



## Economic and Social Council

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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 Humanitarian Foundation of Canada, 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\***

The Humanitarian Foundation of Canada is pleased to learn that the 2011 annual ministerial review, to be held during the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in July, will focus on education. Education represents the most powerful means to creating sustainable communities by building the capacities of individuals through learning and skills development. Over the past several years, Humanitarian Foundation of Canada has worked with partners in a number of developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region to improve access to primary education, with a special emphasis on the education of girls who have been historically marginalized in many of these regions.

Our education projects include four key priorities: (a) improving access to primary school education in rural communities where existing conditions are very poor and educational opportunities are limited by building new schools; (b) enhancing the experience and qualifications of primary school teachers by providing training and updated curriculum; (c) equipping classrooms with technology, such as computers with educational software, to enrich the learning process; and (d) utilizing new educational facilities for training adult members of the community during the evenings and on weekends, targeting skills training to the unique needs of the region, holding special sessions for women to focus on women's health and education.

Humanitarian Foundation of Canada undertakes this work on the basis that primary education is essential to equip children with the foundational knowledge and skills that are necessary for a life of economic self-sufficiency and good citizenship. Primary education can also foster a sense of individual self-worth and promote the understanding and respect of others. By building partnerships between local representatives and project coordinators, these education projects also provide an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and technology transfer that bridge the gap between the developed and the developing worlds.

While we believe that our work is making an important difference, much remains to be done. Humanitarian Foundation of Canada notes the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2011 report, which indicates significant progress in the Asia-Pacific region on achieving gender equality in primary education. However, we are troubled by the disclosure of the lack of progress or even regression in many developing countries in this region relating to primary enrolment, reaching the last grade, and primary completion.

Humanitarian Foundation of Canada notes that all 192 Member States of the United Nations have committed themselves to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which include: (a) Goal 2: Achieving universal primary education by 2015; and (b) Goal 3: Overcoming gender disparity in primary and secondary education at all levels by 2015.

The Economic and Social Council must continue to show leadership to ensure that these Goals are achieved by the target date. Humanitarian Foundation of Canada reiterates that the success of this achievement will depend upon the further collaboration of NGOs and civil society organizations with domestic governments to initiate and carry out new education projects.

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