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Statement submitted by Books to Africa International, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

This written statement contextualises today's theme within the realm of education and the importance of access to quality educational resources such as books.

Books2Africa is a United Kingdom registered charity, founded in 2012 by four students who came from Africa to study at the University of Kent and the University of York due to the poor quality of education in their home countries. Today, the charity has Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is committed to impacting two communities simultaneously: reducing environmental waste in the UK and improving the quality of education in Africa, through the collection and distribution of books and educational resources. According to UNESCO and the World Bank, 90% of children who go to school in Africa (202 million children) cannot read or write after finishing school partly because they lack books. At the same time CODEP states that, 13 million books, mostly in perfectly good and reusable condition, are thrown away and go to landfill in the UK every year.

We believe that providing students and teachers in Africa access to quality educational materials such as books empowers a whole community by providing them with "excellent educational opportunities" (Books2Africa supported project, Tukongote Community Library, May 2018) for effective theoretical and practical knowledge and skills. This empowerment through educational opportunities goes further as exemplified by the quotes below from a report by a Zimbabwean school who received books from Books2Africa in December 2018. These quotes highlight how having access to these books ensures inclusiveness and equality by empowering students to improve their academic performance and positively change students' attitudes towards learning, empowering teachers to produce well researched lesson plans and delivery:

"...Form 4A students have significantly improved their performance in Biology because of the availability of textbooks which are relevant to the new curriculum syllabus. Again some learners who used to produce poor scores in school based continuous assessment tests have improved. This improvement in performance can only be attributed to a variety of reading material from Books2Africa. The books promote a reading culture in our learners. The majority of our students have developed a positive attitude towards learning."

"The teaching staff have developed a more positive attitude towards teaching. They can read books to improve knowledge in their respective teaching areas. Planning for lessons has been made easier than before. Even lesson delivery in the classroom has improved. Generally, the availability of the books is a blessing to the teachers."

"The classroom environment which used to have pockets of noise-makers is now quiet. The learners are always quiet reading books for knowledge and pleasure".

Availability of these books also improve the learning environment of students and give both past and present students from different socioeconomic background equal access to learning materials that will support them to prepare for and empower them to succeed at their national exams.