

Address by Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania, at the Transforming Education Summit Leaders Day

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to address you at this Summit.

Education has always been crucial. Everything that we are and want to be is gained by learning. Without education, progress and growth are not possible.

That is why Lithuania places education at the top of our national agenda. We believe that inclusive quality schooling, with more children benefiting from early education, is the way forward to a welfare state.

Recent years have demonstrated that education is sensitive to major societal disruptions. The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly affected children of lower socioeconomic status. To overcome the digital divide, an individualized approach to the provision of IT devices is practiced in Lithuania.

This year, the war by Russia against Ukraine has also tested the capabilities of the Lithuanian education and social care systems.

Since the start of the war, Lithuania has sheltered over 65 thousand Ukrainian refugees, including 24 thousand children. To serve their social, cultural, and educational needs, the first Ukrainian Center outside Ukraine has been opened in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. The Lithuanian state and municipal education institutions provide schooling or distance learning for Ukrainian children free of charge.

It is only a part of global efforts to help Ukrainian children. What is crucial now is to grant education opportunities in the countries receiving war refugees and to restore proper schooling in Ukraine.

We know it will be difficult. Especially worrying is the current situation in the occupied Ukrainian territories. Ukrainian teachers are pressured to use the Russian language and Russian curriculum. The Ukrainian children are being forcibly deported to Russia for adoption by Russian families. Russia must be held accountable for these deplorable actions.

The overriding concern is how to reduce the negative effects of war on the lives of young Ukrainians, especially those who suffer injuries and disability or the loss of their loved ones.

Lithuania will also assist Ukraine in rebuilding schools and kindergartens destroyed during the war.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

at this dangerous time, Ukrainian children need our help! I call on all world leaders to manifest political will and commitment by guaranteeing donor aid for war refugees.

Thank you!