



GLOBAL COMPACT  
ON EDUCATION



MEETING of world RELIGION leaders  
and Pope FRANCIS:

# "RELIGIONS AND EDUCATION: TOWARDS A COMPACT ON EDUCATION"



**OIEC**

INTERNATIONAL OFFICE OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION  
OFICINA INTERNACIONAL DE LA EDUCACIÓN CATÓLICA  
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AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE - CML



# Prologue

Cardinal D. José Tolentino de Mendonça

## REMEMBERING IS LIVING

”

A famous saying goes: 'To remember is to live'. Certainly remembering makes one live and relive when the remembrance concerns something beautiful and important, which must not be forgotten. As is the case with the 'Meeting of Representatives of Religions' that took place in the Vatican on 5 October 2021. For the first time, the spiritual leaders of the major religions sat around a table, together with Pope Francis, to talk together about education. All of them, as in an orchestra where each one plays his or her own instrument, took part, creating an unexpected symphony, a hymn to education, as Unesco's Deputy Director General Stefania Giannini also stressed in her speech at that meeting: *«Today we have heard a common language from the world's spiritual traditions on the fundamental role of education in promoting the universal values of care, respect and solidarity»*. An event like this cannot and must not be forgotten, which is why this booklet aims to keep alive (revive) that symphony whose sounds echo in these pages.

In the introduction to the beautiful volume commemorating this event published in 2022 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana entitled «Religions and Education. Towards a Global Compact on Education» we read: *«This world meeting of the Representatives of Religions takes on historical significance. It is a further step in a long journey of dialogue and participation towards unity. We are all invited to put ourselves at the service of the common good by promoting an open and inclusive education»*.

In his speech, Pope Francis uttered the phrase that has become a slogan taken up several times since then: 'We cannot hide the truths that give meaning to life from the new generations'. This booklet is intended as a further and humble response to the invitation to remember, to relive, not to be silent.

Vatican City, February 28, 2023

José Tolentino Card. de Mendonça

## Address of Pope Francis

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

I am pleased to welcome you on this significant occasion to promote a Global Compact on Education. On this World Teachers' Day instituted by UNESCO, we, as representatives of different religious traditions, wish to express our closeness and gratitude to teachers, and at the same time our concern for education.

Two years ago, on 12 September 2019, I appealed to all those engaged in various ways in the field of education to "dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet and the need to employ the talents of all, since all change requires an educational process aimed at developing a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society" ([Message for the Launch of the Compact on Education](#)).

For this reason, I promoted the initiative of a Global Compact on Education in order “to rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding”. I invited everyone “to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity”.

If we desire a more fraternal world, we need to educate young people “to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives” ([Fratelli Tutti](#), 1). The fundamental principle “Know yourself” has always guided education. Yet we should not overlook other essential principles: “Know your brother or sister”, in order to educate in welcoming others ([Fratelli Tutti](#); [Document on Human Fraternity](#), Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019); “Know creation”, in order to educate in caring for our common home ([Laudato Si'](#)) and “Know the Transcendent”, in order to educate in the great mystery of life. We are concerned to ensure an integral formation that can be summed up in knowledge of ourselves, our brothers and sisters, creation and the Transcendent. We cannot fail to speak to young people about the truths that give meaning to life.

Religions have always had a close relationship with education, accompanying religious activities with educational, scholastic and academic ones. As in the past, so also in our day, with the wisdom and humanity of our religious traditions, we want to be a stimulus for a renewed educational activity that can advance universal fraternity in our world.

If in the past, our differences set us at odds, nowadays we see in them the richness of different ways of coming to God and of educating young people for peaceful coexistence in mutual respect. For this reason, education commits us never to use God's name to justify violence and hatred towards other religious traditions, to condemn all forms of fanaticism and fundamentalism, and to defend the right of each individual to choose and act in accordance with his or her conscience.

If in the past, also in the name of religion, discrimination was practiced against ethnic, cultural, political and other minorities, today we want to be defenders of the identity and dignity of every individual and to teach young people to accept everyone without discrimination. For this reason, education commits us to accept people as they are, not how we want them to be, without judging or condemning anyone.

