



Forty-Eighth Session
of the Commission for Social Development

**Agenda Item 3 (c)
Policy responses on employment
and the social consequences of the financial
and economic crisis, including its gender dimension**

Statement

by

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Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to address, on behalf of UNESCO, the 48th session of the Commission for Social Development under agenda item 3 (c) *Policy responses on employment and the social consequences of the financial and economic crisis, including its gender dimension*.

The note by the Secretariat is highly pertinent and covers several elements, including recommendations, of relevance to UNESCO.

The Organization's mission, is above all an ethical one: "*As a specialized agency of the UN system, UNESCO contributes to the building of peace, the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information*".

Throughout the strategy for the Medium Term Strategy 2008-2013, UNESCO is determined to accord priority to Africa and to gender equality. Moreover, specific targeted action is envisaged for youth, the least developed countries (LDCs), and small island developing states (SIDS). UNESCO will further respond to the needs of the disadvantaged and excluded groups, as well as the most vulnerable segments of society. The task is however more difficult at a time when the world is experiencing a severe economic crisis (along with other global crises).

UNESCO's overall strategy to the crisis is to invest out of the crisis in Education, the Sciences, Culture and Communication. A key role is also to monitor the impact of the crisis.

Let me first briefly focus on policy responses in the area of education. As indicated in document E/CN.5/2010/8 "*Advances in achieving inclusive social development, in particular in areas such as health and education, may be reversed and future progress could be jeopardized*". The *Education For All Monitoring Report 2010 "Reaching the marginalized"* was launched on 19 January 2010 here at United Nations' Headquarters by the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, and the Director-General of UNESCO, Mrs Irina Bokova. The report warns that the aftershock of the global crisis threatens to deprive millions of children in the world's poorest countries of an education. With 72 million primary school age children and another 71 million adolescents still out of school, a combination of slower economic growth, rising poverty and budget pressures could erode the gains in the past decade. "*While rich countries nurture their economic recovery, many poor countries face the imminent prospect of education reversals. We cannot afford to create a lost generation of children deprived of their chance for an education that might lift them out of poverty*" said the Director-General.

The authors of the Report estimate the annual financing gap for key education goals at USD 16 billion – a significant increase over previous assessments. The report identifies policies that successfully counteract persistent inequalities, including improving accessibility and affordability by cutting fees and informal charges and offering targeted incentives; strengthening the learning environment by providing highly skilled teachers and expanded intercultural bilingual teaching; expanding entitlements and opportunities by integrating education strategies into wider anti-marginalization policies, such as social protection, reinforced legal entitlements and more fairly distributed public spending.

Figures from the Global Monitoring Report also featured strongly in the high-level panel on *“Rebuilding Education for the 21st Century”* with UNESCO’s Director-General, Queen Rania of Jordan, business and political leaders at the recent World Economic Forum in Davos (27 to 29 January 2010). As stressed by Queen Rania *“Lack of education is an unfolding crisis – it is an emergency. We have seen how countries have been able to move mountains of money to shore up their economies and only move molehills for education, and that has to change”*.

In the context of the economic crisis, it is particularly important that education systems equip students with the necessary skills to be competitive in the labour market. UNESCO’s consultations with youth reveal a strong sense of frustration that there should be a closer relationship between education planning (systems and curricula) and ensuring that young people are better prepared for the world of work, which in the time of economic crisis, means a greater focus on the demand for skills development and job training.

One of the four priority areas in UNESCO’s education programme is therefore Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) which is oriented towards the world of work. TVET helps learners acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to develop professional careers and enter the labour-market, as well as active citizenship and lifelong learning.

UNESCO is dedicated to advancing learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups and in particular women and youth, - which is especially important in the context of the economic crisis with alarming unemployment rates in far too many countries.

Distinguished Delegates,

Document E/CN.5/2010/8 emphasizes the need to focus on expanding social protection systems, - which includes also to protect (and if possible increase) education budgets.

