



Statement by

UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE

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On the occasion of:

**Commission for Social Development
Agenda Item 3a**

Social Integration

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UNESCO's statement to be delivered in the Commission for Social Development under item 3 (a) Social Integration

Madame Chairperson,

UNESCO congratulates you for your election as chair and strongly supports the work of the Commission.

Building upon "the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind", as laid down in its Constitution, UNESCO has integrated the human rights approach into all its programmes with a view to building inclusive societies through education, the sciences, culture and communication.

UNESCO has a special responsibility with regards to the human rights directly linked to its mandate:

- the right to education (Article 26)
- the right to take part in cultural life (Article 27)
- the right to freedom of opinion and expression including the right to seek, receive and impart information (Article 19)
- the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications (Article 27).

UNESCO has several programmes and activities relating to social integration and social inclusion. From 10-13 September 2007 at UNESCO Headquarters, UNDESA organized, in cooperation with UNHABITAT and UNESCO an Expert Group meeting on "**Creating an Inclusive Society: Practical Strategies to promote social integration**".

Among the factors affecting social integration is the rapid pace of urbanisation. In 2005 the Organization launched with UN Habitat a research programme to contribute to **social inclusion in cities**; "Urban policies and the right to the city, rights, responsibilities and citizenship". It identifies good practices in law and urban planning, and initiatives that strengthen rights and responsibilities, interfaith dialogue, the participation of women, young people and migrants in urban management. UNDESA joined the project in February 2008 following the Porto Alegre World Conference on the Development of Inclusive Cities.

Following the World Conference against racism and all forms of related discrimination in 2001 in Durban, UNESCO set up the International Coalition of Cities against Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance. The project assists municipalities in developing and strengthening their policies for greater urban social inclusion by building peaceful coexistence between different groups in society.

UNESCO agrees that **gender discrimination is a grave obstacle to social integration**. Among the Organization's activities contributing to gender equality are the promotion of research on challenges to women's rights and gender equality, supporting networking and advocacy for women's rights and gender equality, and reinforcing the linkages between research and policy formulation, especially to ensure women's full participation and contribution to sustainable transformation and development in the context of the post conflict reconstruction, as called for by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Violence against women will be one of the main issues in the work of the new Women's Research and Documentation

Center for the Great Lakes Region in Kinshasa, covering eleven countries of the Great Lakes Region.

Madame Chairperson,

At the Doha Forum on Financing for Development, the Secretary-General stressed "Education is the lifeblood for a nation's future economic growth and prosperity".

Education and training is the pillar to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the Copenhagen commitments.

UNESCO is the Lead Agency in the coordination of the Education for All Programme. Meeting at the forty-eight session of the UNESCO International Conference on Education (Geneva, 25-28 November 2008), Ministers of Education, heads of delegation and delegates from 153 Member States, representatives of 20 international organizations, 25 NGOs, foundations and other institutions, took part in debates on the theme of "**Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future**". Participants called upon Member States to adopt an inclusive education approach in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of educational policies as a way to further accelerate the attainment of Education for All goals as well as to contribute to building **more inclusive societies**.

Also, this past year, organized by UNESCO and hosted by the Government of Norway from 16 to 18 December 2008 in Oslo, the eighth meeting of the High Level Group on Education for All focused on overcoming inequality using education as a driver for change.

Despite much progress, millions of children, youth and adults still lack access to good quality education and the benefits it brings, including social inclusion. The EFA 2009 Global Monitoring Report is addressing inequality issues and corresponding policy options. The report stresses that "Deep and persistent disparities based on wealth, gender, location, ethnicity and other markers for disadvantage are acting as a major barrier to progress in education. If the world's governments are serious about Education for All, they must get more serious about tacking inequality".

UNESCO is implementing activities focusing on achieving the six EFA goals;

- Early childhood care and education
- Universal primary education
- Meeting the lifelong learning needs of youth and adults
- Adult literacy
- Gender parity and
- Quality

There is a close link between social integration and poverty eradication, - as well as full employment and decent work. Poverty is indeed a form of exclusion. UNESCO has a **human rights-based approach to poverty eradication**. Such approach considers poverty not simply as a condition of economic deprivation but indeed as a denial of basic human rights, and is based upon the norms and values set out in the international law of human rights, which provide a compelling normative framework for the formulation of national and international development policies, including poverty reduction strategies.

The Organization's activities include capacity building, development of human rights based decision-making tools for aid negotiation and support for the

elaboration, revision and budgeting of national strategies and policies, particularly concerning poverty reduction as a human rights issue.

In line with the human rights based approach, the poor should not only be the target of development strategies but should also be involved in the elaboration and implementation of such strategies, in compliance with the principles of transparency and participation.

Working towards inclusion requires clear recognition of specific obstacles faced by **different groups in society**, particularly those groups that tend to be prone to exclusion such as older people, youth and people with disabilities.

