



United Nations  
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## Education Sector

## Memo

To : DIR, Bangkok Office  
Head, Taskent Office  
OIC, Almaty Office

From: ADG/ED

Cc: DIR/ED/PLS,  
OIC, IITE

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19 September 2016

**Subject: Central Asian Conference on Leveraging ICT to Achieve Education 2030, 2 - 4 November 2016, Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan**

Under the framework of SDG4 and with financial assistance from the Wei Dong Group of China, UNESCO plans to intensify its support to Member States in the Central Asian region to leverage ICT to achieve Education 2030 under the framework of the Qingdao Declaration. It is within this context that UNESCO, in cooperation with the Government of Uzbekistan, is organizing the Central Asia Conference on Leveraging ICT to Achieve Education 2030 from 2 to 4 November 2016 in Tashkent.

The Conference seeks to convene high-level officials from Ministries of Education of the Central Asian countries, to create a sub-regional network and reinforce cross-country cooperation for leveraging ICT at scale to achieve Education 2030. It will also serve as an occasion to launch UNESCO projects funded by the Wei Dong Group of China to support Central Asian countries in developing and implementing national ICT programmes towards Education 2030. The Conference outputs will include a Ministerial Statement on how the Qingdao Declaration will be implemented in Central Asian countries, a sub-regional cooperation strategy, and a follow-up action plan to implement the projects.

I have entrusted Mr David Atchoarena, Director of the Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems (ED/PLS) (e-mail: [d.atchoarena@unesco.org](mailto:d.atchoarena@unesco.org); tel.: +33 1 45 68 08 80) to coordinate the cooperation with your office in the preparation and organization of the event.

In the annex, you will find the draft concept note of the Conference for your reference.

I thank you for your cooperation.



Qian Tang

**Central Asian Ministerial Conference  
on Leveraging ICT to Achieve Education 2030  
Draft Concept Note**

**2-4 November 2016, Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan**

**BACKGROUND**

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 was adopted at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015, which sets out a new vision for Education 2030, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. In the Incheon Declaration on Education 2030, the global education community made a solid statement that “Information and communication technologies (ICTs) must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more effective service provision.” UNESCO has been entrusted to lead and coordinate global Education 2030 agenda. For this purpose, UNESCO has developed the Education 2030 Framework for Action and further led the development and adoption of the Qingdao Declaration on leveraging ICT to achieve Education 2030. The Qingdao Declaration reaffirmed the commitments to harness ICT to: achieve equitable access and inclusion, quality learning, and lifelong learning for all; adopting Open Educational Resources, recognizing and scaling up online learning innovations as well as developing quality assurance and recognition of online learning.

To deliver the political commitments stated above, policy makers need to understand how ICT can be harnessed to deliver equitable and quality lifelong learning opportunities in local contexts. Sector-wide strategies for integrating ICT in the Education 2030 agenda also need to be informed by challenges faced by individual countries and lessons learned from international debates. According to a survey conducted by UNESCO in 2015, the core challenges facing Central Asian countries when they attempt to use ICT for education encompass access, quality, and equity. Specific barriers are outlined below:

- **Topographical barriers** - More than 50% of the region’s people are located in rural areas. Vast deserts and high mountains present geographical barriers that make education difficult to provision and ICT hard to connect and disseminate.
- **Inadequate ICT infrastructure and connectivity** – Poor and inequitable internet access is a common problem through the Central Asian region due largely to topographical barriers and insufficient investments in digital connectivity.

- **Shortage of quality teachers and lack of consistent management on teacher qualifications and professional development** – Teacher competencies are not sufficiently defined and as a result teacher training is inconsistent and often half-hazard. Systematic policy guidance is needed define the skills and qualifications teachers need. This needs to be followed by the articulation and implementation of plans to ensure necessary skills and qualifications are successfully imparted, recognized, incentivized, reinforced and monitored.
- **Lack of proper incentives and motivation for teachers’ use of ICT** – Heavy teacher workload and lack of structural incentives constrain innovation and progressive pedagogy. Teachers perceive the utilization of ICT for learning as a burden, ‘one more thing to do’ in a long list of existing tasks and obligations. Teacher motivation to go beyond basic ICT skills in their work with students is generally low. Efforts to introduce ICT in schools often requires teachers to work more and harder, if they wish to utilize technology effectively, unintentionally creating a disincentive to use ICT in classrooms.
- **Insufficient educational content and open education/digital resources** – There is wide consensus that Central Asian countries need better quality educational resources, aligned with and curated for national curriculums and available in digitized and open formats. Central Asia would also greatly benefit from developing, sharing, and integrating digital educational content and open educational resources (OER) in national languages.
- **Lack of funds and coordination** – A dearth of available funds for educational projects, accompanied by the lack of coordination between educational organizations and governmental entities remains a persistent problem in the region. Superior planning and collaboration between different branches of government can help maximize the impact of limited resources. Additionally, partnerships between governments and the private sector carry a potential to improve educational efficiencies.

