



Annual Report 2019

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Throughout this challenging year, Education International drove union solidarity across borders and shaped the global agenda on education.

Scroll through the timeline below to find out more about our work in 2019.

January

Headlines

1. Annual EI Development Cooperation meeting: setting the roadmap for 2023

The annual Education International Development Cooperation meeting is a key tool to gather education unions to exchange information, experiences and ideas to build up the capacity of their members.

The 2019 annual Development Cooperation (DC) meeting, for which some 38 organisations from all over the globe have already registered, will bring together representatives of Education International (EI) member organisations in Brussels, Belgium, from 14-16 January.

“EI fully supports programmes to strengthen the teachers’ trade union movement and notes that long-term, structured cooperation is the basis for meeting the needs of teachers’ organisations in developed and developing countries,” reiterated EI General Secretary David Edwards.

“In 2019, as is the case since its inception, EI will go on acting first and foremost as a facilitator in this process of cooperation, and systematically collect and disseminate information, promote discussions on the quality of cooperation, and safeguard the principles agreed upon,” Edwards also insisted.

Based on responses from 70 education unions to a survey carried-out by the EI Solidarity and Development Unit, the conversations and discussions during the meeting will address the strengthening of the programmes in order to meet the organisations’ needs and follow-up on EI policies that will be debated and adopted at the World Congress in July 2019.

Edwards also expressed his confidence that the draft guidebook ‘[A DC project from A to Z](#)’ mapping out the basic principles serving as guidelines for cooperation within EI, which will be presented at the meeting, will be an efficient basis for trade union DC work.

More information about the programme of the DC meeting can be found on the [DC 2019 website](#). A significant portion of the meeting will be devoted to side meetings.

2. Philippines: Teacher unionists threatened

Education International has launched an urgent action appeal encouraging the global community of educators and activists to express outrage at the death threats received by the General Secretary of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers Raymond Basilio, and at the unlawful profiling of ACT members by the authorities.

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) has reported that its General Secretary Raymond Basilio received death threats on his personal mobile phone. One call came during an ACT press conference on 11 January 2019, at which the education union denounced the constant harassment and threats faced by its members and leaders. The caller, who appeared to know about Basilio’s personal details and about his family, claimed an order had been issued for Basilio’s killing unless he agreed to cooperate with the caller’s demands.

Despite the denial of the Philippine National Police and the authorities, ACT has also learned of continuing unlawful profiling of its members carried out by the police in different regions of the nation, in a serious breach of both national and international law. In a letter to President Duterte dated 22 January, Education International (EI) denounced such practices violating the principles of freedom of association, equality and non-discrimination, as well as the rights to respect for private life and data protection.

In this letter, EI urges the Government of the Philippines to ensure the security of Basilio, to ensure that the privacy of ACT members is respected, and to carry out independent investigations on the above-mentioned facts.

EI therefore invites member organisations and their members to:

- Send a [letter of protest](#) to President Rodrigo Duterte (copying EI);
- Petition the authorities through the [LabourStart campaign](#);
- Give visibility to the LabourStart petition by recommending it to colleagues, union members and networks; post it on the trade union website, on Facebook and on Twitter.
- Contact their Government and the diplomatic representation of their country in the Philippines, requesting that they initiate a dialogue on these issues with the Filipino authorities.

The deteriorating human rights situation for the indigenous communities in Mindanao – one of the main islands of the country – and its impact on teachers, students and their right to education, continues to be a major concern. EI has repeatedly called on the Filipino government to endorse the [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict](#).

EI stands in solidarity with its affiliates in the Philippines and will continue to closely monitor the human and trade union rights situation in the country.

3. International Day of Education: educators matter!

Education International and education unions worldwide celebrate the first ever International Day of Education, calling on governments to make quality public education for all a reality.

On 3 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted, with consensus, a resolution (Resolution 73/25), proclaiming 24 January as International Day of Education, in celebration of the role of education for peace and development.

This resolution, co-authored and proposed by Nigeria and 58 other Member States, calls on all stakeholders, including UN Member States, UN agencies, and civil society, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, the private sector, individuals and other relevant stakeholders to observe the International Day of Education. UNESCO, as the specialised UN agency for education, was tasked with facilitating the annual observance of the Day, in close collaboration with main education actors.

“We warmly welcome the first ever International Day of Education,” stressed Education International (EI) General Secretary David Edwards. “It is timely and overdue at the same time, as we are very much concerned about slow and uneven progress towards the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs).”

EI to governments: progress on SDG is too slow, act now!

He went on to note that SDG4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all – is key to achieving all other SDGs.

“We as education unionists and professionals have the deep-rooted belief that education is a human right, a public good and a public responsibility,” Edwards explained. “Investing in quality public education is investing in the future! That is why today, on International Day of Education, we reiterate our call for governments to invest in education and teachers: qualified educators make quality education for all possible. We also urge governments to take urgent action and make gender equality and inclusive education a reality!”

He added that EI is carrying out an assessment of SDGs and will be releasing a shadow report in July 2019 at the High-level Political Forum, the United Nations’ central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

On International Day of Education, EI is also broadcasting a [webinar](#) featuring EI Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst and EI’s Dennis Sinyolo, emphasising the global union federation and its affiliates’ role as education experts, leaders and advocates in the field.

4. Germany: Standing together to remember the victims of the Holocaust

German education unionists have joined Israeli and Polish colleagues for an educational trip on the occasion of the memorial day for the victims of the Holocaust.

Germany's two largest teacher unions, the *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* (GEW) and the *Verband Bildung und Erziehung* (VBE), attended an event in Krakow, Poland, on 27 January for International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The event was organised by the Israel Teachers’ Union, the Polish *Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego* and the German education unions.

In addition to exchanging information about the remembrance culture in the participating countries, the visit to the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, liberated by the Red Army on 27 January 1945, was the focus of the trip.

“Never again may genocide happen, that is our common goal. We need to keep the memory of Nazi crimes alive,” noted GEW President Marlis Tepe. “Precisely because popular and nationalist thinking is spreading more broadly in public, dealing with genocide, war and tyranny, with inhumane ideologies and political persecution in the 20th century is an indispensable component of historical-political education. Responsibility for a peaceful future remains central to living together in the migration society.”

VBE Federal President, Udo Beckmann, emphasised: “We see that language and manners are becoming more and more brutal. We should, however, take exactly the opposite direction: standing together, defending our values and the free-democratic basic order and, through living together in tolerance, signalling that this society will no longer be divided.”

He went on to express his concerns at the increase in anti-Semitic behaviour, reiterating that “such incidents and statements must have no place in our society”.

February

Headlines

1. Haiti endorses the Safe Schools Declaration

Education International welcomes the endorsement by Haiti of the Safe Schools Declaration, committing itself to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities during times of violent conflict.

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) announced on 31 January that the Government of Haiti signed the Safe Schools Declaration; becoming the 83rd country to commit to continuing safe education during armed conflict.

With Haiti's endorsement, half of the United Nations member states in the International Organisation of La Francophonie have now joined the Declaration. This contributes to building an international consensus on the urgent need to protect schools and universities, their students and staff, from targeted and indiscriminate attacks, and educational institutions from military use.

Being from a region that has experience delivering education following natural disasters, Haiti and other Caribbean states have examples of good practice in safeguarding education that can be applied to the context of armed conflict and shared.

Background information

Since the launch of the Declaration in May 2015, more than one third of all United Nations member states have joined this international political agreement.

It is noticeable that Haiti's endorsement comes in advance of the Third International Conference on Safe Schools, to be hosted from 28-29 May 2019 by the Government of Spain. Government representatives and organisations working to protect education will gather to catalyse action to end attacks on education. They will also examine progress in implementing the Safe Schools Declaration, and identify pragmatic solutions to the significant challenges armed conflict poses to education around the world.

2. A message from Africa's teachers to the African Union Heads of State

Addis Ababa, 11 February 2018

Free quality public education is a fundamental human right. It is a goal the people of Africa continue to strive for. It is a goal embraced by Africa's teachers.

Quality education for the public good is an indispensable condition for the development of our continent and the realisation of the full potential of its people. Quality education for all is essential for achieving the African aspirations enunciated in Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

The Lagos Plan of Action together with the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 were borne out of an overwhelming necessity to establish an African social and economic order primarily based on utilising to the full, the region's resources in building a self-reliant economy. This must be

the framework for transforming education and training systems in Africa.

Regrettably, we are witnessing a shift away from education as a public good. Far too many governments are retreating from their obligation as guarantors and providers of quality public education for all. We are seeing a reduction in education budgets and increased privatisation of education which, in its different guises, has crept into our education systems and influenced policy and decision makers.

Across the continent we have also witnessed the rapid growth of what is called 'low-cost' private schools. These schools are notorious for employing unqualified teachers with low salaries and few labor rights. Foreign multinational corporations seeking market opportunities are targeting major African cities with the largest concentration of children, attacking and undermining public education across the continent.

The rise of 'low-cost' school chains run by multinational corporations offers little connection with the culture and rights of citizens, and they operate with inadequate, if any, monitoring or accountability.

Bridge International Academies (BIA) stands out as an example – it is the largest 'low-cost', for-profit school chain in the world. In Africa it exhibits both disregard for national sovereignty and the rule of law.

Evidence shows that the expansion of BIA, and other such operators throughout Africa is contributing to the commercialisation and commodification of education and legitimising profit making in the provision of education. It is weakening efforts to strengthen and expand the provision of inclusive and equitable quality free education for all consistent with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

States need to prioritise the realisation of the right to education through the allocation of adequate funding, achieved by the mobilisation of sustainable domestic resources, in particular through strengthened and progressive tax regimes and closing loopholes that facilitate illicit financial outflows.

Research and experience are unequivocal in showing that it is only through a strong, inclusive quality, public education system that societies can be cohesive, just and prosperous.

In the words of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human rights, Philip Alston, it is erroneous to assume that privatisation involves *"little more than a change in personnel and uniforms..."*

"It ignores the motivations driving the process as well as the essential unwillingness of the private sector to take on rights-related obligations, the inability of pared-down Governments to exercise meaningful supervision, the difficulty of monitoring disparate private providers, the removal of much economic decision-making from the purview of democratic contestation, and the wide-ranging consequences of empowering profit-seeking corporate actors in what used to be the public sphere."

Privatisation, in all its various manifestations ('low-cost' private schools, public private partnerships, charter schools and the pursuit of policy reforms such as vouchers and tax concessions), undermines the right of all students to free, quality education and entrenches inequalities, particularly for girls and the socially disadvantaged.

We, therefore, call on African Heads of State to:

- **Reject** privatisation and profit-making in education as it constitutes one of the greatest threat to education as a human right and a public good. Learners and their families must be safeguarded from the exploitation perpetrated by 'low-cost' private schools.
- **Prioritise** the achievement of inclusive and equitable quality free public education for all, a precondition of which is a well-supported, well-paid qualified teacher in every classroom
- **Realise** the internationally-agreed minimum education funding benchmarks by allocating at least 6% of their country's GDP or at least 20% of the national budget to education.

The teachers of Africa remain ready to work with the African Union Heads of State in the achievement of free quality public education for all.

Statement by Education International African Regional Committee. The elected voice of teachers and other education workers in Africa.

3. Iran: Free teacher unionist detained in Kurdistan province!

Education International has sent a protest letter to the government of Iran deploring the arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention of Mokhtar Asadi, teacher and member of the Iranian Teacher Trade Association in the province of Kurdistan.

Education International (EI) was informed that Mokhtar Asadi was arrested in Sanandaj on 14 February, hours after teachers held a peaceful protest in front of the Kurdistan Provincial Education and Training Office. The rally demanded decent working conditions, free quality education for all, and a halt to the privatisation of education.

Protesters were holding up signs with slogans, including "Learning in one's mother tongue is every human's right", "Free education for all citizens", and "End education privatisation". Teachers also called for the end of the crackdown on peaceful protest and the release of detained teachers. The same day, Iranian teachers also held peaceful protest actions in several other cities in the province of Kurdistan, including Orumiyeh, Marivan and Kermanshah.

Asadi was driving home with his family when members of the security forces stopped his car, inflicted violence, and arrested him. He was arrested and has been detained without a warrant. His family and colleagues have no information about his whereabouts.

Asadi, a longstanding target of governmental harassment and repression

Mokhtar Asadi had already been sentenced to exile and imprisonment between 2005 and 2010 due to his activities as a trade union and rights activist.

In 2010, he was arrested and jailed at Evin Prison for 66 days before being released on bail.

Later, he was sentenced to one year in prison by the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Tehran's Branch 15 on charges of "propaganda against the state". He was released in July 2018.

EI: Stop the continuous harassment and detention of rights activists

For years, EI has been denouncing the ongoing persecution and criminalisation of teacher and free trade union rights activists, including Esmail Abdi, Mohammed Habibi and Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi.

The rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association are fundamental human rights. The arrest and detention of union activists exercising these rights are a blatant abuse of power and are in violation of ILO Conventions 87 and 98. The government of Iran should address popular discontent through dialogue, not through repression.

EI reiterates its demands to Iranian authorities to:

- Facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of Mokhtar Asadi and all teachers and workers detained for exercising their rights to organise and to free speech;
- Abide by international commitments to respect the rights and freedoms of all Iranian workers and citizens, including freedom of association, free collective bargaining, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to strike.

Background

Iranian teachers and education workers have been engaged in a series of strike and protest actions since October 2018. They face severe repression from the authorities for peacefully defending their rights and freedoms. At least 15 teachers were arrested, and many others were summoned for questioning or threatened by the security services for their participation in a two-day peaceful strike action called by the Coordination Council of Iranian Teacher Trade Associations in many cities across Iran from 13-14 November 2018. A similar nationwide teachers' strike on 14-15 October 2018 already resulted in the arrests of teacher trade union activists. Teachers were demanding decent wages, free quality education for all and the right to form and join independent workers' organisations. They were also requesting the release of all teachers already detained for defending their rights.

EI launched a [petition on LabourStart](#) in December in support of teacher rights activists and independent unionists in Iran.

4. Philippines: International solidarity against teacher harassment

An international delegation has joined the education union ACT to express its solidarity with teacher unionists, profiled and harassed by the government in contravention of commonly agreed human rights.

Teachers in the Philippines have rallied under the slogan, #HandsOffOurTeachers, in response to the harassment and profiling that teachers have been subject to since last year. In Manila on 21 February, leaders from national and local unions as well as Education International (EI) leadership gathered at the Forum for the Defence of Teachers' Rights in the Philippines. Organised by the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), an affiliate of EI, the event comes in the context of 34 recorded cases of police profiling and harassing teacher-unionists in 10 regions across the country.

During the forum, EI regional coordinator for Asia and Pacific, Anand Singh, underlined the importance of international solidarity when it comes to defending human and trade union rights. He condemned "the profiling, surveillance and continuing harassment of teacher unionists in the Philippines", and explained how the region is gearing up support for its members in the country.

Unionists globally have expressed solidarity with the ACT, including EI affiliates in Korea, Japan, Germany, USA, Australia and Canada. In addition to their solidarity actions and letters addressed to government, the ACT has received support directly from EI. General Secretary David Edwards was a guest speaker at the #HandsOffOurTeachers event. "There are forces that demonise us, the

teachers, because they know how good and influential we are,” he said. “We condemn and denounce the oppression and surveillance against our teachers.”

Ongoing harassment

A leaked Manila Police District profiling memorandum has revealed that the police were ordered to “conduct an inventory” of all educators who were ACT members. Since the leaked document was made public, teacher-unionists from at least 10 regions have reported continuing surveillance and aggravating harassments against ACT leaders and members.

During a press conference on 21 February, former ACT General Secretary France Castro explained how she, and 17 other colleagues, were detained on false allegations last November. The group was detained as they were visiting indigenous Lumad schools on a humanitarian and solidarity mission in the municipality of Davao del Norte. These schools had been forcibly closed by the military, causing the displacement of more than 346,000 people.

ACT secretary general Raymond Basilio has publicly denounced the continuous harassment of the union’s membership. A petition to the Court of Appeals is pending, that includes examples of severe harassment, such as one public school teacher in Escalante city whose classroom was ransacked.

Indeed, Basilio himself has been the subject of harassment, receiving a death threat during an ACT press conference in January.

ACT advocacy

The ACT has been instrumental in organising educators and negotiating collective agreements in the Philippines.

In parliament, union leaders France Castro and Antonio Tinio have been promoting bills to improve the lot of workers (e.g. against the contractualisation of teachers, in favour of free higher education, the right to education of disabled students, and in favour of the extension of maternity leave from 60 to 105 days in the education sector). Castro and Tinio have publicly opposed budget cuts in education, healthcare and housing; the proposed 2019 education budget has been reduced by €860 million.

Opposition

The ACT members in parliament have also opposed measures by the Duterte government such as the:

- lowering of the minimum age for criminal responsibility of children (from 15 to 12 years old)
- targeting of children for military training from the age of 16
- targeting of minors in the war on drugs which resulted in over 10,000 extrajudicial killings and illegal detentions
- the third extension of martial law in Mindanao
- death penalty

The ACT produced a statement on the occasion of the solidarity visit of EI to the Philippines. You can read it by clicking [here](#).

5. "Students and Climate Change: A Lesson in Global Citizenship", by David Edwards

Student mobilisation on climate change is a strong call on democracy to deliver for the planet. It is a rejection of “climate deniers”, but also of “business as usual.” Its ultimate success will depend on expanding the mobilisation while graduating from protest to politics, including by linking lower carbon emissions with progress on equality, social justice and human rights.

Democracy

Several polls and [studies](#) in the last decade have shown dropping support for democracy among young people and growing cynicism about politics and politicians in long-standing democracies. The feeling that elections do not matter and that the non-elected are calling the shots has been fertile soil for authoritarianism.

Young people have contributed significantly to the election scores of Extreme Right parties in Austria, Germany, and France. Young people helped elect President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. However, in the United States, while the authoritarian temptation clearly played a role in the 2016 election, surveys show that [attitudes](#) of young people are beginning to change on democracy since President Trump was elected.

The mobilisation of young people on climate change is a healthy sign for the present and the future of democracy. If paralysed by cynicism or apathy, one does not act collectively and go to the streets to demand action by elected leaders.

A well-functioning democracy needs a minimum of respect for the truth. By marching, students are rejecting “[climate deniers](#)”, including the President of the United States. The ability to separate truth from opinion is not automatic, especially in the internet era. The students who are joining together are clearly not fooled. And, as George Orwell wrote, “In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

From Protest to Politics

The American civil rights leader, Bayard Rustin, the organiser of the [March on Washington](#) in 1963, wrote, an essay following the march, “[From Protest to Progress](#)”. Rustin argued that, although progress had been made through demonstrations, sit-ins and other direct actions, it could only be sustained and developed through government. He wrote that in the course of that effective, but complex struggle, what became clear is that, “all these interrelated problems, by their very nature, are not soluble by private, voluntary efforts, but require government action – or politics.”

The student movement to save the planet from climate change seems to have appeared suddenly and spontaneously. Social networking made it possible to move rapidly. However, experience shows that such mobilisations can also disappear quickly. Nobody should be deceived into thinking that the positive responses received from a wide spectrum of political leaders means victory.

The mobilisation, like the civil rights movement in one way or another, needs to be sustained. An example of young people connecting protest with political action was the “March for our lives”, organised by young people against gun violence in the US following the killings in Parkland, Florida. That march, beginning in Washington, DC and spreading to nearly 1000 other sites, focused on voter registration of young people. That effort contributed to the fact that in the bi-elections in 2018, 47 per cent more young people voted than in 2014.

With climate change, among the challenges of connecting protest with politics are:

- The need to **overcome market dogma** that has dominated public policy for decades. The market alone will never solve climate change. That means that advocating purely “market solutions” signals gross irresponsibility by governments;
- **Industrial/investment policy** is needed, just as it is for any major effort, whether it is a war, an economic crisis, fighting HIV/AIDS, or exploring space;
- Some **political leaders are beginning to respond**. A good example is the proposed “[Green New Deal](#)” in the United States which, adopted or not, forces a discussion and will help to sustain student mobilisation;
- Social measures are required to cushion the blow of structural changes in employment related to climate change. “**Just transition**” efforts, linked with industrial policy, need to include good labour standards and enforcement to ensure that workers have the right to organise and bargain throughout the economy. Losing one’s job does not mean losing **representation**. New jobs should also have [futures](#) for workers; and
- Growing numbers of “**climate refugees**” are forced to leave their homelands. Even if governments reduce carbon emissions, in the short and middle term, many millions of refugees will need to be accommodated and integrated and have their rights guaranteed in other countries. That means that the persistent political exploitation of the fear of “outsiders” will have to be contained and reversed.

Education

Quality education is critical to dealing with climate change and its impact. That means supporting democracy by developing all those competencies, including critical thinking, that enables active citizenship, including global citizenship.

However, sound, quality education is vital not only to close the democracy deficit. If climate change is to be curbed and brought under control, today’s students will need to adapt to changing employment in a changing world. That requires a response far beyond limited skills training. A narrow approach to education directed at passing standardised tests is already becoming a hindrance in the real world. One needs to learn how to learn, develop creativity, self-confidence and a deep, rather than superficial, capacity for thought and judgement in order to cope with and benefit from change.

Greater attention will need to be devoted to [lifelong learning](#), but of a quality and reach that goes beyond much of what we have yet achieved. Some of it will be in educational institutions and some of it will be developed by social partners and others, but it all needs to be good and comprehensive.

Conclusion

At a time when so many people are alienated from politics and are losing a sense of community, it is too easy to give up on governance.

The global student mobilisation on climate change is a source of great hope for democracy; democracy that will advance equality, social justice, and protection of the environment.

Lower carbon emissions can mean the survival of humanity. But decent lives and justice for survivors must be part of that struggle.

If this student movement can be sustained and expanded, and if it can be organised and structured in civil society, including in political parties, it can be a catalyst for a sweeping, transformation for people

and the planet.

As teachers, trade unionists and citizens fighting for a well-rounded education for decent societies, well-being, and the democratic process, we will contribute to accomplishing that mission.

March

Headlines

1. Education unions join in solidarity with Turkish teachers

Education trade unionists from around the world meet in Ankara on 6 and 7 March for the “Education Trade Unions, Rights, Freedoms and Governments International Symposium”, in solidarity with embattled Turkish education unionists struggling for the respect of their rights, their profession and for education as a whole.

Education International (EI) General Secretary David Edwards, in opening remarks to the symposium, organised by EI member organisation E?itim Sen, recalled that “last year EI celebrated its anniversary. We looked at the many changes that took place in that quarter century; progress and setbacks.” He regretted that “one thing that has not changed, unfortunately, is the danger and threats to teacher trade unionists and their leaders in Turkey.”

E?itim Sen and its global union, EI, have a “long joint history”. He mentioned issues of the right to organise and bargain, the fight to teach and learn in one’s mother tongue, overcoming the attempted ban on the union, imprisonment of teacher leaders without due process, mass dismissal of teachers and other workers in the public services following the failed coup d’état, ongoing, interminable trials, attacks on academic freedom and attempts to transform education into indoctrination.

Ongoing dangers and challenges

Edwards suggested that among the lessons to be learned from our common experience in Turkey are:

- “Democracy is fragile. It must be fought for every day;
- “All human rights are linked, and repressive governments are not likely to pick one out of the pack for abuse and leave the others intact, at least not for long;
- “Fighting for rights and justice means that you are never alone; and
- “Trade unionists and their leaders with courage, determination, and solidarity may be defeated, but they will never be destroyed.”

Democracy needs trade unions

Edwards stressed that the fight for trade union freedom in Turkey is part of larger picture; a global battle for human rights and democracy, saying, “although workers struggle to form trade unions in very undemocratic situations, for them to thrive, there needs to be the oxygen of democracy. That is one of the reasons that the existence of democracy is so fundamental to our own existence. Businesses prospered in Pinochet’s Chile and are doing quite well today in China and Saudi Arabia. But, trade unions only prosper in freedom.”

Emphasising that “just as trade unions need democracy, democracy needs trade unions,” he also said that “it is not an accident that autocratic governments fear trade unions. Even in repressive systems, independent unions are islands of democracy and, as such, provide hope. Hope is the enemy of tyrants.”

To have hope, one must have vision; for trade unions, it is a vision of freedom, social justice, and peace, Edwards affirmed that, “being here today and witnessing your courage and commitment and solidarity comforts and reaffirms both that vision and that hope. Together education trade unionists are a tough, resilient bunch. And, they hold a lever to move the world”.

In her remarks to the symposium, Susan Flocken, Director of the EI European Region, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), said, “Freedom of expression, the right to organise and to bargain collectively along with fundamental human rights, including women’s rights, are not a reality for many of our colleagues in Turkey”.

She added that “through our participation in the symposium, we express our solidarity with our colleagues, teachers and unionists, who remain victims of a repressive regime and of the derailing of education policy in the country.”

Flocken observed that, “It is clear from this symposium that you continue your high commitment to trade union values and quality education and the future of Turkey. Being here with you today and the visit to the EU delegation later is a sign that we deliver concrete actions together.

An EI delegation asked for a meeting with Turkey’s Minister of National Education, Prof. Ziya Selçuk to discuss trade union and education issues. There was no response to the request for dialogue from the Government of Turkey.

The purpose of the symposium

The international symposium organised by E?itim Sen features discussions of Turkish trade unionists with their colleagues from Europe and other regions. Sessions cover trade union rights violations, including country cases, the role of unions on education policy and their relations with governments, issues of academic freedom and the roles of trade unions and governments, and furthering gender equality through trade union action and education policy.

In the opening session, E?itim Sen General Secretary Velat Kara set the stage for the discussions by describing the overall trade union situation in Turkey. He said that conditions, “are still very serious and the pressure on our trade union is still going on.” .

He informed the gathering that “more than 1,600 of our members were dismissed by law decrees and are still waiting to get their jobs back. A commission was formed after the state of emergency for dealing with the applications of those dismissed for legal remedy. The process takes too long and it seems that our members have to wait for a very long time for a real remedy. International solidarity is crucial for us and our members.”

The symposium is part of the ongoing struggle to defend the rights of teachers to have free, independent unions and the collective power to protect freedom and basic human dignity. It deepens the international understanding and unity in defence of common trade union values.

Members of the international delegation present at the symposium to show support for Turkish colleagues are, among others: DAÜ-SEN, KTOEOS and KTÖS/Cyprus, FNEC FP-FO, SNES-FSU and SNESUP-FSU/France, GEW/Germany, DOE and OLME/Greece, NASUWT and UCU/UK, and NEA/USA.

2. The Casablanca Declaration: Unions denounce the privatisation of education

Education International's Member Organisations in Morocco have declared their intention to intensify their united struggle against privatisation to ensure free public education for all.

The [Casablanca Declaration](#) is the culmination of 2 days of work from 7-8 March, that brought together trade union leaders in Morocco to discuss the work EI is carrying out in its Global Response programme to tackle the growing commercialisation and privatisation of education.

An attack on the profession

Trade unions in Morocco have been active in their campaign efforts against the privatisation of education over the last number of years as public education and the profession have been under sustained attack.

Inspired by the World Bank's privatisation programmes, Morocco's government has been steadily retreating from its obligation as a guarantor and provider of public education aiding and abetting the privatisation of education.

As part of the its privatisation strategy, the government of Morocco has abandoned permanency of employment for teachers. Today, almost 30% of teachers are precariously employed. Not only does this undermine quality education, it also designed to weaken the unions.

A call for funding and public service

In its criticism of privatisation, the Casablanca Declaration also focuses on the [Education Outcomes Fund](#), (EOF). which has Morocco in its sight as a target country. The EOF contributes to the commercialisation and commodification of education using tax-funded aid budgets to exclusively support private actors and investors, who then are able to profit from the provision of privately operated programs for their own private profit. In addition to Morocco, other countries that are being targeted by the EOF include Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

David Edwards, General Secretary of EI, has underlined that "the Casablanca Declaration is a call on the government of Morocco to reject the dictates of international financing institutions and fulfil its obligation to ensure inclusive and equitable quality free public education consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4."

EI will commission independent research to examine the full extent of privatisation in education in Morocco. The research to be released in December 2019 will be used as the basis for the development of the on-going national campaign waged by Morocco's education unions in defence of quality public education.

3. Teachers stand up in support of their students

The student #FridaysForFuture mobilisations against climate change are growing in intensity and reach - with one day to go before the global strike action for climate teachers are voicing their support for their students' courage and determination.

EI Statement on student action on climate change

Education International welcomes the energy and engagement shown by students across the globe in their fight for climate justice. Their determination and commitment are exactly what we need at this crucial moment. Students are showing the leadership that too many politicians are lacking.

We hope that governments will be infected by the students' sense of urgency to save our planet. Climate change is a well-established scientific fact, not a matter of opinion. It should be taught in all schools, even in areas that produce fossil fuels. Schools must be spaces for learning about and taking action for climate justice. There should be full and free discussions about the consequences of climate change as well as of possible solutions, including dealing with the social consequences of slowing and stopping the growth of carbon emissions.

Unfortunately, in too many countries education is narrowed down to target producing a skilled workforce, and curricula and syllabi is driven by standardised testing. Such systems undermine teaching and learning and the purpose of education; they will not build active citizenship or critical thinking or understanding of a wide range of human concerns and experiences.

Curricula and teaching and learning materials need to be urgently revised and improved to address the environmental crisis and give all learners the skills and knowledge needed for climate justice. But as important as curricula and materials are, educators must also have the freedom to teach. Their creativity should be encouraged, not blocked or diverted. Their professional autonomy is a central in the struggle to build a better world; the fight of education trade unions is also a fight for climate justice and active citizenship.

Students, by taking to the streets have rejected cynicism and apathy and embraced hope. Hope is contagious and can inspire others to take charge of their destinies. The action of students on climate change has not only forced discussions in many countries about that issue, but has also revealed the weak response of many democracies to the most compelling needs of the population and the planet. This mobilisation can contribute to and help inspire a process of re-invigoration of the democratic process.

Education unions stand with the students. We urge governments to make the necessary structural changes for a just transition towards a climate-resilient and low-carbon economy. Climate change is not combatted through the "good behaviour" of consumers. Coordinated and sustained participation of students and workers and their representatives may be the first step towards climate justice. We stand by students in the demand for urgent climate action and a just economic transition.

You can download the visuals for social media [here](#).

4. Sudan: In solidarity with human rights activists

As strikes and protests calling for democratic change increase in Sudan, Education International expresses solidarity with the academics and unionists and supports their demands.

The protest movement began in response to the government's attacks on living standards through austerity measures, which led to workers not being paid and the cost of basic goods going up. Teachers, academics, health workers, journalists, lawyers and workers across the public sector have supported the call for democratic elections after the country's long transition period.

Although Education International (EI) does not yet have a member organisation in Sudan, it took public actions to request the release of imprisoned academics in 2018 and 2019. Both times the academics were promptly released. EI joined with leading human rights organisations, including Amnesty International and Scholars at Risk, to intervene with the authorities. It continues to demand the immediate release of all political prisoners. It calls for an end to torture and violence and respect for the rights of citizens peacefully exercising their rights to assembly and expression rather than imprisoning them.

EI's on-going action in favour of respect of human rights

In 2004, the 4th EI Congress adopted a [resolution on Sudan](#) requesting EI and its affiliates to “support the ending of violence in Sudan and protesting the continuing pattern of gross human rights abuses”. The resolution also called EI to urge national governments and intergovernmental organisations to support and expand humanitarian aid programmes for displaced populations trapped in refugee camps in Sudan and Chad. In 2017, EI obtained funding to initiate professional development programmes for refugee teachers in South Sudan and Uganda.

5. “Time to shine a bright light on and act in the Philippines”, by David Edwards, Anthony Bellanger, and Ambet Yuson

Democracy is threatened from within in many countries where authoritarian, often populist and nationalist forces have gained ground. Institutions of democracy have been attacked. The Philippines is one such country.

Background

Although it has been a democracy for most of the post-War period and for several periods before the war, there have often been troubled times where human rights and democratic processes were not fully respected. One such episode was from 1972 to 1986, when President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law and, essentially, ruled as a dictator.

Current attacks on democracy followed the democratic election of Rodrigo Duterte over four other candidates. He was elected in 2016 to a single six-year term with a plurality of 39 per cent. Many of his campaign promises were “progressive”, including measures to fight poverty, build infrastructure and increase employment. He also promised to kill 10s of thousands of drug users and dealers.

Duterte has delivered on that last promise. According to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, in her address to the UN Human Rights Council on 6 March 2019, up to 27,000 people may have been killed during that anti-drug campaign. Some have been killed by the State and others by “non-State actors” (death squads).

Bachelet further pointed out that Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council have been subjected to threats along with opposition leaders, human rights defenders, and journalists. She also was alarmed by the erosion of rule of law and by proposals to impose the death penalty for drug offenses and reduce the age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 12 or even 9 years of age.

Rule of law has also weakened with the judiciary becoming less independent. Martial law has been declared in Mindanao. There are fears that it could return for the whole country.

In addition to being tough to get rid of drugs, Duterte was elected to wipe out corruption. An example shows that his bloodbath has not delivered on either drugs or corruption. Extra-judicial killings of drug users and small-time drug peddlers have exploded.

However, when the two largest shipments of drugs arrived in the Philippines, one worth 6.4 and the other, 6.8 billion pesos (both the equivalent of hundreds of millions of US dollars), customs officials in charge, and who looked the other way, were simply re-assigned.

Reasons for Hope

Just as corruption turned out to be the Achille's heel of Marcos, history may be repeating itself. As has been seen in other countries, people may be willing to give up some of their democratic rights to fight corruption, but to have rights contract while corruption expands is not what they sought. As under Marcos, this is a major reason for public dissatisfaction.

Another lesson that was learned from the Marcos era is that people never ceased to hope for a better and more democratic future. And activists, even during the darkest days, continued to build support for rights and to organise.

Most of the pluralistic trade union movement of the Philippines has come together on priorities and action in a broad alliance called NAGKAISA. They have managed to work effectively together on several legislative issues and, despite difficulties, have been able to make progress.

Maternity leave has been approved and signed by the President. ILO Convention 151, Labour Relations (Public Service) (1978), organising and bargaining rights for public employees, was ratified and signed by the President. And, discussions are taking place on the rights of contract/precarious workers, although legislation is not final.

Journalists

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the Global Union Federation for Journalists and the largest organisation of journalists in the world, in its media freedom report, ranked the Philippines as the worst country for safety for journalists in Southeast Asia. Since the election of Duterte in 2016, 12 journalists have been killed.

Social media has been used on a massive scale to circulate fake news, including through the activities of [Cambridge Analytics](#), the same firm that pioneered the micro-targeting of FACEBOOK accounts for disinformation in the US in the 2016 Presidential campaign and the Brexit referendum in the UK in the same year.

Journalists in the Philippines have been subject to cyber-harassment including, for example, anonymous and unsubstantiated attacks on them as being linked to drug gangs or members of the Communist Party. Threats, including death threats, have become common.

If the killings are added to death threats, online harassment, police surveillance and the revocation of operating licenses, the IFJ recorded 85 cases of assault on the media from June 2016 to May 2018. It is very possible, even probable, that the President's office is involved. The IFJ reports a "well-funded and professionally managed" assault on journalists without "basis in fact or in law". The website of the IFJ member organisation, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), has been shut down several times by cyberattacks.

IFJ General Secretary Anthony Bellanger decried the attacks on Filipino journalists, but stressed that, “history shows that, despite systematic efforts to generate fear and intimidation, our colleagues in the Philippines have shown courage, even in the worst moments of martial law, and have refused to give way to tyrants. They must, however, be visible and have the support of other journalists and trade unionists and all those who care about human rights and freedom. They must not be or feel alone.”

Teachers

Teachers in the Philippines are suffering from similar threats and harassment. At a solidarity meeting in Manila on 21 February, the member organisation of Education International, the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), reported 34 recorded cases of police profiling, surveillance, and harassment of teacher trade unionists in 10 regions. A leaked memo from the Manila Police District revealed that the police were ordered to conduct an “inventory” of all educators who were ACT members.

Last November, former ACT General Secretary France Castro and 17 colleagues were detained on false charges while visiting Lumad schools on a humanitarian and solidarity mission. Many schools had been forcibly closed by the military, displacing more than 346,000 people.

The current ACT General Secretary, Raymond Basilio, has also been harassed, including receiving a death threat by text message on his telephone during a press conference in January.

Education International General Secretary David Edwards, who spoke at the ACT solidarity meeting, observed, “I left Manila shocked by the sophisticated and highly organised attempts to intimidate teachers as well as to distort curriculum so as to conform to the views of the current political leadership. However, I also left with tremendous admiration and respect for the leaders and members of ACT for their courage and for their efforts to protect their profession and their union and to maintain ties with their communities. They need, deserve, and will receive our strong and sustained support.”

Realising change

The General Secretary of Building and Wood Workers’ International (BWI) Ambet Yuson, is a veteran of the struggle to restore democracy in the Philippines at the time of President Marcos. He has been following closely the situation in his country of origin.

Yuson pointed out that, “although many details are not known outside of the Philippines about what is happening, there is both good and bad news. On the one hand, the President is less than half-way through his term of office and can-do further damage to democracy and the institutions on which it depends. On the other hand, despite intimidation, police-state methods and the deliberate spread of disinformation, distrust and fear, many courageous people are challenging the regime and defending democracy.”

Yuson argued that, “even though President Duterte shows contempt for the opinion of the world, the people of the Philippines are, more than most, anchored and integrated in the international community. More than 12 million Filipinos live abroad Many of them are active union members.”

He added, “As trade unionists, we must challenge all tyrants and intervene wherever democracy is threatened. In the Philippines, given popular belief in democracy and attachment to global standards as well as the determination of brave people to stand up, global action by trade unions and others will be more than words. It will materially help change the situation on the ground and help the people of

the Philippines save and re-build their democracy”.

