Education as a human right and a cornerstone for any democratic society

UK Parliament Conference, House of Lords
Committee Room 1 (HL) and online
London, 15th November 2023, 9:30 – 11:30am

Co-Chairs:

John Howell OBE MP, Chair of the UK Delegation to, and Vice-President of, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The Earl of Dundee DL, former Chair of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Registration:

Conference Secretariat, Isabella Fergusson, email: EduConf2023@outlook.com

Earl of Dundee:

Dear colleagues and guests,

Welcome to our conference on education as a human right and a cornerstone for any democratic society. It is my pleasure to chair it and guide you through the programme. It is very refreshing to see that, in terms of education, we have a breadth of representation here among us. We have those doing postgraduate studies and, not least, we have my parliamentary colleagues who, perhaps now and again, it might be tactfully said, can benefit from lifelong learning to assist them in the various directions they take in politics.

We have participants here in conference room 1 of the House of Lords as well as online, both of whom I most warmly welcome.

On behalf of John Howell, who is co-chair of this conference, I give you his apologies for being absent due to sudden illness. John is current leader of the UK parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe, and is also a candidate to become the next commissioner for human rights of the Council of Europe ; which election takes place in Strasbourg in January 2024.

Education is the cornerstone of human culture and our societies. Notions such as freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law can only be properly advanced through education. Nevertheless hatred, racism and the glorification of violence acquired through dogma, prejudice and wrong-headed propaganda are also acquired through education, from outside our democratic and humane traditions; yet are alien to our international conventions, such as the European convention on human rights. With the world in its present turmoil, it is timely and necessary to emphasise the need for good education and better strategies for achieving wide access to quality education. Our international community cannot allow individuals and disadvantaged groups to be denied the human right of education. With these words, I now give the floor to my parliamentary colleague, Charles Kinnoull, who will open our conference.

Lord Kinnoull:

Thank you very much. Can I welcome you to historic conference room 1, here in the House of Lords? I say historic because, for about 150 years, it was where what is today the Supreme Court had its home. They moved out in only 2009, and the crossbench moved in. This is our home now for our meetings.

I think we should begin by congratulating Alexander Dundee and John Howell for their energy in getting this very important conference together. I do that on your behalf and I thank them, because it is an amazing thing to do and there are quite a lot of complications in House of Lords' processes to just getting you all in here, including online. Their fine records in relation to the Council of Europe are self-evident. But what is less publicly known is that they are held in a very high regard by their colleagues in their respective chambers, who know of their passion and expertise in this area. Further, we have a very heavyweight lot of speakers. These speakers will be talking about some very meaty areas, and I think that that, too, attests to the energy of John and Alexander.

We are all here because we believe that education is a human right – I'm not going to go through what undoubtedly others will go through in terms of the reasoning why we might believe that. But what is exciting today and what is different today is that, really for the first time in the history of mankind : over the last 20 years, we end up with the tools of delivery, of education in a lifelong sense, anywhere on the planet.

I think we need to have the determination to use those tools and to begin educating people from afar, and all the various benefits that we know flow from liberal education can then start to flow into all parts of the world.

That is why I feel that it is very exciting to be here. My predecessor as convener of the crossbenchers had a maxim, which is that there is no such thing as a speech that is too short. I will finish and say how much I'm looking forward to the rest of the conference.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you very much, Lord Kinnoull. What an interesting opening you have given us, and thank you, also, for your strong support for all the previous conferences we've had, including recently those on the rights of migrants and refugees.

It is now a great pleasure for me to give the floor to our first keynote speaker, Mr Yevhen Kudriavets, First Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, who joins us online from Kiev at a moment when Russian air raids have intensified. Minister, thank you very much for being able to address us. You now have the floor.

Dr. Yevhen Kudriavets:

Thank you very much for the kind invitation. It is an honour for me to be here and deliver this speech today. As our previous speaker said, education is one of the human rights, and the right to our children's education has been fought for by Ukrainians with arms in hand and under attack. Our country, our future, our education and over 3,500 educational institutions have been damaged or completely destroyed during the full-scale war.

According to the World Bank estimates, the damage from the actions of the Russian Federation in the first year of the full-scale invasion required $10 billion. We are currently providing updated information for assessment and working with the rollback. The figure has been increasing during the last year. Currently, educational communities are interrupted by air raid alarms yet the desire for development persists. Ukrainian schoolchildren and students continue their education in shelters, online and even from occupied territories: Ukrainian educational institutions persist.

The challenges and directions of our work can now be divided into two main groups. First of all, the restoration of access to education. Imagine: approximately almost 3,000,000 children do not have the opportunity for regular in-person learning. Almost 50% of the total student population in Ukraine is studying remotely. The reason for this is the destroyed infrastructure, the inability to resume face-to-face learning in regions with a worsening security situation, and the lack of proper support. In 10 regions of Ukraine, 80% of children are studying remotely or in mixed forms of education. The flight time of missiles in these areas is too short to ensure safety in schools, even if they have sheltered millions. Ukrainian children have faced various lengths of interruptions in their educational bridge and educational losses.

This leads me to the second focus area for the education system. Can the government continue its provision of reforms and system information during the full-scale war? For us, it is important not only to rebuild walls, but also to fill them with new content, creating an environment for the development of quality education. We're currently continuing reforms in schools, higher education and vocational education but at the same time we are fighting for the future. We cannot stop building it, stop learning or stop growing. It is important for us to understand that emergency response is highly important.

One must emphasise the need for the reforms: it is crucial for the future. A significant indicator of this year is that there have been about 20,000 applicants in special organized centres abroad to enter Ukraine universities. The minister of education and science will support our students studying abroad and back here in Ukraine.

For us, it is a priority to restore access to education.
This includes shelters providing devices in areas when it's not possible to go even in sheltered

buses to deliver safe programmes to compensate for educational losses, and mental health programmes.

I have shared the statistics with you. However, I would like to point out some good examples. For instance, we have this boy, 11 years old, Nikita, in the Zaporizhia region, who dreams of programming but could not attend robotics clubs because his village is an area where the air raid alarm doesn't reach in time. Victoria, from Hercule Region, is 10 years old, the eldest child in a large family. She shares her phone with siblings, the only gadget from which she could join the online process a little bit. Or there is a child of 17 years who, thanks to online education, managed to prepare for entrance exams and enrol in the university she dreamed of. Last year, a Ukrainian kid, from the Kherson region (which was under occupation), participated in the international competition of Genius Olympiad by using Wi-Fi from the post office, and won a gold medal.

There are countless reasons why we won't stop these children, who don't stop learning. Striving for development and achieving their goals, they constantly inspire us to do everything within our power and even more. Today, our support in the restoration of education and development would take us decades to reform education on our own. Therefore, international support is invaluable during this war; thousands of new countries have become shelters.

Today, I want to express my gratitude separately to the people and the government of the United Kingdom. It warmly welcomed our education applicants and helped during the toughest times for Ukraine. When you have a right to education but are threatened by missiles, the occupying forces of the Russian Federation and power cuts, fighting for it is not an easy task. But every day when Ukrainian children go to school, Ukrainian educators are fighting. We disrupt the enemies' plans to destroy our future. Thank you for this time and for your attention to Ukraine's problems, and for your love and productive dialogue about Ukraine.

Earl of Dundee:

We have heard your words and are in solidarity with you and your country, wishing you and all Ukrainian students and teachers every possible success in your difficult and almost impossible circumstances. With this inspiring but also alarming keynote speech, we now come to the debate sessions of our conference. In session one on education, we will discuss human rights.

We are very pleased to hear from Fabian Hamilton, former shadow minister for Europe in the Middle East, and Sir Ian Livingstone, general partner of Hiro Capital and former skills champion of the UK government. First, Fabian Hamilton, I give you the floor.

Fabian Hamilton:

Thank you very much, Lord Dundee. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be here at this very important conference on such an important day and to follow the minister live from Ukraine. Thank you, minister, for such an inspiring introduction and keynote speech.

Before I begin, let me just lay out some more of my credentials if I may. Before becoming a member of parliament, I chaired the education committee of Leeds city council, the city in

which I'm a member of parliament, so I've had a long involvement in state education. My wife was a teacher in further education in the city of Leeds, following my election in 1997, a long time ago now. I became very involved with international relations and foreign affairs through the Foreign Affairs committee, before becoming as shadow minister for eight years until September. I also covered Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian subcontinent – most of the world, in fact. I will try to say some words today on the topic of education.

The human right to education was first enshrined in Article 2 of the first Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights more than seven decades ago. However, many of the Council of Europe's member states respected before 1949 in any case, but it was incorporated effectively into all newly democratic constitutions in central and eastern Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and through legislative assistance by the Council of Europe to its newly democratic Member States in the early 1990s.

You may be familiar with the phrase: 'two lawyers, three opinions.' I am not going to add another opinion, but I should draw your attention to the elaborate and precise jurisprudence of the European court of human rights in Strasbourg, which has extensively interpreted and applied Article 2 of the first protocol to the European convention on human rights through its case-law. You'll find in the conference room the guide to this case-law, produced by the European Court. This guide has more than 20 pages, but don't panic – I am not going to read out the guide in full, mainly because it wouldn't be possible anyway in the time allocated to me, so let me just draw your attention to a few of the key aspects.

