



HOLY SEE

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Adolescents and youth

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is grateful that, in his report on the “Monitoring of population programmes, focusing on adolescents and youth” (E/CN.9/2012/5), the Secretary-General affirms the importance of families in the formation of adolescents and youth and thus the rights and responsibilities of their parents. The family is the original nucleus of society, the primordial foundation of social ties and the locus where the relations of tomorrow--nuptial, parental, filial, fraternal--are cultivated. Each family, founded on the indissoluble union between a man and a woman, accomplishes its mission of being a living cell of society, a nursery of virtues, a school of constructive and peaceful coexistence, an instrument of harmony and a privileged environment in which human life is welcomed and protected, joyfully and responsibly, from its beginning until its natural end. In this regard, the singular and irreplaceable value of the family founded upon matrimony and the inviolability of human life from conception until natural death must be affirmed.

For some time now, my delegation has noticed a disconcerting trend, namely, the desire on the part of some to downplay the role of parents in the upbringing of their children, as if to suggest somehow that it is not the role of parents, but that of the State. In this regard it is important that the natural and thus essential relationship between parents and their children be affirmed and supported, not undermined. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirms that “parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” (Article 26, 3) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms that parents have “the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child” (Article 18, 1). These principles bear particular import regarding all matters pertaining to children, including, for example, with regard to their access to, as well as confidentiality and privacy of, information, education and communication activities and services concerning their health and wellbeing, including in the areas of human love, human sexuality, marriage and the family. It is not surprising that, on many occasions in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), direct reference is made to the essential role of parents regarding their children and that all policies and programmes regarding children be *in line with the CRC* (*cf.*, e.g., Principles 10 and 11; 6.7, 6.15, 7.37, and 10.12).

Mr. Chairman,

With almost 90 percent of youth living in developing countries—40 percent of them constituting the world’s unemployed—and literacy rates of youth below 80 percent in some parts of Africa and Asia, my delegation reaffirms the essential role of education which is a human right (*cf.*, UDHR, Article 26, ICESCR, Article 13, CRC, Articles 28 and 29). Education plays a fundamental role in achieving sustained and equitable economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development and reducing inequity and inequality, and is indispensable to protect and affirm the transcendent dignity of every person. Gratefully in his report on “Adolescents and youth,” the Secretary-General rightly notes that “Ensuring universal primary education and expanding enrolment at the secondary level can yield many dividends, especially with regard to improving skills for productive employment, reducing risky behaviours and developing habits that can influence health for the rest of young people’s lives;” and that “Greater investments in their education, health and labour market opportunities can shape the well-being of tomorrow’s adults and, in the process, ultimately narrow the gaps between countries with regard to human development” (E/CN.9/2012/4, 5-6).

The State has an essential responsibility to assure the provision of educational services, and the right to educate is a fundamental responsibility of parents, religious institutions and local communities.

Public institutions, especially at the local level, organizations of civil society and also the private sector, can offer their unique and respective contributions to the attainment of universal access to education. The educational system functions correctly when it includes participation, in planning and implementation of educational policies, of parents, the family, and religious organizations, other civil society organizations and also the private sector. The goal of education must extend to the formation of the person, the transmission of values, a work ethic, and a sense of solidarity with the entire human family. In this educational process, the State should respect the choices that parents make for their children and avoid attempts at ideological indoctrination. As affirmed in international law, States are called to have respect for the freedom of parents to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions which equally applies to their right to make judgments on moral issues regarding their children (*cf.*, *e.g.*, UDHR, Article 26, 3, ICESCR, Article 13, 3, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Article 12, 4). There are about 250,000 Catholic schools around the world. The Catholic school assists parents who have the right and duty to choose schools inclusive of homeschooling, and they must possess the freedom to do so, which in turn, must be respected and facilitated by the State. Parents must cooperate closely with teachers, who, on their part, must collaborate with parents.

The international community has made significant progress in reducing the number of children without access to primary education. However, as of 2008, some 67.5 million children remained out of school, and if the current trajectory is maintained, the international community will not be able to attain the goal of universal primary education by 2015 (*cf.*, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011). Among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), three countries report enrollment rates below 50%, and only 17 countries report rates above 80%. Despite the progress thus far, much more needs to be done for the international goal of the primary education of all boys and girls to be achieved. It is necessary as well that secondary education and vocational training opportunities are provided which is particularly important for the significant number of young people in many developing countries and also for young migrants (*cf.*, ICRMW, Articles 30, 43 and 45). In this regard, it is important that States address and promote the employment of young people in their national development policies and programmes, focusing on decent work and the elimination of child labor.

Mr. Chairman,

An authentic rights based approach to development places the human person, bearing within him or her infinite and divine inspirations, at the center of all development concerns, and thus respects the nature of the family, the role of parents, including their religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds, and affirms the contribution that young people can and do make to their community and society (*cf.*, ICPD Programme of Action, Chapter II). The more the countries recognize this, the more they will be able to put into place policies and programmes that advance the overall wellbeing of all persons.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman