**Joint Statement of the Group of Friends**

**for Solidarity and Inclusion with Global Citizenship Education**

Paris, 26 May 2020

COVID-19 is a grave global pandemic that is affecting all aspects of our lives. The global crisis triggered by COVID-19 has exposed the underlying social and economic problems of our times and we have witnessed ever increasing incidents of discrimination and stigmatization on the grounds of origin, nationality, religion, race, gender or age, among others. Existing inequalities have deepened and the crisis risks to undermine progress that has been made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

As nations of the world race to find solutions to the pandemic, we firmly believe that closer global cooperation is the key to success of our endeavors. Instead of fostering constructive and productive environments where cooperation and collaboration can flourish, hate, discrimination and stigmatization only impede and undermine our concerted global efforts by raising walls and disconnecting people.

The Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution upholds the democratic principles of human dignity and solidarity among humanity. As UNESCO aspires to construct the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women, and, according to Article I of its Constitution, contributes to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without any distinction, now is the time for UNESCO to take concrete actions.

The current global context of COVID-19 highlights the relevance and importance of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in countering hate, discrimination and stigmatization. GCED has been instrumental in enabling people, young and old, to develop empathy, solidarity and respect for others regardless of their origin, nationality, ethnicity, gender, or religion. In alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and embedded in Target 4.7 of Education 2030, GCED is a great means to spread the value of solidarity and inclusion in the global community, based on the respect for fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and gender equality.

Our Group of Friends will serve as a platform for solidarity and inclusion to meet the challenges of COVID-19 and beyond. The Group of Friends will focus on raising a strong voice against hate, discrimination, and stigmatization in relation to COVID-19 pandemic, and promote GCED for international cooperation in the post-pandemic world. Reaffirming our commitment to a sense of common destiny and the founding ideals of UNESCO, we resolve to help strengthen social trust through the transformative power of GCED. We invite all to join in our voice.

Group of Friends for Solidarity and Inclusion with GCED

Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya,

Philippines, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Serbia