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STATEMENT

BY

THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

H.E. Ms Vesna Vuković

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations

at the

**Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council on the
"Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to
education"**

United Nations, Geneva

5 July 2011

Mr. President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Ms. Under-Secretary General,

Your Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to address the Economic and Social Council on behalf of the Republic of Croatia. Croatia has aligned itself with the statement made earlier by the European Union. In this address, let me share with you some of our national perspectives.

I would like to begin by expressing my country's great appreciation for the Secretary-General's comprehensive and enlightening reports on *Implementing the Internationally Agreed Goals and Commitments in Regard to Education* as well as for the overview on the *Global and National Trends and Challenges and their Impact on Education*. We also welcome the fact that we have been provided with a set of concrete recommendations on how to move forward on this important subject.

The world has taken a step towards the 21st century with the optimism and determination of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As highlighted in the EU statement, education is at the heart of achieving virtually all of the MDGs. With only four and a half years to go until the MDG deadline, we have to take a fast track in order to come closest possible to achieving the education goals. Croatia is ready to do its part.

The task is neither easy, nor unattainable. **Quality education for all is a challenge and an answer at the same time.**

Mr. President,

From the national perspective, Croatia recognizes education as one of key priorities of its policy and attaches great importance to the full realization of education for all. Croatia's **Education Sector Development Plan** serves as a **key policy framework** for driving domestic efforts in implementing internationally agreed goals and commitments with regard to education.

With the aim of *developing "schools tailored to pupils"* the **Croatian National Education Standard** was created to promote teaching methods based on research, project work and active pupil participation.

Harmonisation of education with the European Community – known as *the Bologna process*, started with the adoption of the **Science and Higher Education Act** which has reformed the higher education system according to the principles of Bologna Declaration.

With regard to the *successful inclusion into work, economy and modern knowledge based technology* the special attention is given to specialist vocational education and training supported by the **Vocational Education and Training Act** and in line with the **Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training 2008 – 2013**. This Strategy has recognized the importance of broad knowledge, skills and competences, which lead to greater career flexibility and employability and allow workers to respond to rapid changes in the labour market as well as with constant technological developments through continuous education and learning.

In addition, *the education system also provides greater access for children and pupils with special needs* by developing more concrete positive legislation and enrolment policies, enhancing infrastructure and promoting project work. Over the past two years *51 programmes for low-skilled qualifications, the provision of lifelong professional orientation and development*, and the allocation of teaching assistants for children with special needs have been created.

Last, but not least, it should also be noted that Croatia has developed the project *e-Islands*, that allows distance teaching in regional schools in islands with small populations by connecting these schools with schools in larger cities on the mainland. The system transmits image, tone and educational contents in real time. So far, 21 island schools have been benefiting from it.

Mr. President,

In spite of numerous challenges brought by the economic transition process, as well as the post-conflict environment, education and science have always been considered a driving force for the Croatian society in all of its segments. Croatia is constantly investing effort in modernization of its school curricula, as well as in continuous teacher training through further introduction of information and communication technologies.

We believe that through such approach the Croatian education system contributes to the overall development, not only on the national level, but it also becomes a part of intensive international educational co-operation.

In that context, Croatian Government has engaged in the development project in Afghanistan, which is part of a comprehensive approach, combining military, police and civil support. Through the joint cooperation between the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, the construction of a five classroom school in Homaro Faroq in the Balkh province is being implemented. The total worth of this project estimates around 100.000 USD during the course of this year. It is envisioned that the school will be attended by 250 children from surrounding villages and it has also been identified as a priority by the Afghan authorities.

In conclusion Mr. President,

While placing education high on its national agenda, Croatia expects that this subject matter will also remain high on the international agenda, and further enable consistent and sustainable progress in education for all.

Education is proven to be a stable answer to the challenges we are facing in building a world where everyone has the opportunity to learn the values, behaviour and lifestyle required for a sustainable future. Therefore, with optimism and determination of further development of the world in the 21st century, the education policy should be treated as a long term investment, rather than a short term liability.

Thank you very much.