6. Urgent Action Appeal – Victims of cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi

Education International has been contacted by several of its member organisations in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi expressing deep concern over the plight of their members in the areas affected by cyclone Idai. Many lives have been lost.

ZIMTA and PTUZ from Zimbabwe, and ONP from Mozambique are asking for support for the teachers, their families, students and school communities that have been impacted by the cyclone - one of the worst natural disasters ever in the southern African region.

We appeal to all member organisations to **contribute to the Idai Solidarity Fund** to assist affected colleagues, their families and school communities.

EI will support and work with its affiliates in Zimbabwe and Mozambique to ensure they are in a position to assist their members.

We also ask you to express your solidarity by sending letters of support directly to ZIMTA, PTUZ and ONP.

You can write to our members at the following addresses:

ZIMTA: info@zimta.co.zw

PTUZ: admin@ptuz.org

ONP: onp.snpm@gmail.com

Please contribute to the Idai Solidarity Fund by sending your donations to:

Education International

ING Bank

24, Avenue Marnix

1000 Brussels

IBAN : BE05 3101 0061 7075

Swift : BBRUBEBB

With the indication UAA IDAI Solidarity fund.

7. Costa Rica: EI condemns murder of indigenous leader

Education International has sent out an urgent action appeal to its affiliates condemning the murder of Sergio Rojas Ortiz, an indigenous peoples' rights activist.

The murder of Sergio Rojas Ortiz, a leader and defender of the Bribri indigenous community, on March 18 has shocked civil rights activists in his native Costa Rica and beyond. Mr. Rojas led a campaign to reclaim indigenous territories - this activity made him the target of numerous threats, which proved fatal as he was executed in his home in Salitre, in the South of Costa Rica.

Trade unions demand investigation

Education International (EI) has joined its affiliates in Costa Rica, ANDE and SEC (National Association of Educators and Costa Rican Union of Education Workers), in strongly condemning this act.

Head of EI David Edwards has written to the President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, demanding justice and a prompt and impartial investigation. The global union federation also calls for the protection of the integrity of indigenous peoples struggling to recover their lands.

On March 27 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica said the investigation on the murder of Rojas had “the highest priority on the Government’s agenda.”

A history of violence against indigenous people

The teachers union ANDE, Education International’s affiliate in the country, regrets that “the governments of Costa Rica have not paid enough attention to the year-long conflict taking place in the indigenous territories of the south [of Costa Rica]”.

Costa Rica has 24 indigenous territories inhabited by eight ethnic groups. Only 37% of the total area of Salitre, the territory of the Bribri ethnic group, established by law as ancestral territories is occupied by indigenous peoples.

In April 2015, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) called on Costa Rica to adopt measures to guarantee the life and integrity of the Teribe and Bribri Indigenous Peoples, who are exposed because of their attempts to recover their lands. The IACHR intervened following the persecution of Sergio Rojas as an indigenous rights’ defender. Arrested in 2015, he had since been under constant threats and had already suffered several attacks.

On August 9, 2016, as part of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Sergio Rojas and other indigenous leaders denounced the Costa Rican government's lack of commitment to the rights of indigenous peoples. A press conference was held in the ANDE premises.

Following the killing of Rojas, Costa Rica, who ratified the ILO Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples, invited the IACHR to visit indigenous territories in order to follow-up on measures ordered to protect indigenous communities.

UN human rights experts have condemned the murder of Rojas and have **demand**ed that “the Costa Rican authorities identify everyone involved in this reprehensible crime and bring them to justice in accordance with the law.”

April

Headlines

1. Democracy, human rights and the future of work on Executive Board's agenda

The agenda of the 52nd Education International Executive board meeting covered a wide range of topics that are going to be key in four months at the organisation's key political event, its Congress.

The EI Executive Board is the elected governing body that directs the affairs and activities of EI between its World Congresses. EI held its 52nd meeting from 2-4 April in Brussels, Belgium, with members examining items for the EI 8th World Congress that will take place in Bangkok, Thailand, at the end of July.

Democracy first

The board debated a resolution on democracy that is central to that key priority off EI's policy in the years to come. Deputy General Secretary Haldis Holst, who presented the text, stressed the importance of the defence of democracy in the face of authoritarianism, and racist movements. She emphasized the role that education plays in countering these socially dangerous trends, and underlined the importance of Congress adopting such a resolution.

Human rights and education

Holst as well as EI General Secretary David Edwards, made it clear that human rights and education go hand in hand. From its work in the area of gender equality to the respect for indigenous peoples' culture and language, to the whole range of human rights and rule of law issues, educators and their unions are on the frontlines of the defence of human rights.

"We can speak truth to power because we are an independent organisation that relies on its members," Edwards said. He was joined by AFT president Randi Weingarten, who recalled that many EI members were "fighting for their lives. We have to be there to support our brothers and sisters," she concluded.

The Executive Board held an action in solidarity with fellow colleagues from the ACT Philippines, who are being harassed, placed under surveillance and persecuted. Executive Board members posed with signs reading "hands off our colleagues" after Raymond Basilio, ACT General Secretary provided a moving account of the dangerous situation he and his family and other trade unionists experience every day. "There is nothing wrong when we protect human rights. When we demand that teachers be treated as human beings. We continue the struggle with you," he said. He also observed that teachers in the Philippines are, "underpaid, overworked, and under surveillance".

Achievements

In his progress report, David Edwards highlighted some achievements of EI and its member organisations. Edwards cited progress over the past five months. These included several launches of research on inclusion, including of disabled persons, privatisation, refugees and migrants and the status of teachers. He also discussed policy conferences in Africa, Europe and Asia; and the first-ever International Day of Education."

The future of work

Tim Noonan spoke on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). 2019 is the centennial anniversary of the creation of the ILO, and the international union movement will take this opportunity to demand a universal labour guarantee for all workers, independently of their work relationship. He also explained the work of the Commission on the Future of Work that was established by the ILO, pointing out that the global economy needed a “reset to make it work for people”.

Noonan addressed several other topics of concern for international labour such as the digitalisation and datafication of work and the need for a regulation thereof. A rapidly changing world “needs a new social contract fit for the 21st century and we are going to deliver it at the ILO this year in June,” he said.

Africa

Assibi Napoe, director of the Africa regional office of EI, presented an overview of the region from an education and trade union perspective. She stressed the urgent need for cooperation in those countries or regions affected by natural disasters, famine or conflict. Napoe highlighted some of the challenges faced by trade unions on the ground, such as fragmentation or the lack of young members, as well as institutional barriers such as an under-developed social dialogue system in some countries.

In terms of access to education, Africa is a continent that embodies the most severe challenges faced both by teachers and students. With 1100 closed schools in Burkina Faso, 750 in Mali and over 100 in Niger, many children do not have access to any education. Overall, in Africa one third of 12-14 year olds are out of school. The system lacks over one million teachers and adequate funding to tackle this and other infrastructural issues.

2. The Philippines: Stop governmental harassment of education trade unionists

In a resolution adopted at its 52th meeting, the Education International Executive Board condemns the government profiling of its member organisation in the Philippines, the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), and the death threats its leaders have received.

Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) leader and Education International (EI) Executive Board member for Asia-Pacific Raymond D. Basilio gave a moving speech about the constant harassment and threats faced by ACT members and leaders, as well as his own experience. This was at the 52th EI Executive Board meeting held in Brussels, Belgium, on 2-4 April.

Besides receiving [death threats on his personal mobile phone, one call coming during an ACT press conference on 11 January 2019](#), Basilio explained that “one day, one man came to me and told me: ‘you are next’”.

He went on to say: “I cannot sleep in my own bed anymore, I cannot see my family nor go to the union office where I am probably awaited by public forces. I have to change my email and contacts every two weeks at the latest.”

Basilio pointed out that “I could go to another country, but I will not abandon my members; I want to be with them. That’s where I belong.”

“Public support and international pressure, such as that of Education International, is extremely important for us. I’ll bring back with me your heartfelt support to my fellow educators and Filipinos,” he concluded.

The resolution adopted by EI Executive is available [here](#)

3. It’s time for the IFIs to do some spring cleaning

As the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund enter into this year’s Spring Meetings, Education International has released a statement that calls for these international financial institutions to evaluate the efficacy of their work and to take new approaches, ensuring that their policy and lending aligns fully with the sustainable development goals.

Out with the old and in with the new

The 2019 [Spring Meetings](#), held in Washington, mark a turning point for the Bank. Following Jim Kim’s surprise resignation in January, the Bank welcomes its new president, David Malpass, a senior US treasury official nominated by Trump. Leaving aside the disappointing process for appointment (which continued the traditional ‘[gentleman’s agreement](#)’ between the World Bank and IMF rather than allowing for an open and merit-based selection process), and the overwhelmingly inappropriate choice of Malpass (who has been highly critical of multilateralism, contributed to the financial crisis as Chief Economist of Bear Stearns investment bank, and has repeatedly [downplayed](#) the urgency of the climate crisis), Education International calls on the Bank to use this moment of change to take stock of past failures and move towards more effectively contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

IFIs – clean up your act!

In the [statement](#), EI expresses concern about the current lending practices and policy of the IMF and World Bank, which contribute to pushing poor countries into debt crises, encourage austerity and reduced investment in education, undermine the teaching profession, promote privatisation of education and can exacerbate inequality. It highlights that it is high time for this to change, and as such the IFIs should examine their practices and ensure that all future loan agreements and policy advice support equality, sustainability, development based on country priorities, teacher professionalism, quality education and the promotion of decent work for all.

Education International’s key recommendations

EI’s statement includes the following key recommendations for financial institutions.

“In order to ensure that their work is fully aligned with the sustainable development goals, the Bank and IMF should:

- Promote decent work for all and support a new social contract between governments, businesses and workers that ensures a universal labour guarantee, living wages and gender equality, inter alia.
- Lend responsibly and stop providing borrowing countries with loan conditions that promote austerity and the curbing of investment in vital public services such as education.
- Conduct comprehensive inquiries into their own roles in contributing to the casualisation and deprofessionalisation of the education workforce in developing countries.

- Promote teacher professionalism by ensuring that all policies, lending and projects support the implementation of the [ILO/UNESCO recommendations on the status of teachers \(1966\)](#), [recommendations on the status of higher education support personnel \(1977\)](#) and [guidelines on decent work for early childhood educators \(2014\)](#).
- Respect trade union rights and recognise the contributions of education trade unions for successful education policies.
- Recognise education as a human right and public good and support governments to improve, strengthen and expand public education systems rather than promote PPPs or finance private provision of education.
- Align all lending and technical support with the Paris Agreement. “

The full statement can be accessed [here](#)

A statement from Global Unions is available [here](#)

4. Global education union leaders in solidarity with African educators living in violence-ridden countries

The Education International Executive Board has sent out solidarity letters to member organisations in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria; countries where political and terrorist violence has taken the lives of teachers, academics, and education support personnel.

At its 52nd meeting held from 2-4 April, in Brussels, Belgium, Education International's Executive Board has expressed its solidarity with member organisations upon learning about the political and terrorist violence, which took the lives of educators and students in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria in recent months.

EI will communicate with the authorities of these four African countries to insist that security risks for students and teachers be addressed. It will also demand that its member organisations be consulted in the development of coherent plans of action to address the immediate and longer-term needs of local communities.

The educators' global union federation also calls on the public authorities in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria to:

- Improve the investigation of, and response to political violence in the education environment, including by taking the strongest measures to put an end to extrajudicial killings, investigating all reported cases, and ensuring that all suspected perpetrators are brought to justice;
- Accelerate action to restore the right to education throughout the country by ensuring secure and safe schools for teaching and learning, as stated in the International instruments to which these countries are signatory; and
- Guarantee freedom of association and the effective implementation of the right to collective bargaining in order to create an environment that is conducive to labour management negotiations to improve the status and working conditions for teachers and education support workers.

The four countries have ratified the [Safe Schools Declaration](#), an intergovernmental political commitment to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities from attacks by armed forces and armed groups, as well as to restrict military use of educational infrastructure. The Declaration

includes a range of commitments, linked to specific, concrete actions that can reduce the risk of attacks and mitigate their impact. Should its member organisations so request, EI can liaise with GCPEA to see how the education unions can be included in activities to implement the Declaration in order to defend the right to education and protect the lives of teachers and students.

5. WIPO: Discussions on copyright exceptions for education and research move forward

The week of April 1-5, 2019 was an important week for education and educators due to discussions at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Geneva.

The importance of copyright exceptions, including for education, was acknowledged by several speakers during the 38th session of the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related rights (SCCR). Attention was also drawn to the trans-border character of education. More government delegates than at previous meetings of the committee, expressed hopes that during the next meeting in October there will be progress to advance international work on exceptions and limitations. The demand for tangible results seems to be on the rise, according to Education International (EI) delegate to the SCCR Nikola Wachter.

Wachter explained that EI attends the SCCR to defend and broaden international copyright legislation that empowers teachers, researchers and students to use copyright protected works for teaching and learning at home and for cross-border collaboration and exchange.

In her statement to the SCCR, Wachter stressed that the exceptions and limitations to the use of copyrighted materials in education should be enhanced to allow for access to quality education for all.

Unpacking myths around copyright and education

EI organized a side event in collaboration with the International Federation of Library Associations, and the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL). Under the title *Truths, Trends and Tropes: Unpacking the Debate around Copyright Exceptions and Limitations* representatives from libraries, education unions, researchers, students and government representatives addressed recurring issues around copyright and education.

The session included sessions on why “commercial licenses can’t solve it all”, “there is a need for an international instrument” and “exceptions and limitations are not the end of markets”.

EI stressed that “while discussions at WIPO turn in circles, modern education has moved on and we need an international instrument that provides clarity for educators and students when they work in their country or in cross-border settings”.

Students of the University of Toronto provided insightful examples of copyright related challenges they have encountered during their studies. Some had not been able to access works while being on exchange programs abroad, while others had to keep clicking on an online book as otherwise their access to the book would stop due to restrictive license terms.

Expanding on the knowledge around copyrights

During the SCCR38 sessions, several studies related to exceptions and limitations were presented to the audience. They ranged from presentations on the typologies of copyright laws for [education](#) and

libraries to copyrights in [education and distance learning](#). The latter included revealing examples of how educators, students and university librarians encounter problems when collaborating across borders. The participants also pointed out challenges related to commercial license agreements.

Regional events

The SCCR38 provided information on the upcoming regional events in Singapore, Dominican Republic and Kenya. EI is going to attend these consultations with several member organisations in order to express the voice of education workers through their unions in the regions. The recommendations that will result from the regional seminars will guide the discussions at an international WIPO conference on exceptions and limitations in October of 2019 as well as at the 39th session of the SCCR the following week.

6. The Republic of Moldova endorses the Safe Schools Declaration

Education International welcomes the endorsement by the Republic of Moldova of the Safe Schools Declaration; a solemn government commitment to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities during times of violent conflict.

The Republic of Moldova is the 86th state to endorse the [Safe Schools Declaration](#), an intergovernmental pledge to protect schools and universities from targeted attacks and threats and protect students, teachers, and academics from murder, injury, rape, abduction, and recruitment by parties to the conflict. The Declaration covers education institutions and getting to and from those facilities. Moldova's support was announced by the [Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack](#) (GCPEA) on 17 April.

Moldova is also the 39th participating state in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the 37th member of the Council of Europe to join the growing community of states committed to taking concrete action to protect education during armed conflicts.

“Moldova's endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration is significant given the challenges to the education sector that have arisen from the frozen conflict in Transdniestria,” said GCPEA Executive Director Diya Nijhowne. “The Declaration includes a commitment to promote conflict-sensitive education policies that foster peace rather than fuel tensions, which is particularly relevant to the context.”

Key conference on Safe Schools coming up soon

Moldova's endorsement comes as Spain prepares to host the Third International Conference on Safe Schools, which will take place from 27-29 May in Palma de Mallorca.

During the conference, governments, international agencies, and non-governmental organisations will share their experience of protecting students, teachers, schools, and universities in situations of conflict and insecurity. The conference will pay special attention to the ways in which women and girls may be differently impacted by attacks on education than men and boys; emphasise the need to improve monitoring and reporting of attacks on education to inform prevention, mitigation, and accountability mechanisms; and identify concrete measures for avoiding military use of educational infrastructure.

A key component of the Safe Schools Declaration is the commitment to bring the [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict](#) into relevant domestic policy and operational frameworks.

According to GCPEA's report, [Education under Attack 2018](#), in at least 28 countries around the world, between 2013 and 2017, schools and universities were used for military purposes by armed forces and armed groups, depriving students of their right to education and risking the security of students, teachers, and staff.

Headlines

1. Ghana: Accra forum strengthens social and policy dialogue in Africa

Education International's Social and Policy Dialogue Forum, held in Accra, Ghana, on 8-9 May, served to support stronger social and policy dialogue in Africa, where mechanisms for social and policy dialogue are often either weak or non-existent. Significantly, the participants signed the Accra Declaration, which highlights the need for and benefits of social and policy dialogue

Effective social and policy dialogue are fundamental to improving education policies. When teachers, education support personnel and educational authorities cooperate meaningfully and share their expertise to identify solutions to the problems our education systems are experiencing, we are more likely to succeed in achieving quality education for all.

The forum created a space for representatives of education sector unions, Ministries of Education and education stakeholders from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi and Uganda to come together. They learned from each other's experiences, shared ideas on promoting effective collaboration, and discussed how to implement more effective mechanisms for dialogue in their respective countries.

International interest

The gathering is one component of the [Norwegian Teacher Initiative](#) (NTI) and was attended by international partners. These included representatives from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), IICBA and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Representatives from Education International (EI) and its member organisations, Lärarförbundet (Sweden) and Centrale Syndicale du Québec (Quebec).

Proactive approach

During the forum, Haldis Holst, EI's deputy general secretary, underscored the importance of social dialogue. Speaking from her experience as a former teacher in Norway, she reminded participants that respectful and trusting dialogue and the inclusion of teachers in decision-making processes is vital not just at national level, but within schools, at local, district, regional and national levels in decentralised contexts, and at the international level. She also emphasised that unions were moving towards a proactive approach of conflict resolution which, if embraced by governments, would be more beneficial in the long run.

All other dignitaries representing various technical and funding partners urged participants to embrace social and policy dialogue as a critical ingredient to cooperation on improving teacher-related policies and eventual better learning outcomes.

Shared learning

Through in-depth, productive discussions, participants from each country came to shared understandings of the conditions, forms and models of social dialogue and the opportunities for social dialogue available at various levels in their countries. They considered the strengths and weaknesses of the current mechanisms for social dialogue, debated how the mechanisms could best be improved, and finally made decisions on clear, tangible steps that can be taken to sustainably improve social

dialogue in their countries through the NTI framework and in the longer term. The forum concluded that, currently, social and policy dialogue is only instituted when there are challenges. However, there is a need for more institutionalised approach which is more preventive than curative.

Recommendations for action in the short term included:

- Establishing representative task teams to oversee the implementation of strategies to improve social dialogue mechanisms.
- Building the capacity of both education sector unions and government representatives to engage in constructive social dialogue.
- Ensuring that funds are allocated specifically for facilitating social dialogue.
- Formulating advocacy strategies to sensitise key actors to the importance of social dialogue.

