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### **Statement submitted by The Athena Fund, 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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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **iPad for Every Special Education Teacher**

Many special education students, such as students who are high on the autism spectrum, have difficulties in communicating, reading and writing, or cannot communicate, read and write at all. In recent years, it was revealed that by using an iPad, these students can communicate with their surroundings, improve their learning, and even read and write. In 2015 Athena Fund (non-profit organization empowering Israeli teachers) found that while many special-education students have iPads, their teachers don't have this vital tool.

The "iPad for Every Special Education Teacher" addresses key elements of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)/2030 Agenda in the education sphere, including equitable access to quality education at all levels, equal access for boys and girls with special needs to quality education, irrespective of sex, race, ethnicity, persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and special education students in vulnerable situations. The program helps them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. The program helps provide children and youth with special needs, with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities.

The program helps ensure that girls and boys with special needs complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. It helps ensure that girls and boys with special needs have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. It also helps eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to education for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

The iPad allows teachers and students to engage in meaningful and rewarding learning, since teachers can prepare special curricula for individual students. Access to the iPad is immediate and intuitive, leading to enjoyment and enhanced motivation. In addition, students gain the ability to show high-level thinking and comprehension skills.

The program enables special-needs students to communicate more effectively with their teachers, peers, families and communities, helping them better integrate into society. Children who previously found it difficult to communicate with family and teachers can now express their feelings and desires through the iPad.

The program has so far provided iPads and training to 7,000 teachers in schools and kindergartens, teaching approximately 56,000 students with special needs.

A pilot study conducted by researchers from Israel's Bar-Ilan University shows that 78.4% of the special education teachers who received iPads say that the iPad affected the teaching. 57.6% believe that the iPad improved the teaching, 47.8% emphasize the convenience and accessibility of the iPad, 41.1% think that the iPad increases motivation and enjoyment, 29.1% believe that learning is active and interactive, and 21.4% believe that the iPad promotes learning and skills. 94.5% are satisfied with their training, and 67.6% ask for additional training.