

BUILDING THE EDUCATION WE NEED:

STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2030

SHAPING THE FUTURE WE WANT



**ORGANISATION
OF SOUTHERN
COOPERATION**

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01 | Mission: The Education We Need



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01. Mission: The Education We Need

1. Conceived within the context of the industrial revolution, with the establishment of compulsory schooling laws throughout the 19th century:

“Mass education was the ingenious machine constructed by industrialism to produce the kind of adults it needed. [...] The solution was an educational system that, in its very structure, simulated this new world. This system did not emerge instantly. Even today it retains throw-back elements from pre-industrial society. [...] The whole administrative hierarchy of education, as it grew up, followed the model of industrial bureaucracy. The very organization of knowledge into permanent disciplines was grounded on industrial assumptions. [...] The inner life of the school thus became an anticipatory mirror, a perfect introduction to industrial society.”¹

2. Over the decades, this has led not only to a disassociation of schooling from local cultures but also to a the development by the latter of an inferiority complex². Highlighting the virtues of individualism and competition for success, it downcast those of solidarity and cooperation. Disjointing knowledge into subjects and disconnecting it from local realities, it has disabled people from understanding and engaging with their real-life experiences. By uprooting learners, under the guise of egalitarian standards, from their own contexts, languages, and identities, it has disintegrated valuable cultural spaces and perspectives essential to learning, which as much a social process as a cognitive one.
3. This legacy of the first industrial revolution continues to permeate, in the midst of the 4th industrial revolution, contemporary education systems through their existing structures and frameworks, reproducing social inequalities and cultural imbalances. For education systems to realise their transformative potential and address inequalities, enable individuals to participate as equals in the shaping of

¹ A. Toffler, Future Shock, Penguin Random House, LCC, USA, 19

² <https://educationrelief.org/global-guide/>





their own futures, act as a catalyst of sustainable development, they must first and foremost be transformed themselves to reflect the realities and respond to the needs of the contemporary world.

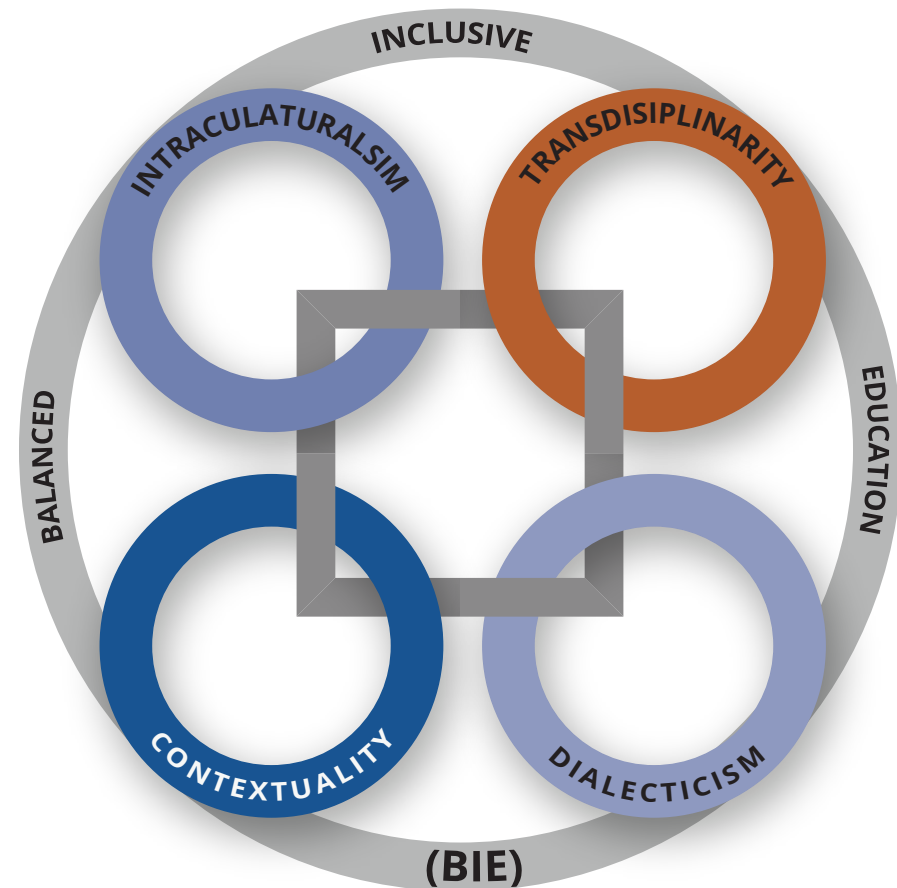
4. In 1990, acknowledging the moral obligation to address the exclusion of millions of children from education systems, the international community pledged efforts to meet the basic learning needs of all by 2000, through the adoption of the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (EFA). In continuation of this effort, the World Education Forum 2000 in Dakar set out a road map to meet the EFA target by 2015 with six goals ranging from improving early childhood care and education and universalizing primary education, to reducing adult illiteracy, ensuring gender equality and improving the quality of education with recognizable and measurable learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.
5. In 2015, reframing the global education agenda to address Sustainable Development Goals 4, the Incheon Declaration «Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all "placed" inclusion and equity in and through education » as the cornerstone of the agenda for education, and committed to address inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes.
6. Despite the historic and progressive nature of these commitments, the various initiatives undertaken as a result in order to ensure the inclusion of all learners, be it in through special efforts through curricula reform, have proven insufficient as reducing the notion of inclusion to access, participation, and achievement under a standardized model of education remains restrictive. The current education systems served the purposes of modernisation for which they were established. By excluding an inestimable wealth of cultures, cultural practices,

