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

### **Statement submitted by Legião da Boa Vontade, 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 theme of the High-Level Segment Meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2011 imposes great challenges on countries. In an international economic context of uncertainty, many nations feel obligated to redistribute resources initially allocated for education. Faced with this, the Legião da Boa Vontade congratulates this initiative of the United Nations and defends the idea that quality education is a tool that can gradually and consistently prevent crisis scenarios, in addition to offering effective solutions to the challenges of the international development agenda, including complete fulfilment of the eight Millennium Development Goals.

The recommendations in this report stem from the Legião da Boa Vontade's experience of more than six decades, and as a result of wide social mobilization efforts promoted by the organization through the 8th Solidarity Society Network Multi-stakeholder Forum — 5th Innovation Fair. Representatives from hundreds of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the media and academia, as well as public authorities, participated in a plural debate around the theme "Education for Global Development: A View Beyond the Intellect".

The Legião da Boa Vontade proposes the adoption of an education platform that is not limited to the school context, but one which fomented renewed citizen awareness, with effects on the other spheres of society, as defined by the President of the Legião da Boa Vontade, José de Paiva Netto: "Education needs to be disseminated and considered, by all of us, as a safe path to shortening the social distance between classes. It is also an efficient antidote against violence, crime, diseases and everything else that annuls the salutary growth of a people".

Synthesis of the diagnosis: Although Latin America has achieved progress in education, the quality of the teaching needs improvement, the hours are insufficient, and school equipment is technologically outdated. Additionally, there is a low retention rate, a distortion between age and school year, and meanwhile violence and drug use is prevalent throughout teaching institutions. These problems, intimately related to social and regional inequalities in each country, exacerbate the inequities of a perverse system, which deprives poor children of access to quality education.

Legião da Boa Vontade and quality education: Founded on 1 January 1950, the Legião da Boa Vontade currently operates in more than 70 Brazilian cities, and is comprised of autonomous offices in Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Paraguay, Uruguay, the United States of America and Portugal. Every day, the Legião da Boa Vontade provides network of schools and Community Centres for Social Assistance to thousands of children, youth and adults suffering from poverty and other social vulnerabilities. Through educational, recreational, vocational, as well as sporting and cultural activities, this work also benefits students in the public school system. Every year, more than 8.5 million services and benefits are offered to families. This gigantic operation is financed by small monthly donations from individuals and multi-stakeholder partnerships. These contributions are due to the credibility of the organization as demonstrated through transparent management and proven results.

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

This mark of excellence has generated widespread recognition and invitations from public and private teaching networks to train and prepare materials based on the pedagogical proposal developed by the organization. It also foments a permanent debate on the theme in education congresses, besides reaching millions of homes through radio and television programmes, websites and publications.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, School Massacre: This report was prepared under the emotional impact of the tragedy that took place on 7 April, when 12 children were victims of a massacre at the school where they studied in Rio de Janeiro. As with similar cases in other parts of the world, the assailant was a victim of bullying earlier at the same school, and also suffered from mental illness. The fact that these individuals grew up without such disturbances being diagnosed and treated deserves the reflection of the entire society. For this reason, the Legião da Boa Vontade promotes discussions on education with a different approach: “a view beyond the intellect”, as extolled by educator Paiva Netto. Showing a concern that goes beyond curricular content, the Legião da Boa Vontade considers the values and subjectivity of each student, educated by a pedagogical proposal that combines development of the intellect with the perspective of Ecumenical Spirituality, and guided towards a Culture of Peace. The Legião da Boa Vontade’s work is therefore best summarized by the expression: “Here is where one studies and where Brain and Heart are formed”.

This new concept expands the sense of citizenship and renews the hope that tragedies like the massacre in Rio will never be repeated. Moreover, it multiplies the positive impact of innumerable stories of triumph, demonstrating that a complete development of individuals is possible for a harmonious society.