UNESCO strongly agrees with especially the following recommendations at the international level in the note of the Secretariat, - and which the Organization contributes to implement through various initiatives:

- *Increasing support to developing countries in their efforts to implement policies to counter the social impacts of the crisis;*
- *Strengthening and coordinating efforts by the United Nations system to accomplish the crisis initiatives, especially the Global Jobs Pact and the **Social Protection Floor Initiative**.*

Among the key policy recommendations at the national level we have taken particular note of and support in E/CN. 5/2010/8 are the following:

- *Comprehensive responses to the crisis, including fiscal stimulus packages, should accord priority to employment creation and social protection for all women and men, and **protect core social spending in health and education**.*

The Eight Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All which met in Oslo, Norway, from 16 to 18 December 2008 adopted the Oslo Declaration which emphasizes the need to protect social spending in education and actually increase it: *“We urgently call on national governments to allocate adequate domestic resources (4 to 6 percent of GNP/15-20 percent of public expenditure) to education, on development partners to increase official development assistance in accordance with the Doha declaration and on all EFA partners to prioritize investment in basic education within a balanced approach to the whole sector. We further urge the development partners to deliver on past commitments and ensure the timely flow of adequate resources through various bilateral and multilateral aid channels including FTI Trust Funds, through which they assist the most EFA challenged countries. In countries making progress towards EFA we call on governments and the development partners to better target those still excluded from education”*.

Distinguished Delegates,

One of the ways UNESCO assists Member States to respond to the crisis is through the Regional and Sub-regional Fora of Ministers in charge of Social Development organized in the context of the Organization’s Management of Social Transformations (intergovernmental) Programme (MOST). . The MOST Fora of Ministers aim to improve policy formulation by ensuring it is underpinned by state-of-the-art research, and anchored by international standards and norms. They provide high quality policy responses to the crisis. The Fora of Ministers give the Ministers the opportunity to meet and exchange their experiences and to dialogue with researchers and other important stakeholders in social development, particularly the UN system.

The Fora of Ministers of Social Development provide:

- A space for regional dialogue at Ministerial level on regional strategies on social policy;
- Opportunities to work on harmonization initiatives;
- A platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices on national policies;
- An environment that encourages the development of joint projects;

- Opportunities to influence international reflection and policy-making.

In a globalized world where governments are currently facing major crises, the Fora of Ministers of Social Development, - which so far involves seven sub regions and about 90 Ministers of Social Development, are highly pertinent given the trend towards cross-border cooperation and the increasing expectations as to the role of the State.

The VIIth Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Latin America, which was organized by the Government of Ecuador and MOST in August 2009, focused on the social impacts of the crisis, and the ways forward. In the Quito Declaration adopted it stressed that the Global Jobs Pact and social protection are among the key policy responses.

The thematic session of the ninth session of the Intergovernmental Council (IGC) of the MOST Programme (28-30 September 2009) was "*National and International Responses to the Crisis*" and contributed to the adopted recommendations which are highly relevant for the Fora of Ministers of Social Development.

Social protection is indeed one of the key policy responses to combat the social impacts of the crisis, especially for the most vulnerable such as youth, women and the disabled. In this spirit UNESCO fully supports the Social Protection Floor Initiative led by ILO and WHO and participates with them in its development. At the inter-agency meeting on the Social Protection Floor (Turin, Italy, October 2009) it was suggested that the Fora of Ministers could advocate for this initiative and exchange best practices within social protection. In response to this, ministers for several upcoming Fora of Ministers have already agreed to have this as the thematic focus. At the end of 2011 MOST will publish an International Policy Brief on the exchange of social protection practices and experiences drawn from several regions

As indicated in document E/CN.5/2010/8, some social groups, including youth, are suffering more from the crisis than others. This crisis has already affected several crucial domains of the life of youth, many of whom are being affected by the decrease in funds available for education and training, difficulties in entering the job market, loss of employment and anxiety about an uncertain future. These were highlighted by the 120 youth delegates of the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum (1-3 October, Paris) who reflected on ways to invest out of the crisis through partnerships with youth organizations. In addition to the Plenary events there were parallel sessions such as *Youth at the Crossroads: A future without violent radicalization; the Role of culture in promoting youth-centered sustainable development, Investing in Social Online Networking Tools, Science for a green economy valuing youth perspectives and actions, How to make education more relevant in today's world and UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences' Sector's Global Strategy on Youth and Strategy on African Youth*. In the Forum's Final Report the young participants stressed namely the need to strengthen the link between education and the changing labor market and *strongly demanded that donor countries follow-up commitments of development aid to education at a level which will ensure the*

achievement of EFA objectives by 2015. They equally called for greater participation of youth in the development of national policies and programmes to address the long-term effects of the crises.

