GPE Financing Conference – Dakar, February 2, 2018
Ireland's Pledging Statement

Ireland will more than double its contribution to the Global Partnership for Education over the period 2018 to 2020, contributing €25 million between now and 2020. This increase is a reflection of both our commitment to quality education for all children and our confidence in the Global Partnership for Education to support countries to deliver on quality education for those children most in need. We believe that a quality education is a fundamental right for all girls and boys and that the education of girls in particular, has far reaching effects on child and family health, nutrition and on the education attainment of future children.

While even mediocre education can have a positive impact on children's lives, we are doing a disservice to children and their families if the time and energy they invest in coming to school is not matched by quality education services and by quality learning. As a former Minister at the Department of Education and Skills, I am acutely conscious of the importance of quality learning. Education must be about equipping children and young people with the skills that they need to lead healthy, productive, and meaningful lives. As the world evolves education also has to change to match the new skills needed to negotiate this digital age. Ireland is continually updating its curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning to incorporate new demands and opportunities, and we have many lessons to share.

SDG 4 commits us "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". We also committed to leave no one behind and we see this as prioritising those who are furthest behind. As we focus on improving quality we must not forget the 264 million children who are out of school, many because of conflict or other crises. Ensuring continuity of education for children in crisis situations must be our priority. Education in these situations can equip children and young people with the knowledge and skills to help rebuild their communities and countries as well has help them deal with trauma and retain hope. Each lost year decreases their chances of returning to education, resulting in lost generations and the foundation for future conflict. I welcome the GPE's

increased targeting of grants to countries affected by fragility and conflict and its rapid and responsive mechanisms for providing funding for emergency needs.

We must also not neglect the children who are out of school or not learning because of poverty, malnutrition, location, disability, ethnicity or neglect and we have to continue to work with parents, communities and schools to overcome the barriers that these children face.

Our global future is in the hands of all children – to protect that future we must invest in their education, learning and growth.