In the **Medium-Term Strategy for 2008 – 2013** the Organization has a special emphasis on the needs of Africa, gender equality, youth, as well as the most vulnerable segments of society.

In line with the World Programme of Action, UNESCO attempts to empower youth to provide them with spaces and opportunities to make their voices heard. For UNESCO, the imperative of youth participation has been a long-standing one. It is embodied in the institutionalization of the Youth Forum as an integral part of all sessions of UNESCO's General Conference. The organization is also organizing Regional Youth Fora. UNESCO has a firm commitment to assist Member States in the elaboration of National Youth Policies. The development of concrete benchmarks to assess national progress towards youth empowerment, to which UNESCO has been associated, will be very helpful in this process.

A number of countries have called for international assistance to curb the impact of youth violence in the Central American region. UNESCO has responded by implementing innovative projects which prioritize policies of violence prevention and youth development. The First Regional Forum of National Authorities for Youth Policies was held last year in Costa Rica. Fifty participants from Central American countries as well as 12 bilateral and multilateral agencies agreed on a common vision of the causes of violence among young people and the means to prevent it.

UNESCO encourages the strengthening of mechanisms for the prevention of violence and the integration of youth so that it can assume its civil responsibilities. The Organization has supported several national projects and seeks to raise collective awareness of all stakeholders, associations, academia or governments, at the national and community levels.

Ageing is the regional priority in Europe for UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations Programme, MOST, which is focusing on evidence-based policy making. A recent issue of UNESCO's International Social Science Journal, which is produced in six languages, disseminating social science research results to academic and non-academic communities worldwide, is focusing on "Ageing in Western Europe". During last year's session of the Commission UNESCO organized, in cooperation with UNDESA and the Government of South Africa, a side-event on "Evidence-based policy making to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing".

UNESCO gives high importance to the World Programme of Action concerning **Disabled Persons**, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/52. The Organization has, through its programme on Inclusive Education, worked with its EFA Programme on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities, a network of disability organisations, experts, academics and UN agencies to promote the right to education for children with disabilities within the general education system.

Madame Chairperson,

Regional fora of Ministers of Social Development have been institutionalized, in the context of the MOST Programme, in several regions of the world. These fora address among others issues how to contribute to strengthening social integration.

The objectives of the Fora of Ministers are:

- (i) To promote and contribute to social development by exchanging best practices and debates;
- (ii) To foster research-policy linkages and thus contribute to policy making based on analysis of evidence and dialogue.

Eighty Ministers and representatives have so far engaged in the Regional Fora of Ministers of Social Development in Latin-America, Economic Community for the West African States, the Arab States and South Asia. A Forum of Ministers has also been organized for the Southern African Development Community. The East African Community has organized a meeting of Ministers of Social Development facilitated by the cooperation with MOST. The Ministerial fora come up with pertinent policy recommendations such as the importance of the Right to Information. Citizens need to be informed of their rights to claim them. In this context I would like to inform you that UNESCO

For your information, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will host the next Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Latin America from 27 to 29 March 2009 on “The impact of the international financial crisis on social policies in Latin America; challenges and alternatives”.

Madame Chairperson,

This takes me to the important emerging theme of the Commission which the Secretariat will present on Monday, namely the “**The global crisis and their impact on social development**”.

The consequences of the crisis for development can be devastating and hence there is an urgent need to develop effective counter-strategies.

The High Level Group on EFA noted that it took place in the context of a global economic slowdown spurred by a financial crisis unprecedented since the 1930s. **The Oslo Declaration** states that “It will be imperative to protect and insulate the world’s poorest children, youth and adults from the worst effects of the crisis as they carry the least responsibility for these events. The crisis should not serve as justification for any reduction in any reduction in national spending and international aid to education. Instead, steadfast support for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the EFA and Millennium Development Goals, is more vital than it was before the crisis”.

UNESCO supports the International Social Science Council, which will, from 10 to 12 May 2009 organize a **World Social Science Forum** in Norway, in which speakers like Nobel Prize laureate Amartya Sen will participate. Sessions of the Forum will focus on poverty, race and citizenship and other relevant issues for development. The MOST Programme will organize a session on “Rethinking social policies in light of the response to the economic crisis”. Participants in the session

will include Ministers of Social Development and social scientists. We hope that many of you will participate in the Forum and contribute to the debates.

Madame Chairperson,

The task of social integration is not the responsibility of Governments alone but should indeed be shared by all sectors of the economy and society at large. At the most recent UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Social Development both business leaders, researchers and NGOs participated in addition to the Ministers.

UNESCO would like to make a proposal for a new paragraph under "Recommendations" at the national level in the report of the Secretary-General as follows: "Governments should actively co-operate with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and researchers, in their pursuit of achieving social integration.

Thank you for your attention.