



Resolution on Rebuilding the Asia-Pacific: Educators and Their Unions at the Forefront Towards a Sustainable Future

The 9th Education International Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on 18–20 October 2022, in considering the theme “Rebuilding the Asia-Pacific: Educators and their unions at the forefront towards a sustainable future”:

- (1) Affirming that educators and their unions must be meaningfully recognised and appreciated for their invaluable role in promoting a sustainable, equal, and just future for all and, in particular, for advancing a comprehensive, holistic, and inclusive recovery of the education sector in the Asia-Pacific region, more than two years into the COVID-19 pandemic and several decades into the climate crisis;
- (2) Having adopted sustainable development, in furtherance of the *2030 Agenda* and the *Education 2030 Framework for Action*, as a fundamental, unifying framework for addressing contemporary issues of local and global scope, including sectoral concerns for educators and education unionists, in an interconnected and organic manner;
- (3) Acknowledging that the rights-based, transformative vision of people-centred sustainable development, at its core, necessitates upholding human dignity and thus addressing structural inequities within and between countries, across all sectors, particularly in education where such inequalities in power and access to resources and opportunities hold the world back from fulfilling the promise of leaving no one behind;
- (4) Reaffirming the abiding commitment of the global trade union movement to facilitating a just transition and the achievement of sustainable development, in view of workers’ experience in confronting industrial change, their dedication to promoting decent work and protecting their workplace and the surrounding natural environment, and their belief in ensuring that all peoples thrive under improved living standards and quality of life;
- (5) Recalling from the 8th EI World Congress in July 2019:



- (i) the Resolution on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which emphasised ‘the interconnectedness and importance of all the SDGs’ and highlighted how SDG 4 on education relates to ‘SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 8 on decent work, SDG 10 on reducing inequality, SDG 13 on combating climate change, SDG 16 on peaceful societies, and SDG 17 on means of implementation as particularly central to EI’s values and work’; and
 - (ii) the Resolution recognising the crucial role of education and research for the environment and the future of humanity, urging teachers and scientists to ‘interact with workers’ and citizens’ trade unions in every country, in order to support the movements fighting against global ecological and social crises and force governments to adopt education and research policies that make it possible to ensure that human beings can live on a planet that is sustainable’;
- (6) Further recalling the Resolution on the theme of the 8th EIAP Regional Conference, “Transforming Asia Pacific: Education Unions Driving Education 2030 Agenda”, which acknowledged that ‘all 17 SDGs are integrally related, and teacher unions have a role in improving the quality of life for all’;
- (7) Reiterating that a wide range of EI policy and programmatic priorities in the Asia-Pacific region, as particularly aligned with the strategic directions of System, Status, Rights and Democracy, and Renewal, including Partnerships and Communication, already correspond to and aim for the genuine and full attainment of SDGs;
- (8) Commending the various campaigns, projects, initiatives, resolutions, and activities undertaken by EIAP affiliates toward realising sustainable development, including their actions to promote equity and uphold human rights, to defend democracy and sustain solidarity, to advance climate justice, and to advocate for a comprehensive, holistic, and inclusive recovery in the education sector;
- (9) Emphasising that the dimensions of and pathways to sustainable development do not exist in silos and are instead thematically interconnected with the different areas of work on which education unions in the Asia-Pacific generally focus their advocacy and partnership efforts, to wit:
 - (i) education financing, given that schools and education institutions must keep pace with the demand for resources and updated, appropriate infrastructures and help teachers more capably address pedagogical challenges amid emergencies and disasters;



- (ii) trade union and human rights, given that unions, as partners in social and policy dialogues, are instrumental in setting standards, developing human rights instruments, and strengthening mechanisms for social protection along the wide spectrum of sustainable development;
 - (iii) just transition and climate justice, given that universal climate change education (CCE), based on science and strongly focused on civic action, can help shape a global citizenry equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to sustain the planet and all living systems, prepare current and future generations for jobs in a green economy and a more sustainable world of work, and amplify the voices of marginalised and vulnerable groups in the mainstream climate discourse; and
 - (iv) inclusive recovery, given that those who have the highest stakes in sustainable development – women and girls, Indigenous communities, LGBTI people, persons with disability, and other vulnerable groups, especially in the Asia-Pacific – have historically been left farthest behind and excluded from decision- or policymaking processes on matters that otherwise concern their rights and interests;
- (10) Noting with deep concern that the crises brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, and their corresponding impacts, have sharpened even more starkly the interlocking social dimensions of sustainable development in education, particularly with respect to:
- (i) education financing, as school closures following COVID-19 lockdowns are projected to increase the funding gap to meet SDG 4 to 200 billion USD annually in low and lower-middle-income countries, per 2020 estimates by UNESCO;
 - (ii) trade union and human rights, as several authoritarian governments in the Asia-Pacific region have weaponised draconian policies and repressive legislation, often justified as emergency laws, to legitimise attacks on education unionists' rights to organise and protest, their right to assembly and free expression, and their right to equal protection under the law, among other otherwise constitutionally enshrined freedoms and civil liberties;
 - (iii) just transition and climate justice, as governments in the Asia-Pacific region, though home to some of the world's most vulnerable populations, have yet to



prioritise providing universal CCE and investing in transforming and strengthening education systems amid ever more devastating climate extremes and disasters; and