Declaration

The workshop concluded with the adoption and signing of the Accra Declaration. The declaration recognises the benefits of improved social dialogue in the education sector for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4, recalls the ILO/UNESCO 1966 and 1997 Recommendations on the Status of Teachers and higher education personnel, and underlines the importance of structured social dialogue based on autonomy and good faith. It commits participants to push for enhanced social and policy dialogue with their governments and to take all steps within their power to ensure that the roadmap of actions for strengthened social and policy dialogue defined within the forum are carried out.

2. Asia-Pacific region calls for international action on copyright

International action is essential in order to address the challenges that educators and researchers face when working with copyright-protected materials. That was the finding of a recent regional seminar on copyright exceptions for education, research, libraries, archives and museums.

The [seminar](#) took place in Singapore on 29-30 April and was the first in a series of regional workshops organised by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). Education International (EI) participated together with its affiliates, STU, MOVE, and PGRI. To prepare for the event, EI published an [infographic](#) that portrays how copyright law affects 10 educational activities in 10 countries in Asia-Pacific.

The discussions on education and research centred on principles of fair access and use of copyrighted work as a fundamental part of the right to education. The conference highlighted, in the strongest possible terms, the importance of access to copyrighted work – analogue, digital, or in any other form - for teaching, learning, and research. Participants referred to the Sustainable Development Goal 4 as a global commitment that requires resources, commitment, and political will. It also requires support for teachers to feel free to prepare and use any resources necessary to teach their students in order to provide quality education.

Together with representatives from [Communia](#), the International Federation of Library Associations, the International Council on Archives, the International Council on Museums, EI stressed that copyright laws often do not match the reality of the concerned sectors and that this needs to be changed so that their public missions can be fulfilled.

Need for copyright reforms

Government delegates acknowledged that copyright laws need to be improved to ensure that educators and researchers can provide quality education and research. Restrictive laws and digital locks were discussed as major obstacles to the right to education and research.

Finally, three out of the four working groups led by governments in the region concluded that an international legal instrument will be essential to address the copyright-related challenges of modern education. Delegates voiced the need for an international instrument not only to address cross-border related challenges, but also to support governments to reform their national legislation. The WIPO, as the international body that can move international copyright legislation forward, can play an important role here.

Advocacy

EI has been advocating for such an approach and recently [endorsed a draft treaty](#) on copyright exceptions and limitations for educational and research activities that could be used as a basis of discussion at WIPO.

EI and a delegation of affiliates will be attending all regional WIPO meetings (Kenya, 12-13 June; the Dominican Republic, 4-5 July). As confirmed by the WIPO secretariat, the recommendations of each regional seminar will be reflected in the global conference in October in Geneva, Switzerland. This conference will then provide guidance to WIPO's Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights on what actions will need to be taken at WIPO in the context of education, research, libraries, archives and museums.

3. Development cooperation: how can education unions work best as a network?

In an Education International's EdVoices podcast, Danish Union of Teachers' International Secretary Tore Asmussen and the Director of international and social justice programme of the Canadian Teachers' Federation Dan Martin reflect on the importance for education unions to work collectively as a network on development cooperation issues and stress the need to ensure the sustainability of development cooperation projects.

“Essential that we look for opportunities to work together”

Asked how important it is to work collectively as a network, Dan Martin stressed that “it is extremely important and essential that we look for opportunities to work together. We seek unity within all the countries where we work, and we very much want to foster a cooperative approach to working in the countries where we are engaged. And I think that the same principles should apply to us as partners from the North.”

“One of the things is that those of us who work with development cooperation (DC) are a very small part of our whole organisations,” which “are very focused on national issues,” Tore Asmussen explained.

Noting that “we, as staff members of our organisation, are kind of isolated working with international affairs, and most of our colleagues will say ‘international sounds very interesting’, but they don't really know so much about it.” He pointed out that this DC meeting “is also an opportunity to meet with colleagues who work in the same kind of organisation with the same kind of issues, and that is a revealing learning experience where people who are in the same situation share things, from sharing methods to sharing information on what people know and have seen”. It is on many levels that we actually can gain from being together.”

Education International is extremely important in making sure that the recipient organisation is being heard”

On connecting working as a network with working towards the sustainability of a DC project, Asmussen mentioned that “this is especially an issue when you have a partner which ‘is weak’, because maybe four organisations are working together to support them, and we will have our discussions with them.”

But “are they strong enough to go up against us and say ‘Listen, no, you are thinking wrong, what we need is actually this?’” he asked.

He went on to highlight that it is “an area where Education International is extremely important in making sure that the recipient organisation, the partner organisation out there, is being heard and their interest is being addressed.”

Martin also tackled the issue of sustainability, insisting that “essentially that is all we want to do. We want to work ourselves to the point where we are no longer needed. We want the partner organisations to develop the capacity so that they are responding to the needs of their members, they are becoming responsive and relevant teacher organisations that are willing, fulfilling a mandate that they have.

He therefore agreed that “there is so much to be gained by working in partnership in consortium that it is certainly an area that we are going to be looking forward to doing more in the years to come”.

Listen to the full podcast published on SoundCloud:

Headlines

1. Inclusive quality public education crucial in ending child labour

On the occasion of the 2019 World Day against Child Labour on 12 June, Education International General Secretary David Edwards has emphasised that “inclusive quality public education is the key to eradicating child labour”. Around the world, education unions play a crucial role in accomplishing that goal.

Education International (EI) is joining the celebration of the World Day against Child Labour together with its member organisations. These are education unions that actively work to end child labour “with many positive results”, Edwards said. Working closely with communities on the ground in specific areas, EI affiliates in over 10 countries and three continents act in target schools to take children out of work and back into education. Reducing absenteeism and school dropout rates is a key focus of their work. “Other affiliates have plans to start child labour and inclusive education projects soon,” said Edwards.

The unions’ hands-on programmes include professional development courses for teachers and school leaders, focusing on child-centred pedagogy and active learning techniques. Teachers gain a better understanding of what child labour is and how to identify children at risk or in situations of child labour.

“After the training, we had new tools with which to work. They are based on sound education concepts. I felt that I was more capable – our output was much better. The students’ results were much better.” Naima Dekhissi, Provincial Project Steering Committee member and Regional Coordinator of the SNE’s women’s circle, Fès, Morocco

“The problem was that the children didn’t come to school on a regular basis - maybe only three times per week. The teachers used to think that was normal. But now, following the training, teachers are more empowered and they think of the repercussions on the academic results for the children if they don’t come to school.” Bernarda Lopez, Secretary for Organisation, CGTEN-ANDEN, Nicaragua

Attracting and keeping children in schools is also important. Participation is encouraged, achievement rewarded, additional academic support provided, and the curriculum has been broadened to include practical skills, sport, and the arts.

Multi-stakeholder initiatives are also key in reducing child labour. In Mali, for example, village child labour monitoring committees include the EI affiliate, SNEC, the School Management Committee, the parent-teacher association, the Mothers’ Association, and a representative of the artisanal mining association. The committee president is the traditional village chief.

All of the education programmes focus on the girl child in order to overcome the barriers they face in staying on in school, particularly after puberty. Schools act to ensure safe journeys to school and to support girls through menstruation management. Teachers ensure positive role models for girls, and work to counter the traditions of early marriage and to overcome deeply engrained social stigma so that pregnant girls, young mothers and young widows can stay on or return to school.

“Here, Roma and Egyptian girls are married at 14 years of age in customary marriages. It is not legal but they still get married. So, the girls stop school at 13 or 14 years due to the mentality of the family. We had frequent meetings with parents ... In one case, ... the grandmother said, that because I had come so many times to ask her, she will agree to bring the child to school.” Monitoring group teacher, Naum Veqilharxi School, Korça, Albania

Working on children’s rights and the quality of education also pays dividends for the unions. They report improved relations with local and regional education authorities and increased visibility among local government. Membership numbers also rose.

“When you see members frequently in the context of the child labour project, they begin to believe in you because not all members are concerned about trade unions but they are concerned about children’s welfare and education. So this group of members began to respond and trust us”. Sifiso Ndlovu, ZIMTA Chief Executive Officer, Zimbabwe

Improved labour relations have also led to quicker resolutions of employment issues, with new opportunities for partnerships, social dialogue, and joint advocacy on issues around recruitment and infrastructure.

EI will continue to support unions’ work to promote inclusive quality education and to end child labour. It will also help to facilitate the exchange of good practice between unions and with civil society partners.

2. Djibouti: teachers are being unfairly imprisoned

Education International and the Francophone Trade Union Committee for Education and Training are demanding the immediate release of seven teachers arrested in Djibouti on apparently unsubstantiated charges.

The *Comité syndical francophone de l’éducation et de la formation* (Francophone Trade Union Committee for Education and Training; CSFEF), an organisation of education unions from the French-speaking world and part of Education International (EI), has received news of the arrest of seven teachers in Djibouti.

Six of them, Mohamed Samireh, Abdoul-Mahin Hassan, Youssouf Mohamed Hamid, Moussa Djama Ali, Abdourazak Ibrahim, and Kassim Abdoukader, are accused of having disclosed the contents of the 2019 baccalaureate examination. They are still being held in custody, despite the court having issued a provisional release order, following an appeal by the public prosecutor.

Another teacher, Oumalkhaire Farah Robleh, who expressed her support for her imprisoned colleagues on social media, was given a three-month suspended sentence for defamation. She only avoided a prison sentence because she is eight months pregnant.

According to information received by CSFEF from the two education unions affiliated to EI in the country; the *Syndicat des enseignants et personnels de l’éducation* (SEP) and the *Syndicat des professeurs des collèges et lycées de Djibouti* (SYNESED), along with the Union Djiboutienne des travailleurs (UDT), these accusations are totally unfounded.

“These teachers, four of whom are union activists, are highly competent and diligent professionals working in high schools in Djibouti. They had no way of getting access to the baccalaureate exam contents in advance,” stressed CSFEF President Jean-Hervé Cohen in a press release of 23 June. “They strongly deny these accusations, which are seriously damaging to their professional standing.”

In addition to the criminal proceedings being brought against them, the seven teachers have learned that they will also face disciplinary action that could lead to their dismissal.

In a joint letter to the President of Djibouti, Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, EI and CSFEF, together with SEP and SYNESED, have demanded the immediate release of the teachers, an end to the disciplinary proceedings being brought against them, and a pledge to respect freedom of association for all teachers in Djibouti.

SEP Deputy General Secretary and founder of the Djiboutian League for Human Rights, Omar Ali Ewado, said: “...these teachers have been made scapegoats. The exam contents were never disclosed on social media. They did not attempt to bring about the 'destabilization of the education system' by posting these contents on social media.”

Unions in Djibouti are awaiting the outcome of the trial of the seven teachers, which will be announced later this week.

EI and CSFEF provide full support to imprisoned colleagues and will continue to monitor the changing situation of teachers and human and trade union rights in Djibouti.

You can learn more about the situation of teachers being unfairly imprisoned in Djibouti [in this blog post](#) written by SEP General Secretary Ahmed-Kadar Nour Ismail.

July

Headlines

1. Solidarity with Hong Kong education unionists' protest actions

Education International firmly supported its affiliates in Hong Kong and Taiwan protesting against the legislative change which would facilitate extradition to mainland China.

The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (PTU), joined by the National Teachers' Association of Taiwan (NTA), demanded the withdrawal of the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 proposed by the Hong Kong authorities.

More than one million protesters took to the streets on 9 June, and two million on 16 June, to demand that the government withdraw the bill which would allow virtually anyone to be picked up and detained in mainland China. As the NTA President Hsu-Cheng Chang put it: "It is feared that the new law would target not just criminals but political and human rights activists as well, which will eventually lead to the erosion of civil liberties in Hong Kong."

The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union launched class boycotts across Hong Kong starting 12 June. Teachers were invited to explain the significance of the anti-extradition protests while ensuring the safety of their students. PTU criticised the government for pushing forward the legal amendments by all means. The union also denounced Hong Kong police using tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse protesters. Many students and a teacher were injured during the clashes.

PTU demanded an independent investigation on the police's use of force on 12 June and that protesters not be prosecuted.

2. CSFEF meeting underscores importance of Francophone trade union voices on climate change

Trade union representatives of Francophone Affiliates of Education International (EI) gathered today at the Francophone Trade Union Committee for Education and Training (CSFEF) meeting to discuss ways how their voices must continue to be heard at the EI 8th World Congress by way of resolutions or via francophone representation in decision-making bodies.

In smaller group discussions, delegates focused on union representation, the importance of trade union solidarity and of remedying as quickly as possible union fragmentation, particularly within trade union coordination and platforms. This is to better assert the rights and interests of teachers and support staff in education.

Finally, Francophone education unionists are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of taking climate change into account in their collective bargaining demands. This issue represents an authentic educational challenge, and that is why delegates affirmed their desire to train "eco-citizens" and to conduct cooperative research for a democratic look at these issues. Teachers stand in solidarity alongside young people who wish to mobilise for the climate!

3. Educators' unions in Australia and the EU call for education to be carved out of trade negotiations

During the Education International (EI) 8th World Congress, affiliated educators' unions in Australia and the European Union issued a statement calling for the Australian government and the European Commission to be more transparent in ongoing negotiations on the potential free trade agreement and to explicitly carve out education from the negotiations.

The trade negotiations between Australia and the European Union (EU) were launched on 18 June 2018. So far, 4 rounds of negotiations have taken place. Education International and its member organisations in Australia and Europe have followed with concern these negotiations since the talks were proposed. The information about the timing of the rounds of negotiation as well as the content of the negotiations are strongly limited. There is no structure, such as a stakeholder forum, put in place for unions and civil society organisations to exchange views with the trade negotiators in connection to the rounds of negotiations.

Education International and its member organisations in Australia and Europe request to be consulted on a pro-active and continuous basis by the Australian government and the European Commission respectively regarding education related issues, including the EU-Australia trade agreement. While the Directorate General for Trade is negotiating on behalf of the European Union, it is important that other relevant Directorates General are involved and consulted, in this case in particular the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

In addition, Education International and its member organisations in Australia and Europe are calling for education to be explicitly carved out of the deal. Educators' unions raise concerns on several aspects of the negotiations:

- **Facilitating the privatisation and commercialisation of education** which enhances employment precariousness in the teaching profession, leads to inequalities regarding access, completion and quality of education and jeopardises academic freedom, especially in the case of higher education.
- **Digital trade/e-commerce and domestic regulations**, including the potential forms that digital trade/e-commerce would merge in the provision of education services, such as different forms of online education. These services offer new opportunities but also raise potential concerns regarding personal information and data collection from students, restricted access to materials and research, and homogenization of educational materials that may result in lost local content. These rules also raise potential employment issues since the e-commerce may entice some government to shift away from local education delivery to lower cost online alternatives.
- **Intellectual property provisions** that could have a crucial impact on education systems. Stricter copyright rules that may have an adverse effect on education in that teachers and students face more restrictive rules in the use of materials, higher costs, and less flexibility in the classroom.

Educators' unions believe that commercial trade rules must never restrict the ability of governments and designated public authorities to provide high-quality public services like education. The most effective way to protect high-quality education in Australia and the EU is to include a general exclusion or carve-out for education as a whole.

[Read the full statement here.](#)

August

Headlines

1. International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Preserving, revitalising and promoting indigenous languages

Education International joins in the celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on the 9th of August. This year's theme is Indigenous Languages, in the framework of the United Nations' 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Indigenous Languages are the most endangered languages around the world. Much more than communication systems, Indigenous Languages are sources of identity, history and memory for millions of Indigenous Peoples. Preserving, revitalising and passing them on to new generations is not only vital to the rich cultural diversity of the world, it is essential to the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Education is key in this effort. At the 8th Education International World Congress, representatives of 32 million educators took the lead and unanimously adopted a [resolution on decolonising education](#), making this a priority for the organisation in the next four years. Congress agreed that “education unions, as the organised collective voice of the teaching profession, and in line with their social justice mandate in and through education, have a unique role to play in furthering the decolonisation of education around the world.”

David Edwards, Education International Secretary General, said: “This commemorative day provides us with a shared opportunity to acknowledge and to reflect on the different ways our own education systems negatively impact on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. But this reflection must lead to action. That action may well start today, on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, but it must continue long after the day ends.” Read the full [statement of our General Secretary on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples here](#).

For further information and to get involved, please visit the [official website of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages](#).

2. International Youth Day – Transforming education for and with young people

Education International celebrates International Youth Day and joins the global trade union movement, standing together with and sending a message to the young workers of today and tomorrow, and to those who hold and exercise power within and beyond the world of work: Education is an enabling human right and a public good with the potential to transform the lives of individuals, communities and entire countries.

While the theme of the 2019 International Youth Day is ‘[Transforming Education](#)’, the global trade union movement deeply regrets that the world is completely ‘[off track](#)’ and will fail to meet sustainable development goal (SDG)4 – on quality public education – of the sustainable development agenda by the 2030 deadline.

In their [statement for 12 August](#), International Youth Day, global trade union organisations across sectors note that “today’s generation of youth is the largest in history. Yet too often, across the world, opportunities for young people to engage politically, economically and socially are constantly limited and undermined. Globally, economic exclusion and youth unemployment remain just two of the major challenges we face.”

Youth should have the right to equitable and inclusive access to:

- **Universal quality public education** that is free, equitable, non-discriminatory, inclusive and accessible to all vulnerable groups, with holistic and broad curricula that include a focus on climate change, as well as lifelong learning opportunities;
- **Well trained educators and quality learning environments** that are [free from violence and harassment](#), and in which educators – including young educators – are guaranteed decent working and employment conditions, including access to continuous professional development;
- **Quality apprenticeships** systems and programmes that comply with laws and collective agreements, provide a decent living wage and standard social protection coverage;
- **Quality jobs** that guarantee a decent living, good wages, work security via standard employment and access to social protections, good working conditions in safe and healthy workplaces with good work-life balance, as well as trade union representation and bargaining rights.
- **Support through [future of work](#) transitions** from education into the world of work, so young people equipped with the basic skills that will enable them fully and successfully participate in the fast-changing world of work;
- **Democratic trade unions** with sustainable institutional capacity, as well as organising, bargaining and campaigning capacity. These are fundamental to strengthening young workers’ collective power.

“Youth is the keystone to achieving sustainable societies,” stressed Education International’s General Secretary David Edwards. “Educators worldwide witness this in their daily practices, understand this and are therefore determined to make quality education for all a reality. Their unions are strongly committed to work with public authorities to ensure SDG 4 will be achieved by 2030. At our last Congress held in July, we were lucky to see many young education activists take the floor in sessions, show readiness to take responsibilities in their unions and lead in the future.”

World Teachers’ Day will also shed light on youth

In 2019, [World Teachers’ Day](#) will also celebrate and link youth and education with the theme, “Young Teachers: The future of the Profession.” October 5th provides the occasion to celebrate the teaching profession worldwide, take stock of achievements, and address some of the issues central for attracting and keeping the brightest minds and young talents in the profession.

