



ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 3 SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

31 May 2011

Thank you Mr President,

Franciscans International (FI) welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, with regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity in education.

In particular we support the human-rights approach in achieving Education for All. FI reiterates that ensuring access to education will certainly help reduce poverty and address other human rights violations and it directly speeds up the achievement of other MDGs, such as the Gender Equality and Poverty eradication.

However, FI is concerned at the many challenges to the realisation of Universal Education and wishes to draw your attention to the following:

First: a great obstacle is represented by poverty because of school fees or other indirect costs. This is further exacerbated if compounded by gender-discriminatory behaviors. Unfortunately, in many regions, there is the perception that investing financial means to educate girls is not worthwhile. Young girls living in poverty are 3.5 more likely to drop out of school than girls living in rich households. FI recalls that the objective of achieving universal education should be coupled with the eradication of gender discriminatory barriers in accessing education. This is of paramount importance in order to address other human rights violations: indeed, educated girls will be incentivized to find a job, avoid early marriages, and escape prostitution and trafficking.

Secondly, children with disabilities are also amongst the most affected. In countries such as Malawi and Tanzania, children with disabilities are twice more likely to drop out of school. In European countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, only 58 per cent of children with disabilities have access to primary education.

Thirdly, children living in rural or remote areas and indigenous children are two times more likely to drop out of school than urban children and face discrimination and exclusion when at school.

Civil conflicts, humanitarian crises and natural disasters represent further obstacles to the right to education. Governments should take all necessary measures to grant continuity in education to all children in conflict and affected regions.

Lastly Mr President, FI stresses that school represents a safe environment for all children and opens new life opportunities for their future. Free primary education is just a first step: in order to achieve this goal, governments must ensure that education is also compulsory, that all children effectively attend school and that all families are put in a position to send their children to school, regardless their income.

Thank you Mr. President.