

## Informal Summary

### 2011 Economic and Social Council High-Level Segment General Debate

Wednesday, 6 July 2011

#### Statements – Delegations:

**H.E. Mr. Frederick Barton**, Representative to the Economic and Social Council, **United States of America**, began by stating that everybody benefits from education. Educational opportunities not only increase personal empowerment and learning potential but also promote cohesive, democratic societies. After a decade of relatively steady increases in development assistance, US education aid amounted to \$1.2 billion in 2010. In May this year, the US launched a new global partnership focusing on girls' and women's education as part of a reinvigorated effort to extend basic education opportunities as well as literacy programmes to girls and women.

**H.E. Mr. Fernando Rojas**, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, **Peru**, reported that universal primary enrolment and full literacy, have nearly been reached in his country. There has also been steady progress in reducing the gender gap in education, although it stubbornly persists at the secondary level. Enrolment and retention of students in rural areas continues to be a challenge in Peru. Focusing on this population, as well as children with disabilities, is one of the education sector's priorities going forward. The country has adopted six strategic objectives for quality and equity in education, which draw on the support of civil society groups.

**H.E. Mr. Gobinathan**, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, **India**, remarked on the significant challenges that continue to threaten the achievement of the education-related development goals. India has seen tremendous progress on education in the previous decade. A new provision in the constitution now guarantees the right of education to children aged 6 to 14. Efforts are also underway to ensure that education provides the opportunity for relevant skills development, offered through improved technical and vocational education training programmes. In the area of skills development, concentrating on ICT skills has been a particular focus within the country and is viewed as one of the key enablers for development. India has extended its support in this area to other developing countries, particularly through the India-Africa Virtual University.

**H.E. Mr. Shukuru Jumanne Kawambwa**, Minister for Education, **Tanzania**, emphasized the importance of lifelong learning, based on the quality provision of formal education in the early years. In Tanzania, there is renewed focus on ensuring that education systems provide the skills necessary for promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable growth. Key achievements in recent years have included: the significant increases in the enrolment of girls and boys (an additional 7.5-8.5 million children in primary education); the improved recruitment of teachers; enhanced management capacity; and expanded tertiary educational opportunities. There are now 23 universities nationwide. The Minister noted that the financial crisis risks undermining investment in education and other sectors that are critical for advancing progress on sustainable development. The Minister emphasized the

importance of improving aid effectiveness, including through the engagement of all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure the effective allocation of education resources.

**H.E. Mr. Rubén Dario Reinoso**, Vice-minister for academic development of the ministry of higher education, **Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)**, expressed the strong public commitment to education in his country, where close to 7 per cent of GDP was invested in education in 2009. Enrollment has risen by 170% in 11 years. Decentralization has played a big role in the ongoing education reforms that have been underway in Venezuela. Over 20 higher education institutions have been created in recent years, and the country currently hosts more than 2 million university students, as well as international students from Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa.

**H.E. Dr. Nafisa Shah**, Member of National Assembly, **Pakistan** and chair person on human development, **Pakistan**, referred to the multiple global crises and their potential impact on the advances made on education in Pakistan. The food and fuel price rises are likely to make household investment in education much more difficult. At the same time, last year's flooding in rural Pakistan has destroyed many recent development gains, including education infrastructure. She emphasized the need for developed countries to provide technical, not just financial, assistance in regards to the expansion of quality education. Despite the progress on the education-related development goals in Pakistan, drop-out rates, in particular, remain quite high.

**Mr. H.B. Dansinghani**, Chief Technical Officer, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, **Mauritius**, reported that his country is close to reaching the education-related development goals. Measures have been taken to increase access: free provision of textbooks, free public transport to school, and the provision of social assistance. There is no gender gap in primary and secondary enrolment; girls out-perform boys at many grades of schooling. The country's education strategy is based on several key principles. First, it prioritizes inclusion by targeting specifically those areas most marginalized from education systems. Second, it involves the relevant stakeholders in education policy and programme implementation by organizing substantive, participatory consultations. Third, it emphasizes the importance of "soft" skills for education systems, highlighting the need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be able to embrace multiculturalism, mutual tolerance and understanding.

**H.E. Peter Gooderham**, **Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**, firmly placed his government's emphasis on the importance of providing quality education, especially for girls. Globally, progress in this regard has been significant but it appears to be slowing, particularly in conflict-affected states. By 2014, the UK aims to have supported 11 million children through its aid programmes to basic education, as well as have trained 190,000 teachers and improve the quality of learning.

**H.E. He Yafai**, Representative, **China**, reaffirmed the importance of education to sustainable development. For the education-related development goals to be achieved, China emphasized the importance of (a) promoting education for harmony and peace; (b) increases in aid to basic education from the major donors; (c) a greater focus on expanding access to education at post-primary and secondary levels; and (d) greater efforts in regard to education quality. China has the biggest education system in the world, enrolling over 260 million children and young people. While domestic efforts to improve the education system continue, China has also recently undertaken several education-oriented development partnerships in Africa, assisting in the training of 1500 local teachers.