Recently, the First Forum of Ministers Responsible for Social and Sustainable Social Development in the Caribbean, which was organized by the Government of Jamaica and UNESCO from 24-26 January 2010 in Kingston, focused on *Social Development Strategies for the Caribbean Youth in the context of the Global Crisis.* The participating ministers recognized that there is insufficient attention paid to monitoring, evaluating and coordinating existing policies within the region and effort should focus on ensuring better implementation of (pre) existing policy statements and recommendations.

The Ministers adopted a Ministerial Declaration in which they recommended to the CARICOM Summit on Youth Development (29-30 January 2010, Suriname) several concrete policies for coherent and co-ordinated national and regional action to advance the agenda for investing in youth. Among these recommendations are the following:

“1. Each government establish a high level mechanism to provide leadership, co-ordination, mainstreaming and follow-up on the implementation of national youth policies. Ideally, the mechanism could have support or sponsorship at the level of Head of State or Cabinet. Ensuring co-ordination and mainstreaming within government should be a key objective. The mechanism should be bi-partisan and to signal the need for concerted action;

5. Strengthen national data collection and analysis capabilities and promote collaboration among the statistical departments or agencies of governments in a regional initiative to develop a common approach to collecting regional youth data, including a focus on harmonizing meta data, disaggregated data (e.g. gender), the development of indicators and baseline data for evidence-based policy-making.”

The policy makers saw the International Year of Youth as an opportunity to advance youth advocacy and revitalize government commitment to investing in youth development, and to call action to implement a co-ordinated regional approach on issues such as:

- education responses, formal and non-formal;*
- linking education and job skill training (including ICTs);*
- Health wellbeing, HIV education, sex education (see UNESCO sex guidelines), phased targeted health care facilities and services sensitive to youth;*
- mainstreaming youth participation, especially as responsible citizens with the right to give feedback on all social services, education system, justice and police, on their experiences as perceived by youth so services can modify approaches.*

In fact, this International Year of Youth (GA resolution 64/134) on *Dialogue and Mutual Understanding* is highly relevant to UNESCO’s mandate and its approach to youth as agents of peace and positive change. UNESCO will be closely involved in the preparations and celebrations of the Year in cooperation with the UN Programme on Youth. From 18-19 February UNESCO will be hosting in Paris a UN DESA meeting of

UN Heads of youth programmes to discuss a joint UN plan for the celebration of the Year.

In addition (and among others), UNESCO plans to be fully engaged with key global youth events in 2010 (among which the World Youth Conference, organised from 24-27 August 2010 in Mexico) and has already put forward the suggestion to create a joint follow-up mechanism linking the outcomes of all global events on youth. The culmination of the International Year on Youth with the 2011 UNESCO Youth Forum will be an opportunity to assess the efforts made during the International Year and to jointly reflect on the way forward.

In addition to the above I would like to draw the attention to the fact that UNESCO has several other activities and actions contributing to respond to the crisis, *such as* e.g. to mainstream the principles of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue into national development policies as indispensable conditions for social cohesion, development and peace, and to empower people through the flow of ideas and by access to information and knowledge.

On behalf of UNESCO I would like to congratulate the Bureau of the Commission for Social Development to choose the social impacts of the crisis and policy responses as the emerging theme for this session. As stressed by the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, and the Chief Executives of the United Nations system, at a meeting at UNESCO (4 and 5 April 2009) *“If action is not taken urgently, it can be devastating for the most vulnerable, with growing social insecurity and displacement of people. The achievements of the MDGs is at the stake. The middle class in many countries may be weakened. The vulnerable groups, children, youth, elderly, migrants and people with disabilities are hit the strongest”*. The Chief Executives Board (CEB) underlined that the capacity of governments to design, afford and implement the right policies, while coordinating them with international partners, must be strengthened: *“The multilateral system plays a central role in articulating and delivering a global and coherent response to the crisis, and in translating it into action at the country level”*. UNESCO is strongly committed to this endeavour to achieve social integration, poverty reduction, social justice and development. The newly elected Director-General of UNESCO, Mrs Irina Bokova, is dedicated to helping countries find solutions to the crisis through Education, the Sciences, Communication and Culture in order to assist the most vulnerable and mitigate the social impacts of the crisis.

Thank you!