

Joint Message from
Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO,
Mr Gilbert F. Houngbo, Director-General, International Labour Organization,
Ms Catherine Russell, Executive Director, UNICEF,
Mr David Edwards, General Secretary, Education International
for World Teachers' Day

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The teachers we need for the education we want:
The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage
“Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher”
– *Japanese Proverb*

If we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, in particular the goal of achieving equitable and quality education, we need relevant and innovative pedagogies that prepare the learners of today for the transformation needed by society in a rapidly changing world. Teachers are one of the pillars on which this transformation depends.

Research has repeatedly found that teachers are the single most important school-level variable for improving student outcomes. The centrality of teachers to the future of education was reaffirmed at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit last year, culminating in the establishment of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession. This renewed focus on teachers is timely, as the world currently faces a severe global teacher shortage.

Halfway to the Sustainable Development Goals, 44 million teachers still need to be recruited globally to meet universal primary and secondary education needs by 2030, with 15 million of those required in sub-Saharan Africa, according to newly released data from UNESCO and the Teacher Task Force. Rural, marginalized, and forcibly displaced communities often face the most chronic shortages of qualified teachers.

The fundamental cause of this global shortage is the diminishing attractiveness of the teaching profession, which undermines the recruitment of new teachers and produces high levels of attrition amongst those in service, especially within the first three to five years of entering the workforce. Teachers can typically expect to be paid less than if they entered other professions requiring similar levels of qualification, whilst also finding themselves increasingly overburdened by additional responsibilities and administrative tasks. Due to these poor working conditions, teaching is often viewed negatively as a ‘profession of last resort’, and teachers are not given the recognition and status that they deserve.

The report from the International Commission on the Futures of Education – *Reimagining our Futures Together: A new social contract for education* – recommends that the teaching profession be reimagined as a collaborative profession. To do so, it is essential to shift the way in which we perceive teachers: they should be valued as key agents in renewing the social contract for education. Teachers are lifelong learners, catalysts for change, creators and facilitators of knowledge, and mentors who engage students and support them in understanding the complex challenges and realities of our world today.

Today, on World Teachers' Day, we celebrate teachers' critical role and the great importance of reversing the global teacher shortage. We call upon countries to ensure that teaching is transformed everywhere into a more attractive and valorised profession where teachers are valued, trusted, and adequately supported to meet the needs of every learner. Bold actions must be taken, if we are to reverse the current decline and successfully increase teacher numbers.