

**EI President Susan Hopgood
Education for Sustainable Development
and Education for Global Citizenship Remarks
28 June, 2017**

Let me begin by saying how pleased Education International is about this new commitment of the world's governments to universal education for sustainable development, global citizenship and human rights.

We – and by we, I mean the 32-and-a-half million teachers and education support personnel that form Education International – have been entrenched in these issues for a long time. In fact, they are at the core of teaching and quality education. Contained in target 4.7 is everything that education unions have been advocating for since our creation. Welcome to our world. Beyond the text we must take a collective approach as the SDGs cut across and through everything we do – this is the 'why' of education.

However, since this agenda was adopted to great fanfare, the political climate around the world has changed greatly. Nationalistic tendencies are creeping into too many societies, forcing us to shift efforts from the very challenges we united around only a short time ago. Education International sees this first-hand.

In Bahrain, the leader of our affiliate, Mahdi Abu Dheeb, was disappeared under the cover of darkness one night after he spoke up for teachers' rights. In Turkey, just last week, we were shocked by the government's decision to toss the teaching of evolution from the curriculum. Of course, this followed the dismissal of thousands of teachers for political reasons. In Liberia, the government has decided to hand its education system to Bridge International, replacing teachers with tablets to profit off of the poor. And here in the United States

teachers are being lobbied by fossil fuel companies to alter their lesson plans in favour of dirty energy and the pursuit of big money.

Colleagues, these are only a few examples of the uphill struggle we still face. Education International has three major components required to get back on track to make sustainable development education a reality.

First, education systems must be recognised as the drivers that ensure our children have the knowledge and the tools to not only navigate both an increasingly warming climate and shifting political landscape, but to grow-up with an appreciation of both the world around them and of their fellow citizens. Altering a curriculum goes beyond rewriting text books. The success of any change to a curriculum comes down to the teacher's ability and freedom to integrate it into her lessons and make it meaningful for her students.

A major component for systemic change and sustainability is financing. Governments globally are not meeting their funding commitments to education, and where they do make investments, these benefit the privileged at the expense of the most marginalised, effectively widening inequalities. We hear this from our members; teaching and learning continues to take place in unsafe and unhealthy environments, without oversight, and often with overcrowded classrooms, scarce materials and poor sanitary facilities.

Without government funded, free quality education and highly qualified, well supported and remunerated teachers and education support personnel, there is no chance of every child and young person getting the education they deserve. Neither is there much chance of countries having stable societies or sustainable economies.

Second, as an organisation which represents the teaching profession, we know that educators must be given both the professional space and

the tools to not only include sustainable development, human rights and global citizenship in their lessons, but to adapt them to and live these values in their classroom realities. Tools, time and trust: these are the three 't's required to strengthen the profession and deliver on 4.7.

It is not possible to make sustainable development central to our teaching if valuable planning and collaboration time is wasted on helping students achieve a score on a standardised math test. Teachers must be given the freedom to teach, and education must return to a holistic approach and away from the zero sum game of dollars and cents, freeing our teachers from oppressive standardised tests which put them in a corner, forcing them to only teach what is tested. Education *should* make students employable, but the real issue is to solve concrete problems that threaten the sustainability of our planet. These are among the New Imperatives of educational change.

Finally, our third requirement to making education central to a sustainable future is to build the actual curriculum required to do it. As I have said, this is going to require more than just adding a chapter to a text book. We are tasked with rethinking the entire curricula in order to make sustainable development, within the guise of global citizenship education, a component of all subjects.

For us as teachers, quality education isn't teaching about the SDGs but *teaching the SDGs* – the knowledge, skills and values needed to create a better world. This *is* our job. We are constructing the SDGs as we discuss them here. By teaching *the* SDGs we make them existential.

By choosing the right method we can encourage the agency of students – not just things being described to them, but rather help students take action and create the opportunity to get involved. This is how change becomes tangible.

Colleagues, dirty air is a shared problem, terrorism has no boundaries, the effects of gender inequality are not limited to authoritarian regimes, and the repercussions of cheap labour are felt far from the factory floors. The SDGs are the opportunity to create a reality where clean air is for all, where we see what makes us similar and celebrate the things which makes us different, and where equity and equality are the norm. This is the interconnected world we should be striving to live in. We can begin by making education the pillar of a better, more sustainable world.

Thank you.