knowledge systems, languages, values, and understandings, they have also reached their limits in terms of generating solutions for the challenges faced by the contemporary world and of contributing to the realisation of the inherent aspirations of millions.

7. It is within this context that the concept of Balanced and Inclusive Education emerged as a further progression in the collective understanding of quality and inclusion. Based upon the four pillars, defined in the [Global Guide of Ethics, Principles, Policies and Practices in Balanced and Inclusive Education \(ERF, 2018\)](#), of:

- ◆ **Intraculturalism:** *An approach based upon in-depth cultural introspection for a more complete understanding of the inter-indebtedness and interdependence of cultures;*
- ◆ **Transdisciplinarity:** *An integrative, multi-perspective approach based upon interconnecting both academic as well as non-academic knowledge domains for a complex and holistic understanding of the world;*
- ◆ **Dialecticism:** *An interactional and synergetic approach based upon problem-posing dialogue and critical exchange, for free and critical thinking through the proactive participation of learners;*
- ◆ **Contextuality:** *A context-centered approach based upon the integration and adaptation to the realities, values, and interpretive frameworks of learners, to develop their sense of co-ownership and co-creation.*

8. Balanced and Inclusive Education arose as an approach to educational quality and inclusivity that is sensitive and responsive to the cultural, ethical, and social dimensions of the learning process, rendering education fulfilling for the individual and intrinsically relevant to society. By opening learning institutions to their communities, it strengthens social cohesion, forges equity, justice and harmony. Learners, under the guidance of teacher-facilitators, become co-creators of their education – preparing them



for the world, employability, and professional adaptability. It responds to the needs of individuals and communities, as well as international, national, and local aspirations, necessities, priorities, realities, and challenges by anticipating human, social and economic sustainable development.

9. Rooted in the International Call for Balanced and Inclusive Education (ICBIE) made at the II ForumBIE 2030 (Mexico City, 2018), the Universal Declaration of Balanced and Inclusive Education (UDBIE), adopted in January 2020 at the III ForumBIE 2030 – International Summit on Balanced and Inclusive Education, by countries and organisations from across the Global South, transformed balanced and inclusive education from a common conceptual framework enabling stakeholders to share their experiences and best practices to a clear commitment to educational transformation, to provide education systems with the means to be at the service of national development priorities and aspirations, as well as to become more efficient and capable of providing quality education for all, by dismantling the dynamics of exclusion and preventing the reproduction of inequality.
10. The adoption of the UDBIE commits us towards dismantling the processes of cultural alienation; cultivating the plurality of narratives within and across borders; fostering an understanding of the inter-indebtedness and interdependence between ever-evolving cultures; providing education in mother tongues; interlinking academic and non-academic knowledge domains for holistic understandings of realities; fostering learning communities that include the marginalized; building multi-stakeholder and transdisciplinary approaches, partnerships and collaborations; enabling educators to be learning facilitators; cultivating





problem-posing dialogue, critical exchange and the proactive participation of learners; adapting to the interpretative frameworks and individuality of learners; protagonising learners to be co-creators of their own education, producers of knowledge and architects of desired social transformations; contextualizing education and making community concerns central to it; aligning educational institutions to serve the local development needs and to design solutions along with non-formal and informal educational institutions; embracing society's differences and diversities as well as the plurality of worldviews ; periodically updating curricula and pedagogical practices to adapt to evolving realities; building partnerships between educational and cultural institutions; facilitating South-South and South-North partnerships that respect national priorities and local realities; strengthening transdisciplinary cooperation within the Global South and creating mechanisms for coordinated educational financing and solidarity.

