing educational resources and open data to all categories of learners. We will likewise endeavor to ensure that **national legislations be in favor of establishing digital public educational facilities and considering virtual courses as a complement to face-to-face courses.**

7

We pledge to undertake prompt measures and launch effective practical crisis-recovery strategies to compensate the **educational losses**, already high in the Islamic World and exacerbated by the coronavirus outbreak that further compromised education quality and the principles of fairness, inclusiveness and equality.

We are committed to address the shortcomings and lacks in the academic achievements of students and the increased risks of dropout due to school closures, whether through national programs of schooling implemented directly after the pandemic control, or through « The Second Chance School» program. These programs, in cooperation with civil society organizations, aim at once to reintegrate dropouts and to provide academic support for graduating students.

8

We emphasize the need to **keep abreast of the new features of educational systems and their human and technical needs**, build capacities through training policies, vocational rehabilitation programs, guides, and training courses for all components of the educational family, in line with emerging practices, future directions and innovative roles of these systems after the Covid-19 pandemic.

We also call upon the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to include these issues among its priorities and to coordinate and consult with Member States and international organizations to provide the necessary services, consultations and expertise to reach the fixed objectives.

9

We recognize the colossal negative repercussions of crises and emergencies on women, girls, Children, categories with special needs, refugees, and people in rural and remote areas.

Therefore, we commit to adopting gender-sensitive approaches, rejecting all forms of discrimination against women and providing equal educational opportunities for all categories, without exceptions, in preparing strategies, action plans and education and learning budgets.

10

Conscious of the critical importance of mathematics and science, and recognizing the need to qualify our educational systems to make them competitive in international pupil and student assessment programs, we commit, as much as possible, to gradually work towards **standardizing mathematics and science programs in the Islamic World Countries**. In addition, we entrust ICESCO, in cooperation with the specialized international organizations, with the submission proposals in this regard to be presented to the relevant authorities in the Member States, before ratification during the next session of the Ministers of Education Conference.

11

We entrust the Organization of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as the specialized body in the field of education within the Islamic World, with **coordinating the efforts of the Member States** by facilitating the exchange of experiences and expertise, developing evaluation standards for the educational systems, defining guidelines to guarantee the right to education in emergency and crisis situations, tracking, monitoring and assessing the risks that threaten it, and consulting with financial and technical partners inside and outside the Islamic World in order to provide effective and viable solutions to guarantee the right to education and learning.

12

We support the Comprehensive Humanitarian Coalition initiative launched by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in order to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Member States.

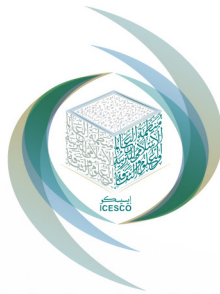
We commit ourselves to advocating this initiative internally and externally, and call upon States, governmental and non-governmental organizations, donor agencies and the private sector to contribute to the success of the aforementioned alliance by supporting its activities and initiatives.

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization pledges itself to take the necessary steps to ensure the effectiveness of the comprehensive humanitarian coalition interventions through directing support to the most needy Member States and giving education and learning the primary importance when setting priorities.

13

We stress the importance of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, especially during crises and emergencies, and **we are committed to ensuring the sustainability of the resources of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization through the regular payment of contributions to its budget, as well as working, as much as possible, to provide external resources**, so that it can fulfill the roles it is entrusted with pursuant to its charter and the resolutions of the General Conference, the Executive Council and the Specialized Ministerial Conferences.

Rabat, May 14th, 2020



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