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Educational institutions are essential, but they can only serve society well if they respect the family, defined in multiple human rights instruments as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society” and further “entitled to protection by society and the state.”

Educational institutions, and the international agencies that design education programming, must not usurp the role of the family, and parents specifically. They must ensure that they are delivering instruction that aligns with the values and expectations of parents and not indoctrinating children with concepts that are as unpopular with parents and communities as they are at the UN General Assembly, as for example “comprehensive sexuality education.”

There is a clear moral hazard in countries relying on an ever expanding and more unscrupulous global industry for sexual and reproductive health services and education related to public health. Indeed, many of the same non-governmental organizations who receive public funds to provide these services and education also profit from their distribution. They are also the authors and proponents of “comprehensive sexuality education.” Among the services and information supplied to children they include abortion, contraception, transgender hormone treatment and surgeries, and the promotion of the moral equivalence of homosexuality and relations between a man and a woman.

These notions do not represent what most parents expect for their children from public education. They are not supported by the consensus of member states and there is no evidence that they improve the health of children. The governments that are knowingly subsidizing this industry, even though its business model is based on advertising dangerous or untested products to children, must take full responsibility for all the consequences that children will experience throughout their lives as a result of being the targets of these policies.

As we mark the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we must pushback against all efforts to dilute, undermine, and erode core human rights protections for the family.

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Parents have “a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children,” according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states clearly, Governments must promote and respect the liberty of parents and legal guardians to ensure “the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.” This includes the liberty to choose for their children schools “other than those established by the public authorities.”

A child is anyone under the age of 18 for purposes of international law. This is a principle of primary importance when determining what is appropriate programming for international agencies, including when it comes to public health. Many programs in fact undermine this important principle by developing concepts that dilute, erode, and undermine the responsibility of parents with regard to the upbringing of their children. They promote sexual autonomy for adolescents and youth, without distinguishing between children under the age of 18 and adults.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child elaborates that parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children in every respect of their lives, including education. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development also affirmed this family right in principle 10 of the Programme of Action.

We must hold fast to these principles and defend the family and children from any attack.