

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي الاتحاد الأفريقي

UMOJA WA AFRIKA



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

UNIÓN AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: +251 115 517 700 Fax: +251 115 517 844

Website: www.au.int

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

DRAFT ANNOTATED OUTLINE

CONTINENTAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Theme: Educate and Skill Africa for the 21st Century

Date: 9th to 11th December

Nouakchott, Mauritania

September 2024

Background:

While Africa has made significant progress in expanding access to education over the past decades, the continent still faces myriad challenges to ensuring quality, equitable and inclusive education for all.

Many African countries face continued challenges in reducing the number of out of school/training children and young people, as well as large numbers of children not acquiring basic foundational literacy and numeracy skills upon which all future learning is built, by the age of 10.

Other challenges include inadequate infrastructure, shortages of quality teachers, limited access and connectivity to digital technologies, emergencies, protracted crises, climate change, high dropout rates (particularly among girls), crises affected children, and other marginalized communities. Given these continued challenges, there is growing recognition of the importance of improving learning and skill development for all children and young people on the continent to drive sustainable development and economic growth in Africa.

The landscape for transforming education in Africa presents both opportunities and challenges. With the rapidly evolving global economy and the emergence of new skills and competencies required for the 21st century, there is a pressing need to re-evaluate and reinvent education systems across the African continent. This transformation must be driven by a holistic approach which addresses the diverse needs of learners, leverages technological advancements, and fosters collaboration between governments, educational institutions, and stakeholders. This shift towards a more responsive, crises-resilient, innovative, and inclusive education system, catering for all children is crucial to empower African children and youth, and equip them with the knowledge, skills, and the mindset to tackle the continent's pressing challenges, and seize its vast potential.

In acknowledgement of the African Union's Year of Education Theme of – 'Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa'; the government of Mauritania will host a Continental Education Conference in partnership with the Africa Union Commission and the United Nations' Children Fund (UNICEF) to take place from the 9th – 11th December 2024, with participation by Ministers in charge of Education being focused on the final day of the Conference. The Conference will gather policy makers and key stakeholders across the continent to engage in transformative dialogues to strengthen advocacy under the **Theme – 'Educate and Skill Africa for the 21st Century'**.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the Continental Conference are:

1. To recognise and appreciate the current implementation status and progress by AU member states of commitments and decisions made to transform education in Africa in recent years, including, but not limited to the TES plan of action and TEiA side event declaration – acknowledging challenges where appropriate.
2. To showcase, and advocate for, the scaling up of successful models, and of innovative and sustainable solutions towards achieving quality and equitable education from across the continent, to meet the demands of the 21st century in Africa, and beyond.
3. To strengthen partnerships and collaboration to foster knowledge sharing among policy makers, researchers, educators, and civil society stakeholders.
4. To explore and agree on sustainable financing mechanisms for education in Africa, through strengthened domestic resourcing and other innovative mechanisms for transforming education systems, and to advocate for the establishment of a Global Education Fund for Africa.

Expected Outcomes:

The expected outcomes of the conference include:

1. A comprehensive update on the status of implementation by AU member states of decisions and commitments made in recent years to transform education in Africa; and the agreement of an action plan, and associated monitoring, evaluation, and reporting instruments, for the next 10 years to address bottlenecks and accelerate actions in key areas where further progress is required.
2. A commitment to the resourcing and scaling up of successful models and innovative solutions implemented in AU member states, to accelerate the pace of effective transformation of education and skills systems.
3. Increased membership and participation of development partners in relevant AUC Clusters to effectively operationalize and embed action points agreed and foster effective implementation of the AU CESA 2026-2035.

4. Established consensus on strategies for sustainable financing of education in Africa, including:
 - a. Redefining clear, and agreed, targets on domestic financing of education in AU Member States;
 - b. Advocating for more concrete involvement of the domestic private sector's contribution in bridging the financing gap to universal access to quality education, and establishing concrete mechanisms to foster an enabling environment for collaboration with the sector;
 - c. Commitment to operationalize the AU African Education Science, Technology, and Innovation Fund as backed by Ministers in 2022, while advocating for the establishment of a Global Education Fund for Africa; and
 - d. Commitment to proactively leverage support from international partners to better access to innovative financing mechanisms for education including debt swaps, Outcome-based financing, social impact bonds, etc.