If in the past, the rights of women, children and the most vulnerable were not always respected, today we are committed firmly to defend those rights and to teach young people to be a voice for the voiceless. For this reason, education impels us to reject and denounce every violation of the physical and moral integrity of each individual. Education must make us realize that men and women are equal in dignity; there is no room for discrimination.

If in the past, we tolerated the exploitation and plundering of our common home, today, with greater awareness of our role as stewards of the creation entrusted to us by God, we want to give voice to the plea of nature for its survival, and to train ourselves and future generations in a more sober and ecologically sustainable lifestyle. Yesterday I was impressed by something that was said by one of the scientists at our meeting: “My newborn granddaughter will have to live, in fifty years' time, in an unlivable world, if things continue as they are”. For this reason, education commits us to love our mother Earth, to avoid the waste of food and resources, and to share more generously the goods that God has given us for the life of everyone. I think of what one thinker, not a Catholic, used to say: “God always forgives, we occasionally forgive. Nature never forgives”.

Today we want to state that our religious traditions, which have always played a leading role in schooling, from teaching literacy to higher education, reaffirm their mission of integrally educating each individual: head, hands, heart and soul. To think about what we are feeling and doing. To feel what we are thinking and doing. To do what we are feeling and thinking. The beauty and harmony of what it is to be fully human.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for taking part in this meeting. I also thank those who, due to the pandemic, could not be here today. And now I invite you to a brief moment of silence, asking God to enlighten our minds so that our dialogue will bear fruit and help us courageously to pursue the paths of new educational horizons.

Vatican, October 5, 2021



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# Pope Francis

- We need to **dialogue about how we are building the future of the planet** and on the need to invest everyone's talents, because every change requires an educational path that brings to maturity a new universal solidarity, and a more welcoming society.
- It is **necessary to combine efforts for a broad educational alliance** to raise mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentations and oppositions, and rebuilding the network of relationships for a more fraternal humanity.
- We must **educate new generations** to recognize, value and love each person beyond physical proximity, beyond the place in the universe where they were born or where they live.



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- We cannot silence the new generations about the truths that give meaning to life.
- Education commits us to **defend the identity and dignity of each person** and to teach new generations to welcome everyone without discrimination.
- **Education commits us to love our mother earth** and to avoid wasting food and resources, as well as to be more willing to share the goods God has given us for the life of all.
- Our religious traditions reinforce their mission to **EDUCATE EVERY PERSON IN THEIR INTEGRITY**, i.e., head, hands, heart and soul.
- Religions have always had a close relationship with education, combining religious and educational activities.



## BARTHOLOMEW I

Archbishop of Constantinople  
Orthodox Church

Turkey



*The education of the new generations is one of the most difficult challenges.*

*Precious traditions are destroyed, human freedom is misunderstood as “the art of avoiding constraints”, individualism and the libertarian conception of human rights spread everywhere.*

## EDUCATION

- It is a transmitter of values; it orients the human being to the essentials of life.
- It is linked to what humanity should be rather than to what it is.
- It prepares children and young people to create a world of peace, to be brothers and sisters to others.
- The quality of a society's vision is judged by:
  - how it evaluates and organises the education of younger generations, and
  - how the school and the aims of education are perceived, the role of the teacher and the pupil.

## THE TEACHER

- helps students to gain a deeper insight into reality and to understand the value of social responsibility.
- appeals to their freedom to use it properly.
- does not impose, but exhorts, invites, accompanies.
- teaches through who and what he is, with the splendour of his soul, of his example.
- is the essential pillar of education.
- raise awareness of the importance of religious education for the spiritual and social education of young people.
- teaches the function of dialogue, the spirit of intercultural exchange and the value of peaceful coexistence with the other, the different.



