



**OPENING REMARKS BY HIS
EXCELLENCY, DR JULIUS MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE, CO-CHAIR OF THE
SDG 4 HIGH-LEVEL STEERING
COMMITTEE (HLSC), PARIS - 29TH
JUNE 2022**

OPENING PLENARY: AN AMBITION TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION

PARTICIPANTS

- *Mr Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General (video)*
 - *Ms Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General,*
 - *H.E. Dr. Julius Maada Bio, President of Sierra Leone*
 - *H.E. Ms Sahle-Work Zewde, President of Ethiopia*
- Master of Ceremony: Mr. Henry Bonsu, Journalist and Broadcaster*

Your Excellency, Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
Excellency, Mr Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General;
Madam Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General,
Madam UN Deputy Secretary-General, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,
Good afternoon.

1. It is my great pleasure to open this milestone event for education alongside the UNESCO Director General, Madame Audrey Azoulay. I thank her for UNESCO's exemplary leadership and tireless efforts in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4.
2. The SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee met this morning. We made a case for recognising the considerable long-term social returns of education.
3. The most vulnerable, most marginalized, and most disadvantaged learners count on us to deliver on implementing SDG 4 by 2030. So it is our collective responsibility to call for immediate and bold action towards that end.
4. Education is a driving force for sustainable development. It is a powerful lever for responding to some of the most pressing challenges faced by humanity including climate change, migration, youth unemployment, healthcare, and peaceful and just societies.

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5. It is also a cross-cutting accelerator for the advancement of all the other SDGs. So any integrated, holistic, multi-sectoral approach to sustainable development must include education.
6. The HLSC's Urgent Call for Action is a call to Heads of State and Government to invest in and transform education as the clearest pathway to our shared goals of peace, prosperity, sustainability, and building resilience.
7. The COVID-19 pandemic and the current global economic crises have further amplified the severe education funding gap. We must therefore use this Pre-Summit strategically to rally all forces behind the call for inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all.
8. We do so because education is not a privilege; it is a fundamental human right. We collectively advocate that education is not a cost but an investment in the sustainable future of our societies, children, and the planet. The cost of inaction is simply not acceptable. We must therefore assume collective responsibility for taking resolute action for education.
9. We must stay focused on using the opportunity offered by the Transforming Education Summit to position education at the top of the political agenda of member states. We can do so with concrete commitments supported by strong political will at the highest levels.
10. I count on the full support of each and every one of you. As Co-Chair of the SDG4 High-Level Steering Committee, I wish to assure you that the Steering Committee stands ready to fully support, monitor, and carry forward the impetus created by the Summit.
11. I look forward to fruitful exchanges and thank you all for your commitment and passion for education.