

**First UN Forum on Minority Issues**  
**Palais des Nations, 15-16 December, 2008**  
**Day 1: Session: Essential Requirements for an Effective Education Strategy**

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UNDP is very pleased to take part in the first UN Forum on Minority Issues, and would like to thank the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues for the invitation extended to our senior management. We take this opportunity to appreciate her continued constructive engagement with us, over the last two years, in assisting us to develop a “Resource Guide on Minorities in Development”, the draft of which was reviewed recently at a validation consultation, with the participation of our staff, the Independent Expert herself, OHCHR and the Minority Rights Group International.

We also would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Viktoria Mohacsi on her appointment as the Chair of the Forum and wish her the best of luck.

Madam Chair and participants,

The UNDP’s Strategic Plan for 2008-2011 reiterates the importance of enhanced attention for “respect for diversity”, “inclusion of vulnerable populations”, “the need to include those “who are being left farthest behind” in the process of growth”, as well as the “reduction of various forms of inequality and protecting vulnerable groups. Based on the development paradigm, the objective is to ensure **real improvements in people’s lives and in the choices and opportunities open to them**, including for those who belong to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, who are often the subject of discrimination and exclusion. As rightly pointed out in the documents for the meeting, education can indeed serve as an “indispensable agency” to explore available opportunities and make the right choices.

Madam Chair,

Since there are other organizations within the UN system that are better qualified to address education-related issues, UNDP neither focuses on **education as a sector** nor engages **directly** in activities that relate to primary and secondary education. However, and given the broader relevance of education for advancing human development, we undertake advocacy at the global level, within the context of the Education for All (EFA) process that’s being led by UNESCO, to raise awareness of the linkages between Education for All (EFA) goals, poverty reduction and the MDGs, as the overarching framework, so that they can be pursued in a mutually reinforcing manner. This, we hope, will ensure development effectiveness and cost-effective use of public resources.

At the national level, both as a development agency and as the agency that supports coherence and delivering as one for results, we work through partnerships, with national and local authorities and with civil society, and interventions in our key focus areas of poverty reduction and institution and capacity building efforts to help build political support for education through promoting pro-poor policy choices and measures in national development strategies and frameworks and through strengthening cross-sectoral linkages in implementation.

Madam Chair,

The draft recommendations placed before us already provide a general framework to further enhance the right to education of minorities, and we would like to make 3 observations:

1. On the recommendation concerning the budgetary allocations (page 4 of the draft recommendations), it may be useful to highlight the important role that the Parliaments could play in budgeting and oversight. Therefore, it is particularly important that minorities are represented in Parliaments and have a strong voice in the process. The recommendation could also be strengthened by highlighting the need to institutionalize the role of the Standing Committees in the pre-budget debates.
2. Increased citizen involvement in the fiscal process is crucial for efficiency and effectiveness of resource allocations in the education sector, as in the social sector. That can best be done through strong partnerships between representatives of minorities, CSOs and human rights organizations, and national and local authorities.
3. Beyond political will, lack of technical and policy capacity can be one of the core challenges that may contribute to non-strategic allocation and spending on education. Hence, constructive engagement and capacity development support for relevant line ministries and departments is necessary. This is where development partners, bilateral and multilateral can play a decisive role.

Thank you for your attention.