## AHMAD AL-TAYYEB

Grand Imam of al-Azhar

Islam

Egypt



- **Rethink educational curricula, in what and how we educate young people.** (Knowledge, gestures, behavioral patterns, attitudes)
- **A review of the pillars of Western and Eastern civilization and culture is required.**
- **Teachers have been able to change society by making people walk with their feet instead of with their heads...**
- **So says the Koran:** *"Is he better guided who walks with his face turned to the ground, than he who stands up walking in the right way?"* (Sura Al-Mulk:22)



- The Hebrew words for **father and teacher** have the same root: **ayah**, which means to do well.
- How should we teach? As one Jewish interpretation of Proverbs suggests, do not teach a child in that way, but rather teach a child in the way that is best for that child.
- And teach them what? Teach them the history of our people. We experienced slavery, the demonization of the outsider, when we were the other in ancient Egypt. And we were liberated with one teaching: be an advocate, not an observer. We must be on the side of those who need our help.



## NOAM MARANS

Director of Interreligious Relations

Judaism

USA

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# MOSTAFA MOHAGHEGH DAMAD

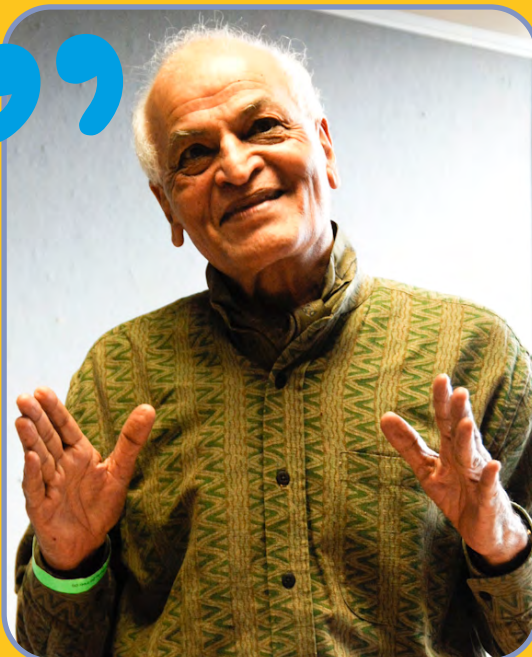
Cleric and scholar  
Islam. Shiite  
Iran



- Teaching our children that being faithful or unfaithful is a matter of the heart and should not affect our social relations...
- We must educate our children that the unity of this family leads to **eternal human brotherhood**.



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# SATISH KUMAR

Editor Revista Resurgence y Ecologist  
Jainism  
England

- We are entering a new era, **the environmental era**, so we need a new education system that can respond to our times and can help develop a nature-friendly culture and a planet-friendly economy.
- **A new holistic approach to education**: education of the head, the heart and hands. We call it learning by doing, combining knowledge with experience.
- We must **TRANSFORM EDUCATION** and learn a new way of living with ourselves, each other and our planet Earth.



# RAJWANT SINGH

President of EcoSikh

Sikhism

USA

- We must provide access to education for all, as **a universal right**.

*“Education should make a person to be kind”.*  
(Guru Nanak)

- Alongside worldly education, students should be taught to see God in everyone, treat everyone equally, respect women, care for nature and have the humility to serve others selflessly.

... let's start **ACTING NOW**.



# CHRISTOPHER FERGUSON

World Communion of Reformed Churches

Pastor United Church of Canada  
Germany

- We stand with all those who seek to realize a global educational project, centered on life and the liberation of individuals, communities and the whole of creation.

- To achieve a new educational project requires an economic, political, social and cultural transformation, guided by justice.

- A **NEW LIFE ECONOMY** with peace and justice for all and led by women, children, youth, indigenous peoples, workers and marginalized people working together, honoring difference and creating new structures and systems that sustain and promote life, not destruction or domination and land.

- This call is found in the powerful words of Deuteronomy 30, 19: *“Choose Life, so that you and your children can live”.*



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## MARIA HABITO

Representative Venerable Hsin-Tao  
Buddhism  
Taiwan

- The principles of **BUDDHIST EDUCATION** are to foster in the student the awareness that **each of us is deeply INTERCONNECTED** and so are we with the universe; and thus, to evoke the compassion that comes from this realization of unity....
- **Two objectives in teaching:**
  - To put their lives at the service of their families, their fellow men, their society and their country.
  - To love and protect the land.
- **Love and care.**
- **We cannot do it alone**, without the collaboration of the global community:
  - Global interconnection and interdependence,
  - Service to others,
  - The need to work together to make this Earth a better place.

