

Human Rights Council (17th session, 30 May – 17 June 2011)

Item 3: Promotion and Protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, 31st May

NGO joint statement on behalf of Defence for Children International, Plan International, the International Catholic Child Bureau, Foundation Intervida, Child Helpline International, Women's World Summit Foundation, Terre des Hommes International Federation¹, the NGO Group to the CRC and War Child Holland²

Thank you Mr. President,

We would like to thank Mr. Singh for the presentation of his first report to the Human Rights Council.

We welcome the special attention given to equality of opportunity in education and the emphasis given to the discrimination and inequalities faced in education in the report. We appreciate that the report notes that the promotion of equality in education is a challenge both for developed and developing countries. Equality of opportunity in education not only refers to access to education but also to the quality of education and to specific aims enshrined in article 29 of the CRC. All States should ensure equal access to education, quality of education and improve education governance.

We appreciate that the Special Rapporteur considers freedom from violence and the right to education as one of the main area of concerns for his mandate and welcome his intention to work closely on this issue with the Special Representative of the Secretary General on violence against children.

Like the Special Rapporteur, we believe that school should be a place free of violence for children. It should be a place where children should be safe and blossom. Violence remains a major impediment to getting all children into schools and keeping them there. It affects approximately one million children worldwide every day. The violence can include acts such as corporal punishment, sexual abuse, neglect, verbal and emotional abuse, bullying, peer-to-peer violence, youth gangs, weapons or harassment on the journey to and from school. The impact on children affected by violence is devastating and has wide reaching social, health and economic consequences both within communities and countries at large.

The elimination of violence in schools needs to be recognised as a prerequisite for getting all children into schools and keeping them there. We would like to encourage the Special Rapporteur to:

- Consistently address violence in school with the national authorities;
- Encourage States:
 - to develop laws that explicitly protect children from violence in schools and to enforce those laws;
 - to have clear laws prohibiting corporal punishment and clear policy on bullying in every school.

¹ Having ECOSOC consultative status

² Without ECOSOC status.

- to develop awareness raising campaigns against violence and to develop child friendly and accessible complaints procedures where children would be safe when filling their complaints and receive the child protection services they are entitled to;
- to invest in training teachers in positive discipline methods, helping them understand alternative approaches to behaviour management";
- to support children to identify and address violence in their schools.

-To prepare a thematic report on violence and the right to education.

Finally, we call upon the Human Rights Council to:

- Consistently address this particular issue when it monitors the human rights situation of Member States in the UPR.

Thank you Mr President