

Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour

5th Global Conference on
the Elimination of Child
Labour, Durban,

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Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Summary of main points of relevance to education international and its member organisations

According to the 2020 Global Estimates of Child Labour, there are 160 million girls and boys in child labour and over the five years, 2016 -2020, child labour increased by 8.9 million, entirely among children aged 5 -11. Target 8.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals calls for an end to child labour in all its forms by 2025.

The Durban Call to Action is a further important international commitment which can be used by Education International and its member organisations in a number of ways:

1. To support advocacy to strengthen quality public education as a tool to contribute to the elimination of child labour.
2. To reaffirm the human right to education and the provision of free, compulsory, quality, basic education.
3. To reaffirm the central role of social dialogue, the importance of the ILO and the ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work, including freedom of association and collective bargaining.

This call to action addressed to the governments of all UN Member States comes in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, which coupled with increasing humanitarian and environmental crises, has reversed progress to eliminate child labour in recent years. It builds on the body of international conventions, UN and multilateral conferences and commitments, in particular the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development target 8.7 to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. It recalls the universal ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and other ILO Conventions, including the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also builds on the commitments made in the context of the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, and the outcomes of the previous Global Child Labour Conferences.

The six-point call commits all governments to scale up action includes:

(IV) Realize children's right to education and ensure universal access to free, compulsory, quality, equitable and inclusive education and training.

Crucially, the Call to Action recognises the need to support teachers' unions as part of the effective measures to realize the right to education.

The implementation mechanisms

These recognise the leading role of the ILO as a centralised information repository on child labour, in particular for Member States National Action Plans for the elimination of child labour. Member States are encouraged to include information on actions to eliminate child labour in their regular reports to the ILO on ratified Conventions, including C. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour and C. 138 on Minimum Age of employment.

Immediate and effective measures for governments to take

The Call to Action to governments identifies 49 measures grouped into six headings:

Decent work and rights at work: This section emphasises the importance of the ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work, including freedom of association, and the right to collective bargaining, and the inter-related and mutually reinforcing character of these rights at work. It also calls for strengthening mechanisms of social dialogue.

Ending child labour in agriculture: Among other points, this section calls for increased support for innovative vocational education and training in agriculture-food production and processing services.

Preventing and eliminating child and forced labour through data-driven policy and programmatic responses: This section calls for strengthened capacity of child protection and education services, the promotion of universal access to birth registration, and accessible and affordable quality childcare. It recognises the importance of fostering systemic behavioural changes at community level on the need to abandon child labour practices and to raise awareness on the right to education. It calls for 'protecting the right to compulsory education' in crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters.

Realising children's right to education: This section (points 28 - 34 of the call to action) provides a comprehensive set of measures which can be welcomed and adopted as policy and used in advocacy by education unions worldwide.



Pt 28 calls for:

- measures to eliminate barriers to quality, compulsory education, such as distance, costs, security, and gender and disability-specific barriers;
- promotion of universal scholarships and school feeding programmes;
- ensuring no one is excluded from quality education, taking into account the needs of the most vulnerable, such as migrant children;
- ensuring alignment between the minimum age of employment and the age of completion of compulsory education (in line with ILO C. 138).

Pt 29 calls for:

- expanding education infrastructure for schools, safe commuting solutions, and universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene in schools;
- reinforcing national and international efforts to close the digital divide;
- supporting curriculum development by including subjects related to food and agriculture.

Pt 30 calls for:

- improving teaching and learning outcomes, including by recruiting qualified teachers in sufficient numbers;
- providing teachers with good conditions of work;
- supporting teachers' unions;
- promoting learner-centred approaches and relevant learning content;
- improving literacy on a large scale.

Pt 31 calls for:

- action to prevent all forms of violence and harassment in schools;
- action to prohibit corporal punishment;
- support to teachers and pupils to adopt non-violent behaviours.

Pt 32 calls for:

- training, skills development and vocational education for girls and boys above the minimum age of employment, including quality apprenticeships, particularly in rural areas.

Pt 33 calls for:

- support to ensure successful school-to-work transition.

Pt 34 calls for:

- ensuring the necessary funding of compulsory education so that all governments seek to commit at least four to six per cent of GDP and/or at least 15 to 20 per cent of public expenditure to education, as recommended by the UNESCO Education 2030 Framework.



Achieving universal access to social protection: This section calls on governments to extend inclusive social protection, including through the establishment of national social protection floors; promote universal child benefit payments and basic household income security for all; and support robust parental benefit systems, including maternity and paternity benefits.

Increasing financing and international cooperation: This last section includes the following main measures to take:

- mobilise domestic resources and adequately fund national action plans;
- promote policy coherence between social, trade, agricultural, financial, labour, economic and education and training policies;
- assist developing countries to attain long-term debt sustainability;
- call upon international and regional financial institutions to enable sufficient and timely access to funds for the effective implementation of the Durban Call to Action;
- support for multilateralism, South-South and triangular cooperation and the leading role of the ILO and Alliance 8.7;
- strengthening international cooperation to eliminate child labour and forced labour among indigenous and tribal peoples, minority groups, migrant populations and other vulnerable groups.

How can education unions use the Durban Call to Action?

Education unions, in cooperation with other trade unions, such as rural workers or plantation workers' unions, and trade union centres have a vital role to play in ensuring that governments are held accountable for the implementation of the measures to which they committed in the Durban Call to Action.

Advocacy with the National Assembly/ Parliament

Unions can contact sympathetic members of Parliament to ask them to raise questions about the actions the government is proposing to take in order to implement the measures in the Durban Call to Action. In developed countries, these questions could focus particularly on funding commitments to increase expenditure on education and ensuring policy coherence in any trade or cooperation agreements with countries where child labour exists. In countries with high levels of child labour, these questions could focus on how the country intends to meet the commitment to earmark 15%-20% of public expenditure to education.

Awareness -raising with union members

Unions can post articles about the Call to Action on websites or their social media, distribute the summary provided by EI to their membership, and include information sessions about the Durban Call to Action in Branch meetings or other education activities.



Advocacy with the education community

Unions can distribute the EI summary about the Call to Action to School Boards, PTAs, local education authorities, Municipal Councils and other civil society organisations. Unions can hold meetings to explain the main commitments and to discuss how to collaborate for its effective implementation or coordinate advocacy strategies.

Awareness -raising with general public

Union leaders can carry out media campaigns (radio and TV interviews, social media and podcasts, articles in mainstream press) to outline the main commitments concerning the right to education in the Durban Call to Action. Unions can use the opportunities of local or general elections to question candidates about what actions they propose in order to fulfil the measures outlined in the Call to Action.