



8 December 2022

**Re: European Commission leadership on Education in Emergencies and support towards Education Cannot Wait**

Dear President von der Leyen, dear Commissioner Urpilainen,

Thank you for your leadership on global education, and for the strong support you have given thus far to Education Cannot Wait (ECW) – the United Nations-hosted global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises – since its establishment in 2016.

Early next year, ECW will hold a High-level Financing Conference (HLFC) in Geneva, from February 16-17, 2023. The Conference, co-hosted by ECW and Switzerland, will be co-convened with Colombia, Germany, Niger, Norway, and South Sudan, with the aim of mobilizing \$1.5 billion in funding to allow ECW to deliver its Strategic Plan for the period 2023 - 2026.

The conference comes at a time when urgent support for education in emergencies is needed, more so now than ever before. Growing humanitarian needs are depriving children of their right to an education. ECW's latest research shows that 222 million children and adolescents affected by emergencies and protracted crises are in urgent need of education support, up from 75 million since similar estimates in 2015.

In Ukraine, the Sahel, Afghanistan, the Middle East and many other places around the world, young people are denied education because of conflict, climate change and forced displacement. A generation of young people are at risk of being left behind, either missing out on education completely or not learning the basic skills needed to develop and help build peaceful, prosperous, and healthy countries. This is particularly true for the most vulnerable children such as children with disabilities.

The European Commission has been an education champion, even more so under the current mandate: a driving force for other players globally. The Commission has been a fundamental donor to ECW from its inception and its continued, multi-year support will be absolutely critical to

ensure ECW can meet its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan goal to provide education to 20 million children and youth in crises.

We therefore call on you to pledge **at least EUR 160 million for the period 2023-2026 at the HLFC next February**. This funding will directly support over 2 million children and youth affected by crises to receive an education and will bring the EU closer to achieving its target of investing 13% of its development budget in education, as announced at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit. A pledge of this value will also help ensure that by 2026, 40 million more girls will be in school, in line with the 2021 G7 Ministerial Declaration on girls' education and the EU's Gender Action Plan III. It will also ensure that the EU delivers on the priorities of its Youth Action Plan in EU external action 2022 – 2027, which explicitly mentions the EU's intention of leading the support to ECW.

Due to the limited resources available in the NDICI - Global Europe's Global Challenges lines, the European Commission should draw mainly from the unspent funds initially allocated under the Geographic Windows to fund this pledge. This support would be well justified given the majority of the new country Multiannual Indicative Programmes have education components.

Strong EU leadership is sorely needed at this critical time and will incentivise other donors to address the financing gap and enable ECW to carry out its vital work.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your team to discuss the above opportunities and how they can be used to advance our shared goal of realizing the dreams of the 222 million children affected by crises, and in need of educational support.

Yours sincerely,

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