Ministerial Statement

Sustaining education as a common good in the age of AI

Adopted at the Ministerial Roundtable
Digital Learning Week,

Paris, 8 September 2026

We, Ministers and designated representatives responsible for education[1], meeting at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 8 September 2026, reiterate that education is a human right and a common good, and reaffirm our shared responsibility to sustain its public purposes in the age of AI.

We recall the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Sustainable Development Goal 4* on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, and the *Global Digital Compact*.

We reaffirm the principles of the *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* (2021), recall the *Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence in Education* (2019) and the *Santiago Consensus* (2025), and take note of the *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research* (2023) *and* the twin *AI Competency Frameworks for Teachers and Students* (2024).

We note the findings of the *Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI* (2026).

We acknowledge that:

1. AI now operates within the formative core of education, with emerging evidence of shifts in how learners think, how teachers exercise professional judgement, and how learning is assessed and recorded.
2. When designed, used, deployed and governed well, AI can advance education's public purposes, including by extending access to learners our systems struggle to reach, lightening the load on teachers, opening learning to those with disabilities, and, where it is adapted to the learner and teacher-directed, enabling personalized, social and collaborative learning.

[1] Ministers and representatives of Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Cambodia, Chad, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Finland, Ghana, Honduras, Libya, Mongolia, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Nigeria, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Saint-Lucia, Türkiye, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United Arab Emirates.

3. These benefits are conditional on deliberative governance, human support and adequate preparation; and that learning is not served when AI substitutes for human relationships and human judgement.
4. The AI systems reaching most learners are general purpose AI systems that were, for the most part, not designed to be used to support teaching and learning, and that the commercial and technical logics of their design shape how they function in teaching and learning.
5. AI has been introduced into education rapidly, and the capacity to respond to it, at every stage of these systems' lifecycle, is deeply uneven, both between and within countries.
6. The evidence base is relatively recent, thin and uneven, drawn overwhelmingly from high-income, connected settings, so the systems least visible in it are the most exposed to terms set elsewhere.

We affirm that:

7. The terms on which AI is introduced in education are a matter of public decision and public accountability.
8. Sustaining education's public purposes in the age of AI requires that deliberate governance and oversight be exercised over the terms on which AI is developed, adopted, deployed and used.
9. Teachers are indispensable to education, and AI must support and not replace their professional contribution and judgement.
10. Every learner, and every child in particular, is a rights-holder in relation to their data and the AI systems that shape their learning, and should receive appropriate protection.

Priorities for action

Taking into account our differing circumstances, capacities, legal frameworks, and cultural and linguistic contexts, we resolve to advance the following priorities, in accordance with our own national contexts, policies, institutional competencies and available resources.

1. **Restore public-interest conditions for AI use in education**

We will work towards public interest conditions for AI in education, including to ensure that these systems are auditable and data portable. Recognizing that AI may reach learners outside formal procurement through free tiers, donations and vendor agreements, we will seek to bring these channels within public oversight so that public decisions govern how AI is integrated in and leveraged within education.

2. **Protect the development of critical understanding**

We will invest in the development of digital, media and AI competencies of learners and teachers to use AI critically, drawing on UNESCO's twin *AI Competency Frameworks for*

Teachers and Students and informed by other relevant frameworks. For that, we will support the integration of media and information literacy into education systems so that learners develop the competencies to engage critically with AI and AI-generated information. We will encourage the design and use of AI that prompts learners to reason and perform the cognitive work required for the development of critical understanding. We will support and participate in the design and evaluation of AI systems to help determine whether learners retain and develop critical understanding.

3. **Cultivate teacher agency**

We will invest in teacher preparation and professional development, as a condition for AI development, deployment and adoption, so that teachers can help contextualize, use appropriately and, where necessary, set aside the AI systems in their pedagogical practice. We will seek to ensure that teachers take part in decisions about which systems enter their classrooms. In this we draw on UNESCO's *AI Competency Framework for Teachers* and the 2025 position paper of the International Task Force on Teachers for 2030 devoted to *Promoting and Protecting Teacher Agency in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.*

4. **Promote age and developmentally appropriate AI and safeguard learners**

We will promote approaches to AI in education that are age- and developmentally appropriate, grounded in children and youth's rights, evolving capacities and educational needs. We will develop our capacity to establish governance frameworks that enable education systems to decide, on the basis of evidence, risk and educational purpose, whether and how AI is used, including the ability to pause or discontinue its use where warranted, with learners' rights, safety and well-being guiding decisions throughout the AI lifecycle.

5. **Govern data in education in the public interest**

We will prioritize the governance of data in education and strengthen our capacity to govern it in the public interest, covering both the data that learners and teachers provide directly and the data that AI systems generate about them. Much of this generated data, the inferences, predictions and profiles that increasingly shape how a learner or teacher is treated, falls outside data protection regimes built for collected rather than inferred data. Such governance must align with data protection law: we will strengthen its enforcement and hold private actors who collect and process this data to their obligations under it. We will recognize and treat teachers and learners, and children in particular, as rights-holders over their own data, with protection scaled to age and development, and the companies and institutions handling such data should be accountable for its use under applicable law. We will involve learners and teachers in decisions about the systems that collect and act on their data.

6. **Integrate equity and inclusion by design**

We will encourage inclusive and multilingual design as a condition of development, deployment and adoption, building the capacity to evaluate AI systems across the languages, abilities and contexts of the learners who will use them, and give particular attention to the effects of these systems on the least-served learners.

7. **Count the total costs and keep exit possible**

We will seek to assess the full cost of ownership before adoption, including connectivity, devices, localization, currency exposure, teacher development and the cost of exiting a system. We will favour interoperability and portability, so that we can change course if and as needed, and we will consider open-source and openly licensed systems, not only proprietary ones, where these allow greater adaptation and public control. We will pursue procurement grounded in trust, participation and equity, weighing not only acquisition cost but educational value, governance implications, environmental footprint and long-term public cost.

8. **Build and pool AI governance capacity**

Recognizing that these commitments depend on resources and capacities that are unevenly distributed, we will commit to strengthening our own capacity to evaluate, monitor and, where necessary, withdraw the AI systems education relies on. We will explore pooling this capacity regionally, in procurement, evaluation and the development and deployment of locally relevant systems and languages, so that no education system needs to face a concentrated supply alone.

We will work to strengthen the capacity to govern AI addressing local needs, languages, cultures and educational priorities, so that education systems retain meaningful agency over the technologies on which they depend.

We recognize that none of the above is achievable where capacity is limited and does not exist.

We call upon

1. Providers of AI systems to provide evidence of safety and educational benefit before deployment; make their systems explainable and auditable; and accept accountability for harm.
2. The international community and UNESCO to support the education systems where capacity is least developed.
3. UNESCO to continue to convene global dialogues, to monitor how AI is reshaping education’s public purposes, and to report on progress and inform policy.

We conclude our dialogue with a call to action: that in the age of AI, the terms on which AI is integrated in education should be set through deliberative governance so that education is sustained as a common good and a right to quality and relevant education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.