York Accord:

The Responsibility to Protect and Rebuild Higher Education during and after Conflict

York, UK

20 July 2015

Preamble

1. We, the undersigned, have gathered in York, United Kingdom, on 17 July 2015 to address how best to protect, rebuild and develop higher education during and after conflict. The meeting is convened at the invitation of the Brookings Doha Center, University of York and the Institute of International Education and under the joint chairmanship of President Jorge Sampaio, Dr Allan Goodman, Vice-Chancellor Koen Lamberts and Professor Sultan Barakat.

2. We are concerned that 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.

3. We reaffirm education as a fundamental human right, as enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and as reflected in the 1990 Jomtien Declaration and the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action.

4. We welcome the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/290 on the right to education in emergency situations, passed in 2010, which urged member states "to implement strategies and policies to ensure and support the realization of the right to education as an integral element of humanitarian assistance and humanitarian response".

5. We welcome the advocacy efforts of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) and the work of the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund, the Council for At-Risk Academics and the Scholars at Risk Network in providing shelter for scholars facing conflict and persecution.

6. We take note of the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, initiated by the GCPEA in 2012 and finalized under the leadership of Argentina and Norway in December 2014, and the GCPEA's 2015 *Principles of State Responsibility to Protect Higher Education from Attack*.

7. We welcome the adoption of UN Human Rights Council resolution 29/14 on 2 July 2015, which urged all States "to strengthen the protection of schools and universities, as well as other educational settings, from attacks by reviewing national laws to ensure that attacks on schools and universities are criminalized, where appropriate; investigating attacks on schools and universities, and

prosecuting and punishing those responsible, as appropriate; making every effort to collect reliable relevant data with respect to attacks on schools and universities; and providing assistance to victims, on a non-discriminatory basis, towards the full realization of the right to education".

8. We acknowledge that while basic education has emerged as an increasingly important sector in conflict settings, and is now viewed as a "fourth pillar" of humanitarian action, the higher education sector in conflict-affected societies remains neglected. This Declaration is focused specifically on higher education and the dual concern with both the protection and rebuilding of the sector in conflict-affected settings.

9. We commit to fostering and strengthening the collective will to protect and rebuild higher education during and after conflict. We believe that through collective participation and actions, the impact of conflict on higher education can be mitigated and challenges turned to opportunities for rebuilding.

The Responsibility to Protect Higher Education

10. We call upon state and non-state armed actors to recognize universities as neutral, safe spaces during conflict, and to ensure that higher education communities are physically secure and free from intimidation.

11. Stronger national and international legal standards are needed to prohibit the military use and abuse of higher education. We call upon state and non-state actors to review national policies and laws, in close co-operation with their higher education institutions and staff and with due respect for the values essential to quality higher education, especially institutional autonomy, academic freedom and social responsibility, to ensure that higher education communities are physically secure, and free from intimidation and improper external influence.

12. The global higher education community should construct a global architecture to monitor and report systematically on the impact of conflict on affected institutions and higher education communities.

13. We call upon national, regional and international legally responsible bodies to investigate attacks on higher education and hold perpetrators accountable.

14. We call upon global institutions of higher education to identify practical steps towards offering safe haven to scholars and academics affected by conflict and, where possible, to protect valuable resources from collateral damage.

15. We encourage individual institutions, regional bodies, ministries of higher education and international organizations to adopt a more regional focus to maintaining higher education capacity,

including integrating students and the faculty of refugees and IDP populations into regional higher education networks.

16. States and higher education institutions should review and update emergency protection and preparedness measures to afford protection to campuses and academic communities.

17. We propose a Rapid Response Mechanism for Higher Education (RRM4HE) in emergencies to mitigate the effects of conflict and ensure that students can return to university as quickly as possible. This should be included as an integral part of humanitarian response. Although further reflection is needed, the RRM4HE should act as a student clearing house, and work in close co-ordination with relief agencies, combining a wide range of emergency academic responses. We call upon private and public actors to mobilize significant financial resources to this end.

The Responsibility to Rebuild Higher Education

18. We affirm that the higher education sector plays a vital role in knowledge production, innovation, skills development, cultural preservation and national progress.

19. We call upon all actors to recognise that higher education can play a constructive role in addressing inequalities and advancing social justice in societies recovering from conflict. Institutions of higher education are critical to addressing the challenges faced by conflict-affected societies, including economic development and social unrest.

20. The rebuilding of institutions of higher education should be an inherent part of any national or regional post-conflict reconstruction strategy.

21. We call for the design and implementation of practical and timely programmes that build educational and research capacity to promote sustainable peace, reconstruction and reconciliation.

22. We call upon states, international donors and development institutions to pay particular attention to the opportunities to "build back better" in the higher education sector. To support this end, all actors should commit to creative responses to the challenge of rebuilding and to advancing a robust evidence base on what works.

23. We call upon states, international donors and development institutions to increase funding for the sector by exploring innovative and collaborative funding models.

24. We encourage higher education institutions worldwide to support those recovering from the effect of conflict by developing mutually beneficial partnerships and other forms of collaboration through which the exchange of people and ideas are encouraged.

25. Higher education institutions should be safeguarded as inclusive, open spaces where challenging ideas are debated and diversity is accepted without resorting to violence.