

## Georgia's National Statement of Commitment

Georgia fully acknowledges that equal access to inclusive, equitable and quality education that rests on the core principles of Leaving No One Behind and Lifelong Learning for all is a fundamental human right and public good. It is a necessary prerequisite for personal growth and professional development that paves the solid way to prosperity, social wellbeing, peaceful and sustainable development of the country and its society.

This is the mission that underpins the decision of the Government of Georgia to declare education as a top strategic priority of the country's sustainable development agenda.

Georgia emphasizes that the right to receive education is a constitutional norm, ensuring that preschool education is guaranteed, whereas elementary and basic education is compulsory. General education shall be fully funded by the State. Moreover, all citizens shall have the right to state-funded vocational and higher education.

The Covid-19 pandemic made the leaders worldwide reimagine education and mobilize efforts to uphold the principle of "Leaving No One Behind". While mitigating the damage caused by the pandemic, Georgia successfully managed to readjust the education system quite fast, enabling it to switch to a distance-learning mode by introducing a number of various free online and TV tools for students and teachers at all education levels.

The crisis, nevertheless, created opportunities and sparked a surge of innovative solutions. So, Georgia was among the global firsts to introduce curriculum-based TV programmes by joint efforts of Ministry of Education and Science and Georgian Public Broadcasting and it still enjoys growing popularity and serves to the best interest of the society as a whole.

There still remain global challenges related to accessibility, equity and inclusion in terms of the digital divide, particularly for schools located in remote areas, persons with low socio-economic opportunities, educational or physical disabilities, ethnic minorities, IDPs and Refugees.

The Government of Georgia intends to double its efforts to ensure investment in improving education infrastructure, further development of curriculum, modern and diverse education resources and to invest in the professional development of teachers and educators, who are the backbone of the process of equipping the future generation with adequate skills and knowledge, leading towards shaping the society of well-educated, skillful, responsible and active citizens. Supporting the needs of all learners, including those from vulnerable groups, will further continue.

The COVID-19 pandemic and adverse impact of climate change as well as Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine with its widespread effects on people, regional peace and security

brought to the forefront the necessity to intensify the policy efforts in order to transform Georgian education system by 2030. Therefore, adhering to the spirit of Incheon and Paris Declarations, Georgia committed itself to reimagine education policy framework and to invest more in Education and gradually increase the public funding of the sector, reaching up to 6% of GDP by 2030.

As a result, Georgia developed and adopted the National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030. Adjusted to Georgian realities and synchronized with the long-term policy vision of the Government of Georgia, the strategy dwells on three main pillars of Quality, Equity and Good governance in Education and 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 Futures of Education, that are necessary for transforming education system as well as contribute to reviewing, revising and accelerating the fulfillment of SDG4 and its Georgia adjusted-targets and indicators.

Georgia underscores that the National Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030 strives to ensure equal access to inclusive, equitable and quality education, as well as to improve opportunities for lifelong learning for all, 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.

Georgia emphasizes that the strategy development process was distinguished by its openness and participatory nature, as strategic goals, specific objectives and indicators of the document were shaped as a result of rigorous national consultations, held within the period of December 2021 to August 2022, with active engagement of all stakeholders, including civil society and key international donor organizations operating in the sector.

Georgia underlines that as a result of all-encompassing and inclusive strategy development process, the National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2022-2030 on 3 strategic 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 up through science, technology and innovation. Georgia points out that the 2030 Agenda's principle "Leave No One Behind" has become the bedrock of the National Strategy.

Stemming from the aforementioned,

Georgia reaffirms its commitments and determination for undertaking concrete actions for building back better and fast from the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the efforts to mitigate the damage caused by pandemic, Georgia successfully managed to readjust the education system quite fast, enabling it to switch to a distance-learning mode by introducing a number of various online tools for students at all education levels and learning abilities. The government of Georgia ensured free access of all students and teachers at all levels of education to Microsoft Products.

Georgia reaffirms its commitment to ensure full recovery from COVID-19 educational disruption and mitigating the challenges of quality and equity in digital learning, committing resources to closing digital divides.

Georgia is resolved to support the introduction and development of innovative models of distance and hybrid learning at all levels of education in order to ensure equal access to quality education for schools located far from cities, for families with low socio-economic opportunities without access to the Internet or digital technologies as well as create equal learning opportunities for persons with special educational needs.

Georgia is determined to ensure modernization of education system, support and encourage creation of favorable inclusive learning-teaching environment at all education institutions. Georgia plans to achieve it by developing digital infrastructure, diverse education resources. In particular, it is planned to develop electronic management system for learning and teaching with full access to digital adaptable learning materials and resources. Moreover, Georgia plans to assess the losses of learning process during the pandemic and develop an actionable plan to eliminate disparities between academic performance and achievements in different groups of students.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic vividly demonstrated the power and importance of science and technological innovation for the well-being of population and containment of the virus, therefore Georgia reiterates its commitment to enhance the support for scientific excellence and development in the pursuit of implementation of sustainable development goals.

Georgia commits itself to ensure that by 2030 all schools comply with the authorization standards, which are oriented on school modernization, development and empowerment to ensure quality education and implementation of flexible and effective quality assurance mechanisms:

- ✓ to further enhance equitable, inclusive, and diverse education and science system, so that every person, regardless of socio-economic status, place of residence, ethnic or linguistic belonging, special educational needs, and disabilities have access to high-quality educational services throughout the country.