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## HILARION DE VOLOKOLAMSLK

Russian Orthodox Bishop  
Representative of Patriarch Kirill  
Russia

- We need to understand education **holistically** as a path of intellectual and spiritual growth.

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## GRETCHEN CASTLE

Secretary General of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Quakerism (Quakers) England



- Quakers often say “there is something of God in everyone”:  
– This inspires our sense of equality and community.  
– It shapes our work for peace and social justice.
- Every person should have the opportunity for education, not only for work, but to prepare the mind and spirit to be a good citizen of the world.
- Teaching respect for all life, care for creation, nurturing the curiosity that leads people to care for others. This is where religion and education meet.
- And so, putting the person at the center of all learning, listening to and respecting each person, connecting students to ethics, school-family collaboration, a better understanding of economic and political systems that can integrate a holistic ecology.

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## ABNER FERREIRA

Church Assembly of God Madureira Evangelical bishop Brasil



- Educating is a daily challenge.
- Educating for life skills is an education based on love, emotional balance, limits and dialogue.
- To educate is, above all, to set an example.

Credits : Albin Hillierl, Service de presse, Conseil œcuménique des Églises, Attribution, Wikimedia Commons



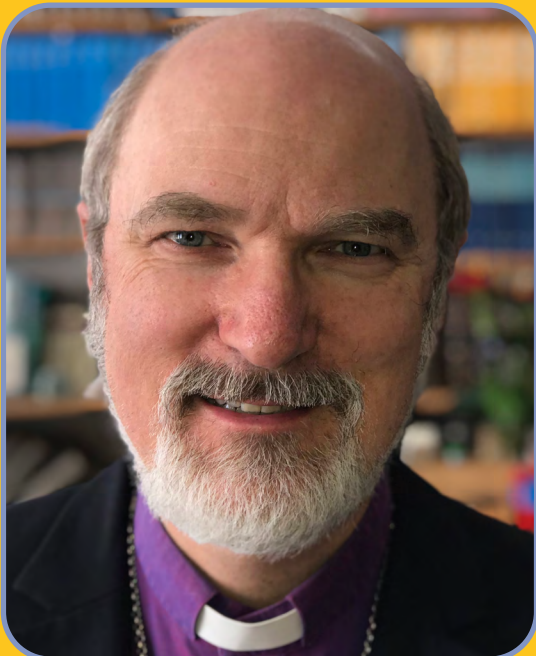
- **INTERRELIGIOUS COOPERATION IN EDUCATION:** a task for today and tomorrow.
- Contribute to the dialogue of cultures and religions.
- Calling on all religions alive today to be **united in an educational alliance** is a timely and necessary step.
- Education in the service of the life of people and the earth.

## IOAN SAUCA

Secretary of the World Council of Churches  
Romanian Orthodox Church  
Switzerland



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I want to highlight three things :

1. There are still too many countries where the **percentage of girls** attending school and receiving an education is **much lower** than that of boys.
2. Any educational institution should **work closely with parents**.
3. Children have the **right to know their parents' religion** and their own religion. Let us not speak ill of each other or we will distort other religions.

## THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

Secretary General World Evangelical Alliance  
Bishop Evangelical Church  
USA





## DANIEL J. SWARTZ

Rabbi Temple Hesed

Judaism

USA

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- The Talmud called 1,500 years ago, in today's language, to **EDUCATE THE WHOLE STUDENT**, developing not only a knowledge base, but also teaching how to build healthy relationships, how to integrate head, heart and hands, how to enjoy the outdoors and how to participate in building society.
- This **HOLISTIC APPROACH** is even more necessary today.