Background

There are currently 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world. This is the largest youth population ever. However, more than half of all children and adolescents aged 6-14 lack basic reading and maths skills, despite the fact that the majority of them are attending school. This global learning crisis threatens to severely hamper progress towards the SDGs.

12 August was first designated International Youth Day by the UN General Assembly in 1999 and serves as an annual celebration of the role of young women and men as essential partners in

change, and an opportunity to raise awareness of challenges and problems facing the world's youth.

3. 500 days of injustice – We must right the wrong and #FreeLula

Today, August 20th, marks 500 days of the wrongful imprisonment of former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio 'Lula' da Silva. This is a day of action and mobilisation for justice. Educators from around the world stand with their Brazilian colleagues in the call for freedom for President Lula. Join us!

One of the most beloved Presidents in Brazil's history and its first working-class head of state, Lula is the victim of a grave miscarriage of justice. Despite a clear lack of evidence, he was jailed and prevented from standing in the Presidential elections against far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro. With polls showing Lula as the likely winner, he was convicted under bogus charges and not allowed to participate in the elections, in spite of calls from the UN Human Rights Committee.

The policies that made Lula popular with Brazilians and helped improve the lives of millions are being rolled back under the Bolsonaro government. Free quality public education is being undermined to the detriment of the country's students and its future. In Lula's words, "the problems in Brazil won't be solved with guns but with books and schools."

With a strong background in the union movement, President Lula has been very supportive of education unions in Brazil and beyond, meeting with their representatives on several occasions. He welcomed delegates to Puerto Alegre for the 2004 Education International World Congress and spoke at the CNTE/Brasil 33rd National Congress in 2017.

Education unions in Brazil have called for the release of President Lula and have taken a hard stance against the Bolsonaro government, [its methods and policies](#). Roberto Franklin de Leão, International Relations Secretary of CNTE/Brasil and Education International Vice-President, stated: "The 500 days in prison of former President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva is a sad milestone for the recent history of Brazilian democracy. The collusion between segments of the Brazilian judiciary, in partnership with the large commercial media in the country and the local and international economic power wrongly imprisoned the greatest living leader in Brazil, the president who enjoys the highest approval ratings among the Brazilian population: Lula has been an ardent defender of quality public education for all Brazilians. None of the charges against him are true, but the silence of the Brazilian judicial control organs makes them all accomplices of this wrongful imprisonment. We're all Lula! Freedom for Lula now!"

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, said: "500 days in prison without a fair trial cannot stand. This is not just about one person. This is about a country failing to deliver on its promise of true democracy, rule of law, equality and respect for human rights. This miscarriage of justice must stop now. At the Education International World Congress, representatives of 32 million educators made it clear: we stand with our Brazilian colleagues and call for the immediate release of President Lula."

Join the action and add your voice to the call to #FreeLula! Here's how you can contribute:

- [Join nearly 100,000 people and sign the petition to annul the unfair trials](#)
- Share the petition on your social media using #LulaLibreJa #FreeLula and #500InjusticeDays
- Show your support online with photos, videos and messages today, particularly between 12h and 14h, Brasilia time. Use the action's hashtags and tag the official Lula Livre campaign

profiles: Twitter: @ComiteLula @FreeLulaBrasil Instagram: @lulalivreoficial,
@free.lulaFacebook: www.facebook.com/FreeLulaBrasil/

For more information about the campaign in defence of Lula, please visit <https://comitelulalivre.org/>

4. Amazon fires: Educators join in global outcry and demand responsible environmental policies

Over 2,500 fires have been reported in the Amazon rainforest over the past few days alone. Educators call for stronger environmental polices in Brazil and across the world.

The dire situation in the Amazon rainforest has made headlines across the world. Brazil recorded over 72,000 fire outbreaks this year alone - [an 85% increase compared to 2018](#) according to the country's National Institute for Space Research. More than half were in the Amazon.

The increase in the number of fires comes in the wake of the Bolsonaro government policy of opening the rainforest to commercial development, at the expense of environmental protection and indigenous communities living in the region. Since he took office at the beginning of the year, rates of deforestation in Brazil have soared and activists fear many have been emboldened to start fires to clear land for pastures. In response to the outcry, Bolsonaro brushed off concerns and launched an attack on civil society organisations, blaming local NGOs for starting fires without a shred of evidence.

In a video message, Fátima da Silva, Education International Latin America Regional Committee Vice-President and Brasil CNTE General Secretary, labelled the Brazilian government's environmental policy as one "of destroying and selling the Amazonia". She called on the international community to condemn this policy and to defend the biodiversity of the Amazon rainforest, as well as the rights of the indigenous peoples who live there, for the sake of Brazil and the entire world. The full statement is available below (in Spanish).

Susan Hopgood, Education International President, stated: "The Amazon fires are not business as usual. An 85% increase in the number of fires compared to 2018 – this is the result of rolling back environmental protections. Irresponsible policy making is not something the world can afford in the middle of the climate crisis. Favouring development over conservation, disregarding minority rights, baseless attacks on civil society organisations, undermining education – we are seeing this happen in Brazil and many countries across the world with devastating consequences. Educators stand against this tide. We will continue to speak the truth in our classrooms and the highest fora of power. We will not be deterred."

Last month, the Education International Congress made the fight against climate change one of the organisation's priorities for the next four years, noting that "education is the best tool to teach the public to be aware of the causes and consequences of climate change and other environmental problems, and providing people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to seek solutions, change consumption patterns and transform society, thereby helping to change the unsustainable economic model that has led to the spiral of social and environmental destruction in which we currently find ourselves."

5. "G20: no long-lasting change without education", by David Edwards.

The G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial meeting here in Japan is an opportunity to reflect. EI and other Global Unions are participating in the Labour 20 – L20 which represents the interests of workers at the G20 level. It importantly unites trade unions across G20 countries and our Global Union Federations and is convened by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD.

Last year's convening in Mendoza was an important one for our sector as it saw a first-ever Education 20 engagement group (called E20) set up and a Labour 20 (L20) statement that extensively covered the need for investing in quality education throughout people's lives. It included a focus on technical and vocational education and early childhood education. Sadly, this year education seems to have all but disappeared from the L20/G20 agenda. Is this because climate change, just transitions and the future of work are not dependent on education? - far from it.

In fact, ILO Director General, Guy Ryder reminded us at our recent 8th World Congress in Bangkok that the future of work depends fundamentally on education. He called for deeper EI and ILO collaboration on the future of work in education to help realize the recommendations of the [Commission on the Future of Work](#).

A more just society and strengthened social contract will only be possible with the type of education that enables graduates of programmes not only to access jobs, but also to live more valuable lives. That means to develop citizens fully able to engage with the democracies they are part of. Not as passive consumers of what politicians tell them, but as people able to look at the world and make up their own minds.

It is lamentable that the G20 will not be acknowledging the central need for an inclusive, equitable and quality education system that develops the whole of the student for the whole of their lives. This requires well-funded schools and colleges, TVET institutions where the teachers can provide pathways that are meaningful for students - not simply a market mechanism to feed students into jobs that were relevant yesterday and not tomorrow.

It also requires qualified teachers. Too many economies are looking for quick fixes at a time when we are being forced by existential crises to consider the long game. We are at a time where we know what works, but we are ignoring the facts. OECD has been consistent in stressing that education for sustainable futures is critical but G20 countries continue to cut investment and push privatisation solutions that have been shown not to work.

Climate change rightly sits high on the agenda, but rogue states continue to ignore the science and are actively working to block students' access to scientific fact. At the same time, they pay lip service to the importance of an educated workforce while we see income disparities rise and working conditions deteriorate. Political rhetoric is being hollowed out by authoritarian populists intent on short term political gain while being fully aware of medium to long term devastation.

So, what can we do? The future lies in the hands of transnational cooperation. Not one based on yesterday's flawed market models, but on a concerted attempt to develop critical thinking in students, to provide access to lifelong educational opportunities not just for utilitarian purposes but for the purposes that we all care about and ensure we care about each other, and our planet.

6. EI calls on Employment and Labour Ministers in G20 countries to refocus on education

Education International leadership attending the G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial meeting remind ministers that education has to be part of any meaningful long-term strategy to address our common challenges.

Susan Hopgood, Education International (EI) President and David Edwards, EI General Secretary, are attending the Labour 20 meeting in Japan. Convened by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD, the Labour 20 represents the interests of workers at the G20 level and brings together labour unions across G20 countries and Global Union Federations.

While the 2018 Labour 20 meeting in Mendoza introduced the first Education 20 engagement group and highlighted the importance of investing in quality life-long education, this priority is conspicuously absent from this year's agenda. [In a blog published in the run-up to the meeting](#), David Edwards reminded leaders that climate change, just transitions and the future of work are all fundamentally dependent on education. "It is lamentable that the G20 will not be acknowledging the central need for an inclusive, equitable and quality education system that develops the whole of the student for the whole of their lives," the EI General Secretary wrote, adding that "we are at a time where we know what works, but we are ignoring the facts. OECD has been consistent in stressing that education for sustainable futures is critical but G20 countries continue to cut investment and push privatisation solutions that have been shown not to work." Edwards called for more transnational cooperation based on a common drive to develop critical thinking in students and provide life-long learning opportunities to build a future that benefits everyone and our planet.

In Japan, Susan Hopgood brought the perspective of educators to the table during a seminar session she was invited to chair. Opening the session on "A labour protection floor: fundamental rights, working time, wages, occupational health and safety," the EI President highlighted the fact that too many workers are locked into precarious work, including in education where many teachers, university staff and other education support personnel are on short or fixed-term contracts. Hopgood warned that "protection of rights may exist on paper, but the absence of a long-term employment relationship makes them vulnerable to abuse." In addition, the quest for flexibility has undermined protective legislation and collective bargaining. "It has contributed to a growing class of working poor and has accentuated inequality." In terms of occupational health and safety, Hopgood noted that many threats remained, with climate change looming large for the entire world. In the midst of a politically-driven individualisation of our lives, Hopgood invited participants to discuss human-centred ways to organise the future of work that "enhance rather than undermine solidarity, that can reduce isolation and foster cooperation which will strengthen rather than erode democracy, including industrial democracy."

Education International will continue to advocate for quality education systems in the G20 and around the world and a better future for workers with a life-long learning guarantee.

September

Headlines

1. Educators for democracy and human rights: Education International joins Brussels protest in solidarity with the people of Hong Kong

Today representatives of Education International and other trade unions staged a protest in front of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade office in Brussels to stand against recent police brutality and human rights abuses perpetrated against the people of Hong Kong.

The violent response to the peaceful Hong Kong demonstrations continues to escalate, with over 1,117 people arrested since June on charges of rioting. The excessive use of force has led to many being injured, some scarred for life. Protesters remain undeterred. Today high school and university students boycotted the first day of school.

Co-leading the protest in Brussels, David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, said: “We’re here today because this violence cannot be allowed to continue. Citizens’ legitimate concerns and peaceful protests must never be met with police brutality and human rights abuses. We are adding our voices in support of our brave colleagues in education and trade unions, students and all the people taking to the streets to defend democracy in Hong Kong. We urge the Hong Kong administration to put an end to the completely unjustified repression and begin an honest dialogue with the citizens it is supposed to serve, a dialogue rooted in the values of dignity, human rights and democracy. This is the only way forward.”

The Education International General Secretary, together with union leaders from the International Trade Union Confederation, the European Trade Union Confederation and the International Federation of Journalists had a meeting with representatives of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Brussels, sharing their concern over the escalating violence and repression. Hong Kong representatives were presented with an official letter co-signed by the four organisations and supporting the protestors’ five demands:

- Permanent withdrawal of the extradition bill;
- Release of the arrested protesters without charge;
- Retraction of the characterisation of the June 12 protests as “riots”;
- An independent inquiry to investigate police use of force;
- Introduction of political reform with universal suffrage.

In July, at the 8th Education International World Congress, representatives of 32 million educators from over 170 countries unanimously adopted a resolution reaffirming their “solidarity with the Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union; with democracy defenders in Hong Kong and in support of the values of equality, dignity, democracy, justice and liberties”.

Education International will continue to support this cause in all international fora.

2. Colombia: EI condemns threats made against educators’ unions FECODE and ASPU

Education International (EI) members FECODE and ASPU have been targeted by paramilitary threats. Educators from around the world call on the Colombian government to do its duty: ensure the safety of educators and protect schools as territories of peace.

On the 3rd of September, the FECODE executive committee received pamphlets with death threats from the paramilitary group the Black Eagles (Águilas Negras). The threats were directed specifically at Nelson Alarcón, FECODE President; Martha Alfonso, Second Vice-President; Domingo Ayala, Treasurer; María Eugenia Londoño, Secretary for Gender, Inclusion and Equality; Carlos Rivas, Secretary for Legal and Labour Affairs; and Isabel Olaya, Secretary for Organising and Union Education. On the same day, similar threats were received by the FECODE branch in the region of Cauca.

The pamphlets demanded that FECODE cancel its upcoming Caravan for Peace, Democracy and Life scheduled for 6-8 September. The threats also come in the wake of a series of strikes organised by FECODE and calling for better health coverage and conditions for educators in Colombia, the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement and better protection for social activists who have been the victims of violence since the agreement was signed.

Over 1,000 teachers and unionists have been killed in Colombia in the past 25 years. The violence escalated in 2018 when at least 13 teacher trade unionists were murdered. The terrible trend continues in 2019: 700 teachers have been threatened according to FECODE President Nelson Alarcón, with the most recent slaying taking place in August in the region of Cauca.

Strong international support for Colombian educators

Education International and its Latin America Regional Committee have expressed their grave concerns for the chronic lack of safety of teachers and unionist in Colombia and have addressed official letters to Colombia's President Duque, requesting that the government protect schools as territories of peace and educators as defenders of life, democracy and human rights.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: "We utterly condemn the threats made against FECODE and ASPU. It is completely unacceptable for teachers and unionists, people who reject any form of violence, to be threatened with death. We call on the Colombian government to do its duty: investigate these threats, ensure the security of educators, protect schools as sanctuaries and territories of peace."

Hugo Yasky, President of the Education International Latin America Regional Committee, and Vice-President Fatima Silva are currently in Bogota in solidarity with our Colombian colleagues and working closely with them.

[Read the EI statement to the Colombian government here \(in Spanish\).](#)

[The letter from the EI Latin America Regional Committee is available here \(in Spanish\).](#)

3. Latin America Discusses Rights Violations in the Education Sector

On Thursday 5 September in Bogotá, Colombia, member organisations of Education International Latin America (EILA) opened a regional meeting to share experiences and discuss rights violations in the education sector in Latin American countries. The meeting aims to establish a network for monitoring and reporting human and labour rights violations affecting education workers and

education communities in Latin America.

The event began with a speech by Nelson Alarcón, President of the *Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de la Educación* (FECODE), who welcomed all participants and thanked them for their international solidarity in light of the difficult situation in Colombia. Alarcón, who also sits on Education International's Executive Board, shared information about threats from paramilitary groups against members of FECODE's Board of Directors. The threats have come at a time when the country's Peace Agreement has been weakened by authorities of President Duque's government, with FECODE defending the agreement.

Threats Against Colombia's Social and Trade Union Leaders

FECODE suspended the Great Caravan for Peace, Life and Justice programme for 6, 7 and 8 September, when it was bound for Valle del Cauca. The decision was made in response to threats against the leadership of the union organisation and the risk of hosting the Caravan; instead, on 12 September, a 24-hour National Strike was called to demand life, peace, democracy and fulfilment of the agreements signed with FECODE. Alarcón reaffirmed FECODE's commitment to “defend schools as a peaceful territory”.

William Velandia, Prosecutor for FECODE and Vice-President of EILA, expressed his gratitude for the international solidarity with Colombia's education workers and social and trade union leaders. Velandia also remembered the EILA Regional Conference in La Plata, Argentina, where it was agreed to hold an event to monitor and denounce rights violations in the education sector.

Pedro Hernández, President of the *Asociación Sindical de Profesores Universitarios de Colombia* (ASPU), said threats to social and union leaders accompany a new wave of neoliberal reforms, with setbacks in labour rights. According to Hernández, this wave of reforms is taking place in every country in the region and aims to “break the backbone of trade unionism”.

Gloria Arboleda, General Secretary of ASPU and member of the EILA Regional Committee, reflected on the importance of invoking national laws and international conventions to defend the rights of education workers.

International Solidarity

The event was held in collaboration with the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). Daniel Martin of the CTF expressed his concerns about the future of work in view of setbacks in labour rights, expressing the need to defend public education as a fundamental human right. Andrée Gacoin of the BCTF expressed his organisation's solidarity against the conditions of violence affecting social and trade union leaders in Latin America and around the world.

Hugo Yasky, President of EILA and General Secretary of CTA in Argentina, greeted the meeting's participants and expressed EILA member organisations' solidarity with FECODE and ASPU. Yasky stated that the struggle for the rights of workers places trade union leaders at risk of violence and threats of all kinds, and that international solidarity is key to overcoming these obstacles.

International Standards of the International Labour Organisation

The meeting's morning session began with a presentation by Dr. Jorge Humberto Valero on the international labour standards system of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Valero

summarised the historical origins and antecedents of the ILO and delved into the scope of international labour standards and the tripartite nature of the organisation, which involves the participation of workers, employers and States.

Mr Eduardo Rodríguez, the ILO representative for the Andean countries, gave a presentation on the ILO's normative and monitoring system as a means of promoting social justice. Rodríguez detailed the procedures that govern the actions of the ILO and the actions that workers' organisations can initiate to demand respect for their rights before the international body.

Representatives of the different Latin American countries participating in the meeting posed questions to the speakers after their presentations.

Inter-American Human Rights System

Dr María Paula Lemus of the *Colectivo de Abogados "José Alvear Restrepo"* gave a presentation on accessing international systems for the protection of rights, particularly the Universal System of Human Rights and the Inter-American Human Rights System. Lemus explained in depth the process for bringing cases before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and explained relevant rulings on trade union rights by this institution.

After Lemus' presentation there was time for questions, during which representatives of the organisations participating in the meeting shared their doubts about the Inter-American Human Rights System.

Network for Monitoring and Reporting Rights Violations in the Education Sector

Hugo Yasky concluded the day by inviting EILA member organisations to establish a network to monitor and report rights violations within the education sector in Latin American countries. "A network that will enable us to take collective action, a network that will enable us to take more effective action", Yasky said.

At the close of the event, the President of EILA condemned the severe repression suffered by a member organisation, the *Colegio de Profesores de Chile*, which took part in a protest on the streets of Santiago that same Thursday. (see note from the *Colegio de Profesores de Chile*)

José Olivera of the *Federación Nacional de Profesores de Educación Secundaria de Uruguay* (FENAPES) spoke about the offensive mounted by chambers of commerce in his country, which filed a complaint against Uruguay before the ILO aimed at limiting labour rights in the South American country.

4. "Education on the International Day of Democracy", by David Edwards.

