Executive Board
Hundred and ninety-sixth session

SUMMARY
Pursuant to 37 C/Res.11 and 195 EX/Dec. 6, the Director-General submits a progress report on the development of the post-2015 education agenda and the preparation of the World Education Forum 2015.

The financial implications related to this document are covered in document 37 C/5.

Action expected of the Executive Board: Proposed decision in paragraph 22.

PARIS, 17 March 2015
Original: English
I. Intergovernmental process and entry points for education

1. At its 68th Session, the United Nations General Assembly decided “that the proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals [...] shall be the basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing fully that other inputs may also be considered in this intergovernmental negotiation process at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly”.¹

2. The United Nations Secretary-General published his synthesis report on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda "The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet" in December 2014. The report welcomes the proposal on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the Open Working Group (OWG) and introduces six essential elements for delivering on the SDGs. Education is included under the element “People: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children”. The report notes that teachers must be given the means to deliver learning and knowledge. In his report, the Secretary-General suggests a technical review of the proposal of the OWG “to ensure that each goal is framed in language that is specific, measurable, achievable and consistent with existing United Nations standards and agreements, while preserving the important political balance that they represent”.²

3. The 69th United Nations General Assembly took note of the synthesis report of the Secretary-General and decided on a provisional indicative roadmap of the post-2015 negotiation process.³ The process will culminate in the United Nations Special Summit on Sustainable Development to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York.

4. A Steering Committee of Stakeholders was set up for each negotiation session, including all nine Major Groups as well other stakeholders,⁴ to foster civil society participation in the process. The Stakeholder Preparatory Forum for the post-2015 development agenda negotiations was organized at the United Nations Headquarters by the Steering Committee, with the facilitation of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) and the Division of Sustainable Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA-DSD) in January 2015. The Forum called for the post-2015 development agenda to ensure that all learners are taught by qualified, professionally trained, motivated and well-supported teachers. It underlined the importance of acknowledging and building upon already existing structures and mechanisms in different thematic areas. Specific reference was also made to the UNESCO-convened Education for All Steering Committee.⁵

5. The proposed goals and targets will be discussed by Member States at the session on Sustainable Development Goals and Targets in New York (March 2015). Should the discussions allow for proposed modifications to the text, they are likely to have to be “technical” in nature and backed up by strong arguments, especially if based on language that has been previously adopted by Member States around other processes and conventions. While the targets proposed by the OWG are very close to those put forward by the education community in the Muscat Agreement, UNESCO’s Secretariat and the EFA Steering Committee, after careful technical review, believe that some technical improvements would be desirable to make the targets more transformative, measurable and cost-effective. Key concerns include the missing concept of compulsory education in the OWG Target 4.1, which should spell out that at least a full cycle of nine years of free and compulsory basic education, consisting of primary and lower secondary education, should be

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¹ A/RES/68/309
² A/69/700: The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet.
⁴ The Major Groups represent key sectors of society actors; https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/aboutmajorgroups.html
⁵ For more details see the Summary of the Stakeholder Preparatory Forum for the Post-2015 Development Agenda Negotiations: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5879FINAL%20SUMMARY%20REPORT.pdf
provided. Reference to inclusion should also be reflected, alongside with equity and quality. In addition, at least one year of pre-primary education should be provided (OWG Target 4.2). Another concern is the formulation of the teachers’ target and its positioning as a means of implementation rather than a core target. Moreover, the formulation of the adult literacy target should reflect the current understanding of literacy as a continuum of proficiency levels rather than the outdated dichotomous literate/illiterate concept. Importantly, as called for earlier by many UNESCO Member States, the education goal will not be achievable without adequate financing, both domestic financing and aid. It is therefore recommended to include strong language on education financing as a part of the means of implementation of the sustainable development agenda or in the outcome of the Addis Conference on Financing for Development as appropriate.

6. The session on Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (April 2015) will be another opportunity to have further discussions on financing for education. The following session on Follow-up and Review (May 2015) will discuss the High-Level Political Forum as the key mechanism for reviewing the post-2015 development agenda. This particular strategic session provides the opportunity to promote and argue for the inclusion of existing structures and monitoring mechanisms within UNESCO, such as the EFA Steering Committee and the EFA Global Monitoring Report which is proposed to be continued as a future Global Education Monitoring Report.

