Belgrade, 25th October 2021

To UIL and the member of the CONFINTEA VII Consultative Committee:

In preparing this submission, we, the members from civil society, wish to revisit the mandate of the CONFINTEA VII Consultative Committee (CCC) and reaffirm our commitment, as represetatives of civil society, to achieving not just a successful conference but more importantly advancing the role of ALE within the framework of lifelong learning as essential to the achievement of equitable, just and sustainable development.

While the Terms of Reference (ToR) identified that the main task of the CCC is to provide *"guidance and advice on preparation of CONFINTEA VII in 2022"* we recognise that this once in a 12-year event is critical to addressing the current challenges faced by the ALE sector. In particular, we see that for the event to be successful, the outcomes, in particular the new Framework for Action (FfA), must lay the foundations to allow us *"to initiate, accelerate and monitor progress in relation to policy development, gender equality and better provision and participation in ALE within the framework of lifelong learning"* (ToR 2021).

Therefore, we consider that the following suggestions are critical to achieving these long-term outcomes.

1. **Conference Theme and Sub-themes:** During both meetings of the CCC we have underlined the need for a coherent, context-based and forward-looking theme and sub-themes. We agree with the need to align CONFINTEA VII with the two key global education and development efforts, namely the SDGs and the Futures of Education. We provide our detailed suggestions below.

2. **Conference Agenda and Program:** We recognise that agreement on the themes would assist in designing the conference agenda and program. In addition, we recognise that the program design will be greatly determined by the hybrid nature of the conference. During both meetings of the CCC we have supported the need to ensure that we apply ALE principles and methodologies in the design and realisation of the program. However, unlike a 'normal' conference that has sessions for each of the themes, we wish to emphasize that a key purpose of the Conference is to agree on an outcome document - the new Framework for Action. Therefore, we need to ensure that the opportunity to understand and debate the key elements of this new FfA is structurally designed in the program together with the themes/sub-themes. We have volunteered to work more closely with the program committee to design a unique ALE Conference that considers all of the above suggestions. Please refer to our more detailed suggestions below.

3. **Overall Process:** Once decisions on the themes and the nature of the hybrid conference are decided, the next urgent task is to design the entire process that will lead up to CONFINTEA VII. This will primarily include the need to begin the process of developing the FfA earlier and for this to be aligned with the release of the Regional Outcome documents. We also suggest that a Drafting Committee be constituted early in 2022 that is committed to on-going consultation with all sectors, so that we have enough time not just to debate but also to advocate for the new FfA. We again request the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft GRALE 5 report. Please refer to our detailed suggestions below.

Details of suggestions:

1. <u>**Themes and Sub-themes:**</u>

It is essential that we embrace a coherent, context-based and forward-looking theme and sub-themes. We agree with the need to align CONFINTEA VII with the two key global education and development efforts, namely the SDGs and the Futures of Education.

Therefore we support the overall motto:

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Learning to Become.

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and propose the overall theme:

Adult learning and education: A key to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and beyond

We however want to recognise the need to contextualise what 'to become' means, and underline the need to talk about **Learning to change** as well. It is not only in the context of COVID-19 recovery and building back better, but also about addressing structural and systemic problems of our world and problems/crises they cause, where adult learning and education may play a powerful role in solving them. Education and learning help not only to think about the 'new normal', but also help to re-think and critically address the problems of the 'old normal'.

Additionally, we feel that there is a need also to address explicitly themes that are specific to ALE which are often marginalised when looking at the education goals in general. In particular, we call attention to the fact that Financing of ALE, a key pillar of the BFA, is missing from the sub-themes. We also wish to call attention to the need to ensure a more balanced presentation of digitalisation and ICT given the deeply worrying trend we have observed in recent education meetings whereby the voices that are mostly heard are those of the digital technology corporations.

Our detailed suggestions build on the current themes but we propose that they can be clustered into four sub-themes as follows:

Sub-Themes 1 and 2 to address the contextual challenges and the main pillars of the overall theme i.e.:

> 1) the need to integrate ALE more fully and decisively in the SDG-SDG 4 discourse and narratives; and

> 2) looking at ALE beyond the SDGs, specifically aligning with the Futures of Education initiative. There would be overlaps between these two global initiatives, but we would like to underscore the need to see ALE beyond the general agreements and conceptions of the SDGs - hence we maintain discrete ALE-specific sub themes for these.

