

Global Education Summit: Foreign Secretary's speech

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, friends, welcome to London and welcome to the Global Education Summit.

We are gathered with heads of state and ministers from over 30 countries, NGOs and other partners, thousands joining online from right around the world.

We are gathered because we are united in believing in one really important thing – and that is in the power of education as a force for good in the world.

We believe in the testimonies we just heard from Sikemi and my fellow lawyer Cynthia, and millions of young people like that.

We believe in their potential, and the power of education to unleash it.

That's why we're here today.

And that's why there is a breathless new urgency around the work that the Global Partnership for Education is doing.

Because we know that COVID has set back progress further and faster than anyone could have possibly predicted at the time.

We know that 1.6 billion children and young people were out of education at the height of those school closures during the pandemic.

There's a real risk that as many as 24 million children will never return to school. And of course, of those who are out of school, it often the girls that are slowest to get back into education for a whole range of reasons.

We just cannot allow that to happen. That's why we've got to get behind the vital work that the Global Partnership for Education is doing and I want to pay tribute to Alice Albright, to Julia Gillard and the whole GP team for the fantastic dynamism, determination and commitment that they've brought to this vital mission.

And I think partnership is the key word in all of this because we know that we'll achieve much more together, working in partnership, than we could ever alone.

So it's in that spirit that we are delighted and honoured to co-host this summit with Kenya.

And let me just say a little bit about that partnership that we've been nurturing and developing with Kenya, because the Government of Kenya has done a truly phenomenal job, and particularly on education.

They've trained more than 102,000 teachers and distributed 60 million textbooks in primary and secondary schools.

They've realised the goal of universal primary education and gender parity in enrolment. That's quite something.

I want to pay tribute in particular to President Kenyatta, and congratulate the whole Kenyan government and indeed Kenya as a whole, on that inspiring achievement.

We as the UK are also proud in helping to support Kenya in the progress they have made, just as we are proud to have worked in partnership with so many others who are represented here at the summit today.

In Ghana, we've worked with the Government and NGOs to run community-based classes which have supported over 270,000 out-of-school children to gain literacy and numeracy skills as well as other life skills, which are so important.

In Pakistan, we've provided targeted support for over 400,000 highly marginalised young girls. That includes providing scholarships for young girls from tough backgrounds to get an education.

It includes setting up community-run schools to reduce the distance that girls must travel so they can get that vital education.

So let's keep that engine of progress fired up and build on what we've achieved to date. Because, quite simply, we believe that educating girls is the biggest game-changer in global development policy.

And that's not just something we feel in our hearts – take a look at the facts, the evidence, that back that up.

A child whose mother can read is 50% more likely to live beyond the age of 5, 50% more likely to be immunised, and twice as likely to attend school themselves.

Our cause today empowers girls and women but it also helps whole families, whole communities, whole nations, get out of the poverty trap and into a better standard of living.

That's why the UK is hosting this summit, alongside our Kenyan friends.

Between 2015 and 2020, the UK helped over 8 million girls into education.

Earlier this month, at the United Nations Human Rights Council, we introduced a resolution to promote girls' education, and in particular to promote 12 years of quality education – the bedrock, the foundation – and it was backed by over 80 countries.

So our alliance for this mission is growing, and that's going to be a multiplier, if you like, as we step up our efforts. Then in Cornwall at the G7 Summit of leaders, under the UK presidency, the G7 endorsed two new

targets to focus our work.

Those targets are getting 40 million more girls into 12 years' quality education and 20 million more girls literate by the age of 10. We want to focus this incredibly important cause on the key areas that will make a difference.

Just think for a moment what it will mean for the lives, the countries and the whole continents that that can be transformed if we can deliver on those global targets and financial goals that we've got here today.

Just think about that, it would be truly transformative, if not revolutionary, in particular in Africa.

So let's do it – let's get behind this, let's get behind those targets, let's find the investments that we know will repay us many times over.

The Global Partnership for Education will be absolutely essential in helping us reach our goals. And as I've said, the GPE is the lynchpin in this mission that we've set ourselves.

And to transform education in the world's most vulnerable countries, we want to raise \$4 billion at this summit this week.

That is of course the lion's share of the \$5 billion of funding that the GPE needs over the next 5 years to hit these crucial targets.

And the GPE's going to be investing those resources with a plan they've got, in wise ways, in smart ways, focusing on where the money is needed most. And where the investment can add the most value, looking at the highest impact that we can possibly have.

They will work to boost the quality of education by working with countries to develop plans to transform their education systems, encouraging the reforming zeal of the brightest and the best.

Monitoring the implementation of those plans, and investing in key game-changing reforms, whether it's boosting teacher training, or making the best use of education tech wherever we can.

But we can't do any of those things without the money.

The funds that we raise this week will allow us to take huge strides forward towards those ambitious targets of 40 million more girls getting 12 years of quality education, 20 million more girls literate by the age of 10.

It's absolutely critical we raise that \$4 billion this week.

If we can, it would be the single biggest financial boost to children's educational opportunities around the world in history.

And it would come at the point, if we think about this pandemic, of maximum need. So we've got a really critical crossroads moment for us all here at

this summit this week.

Let's be restless. Let's summon all of our ambition, all of our passion, all of our focus, all of the best policy minds that are here.

And for our part, the UK has pledged £430 million.

This is our largest ever pledge we've made to GPE. It's 15% up on the last multi-year pledge that we made, and under the UK's G7 Presidency, G7 leaders pledged at least \$2.7 billion.

So we are off to a flying start.

I call on everyone to pledge whatever they can, and to be as ambitious as they possibly can in pursuit of this life-changing, world-transforming mission that I know we all share.

Together let's seize the opportunity that this summit presents. Let's revolutionise the life chances of those girls, those communities, those whole nations and those continents that we have the power, the gift to support.

We know it in our minds. We know it and feel it in our hearts.

Children want to learn – I've got two young kids myself, eight and six. They want to understand the world, they want to fulfil their potential and lift up their own prospects but also their families, their communities, their nations.

And that starts and ends with the education they receive. So please, please, please, together, let's make this moment count.

Thank you all very much.