

Inauguration of the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030

*Report on National Consultations preceding
Transforming Education Summit (TES) to be held in New York on 19 September, 2022*

Against the backdrop of a fragile and highly uncertain global socio-economic outlook, amid the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences, the adverse impacts of climate change as well as Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine with widespread effects on people, prosperity, peace and development, the importance to double the efforts for ensuring quality, equitable and inclusive education and lifelong learning for all stands high as never before.

During the time of COVID-19 pandemic and in the light of the abovementioned interconnected challenges, on the initiative of Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, **Prof. Dr. Mikheil Chkhenkeli**, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia has developed the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030 and action plans thereto, which fully embrace the determination to accelerate the work towards the transformation of education systems to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030.

It is to be stressed that the Unified National Strategy builds on the global commitments enshrined in the Incheon Declaration, setting the framework for action for the implementation of SDG4, on the one hand, and in the Paris Declaration, calling for investment in the future of education, on the other. Education and Science being one of key priorities of the Government of Georgia, underwent comprehensive reforms in recent years, that primarily aimed to reimagine and transform education landscape in order to become more responsive and resilient to rapidly changing socio-economic circumstances, climate change and coping with the uncertainties of tomorrow's world.

The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030 is faithful to the core tenets of UN Transforming Education process. Adjusted to Georgian realities, the strategy pins down all key aspects agreed at 2021 Global Education Meeting in Paris. The gist of the strategy pivots around the transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals adopted back in 2015. In a similar vein, the goals and strategic objectives of the Strategy reverberate all five thematic action tracks, highlighted in the report of International Commission on the Future of Education, that are necessary for transformation of education system as well as contribute to reviewing, revising and accelerating the fulfillment of SDG4 and its Georgia adjusted-targets and indicators.

The Unified National Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030 strives to ensure equal access to inclusive and quality education, as well as to improve opportunities for lifelong learning, which is closely linked to the principles of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal 4 - quality education; Goal 8 - decent work and economic growth; Goal 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; Goal 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions.

It is to be noted that the strategy development process was distinguished by its participatory nature, as strategic goals, specific objectives and indicators of the document were outputs of rigorous consultations, within the period of December 2021 to July 2022, held with all stakeholders, including key international donor organizations operating in the sector.

As a result, the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030 is centered on 3 strategic directions to enhance quality and relevance of education, ensure equity, inclusion and diversity in education and improve Governance, Financing and Accountability modalities in the system, spanning from preschool education through science, technology and innovation.

In this spirit, the Strategy reiterates the pledge made by the Government of Georgia to increase public funding of education up to 6% of GDP and reconfirms the Commitment towards ensuring full recovery from COVID-19 educational disruption and mitigating the challenges of quality and equity in digital learning and transformation, committing resources to closing digital divides.

The Strategy focuses on intensifying the work towards enhancing the inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools by developing and introducing the mechanism putting in place school nutrition culture. Particular attention is drawn to the importance of enhancement and expansion of inclusive, safe and child-centered school learning environment.

The Strategy emphasizes the importance of developing and implementing the policy framework and programs that aims to make education relevant to the changing forms of work, equipping learners at all levels of education with skills and learning necessary for education-to-work transition.

In an effort to support inclusion and equal opportunities for all, guided by the principle of “Leaving No-one Behind”, Georgia will lever public investments in education in order to enhance competencies of teachers, special professionals or other personnel of education institutions, and to strengthening educational infrastructure, giving preference to their sustainability, learning environment and learning resources so that the needs of all students, especially those of the vulnerable groups will be met.

The Strategy also envisages the need to develop policy tools for reducing social, cultural or financial barriers for accessing to higher education and vocational education and training. Furthermore, the necessity to address quality teaching challenges has been brought in the spotlight of the Strategy as this component significantly affects student achievements. Therefore, in that regard, in line with the global commitment to reimagine the future of education, the Strategy focuses on creation of effective mechanism to improve the quality of teachers by facilitating recruitment, retention of education specialists and supporting their continuous professional development and career growth.

Being aware of the importance of credible and accurate data for tracking the implementation of SDGs coupled with the Unified National Strategy, the Georgian government pays a significant attention to improving the quality and availability of data related to the education and science system. The strategy will promote introduction of an evidence-based approach and the compatibility and coherence of data analysis with the standards established by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

The Final leg of the National Consultation process focused on the presentation of the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030, by highlighting its full compliance and close relevance with the global commitments related to transformation of education system, laid down in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the Incheon Declaration and the Paris Declaration.

At the concluding meeting of National Consultations, **Prof. Dr. Mikheil Chkhenkeli**, Minister of Education and Science of Georgia has introduced key transformative points of the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030 and action plans thereto and opened the floor for discussion on the ways for ensuring efficient and effective implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, making it the most powerful instrument for fulfilment of global commitments on sustainable development and education transformation.

The Final Meeting of National Consultation has summed up the meticulous work carried out for the strategy development, will underline how the Consultation outputs were integrated into the document. The event served as a participatory launchpad marking the start of implementation of the Strategy and taking greater ownership and shared-responsibility for its efficient and smooth implementation.

Prior to the final meeting of National consultations, it was agreed to endorse **Safe To Learn Call To Action** by including separate clause in the text of National Statement of Commitment. As it is in full compliance with the goals and strategic objectives of the National Unified Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030. The National Statement of Georgia includes the text, stating that “Georgia acknowledges that students experiencing or observing violence in and around school face significant challenges impacting their learning experience

and outcomes. As such, we commit to strengthening prevention and response to any forms of violence at the school level, online, and in emergency settings by scaling up evidence-based prevention approaches. We also commit to strengthening child-friendly referral systems to effectively, ethically, and timely respond to violence.”