To help Central Asian countries to overcome the challenges stated above, UNESCO plans to intensify its supports for Member States in the Central Asian region to leverage ICT to achieve Education 2030 under the framework of Qingdao Declaration. It is against this context, UNESCO, in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, with the support from the Wei Dong Group of China, is organizing the Central Asia Ministerial Conference on Leveraging ICT to Achieve Education 2030 from 2-4 November 2016 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

**Dates: 2-4 November 2016**

**Venue:** Hyatt Tashkent, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

**Working Languages:** English and Russian

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Conference seeks to convene debates among high-level MoE officials of the Central Asian countries on how ICT can be leveraged at scale to address the challenges facing the region in achieving Education 2030 goal. More specifically, the Conference aims to launch UNESCO projects, funded by Wei Dong Group of China, to support the Central Asian countries in developing and implementing national ICT programmes towards Education 2030. The Conference outputs will include a Statement on how the Qingdao Declaration will be implemented in Central Asian countries, following-up action plans as well as relevant partnerships to implement the projects.

In addition, the Conference will pursue following objectives:

1. Launching the National ICT in Education Master Plan of Uzbekistan, and sharing of selected ICT in education master plans from other leading countries.
2. Adopting the Central Asian Ministers' Statement on leveraging ICT to achieve Education 2030.
3. A sub-regional network and a long-term cooperation strategy for leveraging ICT to to achieve Education 2030
4. Launching the planned projects including action plans and the relevant public-private partnership.

## **TARGET PARTICIPANTS**

(1) Ministers of Education

Ministers of the ministries of education of the Central Asian countries, including Russian Federation and P.R. of China will be invited to join the Conference. The Ministers are also expected to discuss and adopt the Statement that will be a key output of the Conference.

(2) Ministry of Education officials and representatives of implementing agencies of UNESCO projects

The MoE officials or specialists at Departmental level who are responsible for the development and implementation of national ICT in education policies and programmes in the Central Asian countries.

(3) Heads of international organizations and ICT industry leaders

To maximize the spectrum of experiences and knowledge to be shared during the Conference, heads or high-level representatives of international and regional organizations, international aid agencies, NGOs,

leading ICT companies who have been operating or supporting major ICT in education programmes in the region will be invited to the Conference and join the debates.

#### (4) Representatives of implementing agencies of UNESCO projects

The heads or representatives of implementing agencies for the projects to be launched by UNESCO will be invited to join the debates on the priorities of national ICT in education programmes, the strategies for cross-country cooperation, and the action plans on implementing the planned projects.

#### (5) Local participants

To broaden the impact of the Conference on the education system of Uzbekistan, officials of the 3 education ministries, representatives of local universities and teacher education institutions of Uzbekistan will be invited to the Conference.

### **THEME AND SUBTHEMES**

Under the core theme of leveraging ICT to achieve Education 2030 agenda, the Conference will be unfolded around three intricately interlinked subthemes:

#### **1. Supporting and incentivizing teachers' pedagogical use of ICT**

This session aims to share effective **policies and innovative practices** on how national, institutional and school strategies should be aligned to provide system-wide support and incentives for teachers' effective pedagogical use of ICT. Specific issues to be addressed under this sub-theme include:

- How should teachers' ICT competencies be defined and developed to ensure effective pedagogical use of ICT?
- How should teacher training institutions be empowered to use ICT to expand the benefits of training programmes?
- How should teacher innovation be incentivized and recognized?

#### **2. Mainstreaming effective use of ICT for quality learning**

This session will deliberate the **definition of quality** of learning and **the proficiency standards** relevant to different age groups/grades under Education 2030, and the **reinvention of schools and learning environments** to take advantage of the ubiquity and mobility of ICT to ensure all girls and boys to achieve minimum proficiency standards relevant to their age. Specific issues to be addressed under this sub-theme include:

- How to assess ICT's essential roles in supporting all girls and boys to achieve minimum proficiency standards relevant to their age group/grade?
- What new ways of teaching, learning and assessment have been proved as attributors to better learning performance?
- How schools should be re-defined and reinvented in order to create an enabling ubiquitous learning environment for all girls and boys?

### 3. Ensuring learners' access to relevant digital content & OER

This session aims to promote the key **institutional strategies** for the development and sharing of quality-assured digital content. Specific focus will be given to successful strategies in making **open educational resources (OER)** relevant to local context and accessible for all learners. The **regional cooperation** for OER and the preparation of the second World OER Congress will be discussed. Specific issues to be addressed under this sub-theme include:

- How openly licensed content, cloud storage, and mobile devices are re-shaping textbooks and augmenting learning content?
- What national and institutional policies should be developed and implemented to ensure digital content relevant to local contexts and accessible for all learners?
- What strategies best incentivize teachers and students to create and share high quality resources? What are effective strategies to assure the quality of large-scale user-generated OER?

#### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**Table 1: Structure of the Proposed Programme**

	<b>Day 1 2 November</b>	<b>Day 2 3 November</b>	<b>Day 3 4 November</b>
<b>Morning (3h + 30' break)</b>	<b>Opening Ceremony</b>	<b>Plenary Session 2 Mainstreaming effective use of ICT for quality learning</b>	<b>Workshops</b>
	<b>Contextualizing the Debate: <i>SDG4 &amp; Qingdao Declaration</i></b>		
	<b>Ministers' Roundtable</b>	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	<b>Workshops</b>
<b>Lunch (1.5h)</b>			
<b>Afternoon (3h + 30' break)</b>	<b>Plenary Session 1 Supporting and incentivizing teachers' pedagogical use of ICT</b>	<b>Plenary Session 3 Ensuring learners' access to relevant digital content &amp; OER</b>	<b>Workshops</b>
	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	<b>Plenary Session 4 Presentation and adoption of Statement</b>	<b>Workshops</b>
		<b>Closing</b>	