II. Main steps undertaken by UNESCO

7. UNESCO, with the technical support of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR), undertook a technical analysis of the proposed OWG targets with reference to the Muscat Agreement and proposed some technical revisions. This review was discussed by the EFA Steering Committee in February (5-6 February 2015). The EFA Steering Committee is expected to transmit its comments to the United Nations in New York for consideration by Member States, which should serve as technical background for their contributions to the intergovernmental negotiations.

8. At the request of the Technical Support Team (TST), UNESCO and UNICEF, as co-leads of Goal 4, submitted a joint technical review of the OWG targets to the TST, based on the discussions of the EFA Steering Committee. In addition, as requested by the TST, UNESCO and UNICEF submitted information on accountability mechanisms/measures of frameworks that could be used to measure progress of SDGs and related targets and indicators. Also, key messages on UNESCO's areas of competence, including education, have been provided to the UNESCO New York Office for circulation to interested stakeholders during the discussions on the political declaration that took place from 17 to 20 February 2015 at the United Nations in New York.

9. As requested by the Executive Board at its 195th session, UNESCO continued to facilitate and promote the debate on the post-2015 education agenda. The series of regional ministerial conferences to review the progress on EFA, build a regional position, and develop recommendations for the future education agenda and its related Framework for Action were completed. Conferences were held for the Asia and the Pacific region in Bangkok, Thailand (6-8 August 2014); for the Latin America and the Caribbean region in Lima, Peru (30-31 October 2014); for the Arab States region in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt (27-29 January 2015); for the sub-Saharan Africa region in Kigali, Rwanda (9-10 February 2015); and for the Europe and North America region in Paris, France (19-20 February 2015).

10. The 10th E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting was hosted in Islamabad, Pakistan (27-28 November 2014). The “Joint E-9 Statement on Education Beyond 2015” identified the following priority areas for the E-9 countries: ensuring equitable and inclusive access to quality education; quality of teaching and learning; lifelong learning for all; skills for work and

6 The Conference statements can be found at the EFA web-site: http://www.unesco.org/new/index.php?id=123720
competencies for citizenship and social cohesion; governance and management of education systems; and financing of education.\^7

11. The five regional conferences and the E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting requested UNESCO, along with UNICEF and the support of other EFA co-convening agencies, civil society, and other international and regional partners, to continue leading the coordination of the development of the post-2015 education agenda, and of the development of the corresponding Framework for Action (FFA). They recommended that UNESCO continue to lead, coordinate and provide technical support for the implementation and monitoring of the future education agenda.

12. The preparations for the World Education Forum 2015 (WEF), to be convened by UNESCO, are well under way. Six United Nations agencies have confirmed their participation as co-convenors of the WEF (UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN WOMEN and the World Bank). UNESCO is consulting with them on their support to the organization of the Forum as well as for the implementation of the future agenda and held a co-convenors meeting in February 2015. Moreover, invitations to the United Nations Secretary-General, Ministers of Education, Ministers of Higher Education and Ministers of Cooperation and Development of all Member States have been sent. Invitation letters to multilateral organizations, institutes, experts and civil society are also being processed. The availability of Heads of State/Government and other high-level guests is currently being explored. A concept note for the WEF is also available.

13. The Director-General briefed United Nations Permanent Missions in New York in the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General on the WEF 2015 during an information meeting, jointly organized with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the UN (6 March 2015).

14. Work on the development of the Framework for Action (FFA) is well under way, involving all relevant sections and institutes at UNESCO, partners and relevant stakeholders. A first draft was presented and discussed at the EFA Steering Committee (EFA SC). The EFA SC agreed on the structure and content of the FFA and made recommendations on next steps for its development. It also made proposals on a technical review of the OWG targets and agreed upon the WEF 2015 concept note and agenda.

15. Through the coordination group of UNESCO’s Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA (CCNGO/EFA), UNESCO kept its regional networks of NGOs informed which has helped them to carry out consultations and meetings to strategize about their participation in the regional preparatory conferences, including their position on and input to the current agenda. The Coordination Group of the CCNGO/EFA continued to provide input on the FFA, and UNESCO is collaborating with the Group on the preparations of an NGO Forum to be held in Incheon on 18 and 19 May 2015, as an integral part of the WEF.