## ABDUL MU'TI

Islam

Indonesia

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- It is time to respect teachers.
- The quality of education, of the human being, of the nation and of the world, to some extent, depends on the quality of teachers.
- **WE NEED COMMON ACTION** and cooperation to make teaching an honorable profession and an agent of human civilization.
- We need a legal guarantee for the psychological, professional, moral and social security of teachers. Therefore, we need common commitment and action for better empowerment of teachers.



- We are united by the duty to promote education worldwide, through progress, the development of education and the humanization of knowledge, so that knowledge and science become a sanctioned and guaranteed right of all humanity.
- **REDOUBLE EFFORTS FOR A BETTER EDUCATION FOR ALL.**

# ABDUL AZIZ SARHAN

Advisor Secretary General Muslim World League

Islam  
Rome



# STEFANIA GIANNINI

Assistant Director-General for Education  
UNESCO  
Paris

- **EDUCATION IS A UNIVERSAL RIGHT**, a public good and a source of personal fulfilment and social progress.
- The world's spiritual traditions and their fundamental role in education, they promote the universal values of care, respect and solidarity.
- Development models based on growth and competitiveness have reached their limits.
- UNESCO publishes (End 2021): *“Rethinking our future together. A new social contract for education”*.
- To be transformative, education must provide each student with the understanding, confidence and values to co-create change. This involves empowering students to collaborate, to care for each other and their environment, to act with their hearts and minds, to bring about sustainable change in their community.
- Young people called for climate education to be integrated into all school curricula.(COP of Milan, 2021)

# Suggested ACTIVITIES

In the classroom or outside it, with the different educational, social, religious, cultural and other actors, we can meet and work on these texts to better understand the importance of education and the urgent need to agree and work together for a new education that reaches everyone and transforms lives and contexts, giving birth to a new society that is more humane, fraternal, supportive and sustainable.

We suggest below some activities to be carried out to deepen and advance in the construction of this global educational alliance, through encounter and dialogue. These are activities that you can carry out as they are, or from which you can draw inspiration, adapt or propose others.



## With children (8 to 12 years):

- **8 to 10 years** : Present what the religious leaders said and what they say. Using the observation technique, look for the words that are repeated most often in the messages of these leaders. Once you have made the list, highlight the three most repeated words and draw some conclusions together.
- **10 to 12 years**: In small groups divide up the different leaders and their ideas on education and the need for a Global Compact on Education. Look for important ideas about education in each of them. After searching for the necessary information and using the '[Headline' thinking routine](#)', highlight an idea in the form of a headline or two.
- **All ages**: Conduct a gymkhana (collective game) in which participants are divided into teams (students from all grades mixed) that are not competitive with each other and are challenged to carry out different tasks to achieve a goal. These tasks or challenges can be very varied and can involve anything from searching for specific objects or information to solving tests in competition with the other teams. In our case, they have to do with education in different religions.
- Write a letter with a text, drawing or poem to one of the religious leaders with the title: "The school of my dreams".
- **Organise a time of socialising (dinner or picnic) with families in the same classroom, encouraging reciprocal knowledge through meals. Emphasise the differences in customs in the different cultures and religions, which are also expressed through their food. On this occasion, distribute the leaflet showing that religions also come together to propose important ideas for our future.**



## With teenagers (13 to 18 years):

- Through [the group dynamics Philippe 6/6](#)\* and according to the contributions of the Pope and the leaders of the world religions, what do you think is most important to consider in order to change and improve current education?
- Using the cooperative technique "[Aronson's Puzzle](#)"\*, students will answer the question: What are the most important aspects of education from each religion?
- After reading the document in small groups, organise a KAHOOT on the contributions of different religions and their leaders on education, and the Global Compact on Education.
- If you had the opportunity to talk to one of the religious leaders, what question would you ask?

# 3

## With the youth (18 years and over) :

- Aware that human beings have racial, social, cultural, and religious differences, that make some groups different from others. From the document you have read, name something that draws your attention to each of these differences and explain why.
- In groups of a maximum of 4 students, prepare advertisements for each of the religions and their contributions to education and the Global Compact on Education. These advertisements can be collected in different media: video recordings, posters, blog, etc.
- Using the [DESIGN FOR CHANGE methodology](#)\*. The question that each group should ask itself is the following: how can we improve education in our school? And when we talk about education, we don't want to reduce it only to the field of learning content, but to important aspects such as values, emotions, relationships with ourselves, with others, with the planet and with Transcendence.
- If you had in front of you one of these leaders who have the possibility to change education and some things in society, what would you ask him or her?