11. At the core of this educational vision lies the recognition that education, and reforms in education, are only pertinent insofar as they serve a vision of the future – a new, inclusive and equitable way of development, which could itself be qualified as balanced and inclusive, emerging through and from education, and founded upon the spirit of multilateralism, solidarity and self-determination.

02

**Vision:
The Future We
Want**



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02. Vision: The Future We Want

1. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the improvement of material comforts, longer life expectancy, decreased infant mortality, better education, greater equality, and more individual freedom, led to the emergence of a development discourse promoting the virtues of certain conceptions of modernity and economic growth to overcome poverty and inequalities and to foster human well-being. This narrative insidiously split the world into “developed” and “under-developed” nations, establishing a hierarchy in which the latter, through the implementation of policy prescriptions that were often decontextualised, were expected to strive towards rising in the development ladder that held the former as standards to emulate.
2. Notwithstanding the promise of boundless prosperity for Humanity, with a trickle-down effect to uplift the living standards for all, such development models, gauged with standard metrics of GDP and GNP, neither anticipated the depletion of our planet’s limited resources nor pre-empted the ongoing environmental degradation. And whilst global instabilities and exacerbated inequalities, amplified by climate change and new technologies, have led to an international recognition of the need to transition towards more sustainable economies, as well as the emergence of alternative paradigms for the measurement of development such as the Human Development Index and the Genuine Progress Indicator, the underlying principles and dynamics of development models and their supporting international infrastructure appear to have remained unaltered.
3. Yet development endeavors cannot escape the internal logic of the planet as a complex living and self-regulating system in which individuals, societies, and biospheres function through a network of inextricable relationships. Development, a fundamental property of living systems, implies that organisms undergo structural changes in response to environmental influences and through various interactions overtime develop new forms. Growth, thereafter, is neither linear nor unlimited. Whilst some elements grow, others must inevitably decline and release their components, which in turn get recycled and become resources for new growth. In other words, development is a process emerging out of structural and/or systemic changes with complex inter-retroactions, whilst “growth” is a multidimensional and balancing process.



It is within this systemic paradigm that the Universal Declaration of Balanced and Inclusive Education (UDBIE) heralded that:

“It is [...] the unalienable right of all peoples and nations to benefit from prosperous, humane, equitable, and sustainable development, of which education is the initiating spark.”

And that since:

“

The Global South is constituted of vastly diverse countries, peoples, and cultures who simultaneously share systemic characteristics, challenges, and aspirations. It is, therefore, uniquely positioned to collectively construct and espouse a third, alternative, inclusive way of development emerging through and from education, founded upon the spirit of multilateralism, solidarity, and self-determination.

”

4. Notwithstanding its unambiguous recognition that such authentic alternatives forms of development are yet to be constructed, the UDBIE nonetheless sets out a broad outline of principles to nurture such an undertaking, whereby
- “Development” implies systemic transformations for the emergence of novel initiatives and solutions;
 - “Growth” is multifaceted, and balanced with individual, social, ecological, economic, cultural, and ethical dimensions on par with each other and measured through qualitative as much as quantitative indicators; and
 - “prosperity” is collective and assessed against, quality education, dignified employment, material and immaterial welfare, and the rejuvenation of social cohesion and cultural vibrancy.





5. With the objective of unfolding a new paradigm, growth and prosperity, the UDBIE advocates for an engagement with the human, local, national, and planetary dimensions of development systemically, and sets out elements which, whilst rooted in the educational context, inform this vision of the future.
6. As such, it calls for educational efforts at all levels and in all spaces, to make a shift from the current over-emphasis on self-assertive, reductionist and linear thinking towards integrative intuitive, synthesizing, holistic and circular thinking; from the current systemic focus on values of expansion and competition, which exacerbate exclusion and marginalisation, towards inclusive values of cooperation, solidarity, and diversity. By contributing to building the cognitive foundations that support an agency of change, Balanced and Inclusive Education (BIE) implies designing education systems that make exclusion impossible, strengthen individual autonomies, create grounds for constructive community participation and unfold an awareness and sense of belonging to the planetary ecosystem.
7. At the local level, the UDBIE drives for multi-sector collaboration and mutually beneficial partnerships and learning networks between educational set-ups – such as schools, universities, research organizations – and the local learning environments - local governments, civil society, knowledge depositories, and communities, amongst others. The objective of such partnerships and processes is first and foremost to help all learners to realistically engage with issues relevant to their context, understanding their complexity, seeking multiple perspectives and collective interpretations for co-designing context-specific solutions and individual and community resilience.
8. At the national level, the UDBIE emphasizes overall coherence, cross-sectoral partnerships and, mutually supporting policies and processes for