- (iv) inclusive recovery, as minorities, indigenous peoples, and other marginalised and vulnerable groups have disproportionately suffered significant learning loss, among other impacts of abrupt school closures, due to their generally limited access to digital devices or the lack of an enabling environment at home or in their communities for their continued education online or remotely;

(11) Urges governments in the Asia-Pacific to:

- (i) adequately fund all levels of public education, and more specifically:
 - a. increase the size of education budgets and allocate a share of 4–6 per cent of the country's gross domestic product or at least 15 per cent of the public expenditure to education, in line with the Incheon Declaration's benchmark;
 - b. align available financial resources, in budget planning and disbursement, with countries' national development and education goals;
 - c. prioritise tackling inadequacies of material resources and professional needs of teachers and education support personnel in schools already at risk of falling behind, such as those in low-income areas, by setting up targeted arrangements for additional financing from predictable funding streams;
 - d. supplement domestic investments in education by urging international donors and multilateral institutions, such as the Global Partnership for Education, to meet their funding commitments, scale up and mobilise financing from various sources, and coordinate their strategies for allocation;
- (ii) safeguard the trade union and human rights of all educators, including their terms and working conditions at all times, and more specifically:



- a. formulate and implement or strengthen existing laws that protect teachers' and education unions' rights to organise, strike, and collectively bargain;
 - b. prohibit by law any discriminatory practice against teachers and education support personnel based on union membership or their choice to exercise their civil and political rights;
 - c. abolish practices, laws, and regulations that criminalise union activities or legitimise reprisals and retaliation against educators who report discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and other acts of violence;
 - d. hold authorities and law enforcement officers accountable for the use of violence against teachers, especially during protests, marches, and other union activities, or for their denial of equal protection of the law to teachers and education unionists under arrests, detained or held in custody, imprisoned, or otherwise politically persecuted; and
 - e. engage in social and policy dialogues with educators and their unions, particularly on education policies concerning their rights and welfare, wellbeing and job security, social protection and proper compensation, and the agenda for decent work;
- (iii) put just transition priorities on countries' national development and climate agendas and, more specifically, heed education unions' calls for quality CCE for all, as encapsulated in a conference statement adopted by EI member organisations in the Asia-Pacific on 12 October 2021 and reiterated, in part, as follows:
- a. develop and implement national climate action plans that include CCE in their commitments, such as its compulsory integration into national curricula at all levels of education;
 - b. involve representatives of teachers and education support personnel, as well as student organisations and vulnerable groups such as Indigenous peoples, among other stakeholders, in the review, development, monitoring, and evaluation of national CCE programmes;



- c. invest in climate-proofing schools, education institutions, learning environments, and their infrastructures across every jurisdiction, but most especially in disaster-prone areas;
 - d. incorporate CCE into pre- and in-service training and education of teachers, as well as in their continuing professional development, and at the same time increase funding for teacher training institutions; and
 - e. provide teaching and learning resources on CCE that are social justice-oriented, gender-sensitive, contextually and culturally appropriate, and flexible to the development needs of teachers and students;
- (iv) ensure that principles of social inclusion are embedded and reflected in the design and conduct of education programmes, especially during and in rebuilding from crises, and more specifically:
- a. develop or strengthen and enact rules and regulations protecting the rights of all students to quality public education, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion, and corresponding laws prohibiting discrimination against students and educators based on the abovementioned demographic background, identity, or ability;
 - b. provide teachers and education support personnel with professional and material support in aid of their efforts at reducing the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 school closures on the continuity of learning for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, addressing learning loss, and making up for the lost instructional time, and mobilise and sustain such baseline support as contingency in cases of future crises, such as large-scale school disruptions;
 - c. ensure all students have access to, and all educators thrive in, safe and inclusive schools, free from discrimination, harassment, and violence;
 - d. promote equitable domestic spending on education services, such as re-enrolment and remediation programmes, financial aid, and welfare schemes, for students and educators from poor and marginalised backgrounds; and



- e. require education institutions to set up rigorous accountability systems and perform independent equity audits of institutional practices and working conditions that could further disadvantage or harm vulnerable groups of students and educators;

(12) Calls upon EI member organisations in the Asia-Pacific to continue their local, sub-regional, and regional advocacy campaigns on education financing, trade union and human rights, just transition and climate justice, and inclusive recovery, putting forward the abovementioned calls to their governments and advancing all the necessary preconditions for achieving sustainable development.