# 4

## With teachers and management of the School:

- From the reading of the contributions of the Pope and the leaders of the world's Religions, and from your knowledge and experience, using the "Blue Ocean" dynamic, fill in the following table with three priorities in each box, regarding the changes that should be undertaken in education and educational projects:

<b>Que faut-il supprimer ?</b>	<b>Que faut-il améliorer ?</b>
<b>Que faut-il réduire ?</b>	<b>Que faut-il créer ?</b>

- With the "Dragon Dreaming" methodology, and working on its 4 stages, which are Dreaming, Planning, Acting and Celebrating, the aim is to propose the changes we would like to make for the education of the future of our students, based on what the Pope and the leaders of the Religions contributed to this Meeting.

# 5

## With families:

- The aim would be to create processes of dialogue and friendly and meaningful conversations with the "World-Café" Methodology around the values that religions bring to education and social transformation.
- Meeting of parents from the different classes of the school (parents' delegates and sub-delegates) to discuss the contributions that families can make to educate, help and support schools in the education of their children.

# 6

## With other religious, social and cultural stakeholders:

- A panel of experts inviting people from different religions to focus their interventions on education and how they work with the Global Compact on Education.
- Making a Global Compact on Education a reality requires a collaborative attitude and commitment from everyone, as education is never the action of an isolated person or institution. What initiatives, from the different groups, associations, institutions, etc., can we establish and carry out to improve the education of future generations? It would be a matter of reaching conclusions that would be expressed in a manifesto.
- Using "[Appreciative Inquiry](#)"\* to discover what works well in order to enhance it, achieve renewal and improve performance, applied to Education, in general, and the ideas offered by Pope Francis and in the contributions of the leaders of Religions.



**HERVÉ LECOMTE,**  
Secretary-general  
of the International Office of  
Catholic Education  
(OIEC)



These pages urge us to encounter and dialogue, to listen actively, humbly and compassionately to others, in order to build together a new education capable of responding to the new challenges and needs of people and societies.

From the OIEC we encourage these encounters, because many schools and educational institutions are immersed in diverse areas, with a great plurality of students, of different cultures, ethnicities and religions, welcoming not only Catholics but all, working with them on the values that derive from our Christian, human tradition and those other traditions with which we live, promoting universal values such as brotherhood, care, respect, justice, peace and solidarity.

Hence, we invite educational communities to work on these simple, profound and determining ideas emanating from the Meeting of Pope Francis with the leaders of other religions, inside and outside our institutions. and outside our educational institutions.

We are all called to bring the best of our traditions to bear on an education that improves our lives and our contexts. Yes, let us work together for this noble and urgent educational alliance!

*"That all may be one".*

Religious values emerge from the deepest heart of the human being and place us before the convictions that are capable of giving meaning to a life "beyond itself". This is why Pope Francis is sending out a very profound message when he summons so many leaders of the various religions to reflect together on the only dynamism that can change the world in which we live and bring it closer to the most precious ideals that we can all share: fraternity, equality, freedom, a full life, a commitment to the poor, social transformation...

This is the goal of education and development of the Global Compact for Education. For this dream, all Religious Congregations working in the field of education, we commit ourselves to work together and in communion. It is to this end that the Education Commission of the Unions of Superiors General is working, and it is to this project that we call you all.

Education, the dream of a different world, can unite us in the will to transform it. The testimonies that are part of this publication clearly show us the way: let us continue to work together, let us build an educational pact that illuminates a new world, a world loved by God.



**PEDRO AGUADO**  
Superior General  
of the Order  
of the Pious Schools  
Chairman Com. de Ed.  
of USG-UISG



**GLOBAL COMPACT  
ON EDUCATION**