systemic transformations necessary to a country's successful attainment of its national development objectives. The major issues of the world – such as energy, environment, climate change, food, health, water or financial security – being all interconnected and interdependent, such that no given issue can be dealt with in isolation, the UDBIE advocates for the superseding of cartesian and arbitrary sector-wise compartmentalisation. It unequivocally strives for harmonized institutional and policy environments and multidimensional development processes that contribute to right balances: between short and long-term needs, between human well-being and environmental sustainability, between national and planetary needs, amongst others.

9. Finally, the UDBIE affirms that restoring planetary equilibria, more than just a moral obligation, has become a requisite for the very survival of Humanity. At the planetary level, therefore, it aspires to the reduction of inter-state disparities within the Global South, the regaining of a balance in the North-South relations in the spirit of mutually beneficial partnerships of equals, and the containing of interference with nature's ability to sustain life on earth. This spirit of the UDBIE entails engaging on all international fronts to curtail climate change consequences, supporting systemic changes on a priority basis, leveraging the respective and common strengths of countries of the Global South; pooling technical and financial resources together in order to at least partially bridge significant gaps; reaching out and supporting countries subject to enduring crises; and addressing the inequities of the international system, most notably in terms of the financial and debt architectures which insufficiently reflect the needs and interests of the majority of the world's countries and peoples.
10. The Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC) – founded as an international intergovernmental organisation serving as a common space and collective instrument to accompany and support its Member States, to whom it is fully accountable, in the materialisation of the vision and aspirations proclaimed in the UDBIE – can therefore be best defined as an organisation for a third way development through a balanced and inclusive education. To collectively shape the future that we want, accordingly, the Organisation must adopt a systemic perspective, taking into account the continuous inter-retroactivity between components of educational reforms and other parts of the development ecosystem, with an unwavering belief in the transformative power of endogenous solutions, capacities, and perspectives within and between Member States.



03

**The Spaces We
Engage:
The Organisation
We Deserve**



**ORGANISATION
OF SOUTHERN
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03. The Spaces We Engage: The Organisation We Deserve

A. Political Will

1. The principles that define us, the rights that we recognize and the commitments that we adopt cannot remain mere good intentions existing within the realm of the abstract. The Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC) must, accordingly, encourage, develop, and secure the collective political will necessary to fulfil the purpose for which it was founded by its Member States.
2. To that end, the OSC must ensure that it is a results- and impact-driven Organisation, requiring its organisational and operational procedures to remain lean and flexible, avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy and ensuring streamlined responses. Simultaneously, in order to effectively undertake its mandate and consequently abide by the expectations of its Member States, the OSC must set key requirements, guidelines and processes that ensure ethical, administrative, and operational transparency and institutional accountability at all levels.
3. To ensure the collective political will that is fundamental to the realisation of the common aspirations proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Balanced and Inclusive Education (UDBIE) requires that the OSC be an organisation that accompanies its Member States in an agile manner, is attentive to their needs and requirements, and delivers consistently on its commitments and objectives. In sum, the Organisation that we deserve and that must be consolidated over the course of the upcoming eight (8) years is one which is:
 - a. **Dynamic** – in constant movement, flexible, and adaptive;
 - b. **Present** – available to Member States at all times;
 - c. **Reliable** – technically competent and timely in its delivery.

B. Critical Mass

1. The realisation of the transformative, common agenda set out in both the Universal Declaration of Balanced and Inclusive Education (UDBIE) and the Constitutive Charter of the Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC) is a task that cannot be achieved by any one government, any one sector, any one organisation nor, indeed, any one initiative. It must be a cooperative, collective, sustained, and sustainable effort resulting on



concrete, tangible actions towards achieving the aspirations contained with the Organisation's founding documents. In other words, a critical mass of diverse stakeholders.