**H.E. Ms. Vesna Vuković**, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, **Croatia**, aligned her statement to that made by the EU. One of the major innovations undertaken in the education sector in Croatia has been the expansion of inclusive policies for children with special needs, through the Education Sector Development Plan. Over 51 programmes have been implemented in the past two years. Another innovative programme has focused on the educational needs of children living on remote islands, who have now been linked to partner schools on the mainland in order to ensure they receive appropriate education and training. Croatia also highlighted its support to education infrastructure and provision efforts in Afghanistan, where over 250 children at one school will benefit from their financial support.

**H.E. Mr. Mykola Maimeskul**, Permanent Representative, **Ukraine**, began by outlining the linkage between gender equality and the empowerment of women and progress on education. Gender-based violence, discrimination and sexual harassment continue to be barriers for girls and women wanting to access education, he said. Another area of particular concern to Ukraine is children's access to the internet content and the appropriate regulation thereof.

**H.E. Mr. Jean-Baptiste Mattéi**, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, **France**, noted that France linked the issues of education within ECOSOC to certain working groups within the G20, proposing greater coordination of work on this area between the two bodies. France provided over 1.5 billion Euros in aid to education in 2009 and for the past decade, has attempted to put a greater emphasis on aid to primary education, in keeping with commitments. However, France is particularly interested in finding other sources of finance in order to meet the education-related development goals. Innovative financing is one such option, and France's foreign ministry houses a working secretariat focused on innovative financing of education, including (a) a tax on international financial transactions; (b) micro-donations from individuals; and (c) public-private partnerships.

**H.E. Mr. Sang-Ki Park**, Representative, **Republic of Korea**, pointed to the ongoing inequities between countries and regions in regard to the education-related development goals. However, he also highlighted the dramatic progress made in the Republic of Korea in recent years. He focused specifically on the country's sustained investment in education over recent decades, as well as the full incorporation of girls and young women into expanded education systems. Although the Republic of Korea is still a relatively new partner in providing development assistance, he pointed to the upcoming Busan Forum as a possible venue in which to continue the discussion of education, particularly in the context of aid. In addition, the country recently launched a programme in which 4,000 volunteers were sent abroad to help provide technical assistance.

**H.E. Mrs. Latifa El Abida**, State Secretary in Charge of School Education, **Morocco**, described the comprehensive reforms her country has undertaken since 2000. Between 2008 and 2011, public expenditure on education increased by 150 per cent. In addition, a new conditional cash transfer system has been introduced in rural communities (covering about 357,000 families), where enrolment and retention rates were particularly low. In the decade since 2000, primary (children aged 6 to 11 years) enrolment increased dramatically and currently stands at around 97 per cent. Concurrent policies on decentralized decision-making and the promotion of gender equality have helped support the education-specific policies and programmes implemented over the past decade.

**H.E. Mr. Roberto Flores Bermudez, Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Honduras,** noted that in his country, one of the current goals in the education sector is to raise the average period of school attendance to nine years. Though eight out of 10 school children attend through the sixth grade, only three of those do so whilst progressing at the usual speed and at the appropriate age level. Overall, there have been positive trends in the education sector. Around 90 per cent of the population is now covered by basic education, with the goal of increasing that percentage to 95 by 2015. The drop-out rate has lowered dramatically, from 2.3 to 1.5 per cent between 2003 and 2007.

**H.E. Mrs. Maria Nazareth Farani Azevedo, Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Brazil,** highlighted the importance of the Bolsa Familia programme in enhancing the country's educational and learning outcomes in recent years. For example, more than 95 per cent of primary aged children are enrolled. Access and learning disparities have decreased systematically between 2005 and 2010. In addition, the country created a Basic Education Fund in 2007, which has been instrumental in providing additional public resources for education. In 2010-11, the government proposed a new, national education plan that focused specifically on marginalized communities. Within this plan, by the end of the decade, the percentage of GNI committed to education should increase from 4.5 to 7 per cent. Brazil has overseen the most rapid improvement globally in the average level of schooling since 1995 – a six year-old child in the lowest quintile now has the likelihood of achieving more than twice the level of schooling of her/his parents.

**H.E. Kristinn F. Árnason, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Iceland,** spoke about his country's commitment to ensuring gender equality in all social sectors, in particular in the education sector, which can have knock-on effects on other economic and social indicators. Iceland's focus on gender equality in education applies to both domestic education policies and policies supported as part of their development assistance programme.

**Mr. Luvuyo Ndimeni, Charge d'affaires, Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, South Africa,** expressed support for the statement delivered by Namibia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). He focused primarily on the impacts of the global financial and economic crisis on social spending, and in particular, education investment in developing countries. He noted that public-private partnerships will be key to sustaining progress during a period in which traditional resources for education might be constrained.