The United Nations established the International Day of Democracy on the 15th of September in 2007 to promote democracy. In 2019, it is clear that democracy and all the things that go with it like human rights and rule of law need to be defended as well as promoted. Education is affected by the state of democracy as well as relevant to its defence, promotion, and future.

American political scientist Francis Fukuyama, in an essay in 1989, as the Soviet bloc was collapsing, proclaimed the "end of history" describing,

“... the end of history as such.... That is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”

The shock of the American Presidential elections in 2016 and similar developments elsewhere prompted him to remind us that his original essay in 1989 was “The End of History?” with a question mark at the end. In a book, “Identity” from 2018, he writes,

“Populist leaders seek to use the legitimacy conferred by democratic elections to consolidate power. They claim direct charismatic connection to ‘the people,’ who are often defined in narrow ethnic terms that exclude big parts of the population. They don’t like institutions and seek to undermine the checks and balances that limit a leader’s personal power in a modern democracy: courts, the legislature, independent media, and a nonpartisan bureaucracy.”

Fault lines in democracy have not just come out of the blue. There are few things as fundamental to democracy as free, universal public education and yet, it has come under attack. We have learned that the defence of education and of its practitioners is also defence of democracy.

The birth of public education

Free, universal public education was a major priority for the trade union movement already in the 19th century. For example, in the United States, calling for public education was the first decision when the original inter-sectoral trade union organisation was created. It was founded in Philadelphia in 1827. The delegates called for,

“a system that will fit the children of the poor as well as the rich to become our future legislators, a system that will bring the children of the poor and the rich to mix together as a band of Republican brothers”.

Dangers to the public education system

EI and its member organisations have been fighting commercialisation and privatisation for many years. That struggle was crystallised and focused in the [Global Response campaign](#) launched in 2015 at the EI Congress in Ottawa.

This campaign and related activities are about a lot more than protecting education from those who hustle education as a source of wealth rather than enlightenment. It was also sounding the alarm about education “reforms”, public or private, that narrow the scope of education to those subjects where progress can be easily tested and judge teachers and students based on criteria that are easily measurable.

In many countries, that has distanced education from its mission of education to enrich one’s life and develop the capacity to make a difference, including as an active citizen.

In other words, attacks on public education with a broad mandate and attacks on trained and motivated teachers who can develop students who can think and act independently are also assaults on democracy. They threaten to cripple our ability to foster community, and encourage peace, understanding and tolerance. The increase in segregation that derives from many reforms damages public education and undermines “ *a system that will bring the children of the poor and the rich to mix together...*”

The evolution of education in some countries has placed distance between schools and democracy. Combined with often permanent rather than passing austerity programs, damage to schools and professional teachers compromise the future of democracy.

Education for Democracy

There is nothing new about propaganda. The fact that the internet has become its prevailing delivery system does not change its nature. However, it is like an automatic weapon versus a knife. It can kill more efficiently and is less selective.

People find themselves buried under an avalanche of information. It is a load that too often snuffs out the truth. Social media has become the leading source of information in many countries. There is no technological way to remove falsehoods or separate out fact from fiction. People need to learn how to do that manually and at an early age.

To support educators and others to help students identify truth, think critically, discuss and debate and become actors in rather than victims of democracy, EI has published a book by EI President Susan Hopgood and EI General Secretary Emeritus Fred van Leeuwen called “ [On Education and Democracy; 25 Lessons from the Teaching Profession](#)”.

In launching the book at our recent Congress in Bangkok, van Leeuwen explained that he does not understand why the links of education with democracy are often missing from the debate on democracy, and added,

“in the so-called established and emerging democracies, where most of us in this room work and live, and where we take free elections for granted, democratic standards may fade away, sometimes without us realising it. That is, until we wake up one morning finding our professional and trade union freedoms amputated, finding our public services pared to the bone and sold on the market, finding our media brought into the hands of a few tycoons, and finding our politicians shamelessly exploiting racist and xenophobic sentiments What I am saying is that democracy is a process that is reversible, that democracy can easily slip away.”

Education can instil democratic values. It can equip people with democracy competencies. It can give hope. And, political decisions based on discussions and hope will yield better results than those based on the “Big Lie” and fear.

In conclusion, on this International Day of Democracy, we have a simple message. We need democracy for education, education for democracy, and trade unions for both.

Headlines

1. “Nothing about us without us: educators take the lead on professional teaching standards”, by David Edwards.

One of the most consequential debates and decisions of our 8th World Congress was on professional teaching standards. Congress passed a resolution supporting the implementation of a joint EI/UNESCO framework on the development of professional teaching standards where it is clear that teachers’ unions must be at the centre of the process. As many of our members pointed out, this is not just important for educators; it is essential for our students and their learning outcomes.

Teachers cannot pick and choose what they do. They must be evidence based and student focused. They must have access to continuous professional learning and development throughout their careers to keep their practice current. The only way this can be assured is by ensuring teacher unions are central to the process of writing, shaping and implementing their own professional standards. The EI/UNESCO framework features three domains - teaching knowledge and understanding, teaching practice and teaching relations – and provides a template education systems around the world can use to define professional teaching standards in their national setting, together with local teachers’ unions.

We know there are those in education who are quantifying, standardising, digitising; technicians busy trying to push reductionist arguments, peddling ineffective value-added measures to drive teacher behaviour. Our best defence against this is our own professionalism. The status of teachers is not just about pay and conditions. It is about our ability to stand at the centre of what we know - the teaching and learning process. The teaching profession must play a lead role in the design and implementation of the policies and practices necessary to create classrooms that are conducive to quality teaching and learning. Defining what constitutes effective, ethical practice is a core responsibility of the profession. Nothing about us without us.

What is at stake is the very idea of a profession. A profession is defined in its shared knowledge and expertise, and its shared commitment to defending its standards of practice. The alternative approach is to remove the common reference points for determining the right to be called a teacher.

Therefore, this Congress resolution is also a notice to privatisers that education is not for sale. The race to the bottom when it comes to teacher qualifications in low-fee schools will not be allowed to continue without a fight. Several of our members in Africa warned about the pressing need to fight de-professionalisation and to put an end to the precarious status of teachers. No education system can exceed the quality of its teachers. Quality education requires qualifications that work, not some quick fix, fast track system designed to get teachers in and out of the classroom in short bursts.

Congress made clear that teacher professionalism is not negotiable. Just as we would never want unqualified surgeons operating on our children, we do not want our young people taught by unqualified teachers.

The EI/UNESCO Global framework of professional teaching standards means that we stand over our profession as guardians of ethics and the defenders of standards that work for teachers and their

students. It is an important step in transnational cooperation to ensure that the best education is available for all students.

This is not teachers closing down access to the profession, but teachers opening up professionalism to their own scrutiny. Teachers cannot submit to bureaucratic constructions unrelated to the reality of life in the classroom. They can and must provide guidance in every national setting around what matters and what works.

Download the [EI Resolution and EI/UNESCO Global Framework](#).

2. Education unionists in Asia-Pacific put forward recommendations to advance SDG4 and professional teaching standards

At the Asia-Pacific regional consultative meeting of Education International affiliates, education union leaders adopted recommendations to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 and implement professional teaching standards.

Thirty education union leaders from 13 Education International (EI) member organisations participated in the Asia-Pacific regional consultative meeting “Where are we? Progress towards Education 2030 Agenda”, held from 28-29 September in Bangkok, Thailand.

Day 1: Sustainable Development Goal 4

The first day of the meeting was dedicated to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and aimed to produce recommendations to be included in the 5th Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 outcomes document.

Ms. Maki Hayashikaa, Chief of Section for Inclusive Quality Education at the UNESCO Bangkok Office, updated participants on the status and progress on the SDG4 Education 2030 implementation process. She shared the six policy recommendations submitted to the High-Level Political Forum held in New York, USA, in July 2019, calling on the governments to:

- accelerate efforts to remove systemic and non-systemic barriers that hindered equity, inclusion and quality at all levels of education through ensuring participation of diverse stakeholders;
- diversify learning pathways, both in formal and non-formal education, to eradicate illiteracy;
- increase and ensure the supply of motivated, supported, qualified, adequately resourced and empowered teaching force;
- increase investment, adhere to the international benchmarks of allocation at least 4-6 % of GDP and/or at least 15-20 % of total public expenditure to education and ensure an efficient and equitable resource allocation and accountability in expenditures;
- strengthen monitoring of inclusion, equity and quality by ensuring mechanisms are in place and capacity is available;
- and promote greater engagement of diverse stakeholders, including young people, civil society, academic, media and the private sector, in the achievement of SDG4 and maximising synergies among the SDGs.

She also presented the new campaign of the UNESCO Bangkok Office called #CommitToEducation SDG4. The campaign is based on eight main reasons to advocate for and raise awareness about SDG4 implementation, including the fact that with current trends, over 220 million children,

adolescents and youth will still be out of school in 2030; and too many teachers lack the minimum required training.

Day 2: Professional teaching standards

The second day was dedicated to the development of a roadmap of implementation for the [EI/UNESCO Global Framework of professional teaching standards adopted at EI's 8th World Congress](#) in Bangkok in July this year.

EI's Dennis Sinyolo presented the Framework, which was developed jointly by EI and the UNESCO International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. The Framework's main purpose is to inform and guide the development, review or renewal of national teaching standards. It consists of 12 key principles, such as: quality education is a universal right of all children, young people and adults, in the interests of individuals, communities and societies; all teachers should be trained at university or equivalent institutions and have the requisite knowledge, skills and competences to meet the diverse needs of students; and Governments and education authorities have an obligation to ensure that teachers receive the necessary support, training, professional development, opportunity to engage in and access research, including action research in order to enable all students to develop to their full potential.

Sinyolo also shared with participants possible uses of the professional teaching standards: inform the development/review of national teaching standards; improve teacher quality, teaching and learning; improve initial teacher education; improve continuous professional development for teachers; upgrade the qualifications of underqualified teachers; and promote teacher autonomy and empower teachers.

Recommendations on the implementation and monitoring the progress of SDG4

The two-day consultative meeting resulted in two sets of recommendations. The first set focused on implementing and monitoring the progress towards SDG4, and was sent as input for the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 which took place from 1-4 October in Bangkok. Participants called for governments to:

- Accelerate progress towards the implementation of SDG4 and related SDGs and targets by addressing the major obstacles that impede progress (education financing, teachers, equity and inclusion).
- Ensure investment in public education by meeting the internationally agreed education financing benchmarks (at least 6 % of GDP and/or at least 20 % of the national budget).
- Expand and ensure public provision of early childhood education for all.
- Regulate the activities of private education providers to ensure quality, equity and inclusion, and decent working conditions for teachers.
- Provide adequate and quality infrastructure, teaching and learning resources, particularly in rural, remote and other marginalised areas.

Recommendations on teachers

In their second set of recommendations on teachers, education union leaders stressed that governments should:

- Ensure that quality and relevant professional development is provided to all teachers and leaders in early childhood education, primary, secondary and vocational education and training

and higher education free of charge.

- Ensure that professional teaching standards are developed by and with the full involvement of teachers and their unions.
- Professionalise teaching, including through the upgrading of the qualifications and competences of all unqualified and underqualified teachers.
- Engage with teacher organisations in genuine dialogue in the conceptualisation, implementation, monitoring and review of education and teacher policies.
- Address teacher workload and well-being and ensure that teachers have adequate time for lesson preparation and critical reflection.
- Ensure academic freedom and the professional autonomy of teachers.
- Ensure teachers have decent salaries and working conditions agreed through genuine social dialogue (including collective bargaining) with education unions.
- Ensure job security/security of tenure (permanent contracts) for all teachers and education support personnel.

3. International Day of the Girl: educators celebrate the power of girls to change the world

The global education union movement applauds the momentous activism and leadership of girls around the world. Educators pledge to continue working to empower girls by promoting the inalienable right of every girl to free quality education and by pushing to end school-related gender-based violence. Read David Edwards' statement on the International Day of the Girl.

On this International Day of the Girl, the education union movement salutes the courage, activism and leadership of the many girls working diligently for a just, equitable and sustainable world

2019 will surely go down in history as the year when 'girl power' sent ripple effects all around the globe.

GirlForce: Unscripted and Unstoppable, the [theme](#) of this year's International Day of the Girl, speaks directly to the impact that girls can have on their communities, and on the world, when they are free and able to release their potential. Few will be unaware of last month's massive mobilisation of young (and older) people all over the world to push governments to take action to address the current climate justice. A mobilisation that mushroomed after Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg's initially lonely 'school strike for the climate' became a global phenomenon.

And she is not alone: Anuna De Wever (Belgium), Madison Pearl Edwards (Belize), Tokota Iron Eyes (USA), Helena Gualinga (Ecuador), Leah Namugerwa (Uganda), Ridhima Pandey (India), Autumn Peltier (Canada) and Marinel Ubaldo (Philippines) are also leading activists and advocates for climate justice in their respective communities.

As educators, we salute the courage and capacity of these and countless other young girls and young women who dare to step up, step out and to raise their voices to say: "Enough! We must and we *will* make change happen..."

We support their efforts in our own work to deliver quality education for all; we will hold governments accountable for the promises they made under [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), to *leave no-one behind*;

We will continue our work to keep schools [free from school-related gender-based violence](#), which prevents millions of girls from enjoying the right to education in too many parts of the world.

Evidence shows that educating girls has massive returns for their families, communities and for society in general.

But that is not the only reason why we will continue to do all we can to make sure all girls everywhere can access and successfully complete a full cycle of free, quality public education.

We do so because the right to education is inalienable and because as educators it is incumbent on us to defend every girl's right to education today, and every day.

David Edwards

EI General Secretary

[4. Statement | EI calls on World Bank to change tack in education](#)

As the board of governors of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund come together for the 2019 Annual Meetings in Washington this week, Education International sends two clear messages to the World Bank:

Stop funding and promoting privatisation and education profiteering

Despite the evidence that only free quality public education is sustainable and reaches the most vulnerable, the World Bank continues to directly fund commercial private education providers, including so-called low-fee private school chains through the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The Bank therefore unethically channels public tax-payers' money to for-profit corporations for education provision which, ample research shows, excludes the poorest and most marginalised and is often of poor quality, with unqualified teachers hired at low cost and government standards dodged. This must stop now. If the Bank is serious about supporting Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education it must stop funding private education providers immediately and instead work towards achieving free primary and secondary education for all (SDG target 4.1), universal early childhood education and tertiary education to all who need it by strengthening public education systems.

In addition to financing private education, the World Bank funds market-oriented public private partnerships (PPPs) through its International Development Association (IDA) and actively promotes privatisation of education by advising countries to adopt reforms that reduce regulations and encourage private 'education markets'. The Bank's international policy advice tool, Systems Approach for Better Educational Results (SABER), encourages education ministries in low- and middle-income countries to increase their engagement with the private sector, introduce greater school choice and incentivise market entry of private education providers. The advice ignores evidence of the negative impact of public-private partnerships on equity and quality in education.

EI denounces the privatisation and commercialisation of education as it undermines education as a human right and a public good. In an [open letter to the World Bank](#) and its donors, Eland over 170 civil society organisations from across the world call on the Bank to take a clear and principled position in support of free, publicly funded and provided education and against the use of development aid to fund for-profit or commercial education.

Stop undermining teachers and their unions

The Bank has long been known to undermine teacher professionalism. For many years it has promoted policies that control and devalue the teaching profession, such as high-stakes test-based accountability, reduced teacher salaries and the use of contract teachers. The World Bank recently developed a [new teacher observation tool](#) ('Teach') – a one-size-fits-all instrument removed from the local context. The tool was developed without involving or consulting the teaching profession. By doing this, the Bank suggests that it continues to perceive teachers as unskilled workers who are the principal source of the 'learning crisis' and must be held accountable, rather than as a professional body who should be trusted, given autonomy, supported and listened to.

The Bank rightfully recognises that quality teachers are central to achieving quality education for all. However, it still does not recognise and bolster teacher professionalism. We therefore call on the Bank to act now to fundamentally change its approach to teachers. The Bank should practise and promote enhanced policy dialogue and ensure that teachers and their unions are key partners when designing, developing, implementing and evaluating any education reforms. It should advocate for teachers to be professionally trained and highly qualified, actively supported and well-resourced. And it should [prioritise decent work](#) over cost-cutting measures and go further to promote high quality working conditions for all teachers, seeking to persuade and support governments to raise the status of the profession.

In summary, as the decision-makers of the International Finance Institutions come together this week, Education International has two simple, clear messages – stop promoting education privatisation and stop undermining teacher professionalism, teachers and their unions. Unions and civil society have been calling for reform at the World Bank for years. Now is the time for change.

5. Statement | Education International condemns Turkish aggression in Syria

The global education union federation draws attention to the long-term consequences of the Turkish military action in Syria for students and educators in the region.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: "EI condemns the Turkish military operations in North East Syria launched by President Erdogan and causing unacceptable human suffering and casualties among Kurdish people. The global trade union movement stands for the promotion of peace, the respect of human rights, international humanitarian law and democracy. EI condemns the use of armed forces, in the absence of sanctioned multinational UN operations, in particular against civilians and public service infrastructure like education and health institutions. EI and its member organisations continue to raise awareness of the serious humanitarian and refugee crisis in the region and call on global leaders to effectively address this situation, in particular as regards migratory flows in the Eastern Mediterranean."

The consequences of the violence on schools in the region are terrible, with the education of thousands of children disrupted and no end in sight. Schools are being used as shelters for the thousands of displaced people. The provision of education is a fundamental right and should be a priority everywhere.

Furthermore, the crisis is not limited to Northern Syria. The refugee influx is already causing strain on services and infrastructures in Kurdistan. This will exacerbate existing tensions and vulnerabilities which will increase the need for education and other essential services.

Education International calls for an immediate end to the military aggression so that the people of the region can finally begin the reconstruction process after so many years of war.

6. Chile: Education International condemns political and military repression of anti-austerity protests

Education International calls on the government of Chile to immediately cease all aggression, suspend the state of emergency in all cities, and open avenues of dialogue with citizens in order to ensure conflict resolution.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: “Declaring a state of emergency that suspends people’s rights and deploying soldiers in cities is wholly unacceptable. The government of Chile must immediately stop the repression, remove the military from the streets and begin to address people’s legitimate concerns over the never-ending austerity measures. We stand in solidarity with our colleagues and with all Chileans.”

Chile is one of the wealthiest countries in the region but also one of the most unequal. While the gap between rich and poor in Chile is the worst in the OECD, the government continues to implement austerity measures that undermine public services like education and healthcare. In response to the public protests, the Piñera administration imposed a state of emergency, with over 10,000 soldiers and police in the streets and more than 1,400 arrests. The violence has already led to a number of deaths. Forty-two education districts have been closed in the capital.

The Education International Regional Committee for Latin America issued an official statement to “express solidarity with the people of Chile and condemn the military deployment and brutal repression taking place since President Sebastián Piñera declared the state of emergency.”

[Read the full statement of the Education International Regional Committee for Latin America here \(in Spanish\).](#)

7. Philippines: International outrage at attempted extrajudicial killing of education union members

Two members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, the Education International affiliate in the Philippines, were targeted in an armed attack on their school. One suffered multiple gunshot wounds and is currently in hospital, with the union reporting she is being held prisoner by police forces.

