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Mr. Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today, I have the honour to present my third report to the United Nations General Assembly since I assumed my functions as Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. My report is devoted to the Right to Education and Post-2015 Development Agenda. Considering education as the foundation of the post-2015 development agenda, it elaborates upon a rights-based approach to future education development goals, with necessary implementation strategies. In conclusions, the report contains a set of recommendations.

I have looked with keen interest into the report of the High level Panel presented to the Secretary-General on 30 May 2013, entitled: “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development.” This report proposes an agenda for post-2015 development planning which seeks to “provide a fresh vision and framework, based on our common humanity” and “to achieve a pattern of development where dignity and human rights become a reality for all.” In my report, I have tried to make an appraisal from a right to education perspective of universal goal on education, as also of other universal goals, notably on poverty eradication and on women’s empowerment as proposed in the Report of the High-Level Panel.

Mr. Chairperson:

Available experience in the pursuit of the Education for All (EFA) goals and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provides useful lessons to draw upon in current discussions on the future education agenda. Thus, as the targets set for the MDGs have not been met, the central role of education for accelerating progress towards all MDGs has been recognized in the commitments relating to education at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the MDGs in 2010. This is also reflected in the Ministerial Declaration resulting from the High level Segment of ECOSOC (July 2012). The Human Rights Council in its Resolution 20/7 on the right to education specifically recognizes “the role that the full realization of the right to education plays in helping to achieve Millennium Development Goals.”

The key role of the right to education also came into prominence in the High level Panel on “Mainstreaming human rights into development agenda with the focus on areas of the right to education” organized by the Human Rights Council on 1 March 2013. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated on that occasion, “central to the human rights approach is the universal right to education.” Moreover, the International Expert Conference: Vienna+20, held in Vienna last June also underlined the “importance of the right to education for the empowerment of individuals and the full realization of all rights, including the right to development.”

I was very encouraged by the resolution 23/4 on the right to education, adopted by the Human Rights Council in June 2013 which underlines “the need to ensure that the right to education is central in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.” In that spirit and taking into account the above, the post-2015 development agenda must build upon the Secretary-General’s Global Initiative – Education First - launched on 26 September 2012, which sets Secretary-General’s vision to make education a top priority of the global political agenda.

With a human rights-based approach, we must recognize the importance of linking States obligations on the right to education with political commitments. This is crucial in order to avoid the gap between the commitments and the reality in attaining the MDGs and the EFA goals. This is also of critical importance in face of growing disparities in access to education as the demand for education grows, and what is on offer becomes more diverse. Inequalities in opportunities for education will be exacerbated by the growth of unregulated private providers of education, with wealth or economic status becoming the most important criterion to access a quality education. Even quality basic education is becoming a privilege of the wealthy, whereas education should progressively be made free at all levels in line with international legal obligations of States.
Mr Chairperson, Excellencies:

Allow me to briefly mention my views on the main contours of the education agenda for future, as contained in my report. Such an agenda should build upon and generalize developments in national legislation and policies in many countries for providing basic education of longer duration as part of general secondary education. These developments should include technical and vocation education and training (TVET) based quality learning and acquisitions of competencies, in order to meet challenges of an increasingly globalized economy, as I proposed in my report on “Technical and Vocational Education and Training from a Right to Education Perspective” (A/67/310) to the General Assembly last year. My present report expounds on these ideas, taking into account current developments and the important place that the right to education should occupy as a development priority.

In the post-2015 development agenda, education goal should have the objective not only to make education accessible at the junior secondary level to all but the completion of full secondary level education of good quality by 2030 (time-frame for the agenda), with special place of TVET as an integral part of secondary education, with pathways for the pursuit of higher education. Skill development is particularly necessary to meet the rising aspiration of youth.

This is of utmost importance while responding to quality imperatives. We should adopt a holistic approach to quality, in which, going beyond its instrumental role, education is harnessed to its humanistic mission. The post-2015 development agenda should seek to ensure that quality is not sacrificed while expanding access to education. It should emphasize the need for normative action aimed at the development of minimum quality norms and standards - applicable both in public and private schools. The education implementation strategies should stipulate that countries adopt national quality evaluation mechanisms, to be applied throughout the education process. Governments must also ensure that teachers are well qualified, enjoy social and professional esteem, and are supported through career development opportunities, with novel modalities of teacher training in tandem with reforms in education.

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies:

Education is a powerful tool in poverty eradication, and its empowering role deserves full emphasis. However, a shortcoming of the Report of the High-Level Panel, mentioned above, is that such an approach is not reflected in the first illustrative goal on poverty eradicate. Any education development strategies should recognize that education is indispensable in eradicating poverty wherever it is prevalent, with social protection measures for enabling children from poor household to avail of their fundamental right to education.

Similarly, universal goal related to women’s empowerment should be closely linked to education as a fundamental right, with special measures in favour of women and girls in vulnerable and marginalized situations. Educating women and girls should, a priori, be viewed as a human rights imperative, rather than being undertaken solely because of potential benefits to their children or to society.

Thus, education agenda should be devised along the lines of right-holders and duty-bearers. Education goals should be formulated as entitlements, with corresponding responsibility of governments to their citizens for delivering on the goals and targets, with a focus on quality imperatives.