Firstly, Article 2 uses the quite simple and clear formulation: 'No person shall be denied the right to education.' In this sense, Article 2 is a clear human right which protects the individual against a state authority in it – in this context, denying the right to education. A human right typically protects against state interference or denial. This approach is specified in Article 2 by its second sentence, which says, 'In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.' This sentence reflects the fact that, historically, many older higher educational institutions were founded centuries ago by religious communities throughout the continent of Europe. But it also reflects the historic stand taken by autocracies to promote state indoctrination under the umbrella of totalitarian philosophies. Parental authority over their children was seen as the best – or at least the most suitable – protection against such anti-democratic philosophies.

Of course, there is an important caveat today: the military aggression by Russia against Ukraine clearly challenges the human right to education, as we have just heard from the Ukraine education minister. In today's Russia, Putin pursues a state philosophy of 'Russification', nationalism and oligarchic corruption, often far worse than the Stalinism of some 80 years ago. In the occupied territories of Ukraine today, parents are denied any freedom to express their philosophical convictions.

Article 2, however, is also a human right which constitutes a positive obligation upon signatory states. This is perhaps the most effective aspect of the human right to education; it makes the difference between law in the reference books and law in action. Individuals are not left alone with the task of education, but the state positively enables it.

In the United Kingdom earlier this year, parliament passed the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, which aims to ensure freedom of speech and academic freedom – in stark contrast to what Putin has tried to enforce upon Russian students today. In addition, we are currently debating the Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill, which would establish better and wider access to education, especially for those students with few resources, as well as those continuing higher education after work, or whilst working.

I should also mention in this context Lord Dundee's International higher education and research Bill, which would widen the narrowly national horizon of our legislation, and would enable international cooperation – especially post-Brexit – for the benefit of both students as well as higher education and research institutions in the United Kingdom. Through this legislation, Parliament could give more meaning and shape to the positive obligation of states regarding the right to education.

Let me conclude my brief introduction with the question: why should democratic states care about widening and enforcing the right to education?

Democratic governments obviously do not want to promote doctrinaire, or any other state-imposed philosophies, but rather seek to oppose – and even prevent – such century imposed philosophies. But beyond that basic assumption, it is clear that our societies are currently faced with multiple challenges: rapid technological change, which makes many current jobs redundant, as well as globalization, which brings our society into competition with other parts of the world.

At the same time, we are experiencing an unprecedented global enrichment of societies and individuals through greater connectivity, which is also challenged by new levels of hatred and – sometimes too often – violence. Similarly from human rights to freedom of thought and freedom of speech or expression, the human right to education is a cornerstone of a democratic and humane society. The curiosity of children needs to be guided and supported in order to achieve the positive and humane progress of each individual, as well as society as a whole. Without such positive, enabling and democratic philosophies, and the action to go with it, the United Kingdom – and indeed Europe – will not have the strength to face the coming challenges.

Finally, I am now delighted to hand over to the other speakers who can better explain to us what they've been successfully doing to help achieve this country's vital success in Europe.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you very much, Mr Hamilton. As you mentioned, education is not only a legal right, but it requires strategies and efforts to make education accessible and effective for everybody. Therefore, I am pleased to be able to give the floor to Sir Ian Livingstone, who is not only credited as the father of the United Kingdom online games industry, but is also very active in new approaches to education. Sir Ian, you have the floor.

Sir Ian Livingstone CBE:

I'm not an educationist but I have a huge respect for the teaching profession, and whilst I believe that children have the democratic right to education, I think they also need an

education that works for them. What they are taught and how they are taught matters. Children are naturally curious. Some love learning, but sometimes dislike school. I was one of them.

I have been privileged to work in the UK games industry for over four decades. I co-founded Games Workshop in 1975 and launched Dungeons and Dragons and Warhammer in the UK, games which sparked the imagination. This used communication and required strategic thinking. In 1982, I wrote *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* game book in which you, as the reader, are the hero. Games are not like linear novels. They are interactive, branching narratives which place the reader at the heart of the story, giving them control over their destiny. Choice is empowering. Children read and play through the book, deciding which way to go, solving puzzles, finding treasure and rolling dice to slay monsters – all very exciting for their imaginations.

Yet, there was strong criticism. At the time, people wanted them banned and sent petitions in. All this was happening at the time when they were selling in huge numbers: some 20 million copies were sold. They were great for reluctant readers.
They got a whole generation of children reading and, at the same time, increasing literacy levels, problem solving and critical thinking skills.

I moved into video games in the 1990s and launched Lara Croft and Tomb Raider amongst others. Yes, playing games is fun, but think about the cognitive process of what is happening when people play games. Games require problem solving, intuitive learning, trial and error logic, analysis, communication, risk-taking, planning and resource management. Games encourage creativity and curiosity. Games give continuous assessment. One is not punished for making mistakes when playing a game like Minecraft. Effectively digital Lego, a child learns that applying the heat of a furnace to silica sand and produces glass, which they can put into their game world, and they won't forget that because it is a learning-by-doing simulation. Games are used as a training tool for pilots, surgeons, the armed forces and professionals. So why not apply principles of games-based learning to aspects of the national curriculum to add context? Deeper understanding comes from learning by doing more than rote learning of facts.

Moving onto technology, we are well aware that we are now in a world where AI and robots will replace many jobs which involve repetition. Children should therefore be encouraged to be crazy if that will differentiate them from the robots. Developing video games is a marriage of art and technology, requiring a combination of technical expertise and creative flair. Not every child wants to become a software engineer, but they need to know how code works. They will benefit from being in the driving seat of digital creativity rather than in the passenger seats of digital consumption. A convenient option in some schools is for children to simply use proprietary software in ICT lessons.

Whilst Word, PowerPoint and Excel are useful in themselves, they give children no understanding of how to create their own software. They can play a game; they can't make a game. They can use a website; they can't build a website. That is like teaching children how to read, but not how to write. Computers are a tool to enable digital creativity for the maker generation. Computer science is not just about coding – it is a discipline, a broad mix of computational thinking, problem solving, logic, analysis, and creative thinking to be used cross-curricular to solve problems in multiple ways. In a world where computers define so much of how society works and how we do business to how we enjoy ourselves, computer

science is essential knowledge for the 21st century.

Moving on to the arts, which is equally important in my opinion, creativity gives the UK an edge. As a nation, imagination is key also to the maker generation. The arts should not be something which is simply nice to have seen, at best as a booster for other subjects, but not really counting in the EBacc. They are so often seen as a luxury, something which can be sacrificed in favour of more rigorous subjects to which standardized tests and metrics can be applied. This is a grave misunderstanding of cultural value. The creative industry is the fastest growing industrial sector in the UK economy. Beyond the creative industries, arts benefit all industries in terms of ideas, creation and design.

Difficult to test or measure their intangible value, creative subjects are often marginalized in the curriculum on the grounds that students will be better served concentrating on STEM subjects to get a proper job. My opinion is that this is wrong. Authentic education for the digital world requires the government to evolve the curriculum, bringing the arts and Sciences together to encourage innovation by adding an A for the arts so that it is STEAM, not STEM education. The knowledge economy is driven by original ideas, which are turned into products and services. The value is in the IP created. Apple knows this. The iPhone is the product of a marriage between the Arts and Sciences. The commercial value, however, is not in the low margin physical manufacturing of the iPhone, but in the intellectual property of the services it provides through the App Store.

My own educational input, having benefited from all my life in games, is that we opened the Livingstone Academy two years ago, which adopts a STEAM model in the learning-by-doing, project-based learning and problem solving. We welcome that human beings are good at some things, less good at others, but what is the point of a standardized testing against the same metric in examination? Why make children feel bad about subjects they have no interest in and do not do well in? I am a Manchester city football fan and it's like Pep Guardiola saying to Erling Harland, ‘Erling – you score some really great goals, but you really should get to work on your goalkeeping.’ (This, of course, is something he’ll never do.)

We need to be in sync with the 21st century and deliver education in a natural manner. Giving children a curriculum based on knowledge recall is outmoded. Can we focus on skills and qualifications and know-how as well as knowledge? We are not training our pupils for jobs, but we do want them to be well prepared for the world. Many schoolchildren today will have jobs that do not even exist, so there's no point in training them like robots. They will not be able to compete with the real thing.

The Livingstone Academy is a school where we want our pupils to achieve good examination results through multidisciplinary learning and collaboration. Our model is based on the use of games-based and project-based cross-curricular learning, which has proved to be both popular and successful. We are equipping pupils with know-how and skills of the 21st century. We encourage creativity and diverse thinking in children. We give them making skills and an entrepreneurial mindset so that that might they might aspire to be job makers rather than just job seekers.

Thank you.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you very much indeed Ian. We now have a few minutes for questions and discussions. Who would like to take the floor first?

Robin Walker:
I want to come back on the STEAM piece. I am Robin Walker, the chair of the education select committee in the Commons. We are in the process of launching an inquiry on screen time and I think you want to look at both the positives and the negatives of children being able to use screens. I think you will recognize that there is a big debate about use of mobile phones in schools around the amount of time it's healthy for children to spend in front of screens. Firstly, I'd be delighted if you would come and talk to the committee about your perspective from the games industry, because I think that that would be really interesting for people to hear the role of games in education. But have you looked at what you think is a healthy degree of time for children to spend in front of a screen, or interacting with screens versus face-to-face learning?