- ✓ to implement activities aimed to enhance inclusive, safe and healthy schools by developing the policy supporting school nutrition and by providing access to medical, psycho-social and emotional support services to children, including those with behavioral and emotional problems, as well as their families and teachers.
- ✓ to strengthen prevention and response mechanism to any forms of violence at the school level, online, and in emergency settings by scaling up evidence-based prevention approaches. Georgia also commits to strengthening child-friendly referral systems to effectively, ethically, and timely respond to violence.
- ✓ To develop and implement 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.
- ✓ To enhance targeted support towards students belonging to the social and economic vulnerable groups, as the lack of targeted support impedes the efforts to ensure equity in learning at all levels of education. In particular, Georgia will support all education institutions to ensure delivery of differentiated learning approaches and methods for student with special educational needs or disabilities. The services for NEETs will be developed in order to promote their participation in education. Education opportunities will be also provided to people, especially minors detained in penitentiary establishments. At preschool level, Georgia will ensure nationwide adequate support to disadvantaged children by entrusting municipalities with the obligation to ensure access to respective services for them, also for children belonging to ethnic minorities and from mountainous areas.
- ✓ To promote equality and inclusion in the education system, Georgia commits itself to invest in the development of professional competencies and qualifications of teachers and educators. All education institutions will be provided with a sufficient number of educators and inclusive education specialists for ensuring equality and inclusion in education.

Georgia reiterates its commitment to further continue investment in improving education infrastructure, learning environments and materials that support and meet the needs of all learners, including those from vulnerable groups. It is planned to build and renovate up to 800 schools in need by 2026 in accordance with modern standards, universal design requirements and WASH principles. The process will ultimately result in full renovation and equipment of all schools country-wide in line with the best international standards by 2030. Furthermore, Georgia underlines its commitment that by 2030 vocational education will accessible in all municipalities all over Georgia.

Georgia will draw special attention to improve the education governance approaches. To this end, it is planned to support establishment of a holistic approach for school management based on democratic principles in order to encourage creation of learning environment and services that is oriented on student health, her/his personal growth, career guidance, safety and well-being.

Georgia reconfirms its commitment to develop policy tools for reducing social, cultural or financial barriers enabling students, including those residing in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region, Georgia, to access to quality education at all levels without any hindrance. Georgia will continue supporting integration of ethnic minorities and migrant families, learning of the state language will be supported, alongside with preservation of their cultural identity.

Faithful to the „Leaving No One Behind“ principle, Georgia will continue pay particular attention to the population in the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region occupied by the Russian Federation, who are deprived of the possibility to exercise fundamental rights, including access to education in native language. In the same way, Georgia commits itself to ensure access to equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for internally displaced persons from the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia. Georgia remains committed to continue ensuring that young people residing in the Russian occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali, Georgia have access to higher education (withouth passing national examination, scholarship, state grants).

Similarly, Georgia affirms its commitment to support Ukrainian students who were also forced to leave their country with their families due to ongoing Russian aggression. Georgia will continue to provide them with the educational opportunity to enroll in schools with simplified procedures and receive general education in their native language according to the Ukrainian curriculum and with the help of qualified local and Ukrainian-speaking specialists in Georgia. In addition, Georgia ensures that Ukrainian students are able to pursue their studies in Georgian Higher Education Institutions without passing Unified National Examinations.

Georgia is determined to develop effective and competitive vocational education and training system, including dual education that will be designed to equip learners with current and future skills and competences for life, work and sustainable development through stimulating shared responsibility between public-private sectors, strengthening accountability and mobilizing resources.

Georgia is resolved to address quality teaching challenges as it significantly affects student academic performance. It is planned to create effective mechanisms to support professional development of teachers and educators as well as improve the quality and attractiveness of

teaching profession. Georgia is determined to achieve it by facilitating recruitment, retention of education specialists and supporting their continuous professional development and career growth.

Georgia underscores its commitment to support the cultivation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competences in learners at all levels of education, such as literacy, multilingualism, quantitative literacy, financial literacy, scientific, engineering and green skills, digital and technology-based competences, interpersonal skills and active citizenship, entrepreneurship, creativity, initiative, intercultural sensitivity and expression. Georgia will enhance its endeavours to provide scientific research opportunities for the younger generation.

Georgia underlines its commitment to further its efforts to continue implementing the third generation of national curriculum at schools. To this end, it is planned to develop and design new teaching methodologies, materials and training programs for teachers.

Georgia stresses that special attention will be attached to development of training programs/school curricula, giving due regard to the best interests and abilities of specific students, including offering individual training programs supporting students with special need and disabilities.

Georgia commits itself to develop a whole-of-government approach in order to ensure equality, inclusion and diversity through synergy and coordination between key policy and strategic areas such as education and training, health and social welfare, families and gender mainstreaming, regional and urban development, migration, employment, etc.

Being aware of the importance of credible and accurate data for tracking the implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs) coupled with the National Strategy, the Georgia will pay a significant attention to improve the quality and availability of data related to the education and science system by introducing an evidence-based approach and the compatibility and coherence of data analysis with the standards established by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. In order to ensure inclusiveness and people-centered approach towards the Goals, Georgia is determined to stimulate the development of Citizen Science for monitoring and measuring the progress in achievement of sustainable development goals.

Georgia is committed to strengthen its efforts to support implementation of „Third Mission of Universities“ in the form of centers of excellence and will put Georgian higher education institutions in the service of society to address and realize pressing social and economic challenges and regional needs by means of targeted use and transfer of academic knowledge.

Georgia underscores the importance of maintaining inclusive, networked and effective multilateralism (UN, its agencies, funds and programmes, EU, CoE, OECD, World Bank, and

other international financial institutions) and renew bilateral cooperation on education financing in order to ensure smooth and effective implementation as well as monitoring the progress of the National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia for 2030.