Classroom shooting targets teachers

On the morning of 15 October, teachers Zhaydee and Ramil Cabañelez were shot at by masked men in their classroom, in the presence of their students. While Ramil was unscathed, his wife Zhaydee was struck by six bullets. Mrs Cabañelez was carried to hospital where she is currently receiving medical care.

Zhaydee and Ramil Cabañelez are teachers and members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) in the Philippines. In 2016, Zhaydee received the Outstanding Teacher Award from the Department of Education. The couple are among the few teachers who have decided to reside full-time in their isolated community to deliver education.

Hostages in hospital

According to the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, the couple are being held hostage in their hospital room in the city of Valencia and are being denied the right to receive visitors. A solidarity visit conducted by members of ACT and staff of the Commission on Human Rights on 23 October was blocked by eight armed police officers stationed at the hospital. This was despite the visit being agreed the previous day with Ramil Cabañelez and the couple being in desperate need of moral, financial and legal support from their colleagues.

However, police forces did provide access to the couple to a reporter from a government news agency. The couple informed their union that the reporter misquoted them and twisted their statements in order to deny their affiliation to ACT.

Police attention seems to be focused on keeping the two victims isolated and not on investigating and identifying the perpetrators of the crime. Students' parents have reported to ACT that the police had not visited the school and that students were the ones who gathered the bullet shells left at the scene of the shooting.

Strong condemnation from the union movement

Since the end of 2018, members of ACT have been subjected to state-sponsored profiling, red-tagging, vilification, harassment, intimidation and threats. This is part of a larger trend where progressive movements and individuals critical of the Duterte administration are being systematically targeted.

David Edwards, Education International General Secretary, stated: "These blatant infringements of human and trade union rights must stop now. This is not something the global union movement or the world can tolerate. We stand in full solidarity with our colleagues in the Philippines and call on the international community to take immediate action against the Duterte government. Innocent lives are at stake." The global union movement is mobilising for a special action day in solidarity with colleagues in the Philippines on 10 December – International Human Rights Day.

On 25 October, ACT organised a press conference and released an official statement regarding the attack against Zhaydee and Ramil Cabañelez and the ensuing police action. Raymond Basilio, ACT General Secretary, stated:

"ACT denounces such grievous attacks to our ranks. As educators, it is our utmost duty to defend human rights and uphold peace, justice, and democracy. We demand for state security forces to lay their hands off our teachers and schools! We implore the police to do their job of conducting a genuine and earnest investigation of the case and pursue the perpetrators of the crime! We call on all concerned government institutions to exert all efforts to protect the Cabañelez couple from continuing

threats and attacks and secure their welfare and well-being. We will remain steadfast in this fight until justice is served to our colleagues.”

November

Headlines

1. Hong Kong: Educators stand with democracy defenders

In the face of the on-going violence against protesters and democracy defenders in Hong Kong, Education International (EI) and its members are mobilising to show support for those who defend the values of democracy, justice and liberties.

The violence in Hong Kong continues to escalate. Police forces are using indiscriminate brutality and torture against youth and protesters who are steadfast in their demands for the genuine enforcement of the one-country-two-systems principle and universal suffrage. Nearly four thousand people have been arrested or injured.

This is an intolerable breach of human rights. EI and its members organisations, representing over 32 million educators from across the world, [are gearing up](#) to demand the authorities of Hong Kong to respect the rights and freedoms of citizens as guaranteed by international standards, to engage in a genuine dialogue with civil society and to investigate the use of violence against students and peaceful protesters.

The situation in Hong Kong was prioritised in July 2019 by the EI World Congress, with representatives of millions of educators adopting an [urgent resolution expressing solidarity with the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union and the people of Hong Kong](#). Meeting in Brussels next week, the EI Executive Board will analyse the situation further and decide on the best avenues to lend support to the democracy defenders of Hong Kong.

2. Teachers and UNESCO team up to define professionalism for teaching and learning across the world

Education International (EI) and UNESCO launch a joint framework that will define what quality teaching means, now and in the future. The Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards was launched today in front of education ministers, EI member organisations and policy experts at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris.

With quality teaching high on the global education agenda, educators and their unions have taken the lead to create a set of standards that defines the new benchmark for quality teaching and that will contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4. [The Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards](#) was developed in close cooperation with UNESCO.

At the UNESCO General Conference, Education International President Susan Hopgood took the floor to introduce the new tool and stressed that this was the result of a participatory process that responds to the wish and the right of educators to be at the table when education policy decisions are made. "We care deeply about the status of our profession and about the quality of the education provided to our students," she said, adding that the recognition of teaching as a profession implies taking professional standards and working conditions seriously.

UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education, Stefania Giannini, added that “professional teaching standards designed with the aim to define what quality teaching means for delivering quality education are a powerful instrument in the hands of educators. Their development is one of the critical steps in order to increase the supply of qualified and trained teachers necessary to ensure quality education for all children and adolescents by 2030.”

Why the world needs a standards framework for teachers

The Professional Teaching Standards Framework complements existing UN normative instruments, in particular the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel (1997) which aim to protect and promote the status of teachers. It lays out ten standards covering three domains: Teaching Knowledge and Understanding, Teaching Practice and Teaching Relations.

Hopgood stated that the Professional Teaching Standards Framework would help raise the teaching and learning bar in many countries, schools and classrooms. The professional competences and capabilities defined in the framework would also help to strengthen teacher education and development programmes and propel teachers to a higher level of professional practice and excellence.

Quality before surveillance

The framework as it has been developed by EI and UNESCO is a tool to ensure quality, not “a managerial tool for controlling or punishing teachers. [It is] a fireguard against deprofessionalisation and a catalyst for improving teacher professionalism and practice,” Hopgood pointed out.

It has been developed with the input of teachers, drawing on professional insights and vast experience from a wide variety of educational contexts.

The framework was adopted by the EI World Congress in July. Education unions and governments are encouraged to use the Framework in their national contexts.

3. Statement | The Convention on the Rights of the Child at 30: Celebrating Progress, Facing Challenges

In November 1989 the world was changing. With the Berlin wall crumbling and the world ushering in a new age, countries found common ground in defending the rights of children. “Humanity owes its best to each and every one of you,” stated UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar to an audience of children, as the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted on the 20th of November 1989. It would go on to become one of the most widely ratified human rights treaties in history.

The Convention’s articles 28 and 29 are clear: education is a right, not a privilege. Free and compulsory primary education was mandated while states were encouraged to ensure secondary education was “available and accessible to every child”, including by introducing free secondary education. Higher education was to be made accessible to all, “on the basis of capacity”. School discipline was to respect the child’s human dignity. The purpose of education was defined as “the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”, in preparation for “responsible life in a free society”.

Thirty years on, we've seen massive progress, with more children in schools than ever before. But we do not lack for challenges.

Since the Convention was adopted, the world has witnessed the instrumentalisation of educational settings, and of the very content of education during armed conflicts. We have seen a pattern of attacks on schools in countries affected by conflict, insecurity and weak human rights protections. Students, teachers, education unions, academics and schools have been intentionally targeted. In too many contexts, schools are damaged, closed or even taken over by armed groups. Thousands of children miss out on their right to education as a result.

Worse still, education itself has become a target. Only seven years ago, Malala Yousafzai was shot by the Pakistani Taliban for supporting the very right to education enshrined in the Convention. Two years later, in 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from their school in Nigeria; 112 of these girls are still missing today. These are just some of the cases that made the headlines – many more students and teachers fell victims to these groups without the world paying attention. Both the Taliban and Boko Haram (which translates to 'Western education is a sin') see education, especially the education of girls, as a threat to the unequal societies they seek to impose in their respective countries.

Another big challenge has been the high numbers of people displaced by conflict, persecution, failing states and economic hardship. In 2018, children under the age of 18 accounted for about half of the world's 25.9 million refugees. In terms of access to education, the situation is critical: only 50% of refugee children have access to primary education (the global level stands at over 90%) and only 22% of refugee adolescents are in lower-secondary school.

To address these challenges and many others, the world mobilised around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. Global ambitions grew from trying to achieve universal primary education (MDG2) to the much broader scope of SDG4, which covers all levels of education, aims for improved quality of, as well as access to education, and embraces a broader vision of education, beyond literacy and numeracy. With SDG Agenda 2030, governments have committed to addressing the concrete barriers and ensuring "inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Notably, SDG4 recognises that there can be no quality education without qualified teachers and safe, non-violent and inclusive learning environments.

However, four years since the adoption of the SDGs, the world is already lagging behind and [off track when it comes to achieving SDG4](#), and honouring the right to education of every single child.

This is why the work of education unions is essential. We advocate for free, state-funded, quality, public education for all. We evaluate the progress made and hold governments and international institutions to account. We expose the threats of applying market-based thinking to education and allowing privatisation and edu-businesses to put profit before students. We work to ensure teachers have the necessary employment and working conditions, initial training, and continuous professional learning and development to help all children reach their full potential.

The resolutions adopted by our 8th World Congress in July 2019 show the scope of the work still to be done to dismantle the persistent barriers to universal quality education. At Congress, we pledged to continue [fighting against child labour](#) and for [inclusive quality education for all](#); to keep opposing the [commercialisation of education](#); to take the lead in [decolonising education](#) across the globe; to

[support refugee children to access quality education](#); to make sure [early childhood education](#) is not a commodity, but the right of every child; to highlight the [attacks on schools in Africa](#) and the dire need to ensure their safety; and to champion the universal eradication of corporal punishment in schools.

The progress we've made over the past 30 years is commendable but there is no time to rest. As long as there are children who miss out on their right to quality education, and millions still do, our work is far from over.

David Edwards

EI General Secretary

4. Bolivia: global education union leaders firmly condemn the coup d'état

Education International's Executive Board has condemned the situation in Bolivia, stating that it "firmly and unanimously condemns on behalf of its 32 million members the coup d'état that took place last 11 November".

Gathered at the 55th Education International (EI) Executive Board meeting held from 18-21 November in Brussels, Belgium, leaders of the education trade union movement clearly reasserted that their global trade union federation "promotes, defends and fights for democracy", as stated in the [Resolution "Quality Public Education and Trade Unions Are the Cornerstones of Democracy"](#), unanimously adopted at the 8th EI World Congress held in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2019.

The Executive Board added that "disruptions to the will of the people, as in the case of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, are an assault on the life, development and freedom of peoples and nations. This holds all the more true when such events are prompted by movements that express themselves in a xenophobic and racist manner that not only disrupts the democratic order, but also precludes compliance with legitimately established constitutional processes."

They also highlight and deeply deplore that authoritarian and totalitarian actions are being increasingly encouraged and promoted around the world, and that they enjoy either the direct approval of governments and international bodies or the ambiguous, complicit silence of governments who choose to ignore the will of the people.

The EI Executive Board therefore calls on its member organisations to speak out and show solidarity with the freedom of peoples, to demand that their own legitimately elected governments speak out in favour of the free exercise of democracy, and to plan and promote actions in defence of democracy, sovereignty and independence.

A regional outcry against this attack against democracy

The [Regional Committee of Education International Latin America](#) had already denounced and condemned the coup in Bolivia, which forced the resignation of the Constitutional President Evo Morales Ayma and his Vice President Álvaro García Linera.

Latin American education trade unionists stated: "We reject the acts of violence and the racist, fundamentalist and misogynist expressions that have occurred in recent days in Bolivia and advocate respect for the physical integrity of Evo Morales, his supporters, indigenous peoples and leaders of social movements."

They vehemently denounced the actions of police and military forces, “accomplices of the fundamentalist, racist and extreme right-wing coup sectors”. Law enforcement officials are responsible for forcing the resignation of the legitimate President of Bolivia Evo Morales, they insisted. They called for the prompt restoration of the constitutional order and the cessation of violence, and rejected any type of interference of foreign political or economic interests in Bolivia.

Higher education unions in the EI Latin American region also spoke against the coup and “criminal prosecution unleashed by the sectors that have subverted the constitutional order in Bolivia”.

They expressed their solidarity with the Bolivian people, President Evo Morales Ayma, as well as the leadership and active members of the civil society movement, “victims of the brutal aggression executed by armed gangs serving a racist oligarchy taking revenge against those who dared to challenge their historical privileges to build a democratic state.”

To them, this assault on Bolivian democracy represents an attack on all the peoples of Latin America and “it is part of the reactionary offensive against democratic-popular governments that in this century have tried in various ways to lead towards equality and social justice”.

In Argentina, [the Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina and the Federación Nacional de Docentes Universitarios](#), both affiliated to EI, expressed solidarity with the [Bolivian people](#) and support for democracy by marching on 11 November to the Bolivian diplomatic headquarters in Buenos Aires.

“We are facing a new coup d’état, in this case perpetrated through the violent action of armed fascist groups opposing the great advances made in the governments of Evo Morales,” highlighted Hugo Yasky, President of the Regional Committee of Education International Latin America.

He considered it to be “no accident” that the coup happened just a few days before newly elected Argentine President Fernández took office, at the same time that the Chilean people stand up and continue protesting against the increased cost of living, privatisation and inequality prevalent in this country, and when Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was released from prison in Brazil.

5. 55th EI Executive Board meeting takes strong positions on education and democracy issues

Education union leaders tackled a number of strategic issues of key importance for both the global education sector and education unions. In addition, the Board adopted a series of resolutions denouncing violence and attacks on democracy.

The 55th meeting of Education International’s Executive Board took place in Brussels from 19 to 21 November. The Board worked to develop strategies to ensure quality education for all, fight privatisation in and of education, defend human and trade union rights, protect democracy, stimulate trade union renewal and more. Key dates and events to advance the global education agenda were also discussed.

In a special session, the EI Board heard from the Vice-President of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union (HKPTU), Ip Kin-Yuen, who shared insights into the dire situation in Hong Kong. The Board reaffirmed its support for HKPTU and urged the Hong Kong administration to protect its citizens and engage in a dialogue on their legitimate demands. This is a direct follow-up to the

[Resolution on solidarity with Hong Kong](#) adopted at the 8th EI World Congress, in which EI and its members organisations pledged to support the values of equality, dignity, democracy, justice and liberties in Hong Kong.

The Board also discussed and passed resolutions on three issues of particular importance:

- Resolution encouraging all governments to ratify [ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work](#) as a matter of urgency and mobilising EI member organisations to advocate for the ratification;
- [Resolution condemning the coup in Bolivia](#);
- [Resolution on the situation in Chile](#).

Executive Board members attended a special screening of [The Teachers' Protest](#)– a documentary about Norwegian teachers and their stand against Nazi propaganda in schools during the Second World War. The special guest of the screening was Jon Seal, the film's producer and director.

6. 40th UNESCO General Conference: Teachers and educators at the core of achieving SDG 4

Education International and its member organisations have been active at UNESCO's 40th General Conference, where teachers and educators were high on the agenda.

The UNESCO general conference, taking place from 12-27 November, has been debating the future of multilateralism in today's rapidly changing world. At the Education Commission, UNESCO member states have made multiple important decisions that will push forward progress towards achieving quality education for all.

Key resolutions adopted so far include: a convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications, a resolution on coordination and progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, a new framework on Education for Sustainable Development, a strategy for literacy, as well as a recommendation on open educational resources. The General Conference also took a decision to develop a new UNESCO standard-setting instrument on the ethics of artificial intelligence.

Giving an overview of UNESCO's programme to achieve SDG 4, Assistant Director-General for Education, Stefania Giannini, highlighted four key trends that are impacting and transforming education: demographics, climate change, migration, and technology. She outlined how UNESCO's work aimed to bring about strengthened social cohesion in the context of these trends. UNESCO, she said, would fast track initiatives on inclusion and innovation, continue to provide leadership on SDG 4, invest in foresight and research, and support system strengthening at the country level. Gender would be a cross-cutting focus, whilst Africa would be prioritised and the budget allocated to the region would be doubled.

There was strong support for UNESCO as the coordinating agency for SDG 4 but many delegates also called on the institution to strengthen its leadership role as other actors and initiatives have emerged in recent years. Giannini assured the General Conference that UNESCO would be more accountable, more understandable, and more visible in the education sector. However, she also called on member states to do their part, emphasising that governments had a responsibility to make SDG 4 a reality through strong political will and increased investment in education.

Notably, after years of intensive advocacy work from Education International, teachers were repeatedly framed as crucial actors for quality education throughout the Education Commission. Gianni remarked that ministers' interventions during the week showed that there is a common understanding that teachers are at the core of achieving SDG 4: "Without highly qualified, well trained teachers, everything else is pure literature."

Education unions representatives were active in the debates, ensuring that teachers and education support personnel's views were voiced. Speaking at a ministerial meeting on enhancing inclusion and mobility in higher education, Haldis Holst, EI Deputy General Secretary, stressed that for higher education to truly be inclusive it cannot become a market-place under the guise of increasing mobility. Furthermore, inclusion and mobility of higher education staff must be considered alongside that of students. Jean Portugais, FQPPU President, Canada, also spoke on the topic, pointing out that the quality assurance component of the Global Convention must not be used to undermine academic freedom and professional autonomy, as is currently the case in many universities

Speaking on UNESCO's work on SDG 4, EI Senior Coordinator, Dennis Sinyolo, stressed that at the current pace, SDG 4 will not be achieved by 2030 as countries are not investing enough in education, there is a shortage of qualified teachers and too many marginalised children are denied access to education. Governments need to dramatically step up their investments in education, invest in teachers and work together with their unions, and ensure that no-one is left behind.

EI and UNESCO launch the first [Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards](#)

The Framework [was launched at the UNESCO General Conference](#) on 16 November, in the presence of education ministers, EI member organisations and policy experts. Developed in close collaboration with UNESCO, the Framework is the result of a participatory process that responds to the wish and the right of educators to be at the table when education policy decisions are made.

In front of a packed room, Susan Hopgood, EI president, took the floor to present the new instrument and underlined that teaching standards – when developed and controlled by the teaching profession – can play an important role in improving teaching and learning globally.

"We encourage teacher unions and governments to use this framework to strengthen their national professional teaching standards, teaching and learning practices in order to ensure equitable, inclusive, free, quality education for all", urged Hopgood.

UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education, Stefania Giannini, added that "professional teaching standards designed with the aim to define what quality teaching means for delivering quality education are a powerful instrument in the hands of educators. Their development is one of the critical steps in order to increase the supply of qualified and trained teachers necessary to ensure quality education for all children and adolescents by 2030."

Recommendation on Open Educational Resources

In a very welcome move, on 19 November, the UNESCO General Conference adopted the Recommendation on Open Educational Resources which paves the way towards increased access to teaching materials: an essential part of the right to education, SDG 4, as well as UNESCO's 2030 Framework for Action.

The recommendation also enables teachers to exercise their academic freedom and professional autonomy (UNESCO/ILO Conventions on the status of teachers/researchers) in choosing and adapting materials for teaching and learning.