Sir Ian Livingstone CBE:

Clearly you have to have a balanced life. I would not recommend that children spend their whole lives on screens. But they do not spend most of their time playing games. They get more entwined with the prolific use of social media. I think that needs to be looked at more deeply. The games industry is, as I said, a powerful tool in learning. Naturally, when we arrive in this world as babies, we learn through play. Games are often perceived as a negative thing, but I think they are an absolutely positive thing in child development. I'm not sure how you can legislate it, because technology is around us and we have to learn to adapt our behaviour to the digital world in which we find ourselves. So, we have to make sure that children fully understand the implications and also the positives, how they can use their devices in the positive sense rather than in a negative sense.

Earl of Dundee:

Following the terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel, as well as the Russian military attack against Ukraine, we have seen an enormous flood of agitation and propaganda filled with hatred online. Education, and indeed media education, can play a central role in helping the public to reject such indoctrination. Do we need more lifelong learning of media competency?

Fabian Hamilton:

The answer has to be yes. Let me touch on Robin's question for a minute. I have two small grandsons, aged three and a half and seven. When I was bringing my children up, of course screens weren't an issue, but they certainly are now, and I think there has to be a combination of the usefulness of a screen to help learn through play and the rationing of that screen time. It has to be controlled.

I think on the question you, Lord Dundee, asked about hate speech, this is something that tragically we are all trying to tackle at the moment. What I'm finding as a representative of a constituency that has an almost equal number of Jewish and Muslim constituents is that you have to try and steer a middle path through that says, 'Let us not allow Hamas, who destroyed so many Jewish lives and the bombing of Gaza, that's destroyed so many Palestinian lives, separate the harmony that we've enjoyed in our communities.' I don't know about London

but, certainly in the city of Leeds, we are privileged to enjoy very good community relations, so much so that when Muslims first arrived in Leeds they went to the kosher butchers to buy their meat, because this was allowed. That was not Haram. That collaboration, that cooperation, that friendship, that mutual respect must not be torn asunder by hatred.

How we tackle hatred, I don't know. It seems to me that the opposite of this kind of remote hate speech is knowing one another better and not being frightened of one another. The problem with a lot of hate speech on the Internet is that it encourages those of us in that bubble to view the other as distant, as not human, as not part of our society – as having nothing in common with us. We know, for example in the Jewish and Islamic faiths, that there is so much more in common between those two faiths, in terms of theocracy, than there is in laws that divide them. Sharing our common humanity together is, in a way, the best method of pushing back the hatred that some social media can encourage, and indeed develop.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you very much. Online education and culture are vital elements of education during a crisis or conflict. Lord Vaizey has been the longest serving United Kingdom minister of state for culture and the digital economy.
I am, therefore, very grateful to him for joining us today. Edward , you have the floor.

Lord Vaizey:

Thank you very much, Alexander. It is very kind of you to invite me. I was the minister of state for culture and the digital economy for many years under David Cameron. And I also was lucky enough, in that role, to work with Sir Ian Livingstone. In fact, the first report I commissioned as a minister became known as the Livingstone report, which was focused on education and skills. Indeed, this included digital skills to try and promote the digital skills that our kids need to navigate a 21st century economy.

Sir Ian Livingstone strongly recommended that we put digital skills and coding into the national curriculum. And, as the minister who commissioned the report, I told him there was no way that he would get that through. But Sir Ian presented his report to Michael Gove, who said that it was a brilliant idea. As a result, coding is now in the national curriculum, although it is very important to remember when government decides that something is a good thing and should be taught in our schools that you have to do the doing as well. You have to make sure you have teachers with the right skills and expertise and incentives to teach these very important skills.

I know that we're looking at this issue partly through the prism of Ukraine. I also work with an online education company called Perlego, which provides access to thousands of textbooks online, so I see how education is changing. Physical textbooks are extremely expensive; Perlego makes it cheaper. But it also ensures that textbooks can be updated in real time. It is a small example of why digital education is so important. I'm a big fan of digital education across the board because I think that one of the things that frustrates me about traditional education at the moment is that most of our Victorian forebears could walk into a classroom and be very familiar with the surroundings. I don't think we're taking advantage enough of technology and how it can really change the way children learn in a good way. There is an opportunity, for example, to provide personalized curriculums, to be able to identify specific weaknesses in a pupil's learning and then drill down and reinforce the

learning opportunities for that particular pupil.

Also, I know that Ukraine itself has a fantastic digital ecosystem. It certainly did before the war. I've worked with a number of companies who had a lot of people based in Ukraine doing coding, so they have a huge amount of expertise in that area.
It was a very thriving technological economy before the war, so it is something that is very important. It is difficult to imagine the challenges and hardships that Ukraine has faced since the war began. Schools and universities are being attacked, and students and teachers are being displaced, so it's no surprise that online education has been one of the opportunities to try to have some semblance of normal education. Also, it means that refugee students in the UK and in other places can continue their educational path and have contact with fellow students and teachers.

What Ukraine is going through is far worse than we experienced during the COVID pandemic. But the COVID pandemic in the UK is a good example where digital online education, education as a human right, was able to be maintained in some shape or form. I'm pleased that online education proved its reliability during COVID. It showed how reliant we are on the digital sector. It also reinforces our need to protect the digital sector from attempts to undermine it through viruses, hacking and digital manipulations.

I know that Ukraine has relied heavily on Starlink from SpaceX. Landlines and infrastructure are being destroyed or are missing, but the ability of Starlink to fill a gap does not undermine the need to protect landlines and hardware infrastructure in the same way we would want to protect electricity networks through Europe. We need strategies in place to make those networks as robust as possible. I think that it is important to have this debate here, because Britain does have a unique role to play in international education. I am chair of the UK-ASEAN Business Council and in my trips to Southeast Asia I am reminded of the soft power as well as the economic power of the British education system, not just through the use of English language, which is the lingua franca of science trade, but also through the fact that our higher education system has effectively provided the model for so many countries around the world with its bachelor and masters degrees as well.

We have, in Britain, an obligation to participate in international cooperation in the education field even after Brexit. It is vital, in my view, that we place a huge emphasis on cross-border cooperation with EU member states and with countries like Ukraine, because education is a human right and a humane necessity. If we are going to allow everyone to take part and achieve progress, then we have to do that as well. Violations of the human right to education must be investigated and adjudicated by the European Court of Human Rights and national courts. I think that education ministers have to establish a framework for closer cooperation and education and research across national borders. Regardless of Brexit, all the countries in Europe have a long tradition based on common values, and that should be our watchword. We must give education institutions and students as much opportunity as possible for exchange and cooperation.

We have always thrived by students going abroad. They come back and benefit our societies. Would I go to Southeast Asia? I am told time and time again, despite all the numerous initiatives that the UK undertakes, the gold standard is the Chevening Scholarships program, which allows students from Southeast Asia to come and study in the UK. They get a great understanding of British culture. They gain a huge affection for our country and that kind of connection is, in my view, priceless. We have students growing up using digital media that

crosses national borders. It is an interesting angle to engage with what I would loosely call informal education. Even my children, both at very good schools, gain so much of their learning through endless scrolling through TikTok. Education institutions have to cope with this phenomenon.

No one should be left behind in education. The success of our societies depends on support for the weakest members in our society as well. If we accept that parts of our society remain uneducated, educational support is a win-win situation.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you so much, Lord Vaizey. This leads us to our second session under the heading ‘human rights and education for democratic citizenship’, where we are very pleased to welcome Dr Kate Moriarty, head of human rights education at amnesty international in London, as well as Sarah Keating, head of the formal and non-formal education division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

Let us start with the human rights NGO Amnesty International, which has been very active in human rights education throughout Europe for many years, even in Russia, where NGOs are legally suppressed today. Dr Moriarty, you have the floor.

Dr Kate Moriarty:

Thank you, Lord Dundee, and thank you everybody else. First of all, just thank you for the invitation for Amnesty to be here and I'm really happy to contribute to this discussion from the perspective of human rights education, and bring some focus on conflict, which we've already heard from the minister in Ukraine.

Colleagues have already mentioned the long history of the right to education, and I wanted to mention the Universal declaration of humanrRights, which has its 75th anniversary in December this year, where in the aftermath of world war two and the atrocities, the right to education, along with other human rights, was laid out. Since world war two, we've seen that the right to education has been enshrined in multiple, legally binding documents such as the International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights and convention on the rights of the child.

As already mentioned in the European convention on human rights, all of which is widely endorsed and ratified by states around the world, including the UK, and obviously, members of the Council of Europe, education is a universal, indivisible human right for all, without discrimination. Denying the right to education not only violates that right in itself, but it also hampers the enjoyment of other rights and fundamental freedoms.

In the Universal declaration of rights and in other frameworks for education, the purpose of education is that ‘education is director, for full development of the human personality and for strengthening respect for human rights of fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.’ I think remembering what the purpose of education is as well as the academic side is really important, and Amnesty International advocates a holistic approach to quality human rights education. Human rights education is a very powerful tool, which helps prevent future human

rights violations and violence, as well as fighting racism, hatred, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance.

