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The world is seeing a surge of violent conflicts paralleled by a concerning rise of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and hate speech. According to the Global Peace Index 2023, the average level of global peacefulness deteriorated for the 13th time in the last 15 yearsⁱ. 2022 was recorded as the deadliest year since 1994, the year of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and the Yugoslav warsⁱⁱ. In 2022, the overall global economic impact of violence increased by USD 1 trillion to a total of about 17.5 trillion, almost a quarter of global GDPⁱⁱⁱ.

In our interconnected and interdependent world, these numbers do not capture the magnitude of human suffering, nor of the shocks they cause to the societal fabric around the world. The impact of conflicts is felt far beyond war zones and transcends any boundary based on geography, gender, race, religion, politics, offline and online, and leaves a legacy of traumas. Hate speech, in particular, not only causes harm at the personal level and can incite group-targeted violence: it is also an attack on inclusion, diversity and human rights.

In this context, an active commitment to peace is more urgent than ever. This commitment ought to surpass security and defense measures to prevent or stop conflicts, for peace does not begin where violence ends. Sustaining peace requires a strong foundation of inclusive, democratic and participatory governance, dialogue, solidarity, mutual understanding and cooperation, sustainable development, gender equality and the general realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education is key to this endeavor. This pertinent role of education should reverberate in the ongoing negotiations towards a Pact for the Future to be launched at the Summit of the Future in 2024^{iv}.

Education for peace needs to be transformative at its core, as jointly underlined by the UNESCO [Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development](#)^v, and the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education^{vi} which calls for a new social contract for education.

A transformed and well-resourced education system can be an effective long-term preventative tool that protect, build and sustain peace before, during and after conflict. Before conflict, such an education can lay the preventative foundations that make conflicts difficult to erupt by helping all learners realize their fundamental human right to accessible and equitable quality education. This is fundamental, especially when more than 250 million children and youth are out of school globally, and most of those in school are not acquiring the basic skills. Additionally, 44 million teachers are needed to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030. These challenges are compounded further by the lack of adequate resources for education. More than 70% of countries allocate less than 4% of GDP to education^{vii}.

Anchored on a strong foundation of accessibility, equity and quality, education, especially when mainstreamed in global peacebuilding efforts, can play a protective role when there is a continuity of learning, especially for those marginalized during conflict. Education can also contribute to redressing inequities, inequalities and injustices by ensuring that all learners are represented and recognized in all facets of education. Lastly, it can facilitate post-conflict recovery, justice and reconciliation^{viii}.

Education placed at the center of our commitment to peace can help empower learners with the necessary knowledge, values, attitudes and skills and behaviours to become agents of peace in their immediate communities. As conceptualized in UNESCO's [Global Citizenship Education](#), these defenses of peace include cognitive, social and emotional skills, and behavioural competencies to, for example, address issues ranging from hate speech and discrimination to all violent conflicts.

The International Day of Education 2024 aims to:

- Mobilize Member States and partners to maintain education at the top of the political agenda and deliver on their TES and Education 2030 commitments;
- Generate visibility at the local and global levels on the importance of education in strengthening and sustaining peace, as outlined in SDG4 Target 4.7, and other global education efforts;
- Advocate for higher levels of domestic and international financing for education in general, and education for peace in particular, especially through innovative and multistakeholder mechanisms and partnerships;
- Highlight and celebrate the peacemaking role of youth and educators in and through education towards just, inclusive and peaceful societies;
- Provide a platform to discuss priorities and challenges for education for peace in contexts of increased protracted global crisis and conflicts;
- Rally influencers and the wider civil society to push forward the movement to bring education into the center of local, national, regional and global peacebuilding efforts;
- Raise awareness for effective approaches in education for peace and mobilize commitment for their implementation.

More information available on <https://on.unesco.org/EducationDay2024>

ⁱ Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index 2023: Measuring Peace in a Complex World, Sydney, June 2023. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources> (accessed 27/10/2023).

ⁱⁱ Ibid. page 3

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. page 4

^{iv} [Summit of the Future website - EN | United Nations](#)

^v [Revision of the 1974 Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms | UNESCO](#)

^{vi} [Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education; executive summary - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

^{vii} [Education transforms lives | UNESCO](#)

^{viii} Novelli, M., Lopes Cardozo, M., & Smith, A. (2017). The 4Rs Framework: Analysing education's contribution to sustainable peacebuilding with social justice in conflict-affected contexts. *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, 3(1), 14-43. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.17609/N8S94K>