Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you all for coming to this side event on Educating for a Sustainable Future.

Special thanks go to our host – the Government of Brazil.

Agradeço profundamente os nossos anfitriões brasileiros por sua hospitalidade e liderança.

This issue goes to the heart of the success we need from this United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

We will reach our goal of crafting green economies only if we build strong foundations.

This calls for the development of green societies, built on new ways of thinking and acting by people of all ages and by all parts of society.

We know how high the stakes are.

The Report, Resilient People, Resilient Planet, from the United Nations Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability put them clearly:

The signposts are clear: we need to change dramatically, beginning with how we think about our relationship to each other, to future generations, and to the ecosystems that support us.
Change must occur.

Change will not be easy, but it carries extraordinary opportunities and responsibilities to promote a sustainable planet, more just and green societies, and growing, green economies.

This must start with education – education that empowers women and men with new values and behaviours to find solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow, education that develops new and relevant skills.

In a word, change must start with education for sustainable development.

Ladies and gentlemen, education is the most powerful path to sustainability.

Economic and technological solutions, political regulations or financial incentives are not enough.

We need a fundamental change in the way we think and act.

We know this is a tall order.

This calls for revising curricula and learning objectives.

This calls for teaching and learning about climate change, about disaster risk reduction, about biodiversity.

This calls for new methods to motivate and empower learners to change behaviours and become actors for sustainable development.

This means linking education more tightly with the needs of economies and the aspirations of societies.

It means forging partnerships for sustainability between governments, civil society organizations, businesses and education institutions, along with individual educators and learners.

Education for sustainable development is education for the future.
This is UNESCO’s core message today.

It is the objective guiding our leadership of the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* (2005-2014).

The Report we launch today on the achievements of the Decade shows the progress we are making.

There are many success stories from across the world.

Japan has integrated Education for Sustainable Development into national curriculum guidelines.

Sweden has made mandatory the teaching and learning of sustainable development at various levels of the education system.

More than 800 professionals from 42 countries in Asia and Africa have taken part in training programmes for education for sustainable development funded by Sweden.

China has designated a large number of experimental schools for Education for Sustainable Development.

The Canadian province of Manitoba is reorienting its schools to address sustainable development.

As lead agency for the UN Decade, UNESCO is focusing on three key issues -- climate change education, disaster risk reduction and biodiversity education.

We are running pilot country programmes to assist policy-makers and teacher educators to take action on climate change.

I am pleased to launch online today a new climate change clearinghouse database – this provides easy and free-of-charge access to hundreds of climate change education resources and materials.

I wish to highlight also UNESCO’s work to promote dialogue and learning through its global network of Biosphere Reserves -- 580 reserves in 114 countries -- where
we are bringing key actors together to agree on actions for sustainability in ways that are meaningful to them.

One example to illustrate -- in the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve of Nicaragua, the indigenous knowledge of the Mayangna people has been gathered into two volumes in the Mayangna language, which are now being integrated into school curricula.

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is the work of partnership, bringing together 22 agencies.

The United Nations Environment Programme’s initiative for Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities, involving 65 universities from 32 African countries.

The United Nations University has created a network of 100 Regional Centres of Expertise.

The United Nations Children’s Fund has integrated education for sustainable development as part of all its work to promote quality education.

Each of these examples shows what can happen when political will is married with resources and vision.

States are essential actors – in this Conference and at home, in their educational systems.

I wish to thank Sweden and Japan for co-organizing this event today, and also Denmark for its support.

We stand less than three from the end of the UN Decade – much has happened, but much hard work lies ahead, to mainstream Education for Sustainable Development into education systems across the world.

Education for Sustainable Development has come of age, and we are gaining momentum – but we need greater commitment and longer-term engagement.
These are the stakes of our side event.

On this note, I turn now to our distinguished panellists.