Amnesty's core work in human rights education takes place in both formal and non-formal education sectors and spans very diverse global initiatives: from working on female genital mutilation in West Africa to addressing issues around sexual violence in Europe, and elsewhere. More than half of the human rights education work that we undertake at Amnesty takes place in the formal education sector, but also importantly with adults in the UK.

Amnesty International calls on the government to offer human rights education in a range of settings, including as part of the school curriculum. In a recent UK-wide survey, we asked to what extent, if at all, do you consider the following important or unimportant: children and young people being taught human rights. 82% of the respondents said that it was very important or fairly important that we teach children and young people about human rights, so we would like to see that strengthened both within the UK and across Council of Europe member states.

We would also like to suggest, within the context of the UK, that the next issue of the school inspection handbook should have a section that evaluates the extent to which human rights are promoted and protected within educational institutions.

I want to talk about the right to education in conflict, and also human rights education in conflict. We've heard from the minister of education in Ukraine about the many challenges of the right to education and of the courage of the students and teachers. I think we should not forget that around the world – in Ukraine and in other conflicts – the right to education is being disrupted and denied. But that right is not suspended during conflict. In fact, other protections come in: schools, as well as hospitals, as you know, have a special protection right under international humanitarian law. However, there are many challenges, of which Amnesty has documented some: for example, in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram attacking schools, killing students. The Saudi coalition is deliberately bombing schools in Yemen, and we're seeing new and protected conflicts that are leading to really appalling human tragedies. We're witnessing an escalation of the grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the conflict in Gaza and Israel, including the deliberate targeting of schools. The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has resulted in grave violations of human rights law, and as we've heard, it's disrupting the education of millions of children.

Going back to that vision of the DHR , and also affecting the child, it's really clear that the purpose of education extends beyond the academic learning, and includes the promotion of values such as human rights, peace and tolerance, regardless of children's circumstances. This remains equally relevant for children living in, or having lived through, conflict. Empowering individuals with critical knowledge and skills fosters resilience, aids in healing, and promotes peace, which is crucial for rebuilding communities and instilling respect for human rights, especially among younger generations.

Among the different initiatives Amnesty has in response to crises, Amnesty has focused on both the right to education and human rights education during conflicts. In the Middle East and North Africa region, for example, human rights education with activists enables them to document human rights violations in other settings, such as in Burkina Faso. We're working during conflict and post conflict. Conflicts can increase the chance of early childhood marriage, so we are working with communities to reduce that. We've launched online

programs on refugee rights, and worked on the ground in countries surrounding Ukraine.

We're working with schools and teachers to give support to welcome Ukrainian refugees. For example, in Poland there's a campaign called Schools For All. It is helping to accommodate more than 200,000 refugee children from Ukraine in the UK. The latest teacher training program, which started just the weekend past, includes the focus on how to approach discussions around the conflict in Israel and Palestine, which are coming up in classrooms everywhere. So, supporting educators is really vital to the right to education for both traumatized and displaced children and for teachers.

Teachers offer a very crucial stability, and aid in helping pupils cope with the conflict and showing the continuous learning and psychosocial support, as in the case of Ukraine and in other conflicts, given the war's impact on Ukraine, as we heard from the minister. We think it is vital for the Council of Europe's future programs to support not only educational institutions, but also youth movements, and ensuring human rights education aligns with the Charter.

I want to mention that also within our human rights education work at Amnesty, we're currently developing resources to help people understand the international humanitarian law during conflicts, and the historical context of the conflict in Gaza and Israel.

I'll conclude my remarks by saying that I think today's discussion really underscores the crucial role of states in upholding the right to education, even in conflict and displacement. We need to emphasise the importance of embedding human rights education in all learning environments to empower people with rights awareness.
It is vital for states to implement concrete measures that bolster education's role in fostering respect for human rights, understanding, tolerance and peace, especially during increased conflict and intolerance. We call on the UK Government and the Council of Europe to strengthen its support for human rights education, and we stand in solidarity with all those students and teachers everywhere in the world, and all the children that are still denied that right to education. Thank you very much for your time.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you very much, Dr Moriarty. This takes us to the Council of Europe, which is called the beacon of human rights in Europe. I give the floor to Sarah Keating from Strasbourg.

Sarah Keating:

Thank you very much, Lord Dundee.

Our topic today, education as a human right and cornerstone for any democratic society, goes to the very heart of the Council of Europe's work, and indeed it's raison d'être to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law in and through education. No one is born knowing what democracy and human rights are. Democracy and human rights must be learned by each and every generation, and most of all experienced as something we've already heard about before. The risk of not educating our citizens to live in a democratic society is real.

In the Council of Europe secretary general's annual report, she mentions a clear and worrying degree of democratic backsliding. She points to evidence in Europe from the judiciary to freedom of expression and, of course, to the deep impact of Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. This is why in May of this year, the Council of Europe organized this 4th summit of heads of state in Reykjavík – it is only the 4th in the organization's 73 year history – and it was entitled United Around Values. Indeed, it is values which unite us and are non-negotiable.

This is why the Russian Federation was expelled from the Council of Europe in the weeks after its invasion of Ukraine, and why, at the summit, the heads of state affirmed that they were united against Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. At the summit, which included prime minister Sunak, the Reykjavík principles of democracy were also adopted. One of the 10 principles focuses on education and calls upon member states to promote the participation of young people in democratic life and decision making processes, notably through education initiatives on human rights and democratic values such as pluralism, inclusion, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability. It is a clear sign that education is high on the political agenda of our member states.

Just a few months later, in September of this year, the Council of Europe organized in Strasbourg it's 26 Standing conference of ministers of education. Ministers from 43 member states met on the topic of the transformative power of education, universal values and civic renewal. The conference set out new priorities and actions to implement the Reykjavík principles for democracy, and at that conference we were very honoured that UK education Minister Halfon participated. What were the results of this conference? First, the ministers launched the new Council of Europe education strategy: Learners First. I'd like to emphasise 'Learners'.

Five resolutions were adopted to reaffirm the critical role of education in promoting democracy and the rule of law. The strategy is composed of three pillars, but I'll just focus on the first pillar, which is renewing the democratic and civic mission of education. We didn't start from zero at the Council of Europe in this area, and the minister clearly acknowledged the need to build upon the keys of the Council of Europe over the last 20 years. This includes your charter on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education and the reference framework of competencies for democratic culture. These are 20 competencies which break down democracy into tangible parts centred around values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding. They include, for instance, critical thinking and empathy and provide a basis to reform policies, curricula, teacher training and materials. The ministers also underlined the need to broaden the use of these competencies throughout the curriculum areas and to all levels of education.

Schools simply cannot keep adding new courses and maintain the same structure ; and one hour of civic education a week isn't enough. Learning how to vote and how government works is very important, but fostering democratic competencies will provide learners with the understanding they need in the future and improve the quality of education. Their use in the daily life of learners will help them to confront and address issues such as violence. Mental health is also coupled with greater demands on teachers to act as educators.

Another area identified by the Ministers of Education is vocational education and training in many countries of Europe. More than half of students attend secondary vocational schools, and we've seen that this constructive social dialogue can be increased by promoting

democratic citizenship in vocational schools.
These are important life skills for young people and can help employers too.

It is also very exciting to see all of this work being put into practice in our Member States, including here in the UK. For instance, the Association for Citizenship Teaching identified how schools adopt different approaches to promote democratic citizenship through curriculum, school culture and in the community. In research, the key features for success include citizenship as a separate subject, taught by trained and committed teachers, along with student-led projects and support from senior leaders. Some of the comments from the students were that they felt that they could create positive changes by treating others well, raising awareness about injustice and receiving inspiration from changemakers.

Another example is Turkey. I was involved in a project where a new course in democracy and human rights was developed by the Ministry of National Education, with the support of the Council of Europe, which now 1.3 million children take a year. All 10 year olds in Turkey take this compulsory course developed with the tools of the Council of Europe and other projects. We have seen how bullying in schools has decreased by engaging students and the whole community and the management of their schools. Learning how to deal better with controversial issues and media literacy also helps build resilience. Seeing and talking to students in some schools in very remote areas, and how they now they want to go to school because there's less violence in school, is very encouraging and inspiring.

Ministers have decided to go one step further and ask the Council of Europe to bring all of this work together under one umbrella by launching a new European space for citizenship education. They have asked the Council of Europe to develop a new framework convention for citizenship education. Such a legal instrument will codify all of the above instruments, and it will also include recommendations from the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe on democratic citizenship, and the European convention on human rights. We will also add new areas which have developed over the years, such as digital citizenship education and education for sustainable development. It will serve as a one stop shop for the promotion of democratic values in education in Europe. This will take time to develop and negotiate with member states. It will also create a space for European cooperation between Member States, sharing of good practices, and exchanges. This could be online, but it would be even better if it was face to face as we've seen how rich these experiences can be: for instance, when education officials from other European countries have visited London, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

In conclusion, we hope that these initiatives will ensure a democratic future for learners in a practical and meaningful way. As the chair of the committee said, our continent’s oldest multilateral organization, the Council of Europe, is considered the conscience of Europe, and never in our lifetime has Europe needed its conscience more. Thank you very much.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you so much, and also for so kindly travelling from Strasbourg to be with us in London today. We now have a little time for discussion and questions. Who might like to begin?

