

Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address this important event. I use this opportunity and thank the civil society organization “Fingo” and the network “Bridge 47” for their consistent work in advocating for global citizenship education.

Dear Friends,

Imagine your own house burning. Would you not do your outmost, to bring the flames down? This analogy goes for human kind: we have no planet B, where we could build a new home and start it all over.

Climate change will have an accelerating impact on many global challenges, including food security, loss of biodiversity, inequality and people’s possibilities for income, their sense of security and aspirations for a better future.

In all countries, we have no alternative but to **engage everyone – all actors, policy sectors, industries, academia, media and civil society** alike – for seeking solutions for tomorrow, together.

**We need to start with education and training.** This is the **bedrock of equality, employment, creativity, innovation, technology and research**, which together are the key in achieving the goals of 2030 Agenda. Education and training provide the best safeguard against exclusion and lack of prospects. Through its transforming impact, **inclusive, quality education is a powerful equalizer in society.** Education is not only a fundamental human right. It is also pivotal for participation, democracy, critical thinking as well as for making informed choices and evidence-based decisions.

**Investments in education pay off**, as they contribute to the wellbeing of the entire society. **That is why the SDG 4 should come first**, and target 4.7 (four-point-seven) on Global Citizenship Education should guide this work.

Dear Colleagues,

The fact that more than half of children and youth worldwide are not learning the basics, whether they are in school or not, is alarming. Additionally, 750 million adults cannot read or write. We must step up to combat the **global learning crisis. Girls and women, as well as vulnerable groups** are at the forefront.

This requires more focus on competent **teachers**, whose work is valued and supported. It is also urgent to focus on the **relevance of learning.** Our systems must be fit to ensure the necessary **competences and skills for life and work.** Providing continuous learning opportunities for reskilling and upskilling is a key for a sustainable future.

In Finland, our ambitious goal is to raise the **education level of the whole population**. Our aim is that 50 per cent of young adults will have a higher education degree by 2030. While doing so, we will **close equality gaps** by raising the minimum school leaving age to 18 years, putting more focus on early years and increasing support, guidance, flexibility and individual learning pathways. We will reform our **lifelong learning** system. In Finland, we do not ask, if we can afford the cost of education, because we know that **we certainly cannot afford the cost of non-education**.

Furthermore, we will have a **zero tolerance rule against bullying**. Schools will be reinforced, to serve as **community hubs and advocates of wellbeing**. Here, we aim to foster cooperation between civil society organizations and schools. Sustainable development, climate change, digital transformation, new literacies and working life skills will be taken into account horizontally across the different levels of education.

Since knowledge, skills, research, civil society, culture, youth and sports play such a pivotal role in the transition towards sustainability, we are also preparing a **holistic framework to implement the Agenda 2030** under the branch of my Ministry.

Dear participants,  
I wish to conclude with remarks on youth.

Representing a younger generation myself, I fully relate with and support those hundreds of thousands of children and young people worldwide, who are standing up for climate. Young people are worried about the conditions for life on earth but also about their opportunities for education, training and employment. Our societies should echo their voices and do better to ensure prosperity and wellbeing of their and future generations.

Using the words of our Prime Minister, the time for saying “yes, but” is over. The clock is ticking. There is no time to waste. It is urgent to harness the full potential of the knowledge sector in our joint endeavor for a sustainable future.

Thank you for your attention.