2. This requires the Organisation to not only serve, in synergy with its Member States and Associate Members, as an international, multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral platform for exchange and collaboration, but also an instrument that is appropriated by its Members and the general public in order to articulate shared objectives supported by the right roadmaps and coordination mechanisms.
3. It is decisive that the OSC be an organisation that involves and is involved with stakeholders and communities; that not only anticipates developments and proposes possible courses of action, but also contributes to the shaping of the public debate and the international discourse; and that efficiently and swiftly responds to emerging situations as well as concerns of stakeholders at all levels. In sum, the Organisation that we deserve and that must be consolidated over the course of the upcoming eight (8) years is one which is:
 - a. **Participatory** – permanently and continuously open to, and engaged in, the exchange of ideas, cross-sectoral dialogue, and collaborative projects;
 - b. **Proactive** – able to foresee developments and enterprising in its initiatives and proposals;
 - c. **Responsive** – positively and expeditiously acknowledging contextual shifts and addressing stakeholder concerns.

C. Financial Sustainability

1. Financing is a fundamental dimension of the journey towards the construction of balanced and inclusive education systems and the achievement of sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development. For without the necessary resources, it is impossible to translate political will into operational plans and for a critical mass of stakeholders to enact collective, coordinated actions. In other words, financial sustainability is a condition sine qua non to ensure that ideals morph into concrete reality.





2. To respond to this imperative, the Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC) can neither permanently depend on the continuous investment of its Members, nor can it compromise its agenda and priorities – which must only be set by its direct stakeholders which are its Member States and Associate Members – by depending on a small group of external donors. Accordingly, it must balance Member State contributions, mitigate donor dependence, ascertain financial continuity for programme implementation, and guarantee maximum efficiency in overhead and programmatic costs. Equally important, if not more so, is to ensure that the considerable investment of financial resources by Member States over the medium to long term to build balanced and inclusive education systems is not predicated on placing them further in debt nor on having their development plans steered by the agenda of international donors.
3. This requires the OSC to operationalise the Financial Subsidiary – diversifying its investments in Member States; to be innovative in the mechanisms for development finance that it proposes and develops; to ensure its own financial transparency, traceability, and accountability; and embody a spirit of shared responsibility, mutual duty, and common destiny. In sum, the Organisation that we deserve and that must be consolidated over the course of the upcoming eight (8) years is one which is:
 - a. **Audacious** – amenable to undertake innovative and bold initiatives;
 - b. **Responsible** – financially disciplined, budgetarily efficient, and institutionally accountable;
 - c. **Solidary** – operating with care for the collective and common good, under principles of equity and mutual duty.

04

The Objectives We Have: The Actions We Take



ORGANISATION
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04. The Objectives we have: **The Actions We Take**

Objective 1. Enhancing Systemic Governance And Policy Frameworks

1. The theoretical framework of the Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC), as set out in the Universal Declaration of Balanced and Inclusive Education (UDBIE) and the Constitutive Charter, rests on the foundational pillar that is a systemic vision of education.
2. In analysing education system reform from a systemic lens, the necessity of recognising the components of the education system as interdependent and mutually reinforcing emerges: the system is apparent to an organism in which each part is dependent on all others, continuously inter-retroacting.
3. Accordingly, when seeking to reform any given component of a system, it is imperative for a country to explore how the given component affects other elements of the system and how these also need to be reformed to support the overall transformation.
4. This is a complex and dynamic process that involves a range of factors and actors: curriculum developers, learning resource developers, teacher-training programmes and trainers themselves, inspectors, heads of schools, teachers' practice, and assessment models, amongst others.
5. As an additional layer of complexity, outside of the education system itself, numerous factors and sectors inevitably influence the education system, such as health, labour, economic, and environmental policies as well as formal and informal actors at the local, national, and international levels. Since these are also inescapably subject to inter-retroactivity with the education system, they must be taken into consideration when articulating educational policies and reforms.
6. The OSC has a corresponding responsibility to support its Member States in their determination to develop systemic governance and policy frameworks. The Organisation will accordingly contribute to the development and support the implementation of:
 - a. A comprehensive, context-sensitive system diagnostic, monitoring and evaluation tool to support Member States in identifying gaps, the level of alignment to, and the progress made towards, a balanced and inclusive education system;



- b. Effective, context-specific strategic governance models that make for effective stakeholder engagement and accountability with regards to policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and ensuring equitable and optimal use of financial resources;
- c. Flexible, context-sensitive policies and implementation strategies in consultation with concerned stakeholders;
- d. Capacity-building of stakeholders with appropriate information management technologies for processing relevant data and information in order to streamline administrative procedures, monitor reform impacts on student learning and local development;
- e. Inclusive, cross-sectoral dialogues at the local and national levels;
- f. Regular regional and international fora and exchange-platforms for enabling the exchange of best practices in systemic governance.