Items of Discussion:

The conference will cover the following key areas that contribute to improving learning:

1. **Curriculum Reform and Competency-Based Learning:** This will focus on aligning (to the extent possible and to the best of available data), curriculum with the demands of the future, including the 21st century job market; promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, socio-emotional, and collaborative skills as well as literacy on environmental sustainability and climate change; and integrating local knowledge and cultural perspectives into the curriculum. The discussion will focus on transforming curriculum agenda in the continent through building a strong harmonization among curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.
2. **Teacher Development and Professional Support:** Discussion will focus on improving the transparency and accountability in teachers' recruitment and deployment, rationalization of teacher resources and quality and availability of teacher training programs; providing continuous professional development and support for teachers, leveraging possibilities offered by digital tools; and enhancing teacher retention and motivation. Further, reflections on issues such as ensuring decent working conditions and an enhanced status of the teaching

profession, including through wages comparable with professions requiring similar levels of qualifications.

3. **Responsive Learning Outcome Assessment:** Building and managing existing education management information system and align with international tools that exists. Early and regular assessment of foundational skills is crucial to measure progress and identify the key gaps in learning, promote data driven decision making and effective education service delivery. The discussion will be centred around building robust, cost-effective, comparable learning outcome assessment tools, responsive to the continent's needs, including learning measurements in emergency and crisis contexts.
4. **Promoting Impactful Practices at Scale to Elevate Early and Foundational Learning Outcomes:** This thematic area will focus on strategic approaches and support mechanism for the education systems to fast-track the scaling up of evidence-based impactful practices and structured pedagogy. Indeed, international evidence shows clearly the benefits of early education and their impact on adults' careers.
5. **Emergency-and crisis resilient education systems that are climate informed:** Discussions here will focus on addressing the gaps in better preparedness and response to the growing frequency and scale of multiple types of crises on the continent and explore solutions, strategies and best practices to ensure continuity of learning for children and young people affected by climate disasters, protracted conflict and public-health emergencies. Moreover, discussions will focus on education, education infrastructure, and teaching and learning as an integral part of climate adaptation and mitigation efforts in the African contexts, relevant opportunities, partnerships and practices.
6. **Leveraging Digital Technologies for Education:** This will focus on expanding inclusive access to digital learning through influencing digital learning policy, cost-effective and adaptive digital devices and infrastructure for learners and teachers and connectivity in schools; open access to learning platform, integrating digital tools and resources into teaching and learning; and developing digital literacy and skills among students and teachers.
7. **Inclusive Education and Equity:** Discussion will focus on eliminating learning poverty and reducing OOSC by addressing the educational needs of marginalized and underserved communities, including the growing number of children affected by multiple types of crises, promoting gender-responsive and

inclusive education strategies; and ensuring equal access and opportunities for all learners, including second-chance education and alternative learning.

8. **STEM Education and 21st-Century Skills:** Discussion will focus on strengthening the quality and participation in STEM education; fostering creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial mindsets; and preparing students for the jobs of the future.
9. **Vocational and Technical Education:** Discussion here will focus on enhancing the relevance and quality of vocational and technical education; aligning with industry needs and labor market demands; and promoting pathways between academic, and technical, and vocational education.
10. **Financing and Governance for Educational Transformation:** Discussion will focus on exploring innovative financing mechanisms, including, but not limited to public-private partnerships; strengthening policy and governance frameworks, including enhanced accountability mechanisms, to support educational transformation; and ensuring equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability in resource allocation and utilization.

Participation:

Participants to the conference will come from the AU Member States, in priority,, Ministers of Education and Ministers of Finance. Also expected are representatives from other Ministries in Charge of Education, Youth and Skills Development; Women and Girls Education and Development; Departments of Education of the Regional Economic Communities; Education Policymakers and Stakeholders; Researchers, and Education Practitioners. More broadly, representatives from international organisations and Education Partners; Thought Leaders from Africa and beyond, Civil society organisations; the Youth and Private sector stakeholders, are also expected to attend.

Format:

The Conference will be divided into two Components, a 'Senior Officials Meeting', comprising Technical Discussions, including representatives from Ministry of Education, and their Respective Directors, running on Days 1 and 2 of the Conference, and a High-Level Political Dialogue session involving high level representatives including Ministers in charge of Education. .

The Conference shall be in-person with interactive sessions to keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops, and breakout sessions; and networking opportunities to facilitate collaboration among participants.

It is anticipated that technical sessions will adopt a 'Scientific Symposium' approach, by which experts are invited (through 'Open Call', and targeted approaches) to submit abstracts, and (subsequently) papers, which will form the basis of technical discussions, and which will be collated into a publication following the conference, to serve as a resource moving forward.

[Agenda Appended as Annexes]

DRAFT