Tejendra Pherali (Professor of Education, Conflict and Peace, UCL)

My name is Tejendra Pherali. I'm a professor at University college London. I’m pleased to be here with my students, and I specialise in conflict and peace. When I was invited to join this conference, I was inspired by the idea of education as a human right and the significance of education in promoting and enabling rights at a very challenging moment that we live in, when violence is ongoing and educational and human rights are being violated.

One of the points that I wanted to make is that education is a powerful tool for enabling human rights, but also education is a hugely political process. Education can also exacerbate existing conditions of inequalities and discrimination, while hardening those political ideologies, already detrimental to the wellbeing of society. Teaching history can sometimes be biased and even dangerous ; promoting one kind of narrative, as we've seen ; as equally various extremist and harmful views have often been promoted through education.

I think it's very important to think about education not only in the sense of what happens within formal educational settings, but also in a broad sense where education is actually used to perpetrate and reproduce conditions of violence. Social media is an example where we are constantly bombarded with the same kind of material. This may harden our thinking and beliefs, blinding us to alternative views. Clearly that is very dangerous. I want to think about education in a critical manner rather than wrongly believing instead that education always leads to a positive outcome and for peace in the society. Thank you.

Earl of Dundee:

This is a very useful and penetrating question, which challenges the balance of education to avoid any unwelcome extremes. The pursuit of such a balance is also very much a Council of Europe philosophy. Sarah, would you like to comment?

Sarah Keating:

Thank you very much for this question. Obviously what happens outside of a school is hugely important. I think one thing that we've also tried to do in our work is not only engage with schools, but with the whole community, also to deal with how to engage with parents, how to deal with media literacy, and also how to touch upon controversial issues and how to discuss them, because that's part of our daily life. We have some really good resources for that. We are aware of this, and it is hugely important to the wider context of education. It can be very political.

Robin Walker:

Just to come in briefly on that, I'm very much agreed with what you said in terms of the risks of indoctrination through education, and I think one of the things ministers in government have to think about very carefully when they're looking at curriculum and when they're engaging in discussions around curriculum is how to encourage critical thinking, questioning how to encourage multiple different narratives rather than one fixed narrative, particularly when it comes to history.
When I was schools minister for a period of time two years ago, one of the things I had to work on was political impartiality guidelines for teaching. It gets very complicated when you get into the issues of contested histories and narratives.
But, I think ensuring that children understand that there is a debate and that there are valid viewpoints on both sides of that debate is an important start, and making sure that we avoid

any form of indoctrination is absolutely crucial. These are part of that wider context in which all education systems have to operate.

I think it's really important that that the European declaration of the right to education includes the right to be educated in a religion and philosophy which the child understands, and that means we have to teach multiple contested different points of view. Getting that right is not straightforward, but I think it's something that every system has to try and aspire to.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you very much. Next question.

Scott Harrison (Trustee at the Association of Citizenship Teaching):

I'm grateful to Sarah for citing some of our projects, which we're very proud of in schools around the country. However, arising from this discussion I think we must be aware of the importance of teachers really knowing their ground on teaching that is often very sensitive, and political issues. We need specialist teachers who know their stuff, and the importance of impartiality and knowing about the law. We're trying to promote this, and to get more tools to give the critical time that's needed to develop citizenship properly.

We've got great projects, but there are schools where citizenship doesn’t get enough time, and sits within frameworks like personal, social, health and economic education. Unfortunately, Ofsted’s decision to put citizenship in personal development rather than look at the quality of education remains a barrier because it means it still isn’t a subject which in on a level with other subjects.

Earl of Dundee:

On this question and its challenge to British education : to get that aspect of balance right, Robin Walker, I wonder if you might wish to comment once more ?

Robin Walker:

I'm entirely sympathetic to your point of view in terms of the importance of the citizenship education. I think one of the things I've paid tribute many times to is the work of Lord Blunkett in pressing the case for that and introducing space within the national curriculum. I think the big challenge comes with the fact that too few people are able to take an exam in it and therefore it is often squeezed out in the exam-focused curriculum in secondary schools. I think that's where I have raised your very point about Ofsted and the way it's inspected.

Something else that my Select Committee are looking at is financial education, and a huge amount of the useful content for financial education is in the citizenship curriculum, but not enough pupils are accessing that. Your point about making more space and time for citizenship would be extremely welcome from that perspective, and I think is something that we need to work on.

Earl of Dundee:

I have a question which comes online which I will read out. It is put by Liz Moorse, who is chief executive officer of the ACT (Association for Citizenship Teaching), teaching working with part of the Council of Europe education policy advisers network. Here is the question:

It is a key role of citizenship, a national curriculum subject in England, which includes media and information literacy, to counter the effects of hate and ensure pupils are educated about democracy and human rights and the positive power of digital. Teachers do need support and better training in pedagogies to teach about sensitive and controversial issues and maintain impartiality in classrooms, when addressing the complicated issues, including some of the current conflicts. The Association for citizenship teaching was funded by the department for education to develop a deliberate classroom, to assist with this.

Again, could I have a spokesman from the Council of Europe to comment on what this background is?

Sarah Keating:

As I understand it, there is a lot of work that's been done in the UK. One ground breaking piece of work deals with controversial issues, including hate speech. We get a lot of these examples when we're talking with the other 45 member states about what Britain is doing.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you. Before we move on, could I ask each of our last speakers what their thoughts are on this aspect? We've heard from Lord Vaizey and Sir Ian Livingstone of the case for more effort being made to put together public private partnerships. Is there not also potential for a parallel to that, which is a working synergy between international organizations such as the Council of Europe and like-minded NGOs? I wonder what your thoughts are on this, and if you're in favour of that kind of direction, whether you would like very briefly to comment on any progress that you're aware of, of relevant working synergies being put together by people who are doing the same things? Or, conversely, of them not doing exactly that as much as we would all like? We would probably all believe that it would become ever more effective if there could come to be an increasing number of relevant working synergies. What are your thoughts?

Dr Kate Moriarty:

From the perspective of Amnesty International, we are a movement in ourselves. We work with individual members, but also organisations around the world. In terms of cooperation at the international level, Amnesty has been very engaged with the Council of Europe. We were very active in the conference in Turin a couple of years ago. Earlier this year, I took part in a stocktake of what was happening. We are in conversations.

We also work with the UN. We have a current partnership with the Office of the high commissioner of human rights. We’re about to launch a project at the events for the 75th anniversary of the UDHR, highlighting the work of young human rights educators working on issues ranging from masculinity and LGBT rights to gender-based violence, across a whole range of issues around the world.

As amnesty, we are cooperating, and we work in partnerships with other organizations, including international organizations. What's really important, and I think what's comes out here is that there is a right to education and a right to human rights to education and that can be delivered in different ways. It could be delivered through gaming, or it could be delivered through learning from play from early age. It can also look at textbooks that are maybe indoctrinating, for example, Russian textbooks on the history of Crimea.

I think there are lots of ways that we can work together. From Amnesty's perspective, we call on states to promote that right to education and are very open to cooperation in those discussions.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you.

We now come to our third session, which looks at action for education. After every debate, it is legitimate to ask: what will come out from this in concrete terms? That is, of course, aimed at all of us, parliamentarians, state officials and the private sector alike. Each of us should ask themselves what we can do to advance quality education.

The UNHCR has done a lot for many years in assisting refugees with education. Given the high number of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, but also in Africa, Asia and America, we are glad to hear online from doctor Dr Rebecca Telford, chief of the education section at the Office of the UN high commissioner for refugees in Geneva. Hoping that the online connection is functioning well, I call on Doctor Telford to take the floor, please.

Dr Rebecca Telford:

Thank you, and thank you to all of the speakers so far. It has been a very rich conversation and I wanted to drill down a little bit into the big picture refugee issues. In this unprecedented time in history where there are more than 110 million people displaced worldwide, I want to think about actions and next steps around inclusion and national systems: why that matters and what it takes to make it happen.

Sir Ian Livingstone was talking about a game in which the child is the hero. I think we have to imagine the reality where there's a game in which the child becomes a refugee and there are a lot of people that they don't know and they don't interface with and feel like they can't influence, who are going to be rolling the dice. What we do when we roll those dice matters, and I think the real focus on the performance of states – which may not naturally welcome refugees, which may not realize their rights, which may have significant problems and challenges in providing quality education to their own populations. They may struggle to include them in existing systems. That's the biggest challenge that we have in terms of realizing the rights of refugees to education in Europe.

There is a stronger approach and I think that's largely because many European countries have a system of compulsory education. There are well-established social services which are applicable to all school age children, including, in some cases, children who are actually irregularly within that territory, and inclusion of refugees and national education systems is the default and the most practiced measure in Europe. There are a lot of pieces around supporting children to enter national systems, and I'll talk about those in terms of actions and

thinking about detailed approaches later. Whilst this is really great news, I want to note that it's not the case everywhere.