16. The technical advisory group (TAG) on post-2015 indicators continued its work and produced a second paper on global monitoring indicators, based on the OWG targets in November 2014. It has also provided feedback and inputs to the OWG and the independent Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) initiatives. The SDSN published a second draft of its report entitled “Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the SDGs” (January 2015). The TAG launched a public consultation on its indicator proposals from November 2014 to January 2015 in order to obtain feedback from stakeholders in the national and international education communities. The TAG provided inputs to the draft Framework for Action and proposed core indicators for the each target.

17. The co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda requested the international statistical community, working through the United Nations Statistical Commission, to prepare a preliminary list of indicators for the SDGs. Based on the TAG

\^7 For more details see the Joint E-9 Statement on Education Beyond 2015:
recommendations, UNESCO and UNICEF have made a joint proposal on education indicators and submitted it to the United Nations Technical Support Team to the OWG (TST). For the Millennium Development Goals, UNESCO was responsible for reporting on key indicators to monitor progress. It is expected that UNESCO will continue to play a similar role as part of a new group on monitoring the sustainable development goals.

III. Next steps

18. UNESCO will continue to work on the Framework for Action (FFA) to be agreed upon by the EFA Steering Committee in April 2015. Subsequently, the FFA will be shared with all Member States for consultation.

19. The results of the TAG public consultation on education indicators will feed into revised recommendations for an indicator framework to monitor the global education targets which will be presented to the WEF 2015. UNESCO will continue to channel input on indicators for education to the United Nations Statistical Commission based on the work of the TAG to ensure coherence.

20. The WEF will be hosted by the Republic of Korea and held in the city of Incheon from 19 to 22 May 2015. It will take stock of the achievements and shortfalls in the implementation of the Education for All (EFA) goals and education-related Millennium Development Goals; the objectives are: (1) to take stock of achievements and shortfalls in the implementation of the Dakar Framework for Action and the education-related MDGs during the period 2000-2015 (2) to agree on a joint position for the education goal and targets in the post-2015 development agenda, which will be adopted by UN Member States at the Special Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015; and (3) to discuss and agree on in principle on a comprehensive Framework for Action to support the implementation of the future education agenda. UNESCO will further organize, in collaboration with the Coordination Group of the CCNGO/EFA, an NGO Forum on 18 and 19 May in Incheon to provide a space for civil society to discuss and agree on a collective vision for education post-2015, and prepare for their participation in the WEF as well as in the implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 education agenda.

21. As the post-2015 sustainable development agenda will be finalized and adopted by the international community in September 2015 at the United Nations Special Summit, and the FFA will only be agreed upon in principle at the WEF, it is proposed to hold a ministerial meeting in Paris during the period of the 38th session of the General Conference to review and adopt the FFA, taking into account the final adopted post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

22. In the light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to take the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 37 C/Resolution 11 and 195 EX/Decision 6,

2. Having examined document 196 EX/7,

3. Expresses its appreciation for the Director-General's efforts in leading and facilitating UNESCO's and its partners' contribution to the development of the post-2015 education agenda;

4. Expresses its gratitude to the countries which hosted the Regional Ministerial Conferences and the E-9 Meeting as well as to the Director-General for having ensured their successful organization;

5. Welcomes and supports the outcome statements of these conferences and meetings;

6. Expresses its satisfaction with the progress of preparations of the World Education Forum 2015, the NGO Forum and the ongoing work on the Framework for Action;
7. **Requests** the Director-General to:

(a) continue leading the coordination of the development of the post-2015 education agenda along with UNICEF and the support of other EFA co-convening agencies, civil society, and other international and regional partners;

(b) continue coordinating the development of the Framework for Action to be discussed and agreed upon in principle at the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea (19-22 May 2015);

(c) actively work towards ensuring a single, integrated future education agenda, and facilitate the alignment of the Framework for Action with the global post-2015 development agenda to be adopted by the United Nations Special Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015;

(d) hold a ministerial meeting during the period of the 38th Session of the General Conference to adopt the Framework for Action in collaboration with other WEF 2015 co-convening agencies, taking into account the final adopted post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

8. **Further requests** the Director-General to submit a report on the outcomes of the World Education Forum 2015 to the 197th session of the Executive Board.