Throughout its involvement in the development of the recommendation, EI worked to ensure that several key elements were included in the instrument:

- consulting teachers and their unions in the development and use of Open Educational Resources (OER);
- provisions for continuous professional development;
- quality assurance (i.e. sensitive to local needs, gender issues, disability sensitive, indigenous knowledge etc.);
- allocation of adequate public funding;
- privacy and data protection for students and teachers working with OER platforms and services;
- adequate copyright exceptions to create quality OER, including the consideration to develop an international instrument on the topic.

As an official UNESCO instrument, the recommendation will provide national governments with advice on OER policies and practices and will ask countries to report on their efforts and progress.

The recommendation will also be a valuable tool to ensure more sustainable and affordable access to openly licensed textbooks and will help to challenge traditional commercially driven publishing markets for education.

Beyond the Conference

Over this marathon conference, hundreds of ministers will have reported on the good policies they have implemented and hundreds will have expressed their good intentions to make further progress. We call on all governments to keep the promises and pledges made during the conference in the years to come. After all, with increased investment, strong political will and adequate cooperation, achieving SDG 4 is still possible.

7. EI condemns the temporary closure of the Jerusalem office of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education by Israeli authorities

In a letter to the Israeli embassy in Brussels, Education International (EI) expressed concern regarding the decision of the Public Security Minister of Israel to close the office of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education in Jerusalem for six months. EI laments the rising violence and warns that the rights of thousands of Palestinian children and youth, including the right to education, are not being respected, with terrible long-term consequences for the region.

On 20 November, the world marked the 30th anniversary of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) which unequivocally states that education is a fundamental right of each and every child. On the very same day, the Jerusalem office of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education was searched by Israeli authorities and the Public Security Minister of Israel issued an order to close the office for six months.

In a letter addressed to the Israeli Ambassador to Belgium, EI condemned the temporary closure and drew attention to the imperative to respect the right to education of all Palestinian children and young

people.

David Edwards, EI General Secretary, stated: “It is our duty as teachers, as educators to stand up for our students and call out violations of their rights. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been going on for over 70 years. Children and young people today are born into a conflict they had no part in creating, yet they are the ones deprived of their rights, including their right to education. We call for the Israeli government to reverse this decision that undermines the right to education of Palestinian children.”

Access to quality education is key to achieving peace in the region and giving new generations a fair chance at the bright future they deserve. Robbing them of this chance, of their right to education, is condemning the region to a never-ending conflict with a massive negative impact on lives in both Israel and Palestine.

December

Headlines

1. International Day of Persons with Disabilities: EI calls for inclusion

Education International (EI) has fought for the rights of persons with disabilities since its creation more than a quarter century ago. The preoccupations of EI included the societal problems related to the human rights of persons with disabilities in general, and that of children, teachers and educators with disabilities in particular.

The most recent Congress resolution reiterating EI policy on the [rights of disabled children and teachers](#), adopted in Ottawa in 2015, noted that an estimated 40 percent of the children not attending school had disabilities and called for urgent action to ensure inclusion.

EI is concerned about the slow progress towards the implementation of internationally agreed standards and commitments.

In December last year EI launched the study '[Are We There, Yet? Education Unions Assess the Bumpy Road to Inclusive Education](#)'. The survey results showed that inclusive education was far from being achieved in many countries around the world.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is a reminder of the urgent need for governments to address the educational needs of children with disabilities. The 2019 theme is "Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities and their leadership: taking action on the 2030 Development Agenda."

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, committing to leave no one behind and to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This commitment makes it clear that all children, youth and adults, including those with disabilities, have the right to free quality education.

This right can only be fulfilled if governments enact and implement inclusive education policies; remove all physical, cultural, social, economic and other barriers to inclusive education; and ensure that all children and youth with disabilities are in school and taught by highly- trained, professionally-qualified, motivated and supported teachers.

Schools, and indeed, all education institutions, should be well-resourced and equipped to cater for the specific needs of children and students with disabilities. Teachers and education support personnel with disabilities should receive the necessary support for them to support their students to achieve their maximum potential.

"Governments should ensure that our schools and all education institutions are truly inclusive," said EI General Secretary, David Edwards. Edwards went on to urge governments to ensure that teachers with disabilities have decent working conditions and all the facilities, tools and resources they need to carry out their teaching functions.

Edwards called on governments to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“As educators, we will continue to do all in our power to make schools safe, friendly, and inclusive for children and school personnel with disabilities. That means reaching out to persons with disabilities , but also, implanting in the school and larger communities the acceptance and inclusion that makes that possible”.

The world’s largest minority

The World Health Organisation estimates that persons with disabilities constitute more than 15 per cent of the global population, the world’s largest minority. Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries.

Armed conflicts, particularly long-standing ones, disable many combatants, but also civilians. In addition, wartime environments, while difficult for everybody, are especially hostile for disabled persons. For example, the decades-long armed conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa have produced mental and physical impediments to development and normal, daily life that will persist for generations.

Earlier this year, Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, launched a study by the Geneva Academy, [“Disability and Armed Conflict”](#).

In her announcement of the study, High Commissioner Bachelet said:

“A much more focused consideration of the needs of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict is long overdue. Some conflicts are lasting longer – the war in Syria, for example, has gone on for longer than World War II.”

“Conflicts are now more likely to be civil wars, and frequently fought in civilian settings. We are seeing massive violations of international humanitarian law, including the use of starvation as a weapon of war, with blockades of essential humanitarian assistance. These and other issues place persons with disabilities at vastly heightened risk.”

“In conflict situations, children with disabilities face specific exclusion: they are left behind, institutionalised and exposed to violence. Women with disabilities also experience higher rates of violence and are more exposed to sexual violence than other women.”

You can also read the blog post [“Beyond regret: what’s needed to stay together”](#), written by Mitsunori Hoshina, Director of the Japan Teachers' Union Youth Department.

2. 10 December | Solidarity with human and trade union rights defenders in the Philippines

On 10 December, Human Rights Day, the global trade union movement is coming together to stand with trade unionists and all those who defend human rights in the Philippines. Join us!

For far too long, voices critical of the Philippine government have been labelled terrorists and enemies of the state to discredit them and make them vulnerable to attacks. This is a propaganda technique called **red tagging**. Many teachers, workers, trade unionists, journalists and human rights

defenders have been targeted in this way.

The climate for teachers and their union is particularly dangerous. Just a few weeks ago, a teacher was [shot 6 times in her classroom](#), in front of her students. This is just the latest in a long list of horrible attacks.

Together we can make them stop.

What are we doing and how you can help

We will work with our global union colleagues in BWI, IFJ, IndustriALL, ITF, ITUC, IUF, and PSI to raise awareness of the situation and send the Philippine government a clear message: **Hands off** teachers, workers, trade unions, journalists and all human rights defenders.

Here is a list of actions you can take to amplify our message and help protect our colleagues:

- Organise an action in front of the Philippine embassy in your country on 10 December. Coordinate with other unions for a bigger impact;
- Send a protest letter to the Philippine government. [Here you can find a model letter](#) that can be adapted;
- Sign the [LabourStart petition to support teachers in the Philippines](#)– it's available in 16 languages;
- Print out the [campaign poster](#) and take pictures with it to show your solidarity. Post the pictures on social media on 10 December using #StopTheAttacks #HandsOff #StopRedTagging

[Click here to see what other unions are doing](#) to support our colleagues on 10 December.

Find out more – tune into the webinar!

Together with our colleagues in BWI and PSI, we are organising a webinar on 9 December to help you get a better understanding of the situation in the Philippines.

The speakers are:

- Daisy Arago, Executive Director of the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights
- Raymond Basilio, General Secretary of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers and EI Board member
- Julius Cainglet, Vice President of the Federation of Free Workers

Tune in on 9 December at 15:00 (MNL) / 18.00 (MEL) / 08:00 (CET) using [this link](#).

[Click here for more information](#).

Thank you for your solidarity!

3. Latin America, united more than ever against neoliberalism and the extreme right

The representatives of the trade unions of the education sector affiliated with Education International Latin America (EILA) met in Brazil on 3, 4 and 5 December to chart the course of the Latin American

Educational Movement.

The 5th meeting of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement was opened in the afternoon of Tuesday, 3 December in the city of Curitiba, Brazil. The participants were received by the Brazilian trade union CNTE and its general secretary, Fátima Silva, who is vice-president of the EILA.

David Edwards, General Secretary of EI, greeted the 5th Meeting of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement on arrival in Curitiba and stated that he was delighted to participate in the event. He underscored the importance of the delegates from the region at a time that a political contribution was being made to the works of the EI World Congress in Bangkok last July, and reiterated the solidarity of the world organization in the struggles waged by its members in the region.

Sonia Alesso, General Secretary of the Confederation of Education Workers of the Argentine Republic (CTERA), called for a fight against fascism and its allies, who claim that the region is sliding back to the times of the dictatorships in the 1970s on the human rights front.

Paulo Freire and the Latin American Pedagogical Movement

The university professor and researcher José Batista spoke on the “The Thought of Paulo Freire and the situation in Latin America,” stressing the ties of the Latin American Pedagogical Movement with Freire’s ideas. He pointed out that education is a collective process which begins at birth and continues throughout life.

Current context in Latin America

The meeting afforded an opportunity for an exchange of analyses and strategies for action between the different participants, as well as for learning through the presentations by experts and academics.

The current context in Latin America was the central theme in the presentations by the affiliates during the second day of the meeting.

Between neoliberalism and the extreme right

The eminent Argentinian reporter Telma Luzzani shared her analysis on the situation in Latin America based on three moments of domination of the subcontinent by United States: the origin of the Monroe Doctrine in the 19th century, the coups by the military governments in the second half of the 20th century, and the current offensive which is endeavouring to regain the control lost with the advent of popular democratic governments at the beginning of the 21st century.

For his part, Luiz Dulci, minister in the Lula Da Silva government, spoke about the weakening of the power of the United States as a world hegemonic power and underscored the emergence of China as a leader on the economic front. He pointed out that the interests of the economic and political sectors of the right and extreme right in Latin American countries supported and served the interests of American imperialism. He analysed the current coup in Bolivia in the context of the electoral victory of the Frente de Todos [Front for Everyone] in Argentina, and characterized the current government of Brazil as being authoritarian with fascist traits, in the way that it pushes neoliberal reforms.

The Pedagogical Movement

Combertty Rodríguez, Senior Coordinator of the Regional Office of the EILA, went briefly over the most relevant elements in the panorama of educational policies in Latin America and pointed out that the Latin American Educational Movement is an organizational political strategy to defend public education as a social and human right, reaffirming the public nature thereof as a form of defence in the face of the terminological arguments put forth by the privatization interests.

At the end of the day, Rodríguez denounced the death threats against the president of FOCODE, Nelson Alarcón, on yet another day of massive mobilizations in Colombia. Rodríguez informed the participants that the EILA had sent a note denouncing the threats and called on all organizations in Latin America to express their solidarity.

4. The global trade union movement puts the Philippine government on notice: hands off human and trade union rights defenders!

Today, Human Rights Day, Education International, its affiliates and the global trade union movement stand with trade unionists and all those who defend human rights in the Philippines.

For far too long, voices critical of the Philippine government have been labelled terrorists and enemies of the state to discredit them and make them vulnerable to attacks. This is a propaganda technique called red tagging. Many teachers, workers, trade unionists, journalists and human rights defenders have been targeted in this way.

A climate particularly dangerous for teachers and their union

Just a few weeks ago, a teacher member of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) – the Education International (EI) affiliate in the Philippines - was [shot 6 times in her classroom](#), in front of her students. This is just the latest in a long list of horrible attacks.

Many members of ACT have been profiled by the national police, have been followed in the streets and received death threats.

Global trade unions stand against repression

This 10 December, EI has teamed up with global union colleagues in Building and Wood Worker's International, the International Federation of Journalists, IndustriALL, the International Transport Workers' Federation, the International Trade Union Confederation, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations, Public Services International and UNI Global Union to raise awareness of the situation and send the Philippine government a clear message: hands off teachers, workers, trade unions, journalists and all human rights defenders.

The global unions have sent a [joint protest letter](#) to the Duterte government, condemning the intensification of the harassment and repression against trade unions and requesting the Philippine authorities to:

- guarantee the security and safety of all union members and leaders;
- respect workers' fundamental rights as guaranteed by international standards, including the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association ratified by the Philippines in 1953;
- allow unions to operate without government interference;
- investigate the many allegations of murders of trade unionists and anti-union violence;

- accept to host an ILO high level tripartite mission before the next ILO conference.

A great wave of solidarity

Across the world, trade unionists are organising protest actions in front of the Philippine embassy in their countries, delivering a protest letter to the Philippine government via the embassy.

Attending the protest in Brussels, David Edwards, EI General Secretary, stated: “The Duterte government is waging war on teachers, trade unions, journalists, human rights defenders and everyone who dares to criticize or dissent. We cannot stand by and allow this to go on. Today and every single day we support our colleagues in the Philippines to resist the pressure and repression, to take the government to court, to keep fighting the good fight. For their sake, for the sake of their students and their country.”

A LabourStart petition to support teachers in the Philippines is available in 16 languages and can be signed [here](#).

For more background information, read the [blog by Raymond Basilio](#), ACT General Secretary, and listen to our EdVoices podcasts with Filipino journalist [Maria Ressa](#) and with former ACT leader, elected Member of the Philippine Parliament and Arthur Svensson International Prize for Trade Union Rights recipient [France Castro](#).

5. COP 25: Educators firmly commit to helping address the climate emergency

Speaking at the 25th United Nations Conference on Climate Change, Education International reiterated its resolve to contribute to solving the climate crisis, tackling the climate emergency from the classroom.

Delivering the pledge to the [25th United Nations Conference on Climate Change](#) (COP 25) in the name of Education International (EI), Manuela Mendonça, International Secretary of the *Federação Nacional dos Professores* (FENPROF) and member of the EI Executive Board, warned that the climate crisis, the greatest threat to our planet and the very existence of humanity, must be tackled on all fronts, from homes and classrooms to government offices.

Educators worldwide are united and mobilised against climate change

“As teachers and educators, we commit to address the climate emergency in our classrooms,” Mendonça told participants attending the high-level event on action for climate empowerment on 10 December.

Education International will mobilise teachers and educators to green their education institutions, to promote sustainable lifestyles and to teach about climate change, its causes, consequences and solutions to the crisis. EI will also continue to stand with students in demanding climate action and justice now.

“We will also support our 32.5 million members by providing tools and capacity building workshops to help teachers, educators and their unions harness the power of education to combat climate change,” Mendonça highlighted.

Education International further commits to work with international organisations to implement global tools, and monitor progress made towards sustainable development and climate change education.

Earlier this year, EI declared a climate emergency in education “because we cannot harness the power of education on our own,” Mendonça stressed, adding that it is vitally important that governments take the lead and demonstrate clear political will, commitment and action to address the climate emergency. Governments need to reduce their countries’ carbon emissions drastically and immediately in order to meet the 1.5°C Paris target, and must commit to and ensure a just transition.

Climate change education must be a key element in education systems

The pledge concludes: “As teachers and educators, we call on governments to ensure that climate change education is a core element of the curriculum, right from early childhood to university. Climate change education must be part of initial teacher education and continuous professional development. Supportive education systems are vital for teachers and educators to be able to help their students to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to take action for a sustainable future.”

You can download the [Guide for education unions and educators “Education, a powerful tool for combatting climate change”](#).

6. Education unions join international efforts to ensure refugees’ rights in and through education

Education international has seized the opportunity of the first ever Global Refugee Forum to reaffirm the crucial role education can play in the context of forced displacement, and to urge governments, UN agencies and all stakeholders to ensure displaced teachers and students’ rights in and through education.

The Global Refugee Forum, held from 17-18 December in Geneva, Switzerland, was the first of its kind and comes at the end of a chaotic decade marked by conflict and natural disasters that have contributed to the rise in the number of refugees to over 25 million people worldwide. Education was among the six main themes discussed during the Forum and including arrangements for burden and responsibility-sharing; jobs and livelihoods; energy and infrastructure; solutions; and protection capacity.

Following-up on the implementation of the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), the Global Refugee Forum represented an opportunity to translate the principle of international responsibility-sharing into concrete action. The Forum brought the international community together to announce new measures to:

- Support host countries;
- Enhance refugee self-reliance;
- Expand access to third-country solutions; and
- Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

The Forum received pledges and contributions calling on States, refugees, development actors, the private sector, UN entities, civil society organisations, academics and faith leaders, among others, to play a part.

“EI pledges to mobilise its 400 member organisations, with a collective membership of 32.5 million educators across all levels of education, to make schools and all education institutions truly inclusive and welcoming to refugees,” EI’s Dennis Sinyolo stated, addressing the Forum.

He went on saying that EI “will continue to provide capacity building for union leaders and educators, provide tools for refugees and migrants and assess progress towards implementation of the Global Compact in education”.

Education International, he underlined, is calling on Governments, the UN and partners to:

- Ensure the accreditation and recognition of refugee teachers’ qualifications;
- Ensure the training and professional development of refugee and local teachers;
- Guarantee the inclusion of refugee children and youth in the formal education systems of host countries within the first three months following their arrival. Please, do not offer an alternative inferior track to refugees.
- Develop, finance and implement comprehensive policies to guarantee refugee teachers’ right to teach and children’s right to learn.

On 16 December, during a pre-forum Spotlight Session on “Teachers shoulder the burden: Improving support in crisis contexts”, co-organised by EI, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Columbia University, Sinyolo emphasised the challenges that particularly affect refugee teachers:

- Lack of recognition of their qualifications, skills and competences;
- Precarious employment;
- Absence of adequate training and professional development opportunities (this last one facing local teachers teaching refugee children and youth, as well).

Sinyolo deplored that “there is a lot of brain waste and loss of talent as refugee teachers end up doing nothing or something else in order to make ends meet. It is therefore important for host governments to accredit and recognise the qualifications of refugee teachers.” He also underlined the paramount importance for host country governments of ensuring decent salaries and working conditions for refugee teachers.

He insisted that the new [UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications](#), adopted in November this year, is an important instrument that can facilitate the validation, accreditation and recognition of refugee teachers’ qualifications.

“In-service training and upgrading programmes of good quality can help refugee and displaced teachers to improve their skills and competences,” Sinyolo went on noting, mentioning the example of EI and Oxfam Novib’s Quality Educators for All programme (Quality-Ed) in Mali and Northern Uganda.

He also reminded that education unions engage in social dialogue with governments and undertake advocacy activities promoting the rights of all teachers, including refugees. Most recently, EI and affiliated unions in eight countries in Europe and two countries in Africa have been conducting capacity building programmes for refugee and local teachers.

The EI European Region, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) just concluded a two-year joint project entitled

“European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education”.

More broadly, the session emphasised the crucial role played by teachers in such contexts: INEE Director Dean Brooke stressed that “even in crisis contexts, teachers organise, bring children together and teach. They make a difference and protect those children. Let’s raise their profile and the profile of headmasters who keep schools opened in difficult circumstances.”

The EI toolkit developed to help education unions and educators to promote the rights of refugee teachers and children in and through education is available [here](#).

A blog post by EI’s General Secretary, David Edwards, calling for immediate and sustainable action can be found [here](#).