The Ukraine crisis has been unprecedented in Europe. That's not something that I need to tell you, but a lot of that was around the sheer numbers, the scale of children and their families arriving in what was a very short period of time. With that scale, even in Europe, with these very robust systems, with significant access to resources and with systems and frameworks which have worked for centuries, it has resulted in a shortage of places. It has resulted in stress on systems and a shortage of teachers. I recognize, as an educationist, there is already a global teacher shortage and it is something that the world is struggling with. There are huge challenges in terms of putting in place support to transition: whether that's language learning, mental health, and psychosocial support and other services, there's been a huge amount of work done to bridge some of those gaps.

Thinking about getting back to what works in the long term and what is going to work at scale is going to be really important. I think it's also about recognising that the enrolment of refugee children from Ukraine in host countries actually remains quite low. There has been a significant amount of work done around this, but only about half of refugee children from Ukraine are in school in Europe. There are a number of reasons for that, some of which are around hesitancy of Ukrainian parents to enrol their children in schools and to use host country curricula because of an expectation to return home soon. Potentially there is a sense of loyalty in making a home, however temporary it is. As someone who works globally with refugees, it's really common as nobody expects to become a refugee and nobody expects to stay in displacement. The average displacement is about 17 to 20 years, so the images that we sometimes have of a refugee camp as something which is very temporary isn't actually the case.

Therefore, when we're looking at education access and inclusion in national systems, there is a piece around scale and understanding that whatever we hope for and however we support children so they're ready to return home when possible, it might be longer than is anticipated. UNHR’s global policy has always been inclusion in international systems and that's embedded in the Global Compact on Refugees, which was signed in 2018. That looks at supporting children to be in classrooms alongside host community children to access the national curriculum and to access certified, accredited pathways. There are amazing opportunities around the use of digital and around the use of technology, but certification and accreditation is absolutely essential. Having the kind of access to education that will create pathways into education (higher education for example), into employment, whether that's in the host country or whether children return home or they are settled into a third country, is what matters.

I think looking at the quality of that education and what it gives children in terms of their ability to go ahead, to live their life and to contribute to the world is also one of the things which will contribute to the end of cycles of conflict. Thinking about Somalia or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where there have been streams of refugees over a number of years, a lot of that is due to huge internal challenges which need to be solved by having a generation of children who are capable of being politicians and peacemakers and people who build the economy. If refugees are not getting that exposure and that experience when they are outside of that country, there are high chances that there will be continued cycles of conflict and continued cycles of displacement. With the right support from government departments at a national level, donors and civil society, and other partners, refugee hosting

countries can fully integrate refugee children and international education systems. We've seen this in Europe in particular.

I'm excited to announce that all these different challenges and needs that we've set out in terms of why inclusion sometimes doesn't happen, but what the benefits are, have been brought together in a pledge for the global Refugee Forum, which is due to take place in December. That forum is a key moment for the delivery of the Global Compact on Refugees, and the pledge has already been signed by the UK, by Germany and by Canada, amongst a number of others. It sets out this ambition, not just in terms of including refugees in national systems, but also ensuring there is support to host governments so that education can benefit the host population children, who are likely already in vulnerable and marginalized areas of the country. It also focuses explicitly on social cohesion, understanding each other and working through education in a way which supports children to have better futures but also enables them to work together and become joint global citizens. The pledge sets out a couple of recommendations, and the first one is around states removing existing social, economic and political barriers. That is particularly around basic education, but there's an important piece there on tertiary, and upholding the existing commitments to international laws and treaties. The aim of all of that is to have refugees accessing education on par with host country nationals.

Whatever the education system looks like, whether there's wraparound support, what access looks like, and how places are allocated, having refugees able to access that on par with host country nationals reduces the chance of conflict, particularly intracommunity conflict, which can be a major issue for refugee hosting countries. The second is around states, with support from donors and others to strengthen the capacity of education systems and schools to include and support refugee children for years to come. We must recognise that however strongly we hope that's not the case, there is a chance that flight is going to be protracted.

There is a huge piece in investing in adequate teaching, staff providing additional training and materials. That's not unique within the education systems and sectors that we're involved with globally, but looking at including and integrating refugees into a classroom is a particular skill set. We also call on countries to support refugee teachers, inclusion and international teacher management. Lots of people become refugees having had careers, having had good jobs. Maybe they haven't got their certificates, maybe that means they would not be qualified in the country, but we must look at where it's possible for them to become integrated.

The third thing is to recognize and jointly continue to confirm the benefits of inclusion and national systems and work together to achieve that. A lot of this is around providing really targeted, timely information to parents, looking at messaging about school having major benefits, social benefits, wellbeing, pedagogy, which really outweighs just accessing learning. There is a need and a rationale to being in school with other people, particularly in a country that you've recently arrived in, and doing that doesn't exclude a future return to the country of origin's education system. We've seen for Ukraine, and also for Syrian refugees in Turkey, for example, issues with not understanding and not being provided with this information, meaning that children lose out on years of school, and that has a long-term detrimental impact in their education outcomes. It affects their ability to contribute to society and provide tailored support to transition children into national systems effectively. There are a lot of examples of this from Sweden and Germany in terms of looking at individual trajectories and support to bringing children into those host schools.

Thank you.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you very much, Dr Telford.

I now give the floor to Jamie Arrowsmith, Director of Universities UK International, the London-based association of higher education institutions in the UK, which recently helped our country to join again – post-Brexit – the EU horizon programme on research cooperation with the European Union and associated countries. I would hope the UK joins soon again also the EU Erasmus programmes. Mr Arrowsmith, you have the floor.

Jamie Arrowsmith:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on a really important topic. I think the discussion so far has been enlightening, if a little sobering, given the scale of the challenges that have been articulated. I will say a few words about some of the practical things that universities here in the UK have done in this space, but also offer some reflections on the lessons that we have learned from the partnerships that we've had with colleagues in Ukraine since the invasion.

Our organization at Universities UK represents 142 UK universities. Within the international team that I lead we're very much there to support universities to develop and deliver their own international strategies and realize their global engagement ambitions. The UK has a really good story to tell in that space. We facilitate that right to education that has been highlighted so far in the discussion. We have more than 679,000 international students here in the UK. When people talk about the international activities of universities, I think what is less well known is that there are one over half a million students that are studying in more than 200 countries and territories across the world, on UK programs, through transnational education partnerships. Those students study in a wide variety of modes and models, including through partnerships through branch campuses, but also through online or distance learning. As Lord Vaizey suggested, we have a huge global footprint and I think that offers unique opportunities as well to support this kind of wider agenda.

I think it's also important to remember that every university has a social purpose and mission as well, and they're there to deliver education, create opportunities and to foster research collaborations. They must transform lives into society, and indeed all kind of strategy we've just published has that kind of tagline. It's about thriving universities serving society, and I think it's important for us to recognize that that is not just a national objective, it's not limited in scope to the UK' it really has to be global in purview. The challenges that universities and the academic community seek to address are global; they're shared.

The opportunities that they furnish through education have a universal appeal, and I think the World Bank has suggested that demand for higher education is going to grow to almost 400 million by the start of the next decade. Most of that growth is going to be in the global South, and to meet that demand, there would need to be a huge increase in the quality, the capacity and accessibility of systems across the world that cannot be addressed through international students and global mobility. That is a real challenge. It will require a very significant level of investment and reform of education at all levels, including the development of teachers, of

academics, and the professional services and communities that wrap around tertiary education in the 21st century.

With those extensive global links and experiences in fostering education partnerships across the world, the UK higher education community can and should play a really important role in supporting those objectives. Indeed we are sort of seeing that. Universities here are beginning, I think, to shape their international strategies around things like sustainable development goals, reflecting on the role that equitable transnational education partnerships can play and also being a cornerstone of responsible and impactful approaches to internationalization. If doing that globally is a challenge, it is obviously a challenge that is magnified greatly if you consider the difficulties that are faced by displaced people trying to access education. I think Dr Telford just spoke of more than 100 million people. Any of those challenges in building capability and systems around the world are magnified.

When we consider displaced learners, we do have a lot of examples of really good practice in the UK sector, many of which actually have a really long history. If the University of London worldwide programs team was here, they'd be telling you that they've been offering distance learning for approximately 150 years. They work in incredibly difficult and contested territories all across the world through wars and crises. It goes to show that UK universities have been doing this for a very, very long time, so there's a huge amount of expertise that we can bring to this.

We also have institutions such as the British Council, and I think it's something that we need to value more than we do and recognize the role that it plays. It's presence in many of the world's most challenging environments is absolutely vital to the role that our universities can play in supporting education and offering English language training, and helping our members our universities to navigate complex systems local challenges so that they can foster those education partnerships that have an impact locally.

There have been some really excellent programs that have been funded by the UK Government, for example Spear Programme, and one of the projects that came through that, led by King's college London, actually delivered accredited learning to displaced learners in refugee camps in the Middle East. There are excellent examples through that and we are indeed working with you and HCR and many of our universities, looking at how we can support humanitarian crises through things such as the universities of sanctuary initiatives.

I think that one thing where we have learned a huge amount is through our work with Ukraine. The response that we've seen by universities has demonstrated what can be achieved when the policy, the funding and the regulatory environment are aligned with enthusiasm, expertise and the initiative of universities. Also, public and political support is important as universities don't exist in a vacuum. The response to the crisis in Ukraine was enabled because all parts of the system – our universities, Government officials, our funders and regulators both in the UK and Ukraine – were able to work together in what was a uniquely supportive and enabling way. This included things like the visa immigration system being adapted to support Ukrainian learners to come to the UK, but funding as well. For example, the student loan system was opened up in ways that I think were just highlighted by Dr Telford to ensure that Ukrainian students could actually work and study here in the UK on the same terms as domestic students.

