

Statement on behalf of the European Union by H.E. Mr. Jan Grauls, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, at the United Nations General Assembly Sixty-fourth session on The right to education in emergency situations

9 July 2010

On behalf of the European Union, I would like to thank the governments of Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Norway and Qatar for forging a cross regional partnership to come to a resolution related to last year's General Assembly thematic debate on "Education in Emergencies".

The EU is very pleased with the interest many delegations have shown, which has resulted in constructive consultations leading up to the resolution adopted today. The Candidate Countries, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

The message of the resolution is clear: education in emergencies deserves full attention, at the same level as other equally important, life-saving needs which humanitarian assistance aims to address during an emergency, such as food, shelter, protection, water, sanitation and so on. From the outset, the EU has engaged with partners to work on the draft resolution, stressing the universal character of the right to education in accordance with fundamental instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The EU would like to take this opportunity to state for the record that this resolution does not alter in any way the current norms and obligations of international law, in particular human rights and international humanitarian law, but merely attempts to clarify how these standards relate to the issue of education. We commend the establishment of the education cluster of the UN IASC to address in a coordinated manner educational needs in emergency situations, including through partnerships for the implementation of the Minimum Standards for Education, Preparedness, Response and Recovery of the INEE. Furthermore, we sincerely believe in financing according to assessed needs as a primary way to respond to the humanitarian needs of the affected population.

The EU commends the work of OCHA and the UN Agencies that provide humanitarian assistance as well as the work of the Special Rapporteurs who monitor the specific issue of the right to education. The EU also welcomes in particular the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict, and continues to encourage the fulfillment of her precious task. The EU appreciates this resolution as an excellent one-off opportunity to consolidate all relevant issues concerning the right to education in emergency situations, while entrusting further follow-up to the appropriate UN bodies.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process