



FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION

Abuja, NIGERIA
25-27 OCTOBER 2021

September 9, 2021

Abuja, Nigeria

A CALL FOR UNIVERSAL ENDORSEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION

Over the past decade, Nigeria has witnessed attacks on education and in an attempt to find a multilateral approach to solving this menace Nigeria joined the first group of 37 countries that endorsed the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) (SSD) on May 29th, 2015. The Honourable Minister of Education signed the letter of endorsement on March 8th 2018. This was followed by the approval for ratification by President Muhammadu Buhari on December 2019. In signing and ratifying the SSD, President Muhammadu Buhari formally declared Nigeria's acceptance to implement the provisions of the [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict](#).

The SSD framework has enabled Nigeria to systematically develop strategies and mechanisms to protect education. Drawing from the SSD Guidelines, Nigeria has developed a National Policy for Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools as a response to the needs of children and the violence that affects them in and around schools. In addition, we have identified and put mechanisms in place to address all kinds of hazards that affect the wellbeing of learners, teachers, school users and the school community to ensure the safety and security of schools in Nigeria. The recently developed Minimum Standards for Safe Schools will communicate the mechanisms to be put in place by all schools to address all kinds of hazards and violence for the continuation of schooling at all times. Also, the SSD Trainer's Guide and Participants' manuals are currently being used to train security agencies and human rights organisations on the protection of education. In the situation that we have found ourselves as a nation, endorsing the SSD has charted a practical pathway in safeguarding the right to education in our context.

Nigeria will be hosting the 4th International on the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) (SSD) in partnership with the African Union Commission, Argentina, Norway, Spain and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA). The conference will be held from 25th -27th October, 2021, in Abuja, Nigeria, and virtually. The theme of this year's conference is "Ensuring Safe Education for All: From Commitment to Practice".



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The Abuja Conference aims to:

- Share good practice in implementing key commitments in the Declaration to inspire other states to adapt the practice within their own context;
- Forge global cooperation and strengthen coordination in protecting education and deterring military use of schools and universities by bringing together education, defence, justice and foreign affairs ministries, and multilateral and civil society organizations, to discuss prevention and response measures;
- Identify actions governments can take to better achieve accountability for attacks on education and justice for victims, by building and strengthening international and national legal mechanisms.

Governments that endorse the Declaration make a commitment to take concrete steps to improve reporting of attacks on education; investigate allegations of violations of applicable national and international law and, where appropriate, duly prosecute perpetrators; and ensure the continuation of education during armed conflict. Endorsing states also commit to use the [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict](#), as far as possible and as appropriate. The Guidelines are a non-binding practical tool that offers guidance to parties to conflict in exercising restraint in using schools and universities for military purposes, helping to safeguard the civilian character of such facilities. Further, endorsing states support meeting regularly – strengthening dialogue and international cooperation in protecting education.

Following recent endorsements by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ghana, Algeria, Timor-Leste, Mexico, Togo and Senegal, [111 states](#) have now joined the Safe Schools Declaration. This represents a significant majority of all UN members, African Union, the Organization of American States, and the European Union. Support for the Declaration has come from the highest levels of the UN, including Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who has urged all UN member states to endorse. A number of endorsing states have begun to implement the commitments contained within the Safe Schools Declaration, and some examples of this are included in the [Practical Impact of the Safe Schools Declaration](#) and [Implementation Resource Bank](#).

Excellency, in the spirit of attaining universal endorsement of the Declaration, the Conference provides an opportunity for more Member States to announce their endorsement and commit to safeguarding education in conflict. In line with your government's commitment to safeguard education in conflict, we humbly request that you highlight its endorsement before or at the



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forthcoming conference. The procedure for endorsing the Declaration is to send a letter signed by a government official to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, either through an embassy or permanent mission at any time.

We look forward to formally welcoming your country as one of the new endorsing states during the 4th International Conference in Abuja, Nigeria.


Malam Adamu Adamu
Minister of Education


Major General Bashir Salihi Magashi (rtd)
Minister of Defence


Geoffrey Onyeama
Minister of Foreign Affairs