**47th session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation and   
capacity-building**

***Theme: Technical cooperation to advance the right to education and ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all***

*Concept note (as of 7 July 2021)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Monday, 12 July 2021, 9 to 11 a.m. Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online platform (Zoom)** *(will be broadcasted live and archived on* [*http://webtv.un.org*](http://webtv.un.org)*)* |
| **Objectives:** | The panel discussion provides a platform to share experiences on the activities and plans of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and relevant United Nations country teams and agencies and regional organizations to support States’ efforts to promote and protect the right to education, including those aimed at alleviating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of the right to education, ensuring the continuity of education for all, and addressing educational inequalities, with particular attention given to girls and to children in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. |
| **Chair:** | H.E. Mr. Yuri Borissov Sterk, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statements:** | **Mr. Mahamane Cissé-Gouro**, Officer-in-Charge of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **Moderator:** | **H.E. Mr. Rongvudhi Virabutr**, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative / Chargé d’affaires a.i. of Thailand to the United Nations Office at Geneva  *Video screening: Testimonies of children and youth about the impact of COVID-19 measures on their access to and quality of education* |
| **Panellists:** | * **Ms. Esi Sutherland Addy**, Former Minister of Education and Culture of Ghana and former Chair of the Board of Trustees on the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights *(video message)* * **Ms. Stefania Giannini**, Assistant Director-General for Education,United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) * **Mr. Fahad Al-Sulaiti**, Chief Executive Officer, Education Above All (EAA), Qatar *(video message)* |
| **Mandate:** | In its resolution [45/32](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/45/32), the Human Rights Council decided to focus the annual panel discussion under agenda item 10 on technical cooperation to advance the right to education and ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. |
| **Format:** | The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. After the opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists, there will be two segments of interventions, followed by conclusions from the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the opening statement, panellists’ presentations, and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 12 States or observers, 1 national human rights institution and 2 non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions.  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. |
| **Background:** | Education is not only a fundamental human right in itself but a right that enables access to all other human rights. Investing in education, including human rights education, is the most cost-effective way to drive economic development, to improve skills and opportunities for young women and men, to unlock progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and to prevent conflict and sustain peace. Education remains the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults, young people and children can lift themselves out of poverty and secure the means to participate fully as citizens in their own communities.  The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed in its article 26 that ‘Everyone has the right to education’. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides a comprehensive recognition of the right to education in its article 13. The right to education is also recognized under other international conventions including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and further elaborated in other international treaties and conventions, notably in the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education adopted in 1960, as well as the UNESCO Convention on Technical and Vocational Education of 1989.  The right to education is guaranteed for all on non-discriminatory basis and encompasses (a) the right of access to quality education; (b) the practice of human rights in and through education; and (c) education as a right that facilitates the fulfilment of other rights. In realizing the right to education, States should ensure that the education system is available for all through sufficient number of educational institutions, is accessible to all regardless of their social/ethnic groups, disability or economic status, is acceptable and adaptable. These obligations prevail even during a crisis. Furthermore, in its general comment No. 13 on the right to education, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides guidance to States in fulfilling their core obligations to respect, protect and fulfil key elements of the right to education with regard to ensuring availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability of education on a non-discriminatory basis.  The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an impetus to reimagine education and strengthen the resilience and preparedness of education systems, firmly grounded in the right to education and the international human rights framework more broadly. In responding to and recovering from the pandemic, States need to adopt a rights-based, inclusive approach to their legal and policy frameworks to ensure that everyone has the right to education and that no one is left behind.  Experiences over the last years have demonstrated the value of key components on good practices in the context of technical cooperation elaborated by the Board of Trustees. Education plays a critical role in building back better from the pandemic and in strengthening national systems for the promotion and protection of all human rights. In recovering better, strong leadership is needed from national Governments and the international community to strengthen the right to education and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education for all. Partnership and effective participation by all stakeholders are essential to mobilize knowledge and develop innovative solutions, including in addressing the digital divide that the pandemic has starkly demonstrated. |
| **Background documents:** | * [Human Rights Council resolution 45/32](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/45/32) of 7 October 2020 on enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights * Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the activities of the Office, the United Nations system and regional organizations to support States’ efforts to promote and protect the right to education ([A/HRC/47/56](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session47/Documents/A_HRC_47_56_AdvanceEditedVersion.docx), July 2021) * Report of the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights ([A/HRC/46/70](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/70), February 2021) * Report of the Secretary-General on the question of the realization of economic, social and cultural rights in all countries: the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights ([A/HRC/46/43](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/43), January 2021) * Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the enjoyment of human rights around the world, including good practices and areas of concern ([A/HRC/46/19](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/19), January 2021) * Secretary-General’s Policy Brief: [Education during COVID-19 and beyond](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf) * Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education ([E/C.12/1999/10](https://undocs.org/e/c.12/1999/10)) |