



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service



## High-level Side Event Boosting Opportunities for Higher Education in Emergencies

19 September 2016 – 01h15 pm-02h45 pm  
Conference Room 12, United Nations, New York

### Background Information

The High-level side-event is a continuation of an emerging network of policy, practice and research that has connected a group of multi-stakeholder partners – civil society, foundations, universities and higher education associations, international organizations, government representatives, aid and cooperation agencies - engaged and committed to promoting higher education among populations affected by conflict and facing emergency situations. It builds on the momentum of the process initiated by the International Conference on Higher Education in Emergencies, hosted by the Global Platform for Syrian Students, the Council of Europe, and the Institute of International Education in December 2014 in Brussels, Belgium. That process was continued in an expert meeting hosted by the University of York, UK, in July 2015 which led to the agreement of the York Accord document which sets out principles for protecting and rebuilding higher education during and after conflict.

In September 2015, this same issue was addressed at an event organized at the margins of the General Assembly. More recently, in February 2016, the Global Platform for Syrian Students and the Institute of International Education hosted a Brainstorming Session in New York on creating a Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education in Emergencies. In March an advocacy meeting was convened at the UN headquarters on Teaming Up to Boost Higher Education Opportunities in Emergencies. In April, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Institute of International Education and the German Mission to the United Nations convened a meeting in New York to address the nexus between the refugee

crisis, higher education, integration and enabling the displaced individuals to rebuild their countries.

Building upon all these efforts, the proposed side event aims at welcoming the progress made at the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants that clearly recognizes the key role of higher education in emergencies and at making a call for action to make immediate progress in unleashing the power of higher education to build resilience in emergencies and foster recovery and rebuilding from disasters and conflict.

## **Objectives**

- ❖ To celebrate the progress achieved at the political level with the recognition of the unique role played by higher education and higher education institutions in emergencies
- ❖ To call for action and engage with a range of actors involved in the protection and rebuilding of higher education in conflict and emergency settings in order to expand the emerging global network of policy, practice and research in higher education in emergencies.
- ❖ To showcase some successful initiatives and programmes that make a difference which participants can replicate or join up
- ❖ To release the first animation film ever produced on a rapid response mechanism for higher education in emergencies (RRM) to galvanize public opinion and mobilize further support.

## **Key Messages**

Higher education is increasingly caught in the crossfire of violent conflict, with devastating consequences for the sector and for conflict-affected societies. Institutions of higher education have sustained physical damage as well as significant losses among students and faculty—through death or displacement—while communities of learning have faced isolation and fear. This loss of functioning higher education systems is detrimental for conflict-affected societies, as progress towards peace and prosperity is greatly hindered by the loss of generations of leadership. Yet too often in contexts of humanitarian crisis or conflict higher education is a neglected sector. But the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants on 19 September represents a true turning point as participants have recognized the power of higher education to build resilience in emergencies and foster recovery and rebuilding from disasters and conflict; and provide complementary pathways to resettlement. Against this backdrop, it is high time to turn the tide and do more, better and faster to boost higher education opportunities in emergencies. There is a pressing need for more attention to be paid to the experience of

higher education in the context of conflict and emergencies; for international donors and development institutions to work out innovative funding solutions for the sector; for governments to better leverage higher education in their refugee protection strategies; and for groundbreaking approaches to bolster Higher Education in Emergencies.

### **Participants**

The aim of this action-oriented session is to bring together a wide range of Member States, multilateral agencies, civil society organizations, and private sector actors from across the world to galvanize support and generate new momentum for boosting opportunities for higher education in emergencies, on the basis of the draft conclusions of the High-Level Summit of the UN General Assembly on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants adopted on 19 September.