



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
9 May 2011

Original: English

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### Substantive session of 2011

Geneva, 4-29 July 2011

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**High-level segment: annual ministerial review**

### **Statement submitted by Fundación Cimientos, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* E/2011/100.

## **Statement\***

### **Public education in Argentina**

Argentina was a pioneer in accessible primary education. Secondary education, on the other hand, has been high in quality but fundamentally exclusive and elitist. Although Argentina has witnessed an increase in the number of students enrolled in high school in the last 25 years, this increase has not necessarily been accompanied by increases in quality, especially in the school systems that serve the nation's most vulnerable populations. Particularly worrisome is the frequency of grade repetition, which has reached 35 per cent, and high school drop-out rates, which are estimated at 12 per cent annually. Those students who do manage to remain in school do not achieve acceptable results; surveys rank Argentina 58th out of 65 countries, revealing a poor performance relative to other Latin American countries as well as troubling internal discrepancies. Argentine schools are among the most disparate with respect to their various curricula.

Since it was founded in 1997, Cimientos has worked to help youth of limited means exercise their right to a quality education, and has received national and international recognition for its programmes. Through the Scholarship Programme, children and their families not only receive financial support, but also personalized mentoring. The stable bonds thus formed serve to reinforce and support these students' commitment to their education. The number of scholarships awarded annually increased until reaching a self-imposed limit of 3,000 annually. Thereafter, the programme's numerical growth depends on the Alliances Programme, which promotes the development and enrichment of non-profit organizations that support students in their communities. These partner organizations, located throughout Argentina, form a network through which participants can learn from each other's experiences. Upon finishing school, many students become part of the Graduates Network, where they gain access to professional training and job opportunities. Finally, the University Scholarship Programme implements strategies to assist students during their undergraduate studies. But the responsibility of academic success does not lie with the student alone. We are all obliged to view the school as an institution that needs to evolve and improve. The School Support Programme provides mentoring to educators, supporting initiatives that they develop in order to achieve better results. Cimientos' accumulated know-how has afforded them opportunities for collaboration with other institutions and the public sector, engaging both national and provincial governments in high school improvement plans, loosening rigid structures and introducing fresh paradigms so that students can learn more and better.

All of our programmes are characterized by systematic evaluations and an ongoing effort to improve the tools and processes upon which we rely. Conscious of the need to gather up-to-date information on the state of secondary education, we perform research that focuses on assessing its exclusivity and integration of all children and youth. Though the Government may be the foremost guarantor of the right to education, at Cimientos we believe that education is a collective cause — that non-profits and all education stakeholders have a role in the design, demands, and control of educational programmes and policies. This is how we will ultimately achieve excellence in education for all.

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\* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.