**H.E. Mr. Hamza Omar Hassan Ahmed, Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Sudan,** supported the statement made by Argentina on behalf of the G77. He also referred to the impact of the multiple global crises as well as the recent armed conflict which have made progress on the education-related development goals difficult. In the area of primary education, the number of students enrolled in Sudan has increased from 4 to 6 million between 2005 and 2009. The country is currently developing its vocational training programme, as well as a national strategy for girls' and women's education. Concerted efforts have been made at the national level to strengthen the role of education in the overall development strategy, but international support was still critical given the complexities the country faces.

**Ms. Nancy Madrigal, Charge d'affaires, Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, Cuba,** welcomed ECOSOC's focus on education but expressed dismay at the likelihood that many countries would not meet the targets set for the education-related MDG and EFA goals. This is the

result largely, she said, of ODA commitments not being met. Despite this, Cuba has surpassed the targets set for the education-related development goals. Illiteracy has been wiped out since 1961, fifty years ago. UNESCO has recognized Cuba as one of four countries with the highest overall educational performance world-wide. She called for enhanced international cooperation, without conditionalities, in the field of education and in social development more broadly.

**H.E. Monsignor Silvano Tomasi**, Permanent Observer to the United Nations in Geneva, **Holy See**, began by discussing the importance of churches and other religious communities' role in the provision of education throughout history. There are currently over 200,000 Catholic schools world-wide, he noted. In order for education to be most effective, cooperation between parents and schools should be fostered. Too often policy-makers focus on education as a means of achieving economic goals, but it is also central to human dignity and the participation of individuals in free societies.

**Statements – NGOs:**

The Representative of the **International Federation of University Women** spoke about the need for greater political will and increased financial resources in order to make the achievement of the education-related development goals a reality. She focused on the importance of girls' education, noting how a lack of education can force girls and women into poverty traps by increasing their risk of early pregnancy, poor health, early school drop-out, among others.

The Representative of the **Conference of Non-governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO)** stated that the primary responsibility for the provision of education rests with governments. He also highlighted the importance of linking education to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Representative of the **Legion of Good Will** focused on the importance of formal and non-formal education in order for communities to embrace universal values, including social justice and good will.

The representative of the **Baha'i International Community** emphasised the role of education in ensuring social justice.

The representative of the **World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts** highlighted its role as a long-standing provider of non-formal education to tens of millions of girls world-wide. She urged non-formal education programmes to be mainstreamed into national education strategies and encouraged the strengthening of partnerships between formal education systems and non-formal forms of education.

The representative of **International Federation Terre des Hommes** spoke about the need for education to focus on skills that can help individuals break free from poverty. He also highlighted the role of education in improving social cohesion, particularly between generations.

The Representative of the **New Future Foundation** discussed **the** interconnected struggle for accessing quality education that unites the African diaspora with disadvantaged populations within

Africa. She called for solidarity among these various groups in their ongoing quest for improving the quality of education.

The Representative of **World Vision International** discussed the organization's new education strategy, which focuses on literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. The organization aims to move towards a more quality-focused approach to its education programmes. Much of this work is centred on partnerships with Ministries of Education, local communities and sister NGOs.

The Representative of **Soroptimists International** highlighted her organization's focus on ensuring that girls and women have access to education in safe, healthy learning environments. In particular, she called for greater attention to be paid to the need for separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys within schools, as well as the need for secure, safe transport to schools.

The Representative of the **International Disability Alliance** focused on the ongoing marginalization of children and young people with disabilities from education systems. They are the most over-represented groups of people not in school, she said. She called on all states to implement Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which focuses on education access.

The representative of the **Istituto Maria Ausiliatrice Delle Salesiane Di Don Bosco** discussed the importance of teacher training to ensuring good learning outcomes.

The Representative of the **Convention of International, Independent Financial Advisors** highlighted the importance of training and education for ethics and in regard to sustainable development.

The Representative of the **United Network of Young Peacebuilders** discussed the need for quality education of relevance. This education should recognize diversity and promote non-violence and peace, he said.

The Representative of the **Palestinian Centre for Human Rights** highlighted the challenges faced by children and schools in the context of foreign occupation, including the lack of security and supplies, as well as classroom shortages.

The representative of **the World Information Transfer** discussed the importance of parenting techniques as a complement to effective teaching and learning.

The representative of the **Foundation for Subjective Experience and Results** stated that universal education is key to the reconciliation of peoples and areas.

The representative of the **International Forum for Child Welfare** called for ECOSOC to work more closely with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as highlighting the need for greater attention to be paid to the rights and needs of migrant children and refugees.

The representative of the **World Jewellery Confederation** discussed the importance of education and training programmes that mainstreamed corporate social responsibility into their curricula.