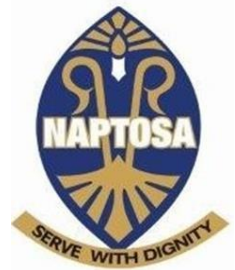


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UNIONS CALL TO ACTION: IMPLEMENTING THE UN RECOMMENDATIONS TO RAISE THE STATUS OF THE TEACHING

On February 26, the United Nations High-Level Panel (HLP) on the Teaching Profession launched its 59 recommendations to governments to strengthen the profession and ensure that teachers are valued and respected. The Panel and its broad recommendations are the result of persistent union advocacy. It is incumbent upon Governments to implement these recommendations to ensure every child is taught by a qualified teacher every day, every lesson.

The HLP on the Teaching Profession was convened by the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres in response to the growing and alarming global teacher shortage. While the world needs 44 million more teachers to ensure quality education for all, more and more teachers are forced to leave the profession they love, and fewer people want to join the profession the world needs. Teachers are burning out and students are missing out.

The shortage itself is not news. In many countries, unions had been raising the alarm for years. It took a global pandemic that caused unprecedented disruption to education everywhere to drive home the gravity of the situation and prompt real action. It also took tireless advocacy from Education International and our member organizations to make the United Nations listen.

Experts from around the world came together to be part of the United Nations Panel: ministers of education, former presidents, academics, representatives from civil society, and most importantly, teachers and students and their unions. Education International was on the Panel, represented by our President Susan Hopgood and union colleagues Manal Hdaife, & Mike Thiruman. Our voice was heard loud and clear throughout the deliberations, and this is evident in the recommendations.

BOLD RECOMMENDATIONS TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION.

Every member reading the Panel's 59 recommendations will recognize our longstanding demands on a broad range of issues, from teacher qualifications, pay and working conditions, to professional respect.

The Panel states that investing in teachers is the most effective strategy to build quality and resilient education systems. Recommendation 8 echoes what unions have been saying for years: "Long-term funding for well-qualified and well-supported teachers is an investment in the quality and sustainability of education systems". This means ensuring competitive, fair, and professional salaries, in line with those of other professions with similar educational requirements. It also means good working conditions for our education workforce, including our support personnel colleagues. Teachers need manageable workloads and student-teacher ratios that allow for quality teaching and learning to happen. Precarious employment that drives so many people away from the profession and counterproductive stopgap measures like the use of contract teachers and unqualified personnel must come to an end.

The recommendations also issue a clear call to make sure that educational working environments are inclusive, safe, and non-discriminatory for teachers.

Teachers must be protected against all forms of violence, discrimination, and harassment, and that includes gender-based violence. Gender pay equity has to be ensured and women's leadership must be encouraged.

Our professionalism is recognized and encouraged throughout the recommendations. The Panel recommends that countries ensure that all teachers have a university degree and access to quality initial teacher training and quality continuous professional development that is equitable, free, part of official duties and co-designed with our profession.

Respecting and valuing teachers also means involving them in policymaking. The Panel is clear: our expertise and insights must inform and shape the policies that affect us. Teachers and their organizations must be at the table when decisions are made. Social and policy dialogue, including collective bargaining feature heavily in the recommendations as the main mechanism for determining working conditions and education policies such as the use of technology in our schools and classrooms. Our right to strike is reaffirmed.

The excitement around the recommendations is warranted. But we know that they will not become reality without financing. The Panel's recommendations on financing education rise to the challenge. Public education must be protected from austerity measures. Notably, the Panel calls on international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to end all measures that limit education spending and teacher salaries and that have long undermined every student's right to a qualified teacher.

Teachers working in emergency contexts were not forgotten. The Panel calls on the international community to establish a Global Fund for Teachers' Salaries. The Fund would ensure teachers working in crises receive fair salaries regularly and on time, because their work to teach and support the most vulnerable children in the harshest of circumstances is vital.

FROM RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACTION

Our tireless advocacy has brought us to this moment. With the Panel's recommendations, we now have a new set of tools to truly transform education and effect real change for millions of teachers and students around the world. We must now take the next steps and make sure our governments answer the call.

The recommendations call for the creation of national commissions that bring together teacher unions and governments to address the teacher shortage and monitor the implementation of the recommendations. We need to make sure these commissions are set up and that they address the challenging issues you face.

Now is the time to organize, mobilize, and join forces to Go Public and make sure our governments fully fund education and invest in our profession. This is our moment. Our union power can transform education all around the world. Let's make it happen.

By David Edwards – Education International – General Secretary

NAPTOSA, is a member of Education International (EI)
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