The outputs of the event contributed to shaping Georgia’s National Statement of Commitment to the Transforming Education Summit on 19 September, 2022 in New York.

General Information on the final meeting of the National Consultations:

United Nations Resident Coordinator to Georgia, UN Office and UNICEF in Georgia facilitated and supported the National Consultations process in Georgia.

The National Consultation process was concluded by the final meeting held on 19-20 August, 2022 with the financial support of the UN Office in Georgia/UNICEF in Georgia.

The Venue: The Tsinandali Estate, A Radisson Collection, Kakhetia, Georgia.

Number of participants: appx. 32 persons, composed of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia; the Administration of the Government of Georgia and UN Office in Georgia

Draft Consultation Timeline

Timeframe	Activities	Budget
2021 December	Kick off National Process for consultations under the guidance of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia	Administrative Resources
January-July 2022	All interested persons and organizations could participate in the meetings and express their opinion, and they were also given the opportunity, if desired, to additionally present suggestions and/or comments regarding the discussed projects. A total of 8 online meetings were held, in which a total of 202 representatives (individuals and organizations) from different regions of Georgia participated. It is important that not only non-governmental organizations concentrated in the capital, but also local initiative groups and representatives of public organizations, student initiative groups and	Administrative Resources

	<p>social movements participated most actively in the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual, teacher, student, parent, interested person – 20 persons; - Education Institutions – 10; - Non-governmental organizations – 62; - Local self-government/territorial body, etc – 20. <p>In the process of public consultations, the Ministry of Education and Science received more than 300 technical, methodological or substantive recommendations from organizations and individuals, 61 specific recommendations for sectors.</p> <p>The total number of received recommendations: 60 Forseen: 36 Partially forseen: 5 Not taken into account/or not considered at this stage - 12 Not relevant/not considered within this action plan, but acceptable -7.</p> <p>General recommendations that were presented in the format of proposed changes; Remarks on the style and structure of the strategy document are provided – 300; Remarks related to accuracy and relevance of professional terminology, sources used in the strategy document - 50</p>	
June 2022	Designation of the Administration of Georgian Government as a Convener for National Consultations	Administrative Resources
June-August 2022	Preparation for Concluding meeting of National Consultations	In close cooperation with UNICEF, UN Office in Georgia, Administration of the Government of Georgia
8 August, 2022	In cooperation with UN Office in Georgia, finalization of the modalities for utilization of	\$10 000 approx

	the funds earmarked by UN Office for National Consultations	
9-12 August, 2022	Sending out invitations to the identified participants of the concluding meeting of national consultations	Done by the MoES
19-20 August, 2022	Concluding meeting of National Consultations on Transforming Education, finalization of National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education	Done by the MoES
22-26 August, 2022	Submitting the final document of National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education to the Summit Secretariat together with an overview of the national consultation process.	Done by the MoES
3rd Week of September, 2022	Presentation of National Statement of Commitment by the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia	
31 October, 2022	Submitting the report on implementation of the Partnership Agreement to the UN Office in Georgia	Done by MoES

Agenda of National Consultations Concluding Meeting 19 August, 2022

17:30-18:00 Welcome Coffee & Registration

18:00-18:10 Welcome remarks

Dr Mikheil Chkhenkeli, Minister of Education and Science of Georgia;
Dr. Sabine Machl, UN Resident Coordinator in Georgia

18:10-18:30 – **Introduction of the aims and purposes of the concluding meeting of National Consultations and Presentation of the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030**

Kakha Khandolishvili – Head of International Relations and Strategic Development Department, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

18:30-19:00 The State of Affairs of implementation of SDG4, its Georgia-adjusted targets and indicators and the future for reviewing and revising the nationalized SDG4 targets and indicators.

Natia Tsikaradze, Administration of the Government of Georgia

19:00 Dinner

20 August, 2022

09:30-10:00 Coffee Break

10:00-11:30 Opening Session: further reflections on Guiding questions, Strategy and preparation of National Statement of Commitment, including Minister's speech for TES summit in September, 2022

Tour-de-Table discussions on the draft text of National Statement of Commitment, including Minister's speech, taking into account the points highlighted in the guiding questions.

Guiding questions of the Session:

1) Drawing on the issue of the current state of financing of education, how the National Unified Strategy reflects on and how the strategy plans to strengthen the public financing of education and what measures are envisaged to ensure more efficiency in use, detailing on the trajectory for education investment over the medium to long term?

2) How the SDG4 benchmarks focused on exclusion, participation in early learning, school completion, teacher qualification, learning outcomes, financing and gender equality, are foreseen in the Unified National Strategy?

3) How the Unified National Strategy complements and contributes to the identified need for acceleration progress towards SDG4 commitments?

4) How the targets are set for skills development, youth and adult literacy, higher education, enrollment, vocational and tertiary education in the Unified National Strategy and do they have relevance with SDG4 global benchmarks?

5) How the government of Georgia plans to strengthen political and financial accountability for achieving national SDG4 benchmarks?

6) Considering the current crises and global developments, what features of education are most important to continue, strengthen and/or safeguard?

7) What in current policy and practice needs to be abandoned?

8) What are key levers of changes?

Feedback from:

Nunu Mitskevich, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia;
Tamar Makharashvili, First Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia;

Valerian Gobronidze, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia;

Representatives of UN Office/UNICEF in Georgia

Representatives of All Departments of the Ministry

- 11:30-13:50 Finalizing the shaping of the National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education, based on the outputs of National Consultation Process, that will be submitted and later presented to the UN TES Summit on 19 September, 2022, in New York
- 13:50-14:00 National Consultation Wrap-up
- 14:00-15:00 Lunch