Objective 2. Building Capacities In Balanced And Inclusive Education

1. The construction of a balanced and inclusive education system is, by its very essence, incompatible with the conception of education as a standardised, homogeneous model to be implemented with no regard to the particularities and sociocultural contexts of countries, communities, and individuals. Balanced and Inclusive Education is, rather than a standardised model, a broad conceptual and technical framework, containing operational principles and methodologies, that enables each country to construct its own educational model in light of its own needs, realities, priorities and aspirations.
2. The commitments contained within the Universal Declaration of Balanced and Inclusive Education form the foundational basis for this endogenously-led transformation of education systems. From its design to implementation, the roadmap to the realisation of these commitments should, therefore, be appropriated by the actors at the core of the education system, such as curriculum developers, school and university administrators, professors, teachers, learners, families, community stakeholders and employers.
3. The OSC has, therefore, a critical role to play in supporting Member States in translating the pillars of balanced and inclusive education and the commitments contained within the UBDIE into contextualised national policies and classroom practice, and the corresponding, multifaceted transformations required across curricula, teacher-training, and student evaluations.
4. This requires the involvement of multiple levels of stakeholders within the larger national development ecosystem and, since it is impossible – good intentions notwithstanding – to externally contextualise an education system, the building of capacities at the national and local levels, to ensure nationally-led transformational processes of the education system – conditions sine qua non to the building of balanced and inclusive education system. The Organisation will accordingly contribute to the development and support the implementation of:
 - a. Appropriate communication and public engagement strategies to democratise and raise awareness on the UDBIE and its implications for education and development;
 - b. An accredited institute at the OSC Headquarters providing capacity-building and training programmes to Ministry officials, master trainers, and curricula developers;
 - c. Curricula frameworks based on the four pillars of balanced and inclusive education;
 - d. Transdisciplinary research, endogenous knowledge mainstreaming, and inter-university partnerships;
 - e. Pre-service and in-service training of teachers in balanced and inclusive educational practice;
 - f. Student assessment frameworks that are adapted to a balanced and inclusive approach to education.

Objective 3. Democratising Knowledge And Research

1. Linguistic, economic, and technological barriers still hinder the ability of youth and researchers from across the Global South to fairly access knowledge and contribute to its production and circulation. The current practices and norms for knowledge production, evaluation and dissemination further disadvantage marginalised populations and delegitimise endogenous knowledge domains of the Global South inhibiting, therefore, their potential to shape equitable development and collective prosperity. For education, and by extension development, to be balanced and inclusive, the current imbalances in access to knowledge, its production, and its visibility must be addressed.
2. To ensure fair access by addressing the linguistic, economic, and physical barriers inhibiting the dissemination of knowledge, concerted and sustained investments are required to digitise and translate research and publications on a continuous basis, to safeguard the affordability of access to knowledge, and to address the socioeconomic and urban-rural divides between and within countries through qualitative expansion of higher education institutions, research centres, and knowledge repositories.
3. The process of democratisation would be incomplete without addressing the geopolitics of knowledge – such as the dominance of certain languages in academia, the scarcity of peer-reviewed journals of international reach based in the Global South, the border and economic restrictions on mobility faced by researchers and students, and the prevalence of Eurocentric epistemologies in the evaluation of academic legitimacy. The underlying dynamics of the current geopolitics of knowledge place researchers and institutions across the Global South at an immediate disadvantage, calling for platforms and initiatives that increase, at the international level, the visibility of epistemologies, ideas, and knowledge generated in the Global South.
4. The issue of knowledge would be of little concern if it were not foundational to development in all its dimensions. Central to the process of ensuring that research contributes to the orientation of public policies, informs social action, and revitalizes knowledge as a pro-active catalyst of sustainable development, however, the issue of providing research institutions and researchers with with means and, across regions which share similar challenges and characteristics, collaborative opportunities with their peers.
5. The OSC has a corresponding responsibility to act as a neutral knowledge broker, both providing access and giving visibility to the latest in transdisciplinary research, knowledge and best practices, to actively initiate and foster the collective exchange of ideas to rethink education and achieve its transformative potential, and to contribute to the strengthening of mutual knowledge and understanding of Humanity's historical, cultural, and shared roots. The Organisation will accordingly contribute to the development and support the implementation of:
 - a. An open, online platform hosting the latest academic publications and research papers from across the Global South, accompanied with the publication of multilingual, peer-reviewed journals and quarterly magazines for the general public,