I consider it necessary that each universal goal should be accompanied by implementation strategies based on a human rights approach that can guide national level action to be undertaken by Governments. The implementations strategy reflected in the explanations in the Report of the High level Panel should be further developed – the post-2015 development agenda should first state the goal; then propose implementation strategies, followed by the monitoring mechanisms, accountability and enforcement.
Though education is a primary responsibility of governments, it is also a social responsibility. The future education agenda should aim at fostering active participation and engagement of local bodies and civil society organizations, including in particular communities, teachers, students and their parents. Education systems of tomorrow need to be so designed that they delineate clearly the role and responsibility of various stakeholders. Governments must maintain a dialogue with them in the implementation of education agenda.

The proposed post-2015 development agenda should also advance a framework of international development cooperation, founded upon the principle of international solidarity. International support is critically important in assisting the developing world, especially the poorest and most fragile States, in achieving the right to education. “Financial and technical support” must be provided to least developed countries by development partners “to implement their national education plans and programmes” while recognizing the need for strengthening national education systems.

Mr Chairperson:

As the High-Level Panel has recommended, a new global review mechanism for the post-2015 commitments should be established based on international human rights standards, and an independent review with effective civil society participation. Measuring, reporting on, and ensuring that future development goals are nationally enforceable will be instrumental in achieving successful progression towards their realization. Developing a set of indicators with benchmarks for this purpose deserves special attention. Thus, political commitments by governments must be operationalized in goals, targets and benchmarks. This will enable to better identify the shortcomings and assess whether education agenda is being progressively advanced.

Accountability as a cornerstone of the post-2015 development agenda should be further linked to the enforcement of right to education so that when it is not fully respected or fulfilled, individuals and groups being deprived of its enjoyment can seek justice and claim that it is safeguarded and enforced. Monitoring the implementation of education goals must be closely tied to national, regional and international enforcement mechanisms.

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My report also reflects on a few issues which I believe to be of critical importance in the field of education.

Post-2015 agenda for education should embrace equitable approaches to address marginalization and exclusion in education, with positive measures including affirmative action and social schemes, targeting disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. The key importance of the right to education as a powerful lever for eliminating the intergenerational transmission of poverty must figure prominently in the post-2015 development agenda. The achievement of internationally agreed targets for poverty eradication will be missed and inequalities between countries and within societies will widen if education is not intertwined with the future goal on poverty eradication.

Education benefits both the individual and the society and deserves high development priority. It is vital that development agenda focuses on increasing domestic and international investment in education based on an enduring legal and policy framework.

I also firmly believe that education should be preserved as a public good and social interest in education should be fostered. Private education providers must be carefully regulated to ensure that education is not allowed to be mercantilised as purely business and that social interest in education is maintained.
Finally, I wish to make special mention of the importance of fostering a humanistic mission of education, rather than confining to its mere instrumental role. This is a matter of concern today when humanistic mission of education is being vitiated.

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies:

Reflecting the concerns such as mentioned above, my report makes a number of recommendations. Allow me to highlight some of them.

In contrast to the MDGs, post-2015 development agenda should create an overarching framework of education which is all inclusive, addresses all aspects of education and is premised upon a rights-based approach. This would impart strength and legitimacy to the development agenda, and provide a firm foundation for action at national level.

All human rights are universal and indivisible, and universal education goals in future agenda should be universally applicable to all nations. We should constantly bear in mind that norms and principles underlying the right to education as an internationally recognized right are applicable everywhere without exception, whatever be the level of education development.

The right to education, which is essential for the exercise of all other human rights, is of paramount importance in national and international development agenda, emerging from a broad global development vision. Full realization of right to quality education for all as a fundamental human right is a determinant factor in achieving future agenda.

National legislation establishing right to basic education has been developed in many countries as part of the EFA process. In future, Governments must be encouraged to carry this process further. Thus, education laws should be modernized so that key dimensions of the right to education such as provision of quality of education, skill development and technical and vocational education and training, national investment in education, regulating private providers of education, fostering lifelong learning etc. are addressed in national legal framework. Such a framework is important as it provides basis for national implementation strategies, in line with international obligations and commitments.

I would like to make a special mention of the important role of the Parliamentarians with respect to the education agenda. As lawmakers and as public figures, they can ensure that necessary laws and policies are enacted, effectively implemented, and that governments are held to account to fulfil their commitments to education. They can also raise public debate on issues of critical importance.

The central role of education now recognized in order to accelerate progress towards all the MDGs deserves continued and enhanced attention. We must also recognize and ensure that all development goals are underpinned by educational dimensions. The right to education should be embedded in all such goals. High priority should be given to it in national development so that it becomes an integral part of development planning and of policies and programmes implementation. The right to education deserves strategic considerations in public policies and in global partnerships. Aligning development planning with human rights norms and principles is essential to avoid that economic progress continues to leave untouched those who remain marginalized, and deprived of educational opportunities. The principle of social justice and equity, reflected in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, are of abiding importance and should receive renewed emphasis in post-2015 development agenda with a view to creating a better world for present and future generations.

I would like to conclude my statement by emphasizing once again that education is the foundation upon which the future agenda for development should be edified. I look forward with high expectation to your full support and abiding engagement in moving in that direction, and in defending the noble cause of education.

Thank you.