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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Fundación Intervida, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

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

[29 May 2012]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Guaranteeing the right to education in food crisis situations

The UDHR (Art. 26), the ICESCR (Art. 13) and the CRC (Art. 28) guarantee the right of children to education. The UDHR (Art. 24), article 11 of the ICESCR and the General Comment No. 12 of the CESCR defend a person's right to an adequate standard of living which guarantees their right to adequate food, especially for children: CRC (Arts. 6 and 24). The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Art. 14) asks member states to take measures to put into practice the right of the child to enjoying the best possible state of physical, mental and spiritual health. And Resolution 64/290 (the right to education in emergency situations) and the A/66/269 report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education highlights the need to assign "political support and financial resources" to education in emergency situations.

Emergency situations, according to the A/HRC/8/10 report from 2008, are defined as "any crisis situations due to natural causes or to armed conflict". Similarly the protocol of the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies establishes minimum standards for preserving education in conflicts or natural disasters.

From the beginning of 2011 a large number of regions in Africa are suffering from a serious food crisis which affects the most vulnerable members of the population. Other regions of the world, like Central America in 2009, have suffered food crises which have left children seriously at risk. According to UNICEF at present 1 million under-fives find themselves at risk of severe malnutrition in the region that includes Somalia, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Cameroon and Senegal. Around 19 million children are born underweight every year, because they and their mothers have suffered from nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy. This complicates children's early access to the education cycle.

Malnutrition causes deficiencies in the cognitive, linguistic and social development of the child, attention deficiency at school, drop-outs and academic failure, among other things. It is, in fact, an indirect way of violence against them. Several case studies show a relationship between early access to education and the subsequent benefit in terms of cognitive development and school performance and permanence. The earlier access to education takes place, the better the performance and subsequent development of the child. This is why the education projects that development organizations carry out in countries more prone to food crises include access to a small nutritional supplement from the pre-primary and primary stage. This food supplement, which is provided by the school using local produce, favors the minimum health conditions necessary for being able to start or continue the education process, promotes school attendance and helps maintain the normality of this process.

The specific consideration of a food crisis situation as an emergency situation allows for the establishment of protocols, the mobilization of resources and the assignation of funds in the communities and States for guaranteeing the basic rights of children. Not guaranteeing the right to education in a food crisis context makes fulfilling the international aims regarding education very difficult, including the MDG 2. It also has a negative effect on the goal of eradicating hunger (MDG1) and the goal of reducing child mortality (MDG4).

We urge you to:

- Make a special mention about and include the right to education in crisis situations in the strategies and protocols about education in emergencies.

- Promote the study and evaluation of actions which facilitate children's access to a nutritional supplement at school, taking into account the gender perspective and non-discrimination in relation to access to a free and compulsory education.
 - Compliment the actions aimed at guaranteeing education in a food crisis situation with a food sovereignty perspective in the communities and with respect for local production, in coordination with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.
 - Promote the compulsory nature of the pre-primary cycle (from 3 to 5 years) in countries prone to food crises, in order to guarantee the right to education for children, and improve their development, performance and prevent academic failure as a result of early school access.
 - Call for the strengthening of national education systems and coordinated protocols for guaranteeing the right to education in food crisis situations.
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