- ensuring equitable access to the global scholarly record and making research from the Global South more visible;
- b. National and regional research centres in areas of common interest enabling contextual and relevant research to be undertaken;
 - c. Conceptual and epistemological frameworks and methodologies to support Member States in defining their own criteria to revitalise their endogenous knowledge;
 - d. Regular fora for intellectuals, artists, and scholars from the Global South, in general, and Member States, in particular, to exchange ideas and articulate new epistemologies of development;
 - e. Endogenous knowledge production in local languages and their integration, promotion, and reinforcement through primary, secondary, informal and higher education;
 - f. National research capacity-building and regional scientific cooperation reinforcement on issues critical to development;
 - g. Policy and strategy innovation for the qualitative expansion of primary, secondary and higher education and creative programmes for social, cultural, and ecological actors;



Objective 4. Bridging The Techno-Digital Divide

1. The international discourse which has emerged from the multidimensional crisis engendered by the advent of the COVID19-pandemic has, in many respects, crystallised around the pressing need to bridge the techno-digital divide. The terminology, however, encompasses numerous divides that must be clearly identified in order to adequately address them. These are commonly understood to be the divides between the Global North and the Global South, between countries of the Global South, and, along socioeconomic and urban-rural lines, within countries of the Global South.
2. The urgency, therefore, is that of enabling wider access to modern technologies and addressing infrastructural gaps essential for connectivity. This requires, on the one hand, innovative and effective frameworks to ensure fair use, pricing, and transfers of technologies in addition to measures ensuring the privacy of users, data security, and durability.
3. On the other hand, bridging the techno-digital divide sustainably also falls into a larger need for the development of endogenous technologies in order to bridge an insufficiently discussed divide: the disparity between technology-producing and technology-consuming countries. This responds to the imperative that is the reduction, overtime, of excessive dependence on costly and often decontextualised and socially-blind technologies, through the development of endogenous technologies which harness the creative potential of communities and stimulate and autonomise economies, providing a more lasting solution to the issue of technological access.
4. The OSC has a corresponding responsibility to support its Member States in developing and implementing participatory approaches for the identification of needs at the local, national, and regional levels and the building of the consequent capacities in terms of appropriate technology selection, fund-raising, multi-stakeholder training programmes within conducive regulatory and policy frameworks. The Organisation will accordingly contribute to the development and support the implementation of:
 - a. Sustainable, endogenous (local, national, or regional) technologies through policy elaboration, capacity-building, partnership building, and capital-investment;
 - b. An international convention encompassing fair use, pricing, data protection, taxation, and technology transfer with major actors in technology;
 - c. Free, open-source software and tools for the production of learning resources;
 - d. Policy and legal frameworks to ensure (i) better use of technology, (ii) more equitable access and (iii) the development of endogenous technological solutions;
 - e. Affordable and scalable solutions for the development of national digital infrastructures;
 - f. Best practice exchanges and collaboration between Member States on technology development.

Objective 5. Strengthening Horizontal And Cross-Sectoral Cooperation

1. The centralised model of a funding and/or technical entity channelling aid from a high-income country to a lower-income country is no longer relevant in the 21st century. However, unlike aid and charity –which are implemented vertically and tend to generate institutional dependence, – solidarity and cooperation – which are practised horizontally, between equals, and strive to achieve collective self-reliance – have become all the more necessary.
2. There is a vital need, therefore, to encourage and support South-North partnerships, as a fundamental means to address the planetary dimension of challenges and aspirations in the contemporary world, built in such a manner as to operate on the principle of mutually beneficial partnerships of equals, which respect and abide by national priorities and local realities.
3. Equally pressing is the essential task of materialising South-South cooperation’s potential in the areas of balanced and inclusive education and development, facilitating, enhancing and strengthening South-South exchanges, both intergovernmental and intersectoral, to identify complementary strengths and overcome common challenges. Accordingly, synergies must be created, mainstreamed towards shared goals, within frameworks that ensure the self-sustainability of projects through the mutual engagement of governments, local stakeholders, and cross-sectoral partners to contribute to the development of endogenous solutions which also make the case for change at the global level.
4. The OSC has a corresponding responsibility to support its Member States to achieve this common aspiration, through the building of dynamic and cross-sectoral mechanisms of cooperation, the articulation of collective and contextual roadmaps, and the creation of effective knowledge-sharing and action-coordinating instruments. This paradigm entails that the OSC must act as a platform for the confederation of efforts and initiatives – across countries, organisations, and sectors – which mobilises and pools together intellectual, technical, and financial resources. The Organisation will accordingly contribute to the development and support the implementation of:
 - a. Streamlined South-South cooperation frameworks and multi-sectoral partnerships;
 - b. Platforms, coalitions, and subsidiary bodies to highlight and strengthen the perspectives of the Global South in international fora, advance the common agenda of Member States, and share experiences, knowledge, and resources in addressing issues of common interest to countries of the Global South;
 - c. A Transregional Partnership in Education for Development (TPED) composed of regional intergovernmental organisations in the field of education to coordinate and streamline technical assistance to Member States, optimising resources and reducing redundancies;
 - d. A Framework to Reinforce Exchanges between Youth and Regions through Education (FREYRE) across universities and educational institutions of OSC Members.

