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pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

## Video message by

**Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the first joint meeting of the International Commission  
and Advisory Board on the Futures of Education**

**18 September 2020**

Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to welcome you to this joint meeting of the International Commission and Advisory Board on the Futures of Education.

One year ago, at the last United Nations General Assembly, we launched this very exciting initiative. This was a call for imagination and for putting forward new solutions to provide quality education for all by 2050 and beyond.

To do so, we have brought together renowned figures from around the world to form the Commission and Advisory Board.

We have brought together education actors and citizens from across the globe to take part in wide-ranging series of consultations. Artists, teachers and individuals are taking part in reflection groups, webinars and studies. Academics and 200 UNESCO chairs have made contributions to this impressive dynamic of collective intelligence.

I would like to thank you very warmly for agreeing to take part in this movement.

Because what was important a year ago has become absolutely vital for our societies with the COVID-19 crisis.

With more than 90% of learners around the world unable to attend class at the height of school and university closures, education systems had to urgently reinvent themselves. We had to meet the most urgent needs and adapt to a curious situation where learning took place without schools.

Entire generations will be impacted, with a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable, particularly girls. 24 million students may never return to school.

This situation has shown us that our education systems were not prepared to face crises.

It has led the education community, and society as a whole, to reflect on issues such as the use of new technologies, the benefits of face-to-face classes, the role of social interactions in schools – as well as relationships between families, teachers and administrative staff.

In many ways, our initiative was premonitory: despite its long-term focus, its goals have now become urgent. And our Commission took immediate steps in this regard.

Your work quickly resulted in tangible paths forward and guidance for reflection and action. This was the aim of the report *Nine Ideas for Public Action*, for example, which was published last June.

Central to this work is the idea that education is a global public good – and, in my view, a global public good that is fundamental for humanity. This is a guiding principle for our common reflections.

This shows the importance of this mission and of your mobilization. I would like to thank you all, and first of all our President, Ms Sahle-Work Zewde, as well as the members of the Advisory Board of course, for helping to make this ambition a reality.

Today's meeting is important: it's a new milestone in our efforts to publish, in just a year, the Report on the Futures of Education.

This is the ambitious goal we are aiming to achieve together. Thank you for your attention.