STATEMENT BY THE GPE BOARD CHAIR ON THE DECEMBER 2020 BOARD MEETING

The Global Partnership for Education Board of Directors met from November 30 – December 3, 2020.

The Board thanked the Government of Germany for hosting this virtual meeting of GPE's Board of Directors and warmly welcomed the opening statement by German State Secretary Flachsbarth reinforcing Germany's strong commitment and support.

The Board further welcomed announcements by the Governments of Denmark (DKK 35 million), Finland (EUR 2 million), Germany (EUR 25 million) and Sweden (SKK 14 million)of new funding to GPE's COVID-19 response; and enthusiastically greeted Finland's announcement of rejoining the partnership.

Amid the sobering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board heard praise for GPE's quick response to help partner countries mitigate the impacts on the most margnialized children by supporting distance education and the safe reopening of schools. The Board also received GPE's financial report, noting that GPE is on track for a record year with US$1.5 billion in grant approvals and close to $1 billion in disbursements by the end of the year.

Nonetheless, partner countries are confronted by unprecedented challenges and uncertainty resulting from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the Board heard during the presentation of a Ministerial Aide Memoire from developing country partners. Their call to protect education and enthuisiastic support for GPE to adopt a bold and ambitious new strategy to drive real progress was well recieved.

The focus of deliberations was on agreeing the key elements of GPE's new five-year strategic plan (2021-2025) in line with the ambitious vision, mission and goals endorsed at the June 2020 Board meeting. The Board reaffirmed GPE's unwavering committment to drive gender equality in and through education, including by hardwiring gender equality throughout GPE's model and operations. A new special funding window of up to US $250 million focussed on girls education will be established as an additional incentive to countries to unblock bottlenecks to gender equality.

The Board approved an innovative new Operating Model designed to strengthen GPE's ability to support countries to foster system-wide transformation and deliver impact at scale; funding programs more adapted to individual country environments; grounded in the principles of country ownership and capacity, as well as mutual accountability; and supported by more efficient and adaptable approaches to financing. A number of new innovative financing programs were also agreed including matching fund and debt forgiveness mechansims to build on the successful GPE Multiplier. As well, the Board approved a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework for

2021-2025, to support GPE's strategic direction. The MEL will inform decisions at the country and Board levels and build GPE as a learning partnership.

Other decisions taken by the Board included: revised country eligibility and allocation formula for 2021-2025, which will ensure a majority of GPE support goes to low-income countries, and modifications to the contributions and safeguards policy, to enable government and private donors more flexibility in making financial commitments to GPE.