Objective 6. Strengthening Solidarity-Based Financing And Sustainable Debt Agreements

1. Adopting a balanced and inclusive education is an investment in the sustainable human, social and economic development of a nation and of the world. It is, in consequence, introducing transformative reforms to an existing education system. This inevitably implies an important mobilisation of financial resources. This mobilisation faces the immediate and legitimate constraint, however, that is the limited availability of financial resources, and which are already allocated to the existing education system and other critical sectors.
2. This constraint has been exacerbated by the COVID19- crisis, as the reduction in economic activities globally has impacted national economies, especially those that are dependent on other countries for their income – such as tourism-dependent economies –, threatened job security, and effectively reduced tax revenue for governments.
3. The fiscal space necessary for essential budgetary increases to, and the undertaking of a systemic transformation of, education systems has therefore been severely inhibited, including by one major budget item: debt servicing and repayments. Despite calls by countries from across the Global South for debt cancellation and debt moratoria, this fundamental challenge has been aggravated as countries with alleged “debt problems” are being downgraded by ratings agencies, further limiting their access to finance to urgently mitigate the immediate consequences of COVID19- – let alone engage in the process of implementing the commitments made towards balanced and inclusive education.
4. It is precisely at this turning point that creative, collective, and solidarity-based resource mobilisation is required, as affirmed in Article XV of the Universal Declaration of Balanced and Inclusive Education in the form of a commitment to “create mechanisms of coordinated educational financing and solidarity which abide by national priorities, adapt to local realities, assist in achieving debt relief, and facilitate budgetary increases for education.”
5. Foreseeing this necessity, the Constitutive Charter established the OSC with a fundamental function to “provide financial assistance to its Member States in their educational initiatives”¹, through the provision of “solidarity-based educational financing, which abides by national priorities and adapts to local realities”² – facilitating through this and other means budgetary increases for education.
6. On the medium-term, such an undertaking requires the OSC's Financial Subsidiary to generate the necessary funds through investments in “ethical, socially and environmentally responsible projects”³ in Member States – simultaneously providing them with concrete investments in support of their sustainable economic development.

¹ Article I.2.f, Constitutive Charter of the Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC) ² Idem

³ Idem

7. The OSC nonetheless has a responsibility, in the shorter-term, to technically support Member States in the optimisation of the financial resources allocated to the education system as well as the operationalisation of coordination platforms for Member States to secure the financing that they require to realise their educational and development agenda. The Organisation will accordingly contribute to the development and support the implementation of:
- a. A Public-Private Partnership evaluation and implementation framework that ensures the qualitative value and sustainability of partnerships with the private sector;
 - b. A Common Leveraging Union of Borrowers (CLUB) to collectively negotiate debt relief and increase financing for education and development on more favourable and sustainable terms;
 - c. Innovative and operational proposals for a more equitable international financial architecture that takes into account the perspectives and interests of countries of the Global South;
 - d. An on-demand consultancy and technical support service, placing at the disposal of Member States specialised staff members during negotiations with international financial partners on loan agreements either entertained or already entered into by Member States;
 - e. The Financial Subsidiary as a multilateral third-party guarantor for education-related loans to OSC Member States;
 - f. Leverage interventions for the optimisation of educational spending, including with advanced digital modelling tools;
 - g. Exchanges of good practices in the field of educational funding and financial management between Member States;
 - h. Human- and development-centred, resource-optimising investment portfolios of the Financial Subsidiary within Member States.