Sub-Themes 3 and 4 are the Action Areas i.e. what to do to turn around policy priority in favour of ALE? These are grouped into

> 3) the five RALE key areas of action, since RALE is a normative instrument adopted in UNESCO, and

> 4) international follow up actions for the new Framework for Action including better integration with the SDGs-SDG4 mechanisms

We propose that the current formulation of the themes be adjusted as illustrated in the table below. New text appears in blue font to highlight what revisions or additions we have proposed.

Current	Proposed
LEARNING TO BECOME	**OVERALL MOTTO: LEARNING TO BECOME**
	Overall Theme: Adult learning and education: A key to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and beyond

• The role of ALE in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
 	
o The role of ALE for sustainable environment and climate;
 	
o The benefits of ALE in health and well-being;
 	
o ALE and demographic change;
 	
o The role of ALE in fostering increased life-chances and employment opportunities
 	
• Towards a right to lifelong learning
 	
• Competences needed in the twenty-first century
 	
o Citizenship education in ALE;
 	
o The role of ALE to overcome crisis situations such as COVID-19;
 	
o ALE in conflict, post-conflict and disaster contexts;
 	
• The role of ICTs in ALE: a) to improve access, b) to support learning processes;
 	
o ALE and artificial intelligence;
 	
• Promoting teaching/learning practice:
 	
o How to motivate learners; use of incentives (individual learning accounts); effective public financing; effective recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non formal and informal learning; assessing and measuring learning achievements.
 	
o Professional development of adult educators;
 	
o The role of the learning infrastructure (including CLCs);
 	
• The role of ALE in cities and communities;
 	
• The role of social dialogue and partnerships in supporting ALE;
 	
• Monitoring the new framework for action in UNESCO Member States.
	Sub-theme 1: The role of ALE in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
	
	● The role of ALE for sustainable environment and climate justice
	● The benefits of ALE in health and well-being
	● ALE and demographic change
	● The role of ALE in fostering increased life-chances and employment opportunities
	
	Sub-theme 2: Competencies needed in the twenty-first century
	
	● Citizenship education in ALE
	● ALE in emergencies, such as COVID, conflict, post-conflict and disaster contexts;
	● ALE and artificial intelligence, technology and ICTs
	
	Sub-theme 3: Decisive Actions to advance ALE (RALE Areas of Action)
	
	● Strengthening Policy
	   o Towards a right to lifelong learning
	● Governance
	   o The role of the learning infrastructures (including CLCs)
	   o The role of ALE in cities and communities
	● Financing ALE
	   o Strengthening public financing, domestic resource mobilisation, tax justice and ODA for ALE
	● Participation, Inclusion and Equity
	   o The role of social dialogue and partnerships in supporting ALE
	   o Addressing the divides in ALE: gender, digital/technology, race/ethnicity, etc.
	   o Disability-inclusive ALE
	● Quality
	   o How to motivate learners; use of incentives (individual learning accounts); validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning; assessing and measuring learning achievements.
	   o Professional development of adult educators;
	   o Promoting teaching/learning practice
	
	Sub-theme 4 : International Cooperation for ALE
	
	● Addressing the Data gaps in ALE – building more robust ALE database systems responsive to country needs and realities - for stronger policies and programmes
	● Monitoring the new Framework for Action - any new features of GRALE for better reporting and monitoring? How to improve national reporting on ALE?; Agree on convening of a mid-term review and perhaps regional follow up actions, others?
	● Advocacy for ALE and strategies/actions to integrate more fully with the SDG-SDG4 processes, including global education financing mechanisms to more strongly advance ALE
	● Follow up architecture: UIL as Secretariat
	● Formation of a committee to look into the structure of the CONFINTEA process

2. **Agenda and Program**

We acknowledge the overall rationale of the program design as explained by Werner Mauch during the second meeting:

Three day conference devoted to perspectives.

- Day 1 - Looking back
- Day 2 - Actual situation
- Day 3 - Forward looking and adoption of new Framework for Action

We have three channels to bring in thematic perspectives - all of which will flow in the final report and framework for action

- Keynote
- Panels
- Parallel workshops

Key thematic focus

- Day 1 - Contributions to the SDGs - afternoon parallel workshops
- Day 2 - Focus on Citizenship Education to focus on the GRALE 5, Panels on Climate change and Literacy and Technology
- Day 3 - Right to Lifelong Learning, link to the Futures of Education Commission Report

However, we make the following preliminary proposals:

Process: We propose that members of the CCC who are interested in the program design be invited to a workshop rather than just give comments during a CCC meeting to allow for more opportunity to discuss, create and innovate.