The cornerstone of the UK's University response, though, has been our UK Ukraine twinning programme, which has led to 100 university partnerships being established, each with a unique but long-term focus and commitment. The priority of those partnerships was to help ensure that our Ukrainian partners, Ukrainian universities and the whole of the system could continue working through the conflict and crisis. The partnerships and twinning relationships that were established required a huge investment of time and resources and that kind of approach isn't really possible at scale in response to multiple humanitarian crises simultaneously. I think it was reflective of a very particular set of circumstances which include that really high level of political and public support. That was key.

While it's been a fantastic initiative, I think its long-term potential is always going to be limited without dedicated support and without long-term support. It needs significant investments from government and research funders on the research side. Setting up research partnerships hasn't been the same on the Education partnership side. What has happened is that UK universities have had to support that work themselves. I think that there are always going to be limits about what we can do as a higher education community without that kind of long-term funding and policy support. There are huge lessons from what we have done working in collaboration with partners in Ukraine, but if we are going to mobilize the expertise within our universities to support displaced learners wherever they are, and those that find themselves living under conditions of war and crisis more broadly, then we do need long-term focus and targeted support. It’s not just funding. It is the policy support as well, otherwise our response is always going to be fragmented and will fail to deliver its full potential.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you for these extremely positive messages based upon the evidence of existing good results for education partnerships and the future prospects of that getting better and better. This leads us to our last discussion round. Who might like to start with a question?

Baroness Garden of Frognall:

I’m Sue Garden. I speak for the Liberal Democrats on education in the House of Lords.

I'm desperately sorry that other commitments meant I couldn't be here for the earlier speeches, but what I did want to mention is that we have a House of Lords committee looking at education for 11 to 16 year olds. Our report will come out before Christmas, but virtually everybody who's given evidence has indicated that GCSEs are not fit for purpose. They don't equip young people for life. They're far too academic and so there are a whole load of youngsters who are brilliant at practical things, but they're not academic and they regard themselves as failures because the system just says that to them. The importance of technical stuff is really vital for this, which is another of our conclusions on this and internationalism.

I was once a linguist, and so I endorse everything you say about Horizon and Erasmus. I think it was utterly iniquitous that we were allowed to leave Erasmus. Boris Johnson promised us that we wouldn't, which is one of very many promises he failed to fulfil. Do please look out for our report, because I think you'll find it's relevant to a lot of the issues you've been discussing this morning, and the international aspect of things is so important. As I say, the fact that languages have dwindled so desperately in our schools is really bad. We’ve

got to be out there talking other people's languages. We can't assume everybody's been speaking English, even if we speak it very loudly.

Earl of Dundee:

Any other questions?

Tejendra Pherali (Professor of Education, Conflict and Peace, UCL):

I'd like to share one of the research projects that we've been doing as part of the relief centre at UCL with communities in Lebanon, particularly working with the refugee communities. One of the things that we developed was a collaborative, massive open online course, which is often developed by MOOCs.

University academics usually develop the course and then deliver it, but from the very beginning we collaborated with Lebanese universities and refugee teachers and educational practice nurses to identify the areas that were important for refugee learners in those communities. We then designed and ran the course collaboratively, and over 25,000 educators and teachers – mainly from Lebanon and from around the world have participated in the Co-MOOC, as we call it: Co-designed MOOC. It is called Transforming Education in Challenging Environments, and some of the things that we were discussing earlier today are brought into discussions in those four weeks of learning activities for educators, policymakers and researchers.

I think one of the biggest challenges for refugee learners in higher education in particular is the lack of accreditation of their learning, because higher education is expensive online. School, higher education and basic education is expensive and many, many children are out of school in the refugee context. Higher education in particular is problematic.

I think there is a real opportunity for UK universities like the University of London, Open University and UCLA and other universities to provide subsidized qualifications for refugee learners' education so that their only portable asset, which is education, could be nurtured and their future could be enhanced. I wonder whether there is anything that the parliamentarian colleagues and UK universities can potentially do to provide qualifications which are recognized by UK universities at a lower cost or subsidized cost in partnership with other organizations.

Robin Walker:

This is not a direct answer and I think that is a policy question, but I think one of the big opportunities of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement legislation is to provide a greater degree of micro-accreditations over universities, short courses and parts of courses which then count towards qualifications further on. That may be part of the solution there.

The other thing is more of an observation, which is that one of the things we look at through our further education system in particular is so-called ESL (English as a second or other language) and support for learners of English. I think one of the big problems with that system at the moment is it's too focused on very part-time courses which do not lead to accreditation, rather than more immersive courses that do. I think it's one of the things we need to look at: that ESL provision. I know universities are often going above and beyond

what they're required to do by legislation at the moment. One of the big challenges we don't have is that framework for graduation, so I think that's absolutely something that would be very valuable for refugee learners, who are often getting that support from universities. I know that my university in Worcester provides a remarkable degree of support there, but the big challenge at the moment is that the system isn't set up to provide that accreditation.
I do think the Lifelong Learning Entitlement legislation should help because it allows for that micro-accreditation and accumulation of different elements of accreditation in building up qualifications.

Jamie Arrowsmith:

Many universities are already undertaking work in this place, like I mentioned. The Spear Programme focused on providing accredited learning as well. There was accreditation for the learning that took place there. I think you're right, there is always more to do here. I do think a lot of this again comes down to the kind of funding modalities in the UK system, which don't make that easy at the moment, and this kind of subsidy. I think there is definitely an opportunity there to do more.

I would also like to pick up on one of the points earlier around the commercial providers and platforms operating in this space. There are other approaches, and reflecting, I think FutureLearn, which has many partners across the UK system, but also internationally in response to the invasion of Ukraine, and also in Afghanistan, made many of their resources available, including accreditation through courses, available to institutions and any learners in partner institutions in Ukraine for example. There are other mixed models as well that have helped to try and address some of those challenges.

Earl of Dundee:

I wonder if I might ask you a brief question, Dr Telford. My family charity Siobhan's Trust, is active in Ukraine and helps people in need of food and other things. How can the UNHCR help NGOs like mine to bring food to displaced school-children?

Dr Rebecca Telford:

School feeding is increasingly an issue. Obviously there are massive problems with malnutrition globally at the moment, and a downturn in socioeconomic status, not just for donor countries but also for households, and an increase in the price of basic goods, means that more and more children and families are going hungry.
It's a significant issue, and under the UN there are a number of agencies who work on this in order to streamline and be as cost effective as possible.

The World Food Programme takes the lead for school feeding and for nutrition in general. UNHCR works with them to make sure that there are lines of engagement so that they're aware of which children are in need, where the issues are, and where the challenges are. The messaging to parents and communities around access to food, food support and school is really clear. Thanks.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you.

I now would like as well to thank all our speakers and everybody who has taken part.

It is a difficult task to conclude this conference.

Therefore, for doing that, I'm more than grateful to my successor as chair of the culture, education, science and media committee of the Council of Europe, Yevheniia Kravchuk, who is also a member of the Ukrainian parliament ; as I also am to my British parliamentary colleague Robin Walker, who is current chair of the House of Commons education committee.

First I give the floor to Yevheniia Kravchuk.

Yevheniia Kravchuk:

Thanks again from Kiev. Thank you for organizing this, and I'd like to express my gratitude to my friend and predecessor chair of the education and culture committee of the Council of Europe , Alexander Dundee, ; who in addition to this, now comes directly himself to both east and west Ukraine in connection with the feeding programme of his own humanitarian charity, called Siobhan's Trust.

It is very difficult to conclude this rich conversation, but what I feel is that we are all on the right side of history because we're speaking about how to give access to education, how to make it better, and how to enrich it. The dictatorship, Russia, is trying to change the curriculum to make the people obedient without critical thinking, without any ideas about what's going on outside of their countries. It was the same thing with Iran and the Taliban, and North Korea. They're trying to restrict access to education, and they're trying to use education as an instrument to have more soldiers that they can send to invade other countries.

I would like to thank the first deputy minister of education of Ukraine for the help that we get, not just from the government, and parliament, but also from the NGOs, from the international organizations to students and pupils both in Ukraine, and those who are in host countries around the globe. Education is one of the most fundamental rights and it doesn't just provide knowledge and skills but also develops the personality. It helps us to understand the rights and responsibilities of citizens and gives these critical thinking skills, and helps us to participate in civic life.

Today I'm speaking both on behalf of the Council of Europe's committee for culture and education, and as its successor chair to Alexander Dundee, but also I'm speaking as a Ukrainian member of parliament ; and deputy chair of the parliamentary humanitarian committee in Ukraine. I am speaking as well as a mother. When I heard all of the numbers that the first deputy minister said about the percentage of those who go online, I decided to make it simpler.

I'll tell you the example of my family and my daughter. My daughter was eight when the full-scale war started, and since the 24th of February and until the end of March she didn't have any access to education. Then at the end of March, the online education started. She is privileged because she stayed in western Ukraine. We are closer to the border, so it is safer, if anywhere in Ukraine is safe enough. Missiles hit a small town, but at least she had access to a laptop. I gave her a laptop ; many kids didn't have a laptop. They were using one phone and were sharing with other siblings.