Hybrid nature: We propose that while we can still have the three-day actual conference, it is important to recognise that ensuring meaningful participation will be limited by timezone, connectivity, language and screen time considerations. We therefore propose that we design a lead up to the conference that could perhaps be similar to the series of regional GRALE 5 orientations and pre-conferences. This could be co-hosted, as we had previously done with the regional civil society partners and regional offices of DVV International together with the UNESCO regional office. These partnerships have worked, to varying degrees during the pre-conferences.

As the new FfA is the expected outcome of the conference, it is important that the draft FfA be made available as part of advance materials to participants way before the start of the conference, allowing member states and other stakeholders to consult and offer recommendations accordingly. At the start of the conference, participants should be alerted to parts of the program where specific elements of the FfA are being explained and debated. This will allow for a more purposeful and output-oriented program, which then makes it easier for the Drafting Committee to gather comments. Having said this, we also suggest that the Drafting Committee be constituted earlier to allow greater time for consultation and discussion given the hybrid nature of the conference.

3. **Overall Process**

As mentioned above, agreement on the themes and sub-themes, a decision on the nature of the hybrid conference and the design of the program are all linked and will inform how best we can prepare for CONFINTEA VII. We therefore propose the following:

Drafting Committee: That the Drafting Committee, with representatives from the different stakeholders, be constituted as soon as possible. That this committee be resourced not just to review the regional outcome

documents, but to be able to weave these outcome documents together with the GRALE findings, the proposed themes and education initiatives, namely the SDGs and the Futures of Education. While the final FfA will only be adopted at the conference itself, the hybrid nature will allow some pre-conference discussions that can contribute to a more participatory and representative process.

Align timelines with release of key milestones: We have been informed that the regional outcome documents will be available at the earliest by the end of the year. However, it has been proposed that during the third meeting of the CCC a first draft of the new FfA will be presented. We therefore request that a better alignment of the timelines be prepared to ensure, for example, as in this case, that the regional outcome documents are available to allow us to review more effectively the first draft. The same alignment is necessary to ensure that a Drafting Committee is also constituted in a timely manner.

Civil Society participation: We wish to make specific mention of our concern that during the second meeting, it was emphasized that CSOs were provided with opportunities to engage with the GRALE 5 process. While we were co-hosting the orientation session, we re-affirm that CSOs were not allowed to participate in the presentation of the GRALE 5 survey tool, nor did we have timely access to information as to who was the focal point in our respective countries. The information that at least 160 country responses have been received is positive, but bearing in mind the central role of the CSOs in Citizenship Education, the theme of GRALE 5, we repeat our request to have access to the draft GRALE 5 report, given that there will be opportunity for feedback from experts. Moreover, we would like to remind you that ICAE submitted an extensive study on Citizenship education as a background document, and we trust that the recommendations from this document will be considered.

In addition, we wish to emphasize that, in the lead up to the actual conference, UIL should encourage national governments to include civil society representatives in their delegations. This will be even more essential for a hybrid conference, whereby CSOs would otherwise have little opportunity to participate, let alone travel to Morocco. This suggestion was adopted for previous conferences and we request that it be adopted again for CONFINTEA VII.

Since we will organise a Global Civil Society Organizations Forum pre-meeting, it would make sense to plan a slot in the conference programme where the main outcomes, messages and recommendations from the GCSO Forum can be presented.

Finally, while we also recognise that the CONFINTEA VII Consultative Committee is meant to *"inform the preparatory process for the conference design, content and other substantive matters",* we observed that most of the time of the meeting is spent on information-giving and updating. While there are opportunities for some feedback and to provide formal submissions between meetings, there is insufficient time for discussions. Therefore, we request that more time be allotted for the final two meetings, that pre-reading be provided and clear agreements be made, not just restricted to collecting feedback. We were surprised, for example, that the *Draft Concept Note* tabled for the second meeting, while having incorporated some of the feedback from the first meeting, was taken as final. This was not formally adopted by the Committee.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We would be willing to meet with colleagues from UIL to further explain our suggestions, all in the spirit of ensuring a successful CONFINTEA VII that paves the way for the contributions of ALE towards equitable and sustainable development.

Respectfully,

Jose Roberto Guevara (ICAE President) on behalf of members of the CCC from the following organizations:

- Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
- International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)
- Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV International)