Regarding food, we are reforming the school canteens and the nutrition that pupils get in school during the full-scale invasion. We are doing reforms during this full-scale invasion, but what these pupils also need is access to laptops, and access to iPads or other tablets because using mobiles for schooling is very difficult. Nevertheless, since September 2022 my daughter Victoria was able to go to school physically again, because the school had a bomb shelter. She is more privileged than some of the students in Ukraine because we had in this school a bomb shelter and we are a bit further from the border with Russia, whereas in some places like Kharkiv students cannot even go to schools offline because if ballistics hit the ground, then the air raid goes on because it's too close.

In Kharkiv, they have classes underground. In October 2023, the first project started in Ukraine to build a totally underground school that can accommodate around 500 pupils. I think it's strange that we are speaking about underground schools in the 21st century, but that's the reality of life.

Another reality of life is how disrupted education is. For example, right now there is an air raid in the whole of Ukraine because the plane that carries the ballistics is patrolling and it can be in the air for three or four hours. It means that everything stops and pupils go to their basement, and if they can, they continue studying. If not, they could be dispersed to their houses.

In terms of higher education, some of the students have not had a physical face-to-face education for years because of COVID when everyone was online. Then the full-scale invasion happened and in many universities there are not enough basements and shelters to accommodate this number of kids.

I would like to thank the Association of UK Universities for helping Ukrainian universities. It’s about education in times of war. We need help with shelters, with laptops, with tablets, and we need help with educational hubs because a lot of displaced pupils still have online education. This means they don't cooperate with their peers, even if they live inside Ukraine.

In my region, we did projects called educational hubs, where pupils can come and play computer games or do something with 3D printers or some IT courses and have conversations with their peers, and have social interaction with them, though they are attending online school.
Another thing I would like to talk about is the education of Ukrainians abroad, and indeed a lot of the Ukrainians still study online when they are in different countries. That’s because they want to return, and if they miss their curriculum then they would have to miss the year and not go with their classmates for another year. We kindly ask you to help them not to lose their identity.

Russia steals Ukrainian identity when they abduct them, bring them to mainland Russia, and put them in re-education camps, and forbid them from speaking Ukrainian.

We also have to help the students that are abroad. They will be enriched with your culture, with languages such as English, German and French. They will help to build Ukraine with their skills, but also they need to have access to Ukrainian books and to Ukrainian libraries and teachers. Ukrainian teachers might be in those host countries as refugees as well.

I would like to underline the work that we do within the 46 states affiliation of the Council of Europe and in its culture and education committee. As current chair, I keep the issue of education at the top of our agenda. I would also like to thank Alexander Dundee for his excellent work, when he was chair, in promoting online education and research across national borders. Just now the committee follows this up by researching and promoting on online education and the special educational needs of children with disabilities and learning difficulties ; and also the role of science, and of education for democratic citizenship.

This link between democracy and education is very important and we do work in the community on that. I'm working on the resolution, on cultural identity, war and peace, and I've had to dig into the war crimes that Russia commits. We've had hearings with the participation of the school principals that are in the occupied territories and what Russians do in occupied territories is horrible. They change the subjects and bring textbooks from Russia, rewrite history, forbid pupils to learn Ukrainian. They rewrite the history of our nation, saying that this nation never existed and this country is fake, and that's what they teach to the pupils that are in Russian occupied territories.

Thank you again for organizing this event. I encourage both British parliamentarians and government and NGOs, and everyone to cooperate with Ukraine. Your ideas and suggestions are very much welcomed. Thank you for attention.

Earl of Dundee:

Thank you so much, Yevheniia, also for the useful work which you continue to do in the Council of Europe and Strasbourg and as a parliamentarian in your own country.
Finally, I will ask Robin Walker to present us with his conclusions. His education committee has dealt with major legislation on higher education recently. Mr Walker, you have the floor.

Robin Walker:

Thank you very much, Lord Dundee. It's a great honour to be here, and to focus upon education as a human right. It is something that we often get very obsessed within our own systems at looking at the internal workings of what is going on in one country or another. I think this discussion has really raised above that to the international challenge.

It is a pleasure to follow Yevheniia who made the very powerful point about being on the right side of history by supporting education as a right. I think that is something we need to remember. We need to remember the derivation of these rights that came after the turmoil of the Second World War and the desire to protect the right of people to understand citizenship and democracy, and engage with all those issues.

In your opening comments, Lord Dundee, you mentioned education as a cornerstone, and I think it's absolutely vital that we remember that.

We've had an incredibly rich discussion today. I'm not going to try and summarise every part of it because that would be impossible, but in my role as chairman of the education select committee, we are looking at those rights to vocational education, to languages, to education access access for people with special educational needs, which is so vitally important, (and it is a continuing challenge even in a relatively undisturbed country such as the UK). We're doing work on a statutory register for children not in school to understand where children

who are being home educated are and whether they're getting the support that they need.

I was very struck by the Ukrainian minister's introduction and the points he made about 2,000,000 children facing disruptions for education to the extent that they can't have face-to-face learning. Lord Vaizey and others are right to point out that distance learning has great benefits and great supports as a standby, but I think we all learned during the pandemic the limitations of distance learning as well. When it comes to education as a right, the right to engage directly with your peers and with teachers is so important.

I thought Fabian Hamilton gave a brilliant summary of the derivation of these rights and talked about some of the legislation before us. His point about the curiosity of children, I think, reduces this to a very human level, which brings us to Yevheniia's point about thinking from the perspective of her own family. I know my 5 year old daughter is so passionately excited to be at school and that's something I want to foster and encourage and support, and we want to allow that excitement to take place for children all over the world.

I thought Ian Livingstone's contribution around the importance of creativity and STEAM, and the development of STEAM, was very important. He leaves that legacy not just of an academy in his name, but also of computer science being a proper part of the curriculum, something that we want to grow and grow: access of children, not just to the tools of using digital skills, but the tools of creating as well.

Lord Vaizey talked about the importance of the UK as an international player and education as an export, which is a huge and important export for the United Kingdom. From Universities UK, we heard about the partnerships and the value of that, and how we can work with other countries. I wasn't aware that there are 100 different partnerships of universities in Ukraine. That is fantastic work. One of the things I had to do, as schools Minister when I was there was during the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict and Russia's unjustifiable attack on Ukraine, was to look at how, having enabled our school system to support refugees from Syria in Afghanistan and Hong Kong, we suddenly had this big influx of people we wanted to welcome and support from Ukraine. We need to work not just in the UK, and at central government level, but also with local authorities, with schools, with multi academy trusts, to make sure that they have the capacity to receive and support those students. Also, as Ukrainian speakers have pointed out, we need the capacity to access their own curriculum, and to remember to be able to understand your own culture, your own religion, and your own background.

We've had some excellent contributions from the floor and I think the point about how we handle conflict and how we provide people with the tools to question different narratives is so vital, particularly when we see what's being done by Russia to Ukrainian children, denying that right to understand their own national perspective. One thing throughout the discussion was the UK's role in securing the so-called Sustainable Development Goals or Millennium Development Goals, and education is absolutely the heart of those. I raised the issue during The King's Speech about how we secure the right to education as well as the right to life for children facing the current conflicts in the Middle East. That's something we absolutely have to keep focusing on.

For me, this has been a fabulously rich and powerful discussion. I think it's really important that we take away Amnesty's point, about 82% of young people wanting to learn more about human rights and wanting to hear more about that side of things. That figure of more than

100 million people displaced worldwide is a reminder of the huge global challenge we have in this space as well.

I'm very grateful for the education I've received as part of this, and keen that my committee can continue to play its part in looking at these issues and making sure that, through the Council of Europe and through the UK's role in that, we can continue to work with partners to support the values of education as a human right. We must continue to develop our own citizenship curriculum, our own offer to students domestically. Last week was UK Parliament week. Members of both Houses of Parliament will have been going into schools to talk about how democracy works, and these perspectives. One of the things I'm often struck by when I talk to young people in schools is they are passionate about the opportunities for other young people around the world. They're passionate about the opportunities for young people to play a part in meeting our climate and biodiversity targets and our environmental goals. We have to make sure education provides them with the tools to do that and we have to make sure that education provides children around the world with the opportunity to engage with those global goals.

I very much look forward to scrutinising the work of the government in this space, but also continuing to challenge how we support education as a human right.

Earl of Dundee:

I will now bring our proceedings to an end.
It's been hugely inspiring to hear all speakers and contributors.

I join Robin Walker in concluding that we must not sit back. Instead we constantly need to analyse the position of education in the United Kingdom, in Europe and everywhere internationally, then resolve to deliver concrete improvements and actions.

Therefore, John Howell and myself will be glad to continue these deliberations and to seek joint working synergies with each of you as a follow up to our exchanges just now.

In advance of today much hard work has gone into logistics and organisation. For that I am very grateful to those responsible for the efficient running of facilities within parliamentary committee rooms here; and to my parliamentary assistant, Isabella Fergusson.

In particular, I thank all of you for enabling this morning such an animated and focused discussion on education as a human right.

The conference is closed.