**Stories of Triumph: Education in troubled areas:** In the largest public safety operation in recent Brazilian history, the Rio de Janeiro government in partnership with other spheres of public power has installed police pacifying units at various slums throughout the city. In areas formerly under the control of drug traffickers and clandestine militias, the state has begun to offer essential public services, complemented by the decisive action of non-governmental organizations such as the Legião da Boa Vontade. In this way, the exclusion conditions that favour criminality are gradually reversed.

The case of 12-year-old Maria (a pseudonym to preserve the person’s identity) is emblematic. As a resident of Providência, a poor community in Rio de Janeiro, Maria’s brother was enticed by drug gangs and killed in a confrontation with the police during the takeover of the community. As a result of this tragedy, she became apprehensive that her life would follow a similar fate. After the confrontation, the police started building ties of trust with the community, counting on specific training and the support of partner associations. The girl and her family now live in a new reality. Currently, she takes karate classes offered by the police pacifying units in Providência and has even won medals in competitions. These achievements reflect an even greater transformation, made possible through the support provided by the Legião da Boa Vontade. According to reports from the multidisciplinary team, the emphasis on emotional development helped the girl overcome her trauma. Anger and fear gave way to kindness and hope, expressed in the community’s new harmonious way of life of the community. Her story reflects those of many other children and adolescents in the community and demonstrates the success of this methodology, which can be replicated in pacification operations around the world.

**Innovative pedagogical practices:** The Legião da Boa Vontade has found that innovative pedagogical practices produce especially effective results for families living in situations of social vulnerability. Due to the exclusion process to which they are submitted, these people face additional difficulties in terms of acquiring knowledge and new skills. However, the benefits of these practices also extend to other social groups. Among the results obtained by this experience in the Legião da Boa Vontade education network are zero dropout rates, non-violent and drug-free environments, continuation of studies for students and stronger bonds between schools and families. By training educators in its teaching proposal, the Legião da Boa Vontade has also contributed to improving these results at other educational institutions.

The organization's pedagogical proposal, devised by Paiva Netto, is made up of two segments: the Pedagogy of Affection (for children up to 10 years of age) and the Ecumenical Citizen Pedagogy (for adolescents and adults). Its objective is to promote knowledge which combines cognitive development with the knowledge the students have within themselves, including the spiritual dimension, subjectivity and values. Moreover, this pedagogical proposal has its own methodology: MAPREI (Learning Method through Rational-Emotional-Intuitive Research). Comprised of six stages it works with diverse contents, age groups and sociocultural realities.

Students play the role of protagonists in the learning process and are not just mere receivers. Although frequently intimidated by adverse social situations, they are encouraged to express themselves. With the strategies, social inclusion is not just obtained at the end of the process, but progressively, as the students gain a stronger voice. Once students see themselves as agents of their own lives, they begin to pursue higher objectives for themselves and for the community. The initiative of research and the encouragement to use intuition are constantly valued and represent the starting point to the comprehension of content and the socialization of knowledge, whereby knowledge is shared with friends, family and the community so that what has been learned in the classroom can be exercised for the benefit of the community. The premise of this pedagogical proposal encompasses a holistic view of the individual, seeing him as a bio-psychosocial spirit-being. The students consequently are respected for their individuality and are not seen as a *tabula rasa*. They are considered bearers of a rich spiritual background, and their intuitive potential are acknowledged and nurtured.

Therefore, the role of educators becomes stronger, making them mediators between the individual and knowledge, who guides the learning process. They have the task of encouraging students to achieve self-actualization. The educator seeks connections between classroom themes and the students' immediate reality, so that each discovery has a meaning for the students' life. The pedagogical work is also extended to the family, beginning with gestation, in order to fully attain the expected results. Analysing the signs shown by the children on a day-to-day basis, the multidisciplinary team (formed of educators, psychologists and social workers) intervenes with families, directing them to public services and partnerships with universities.

**Contributions from Latin America society:** Additional proposals were discussed at the 8th Solidarity Society Network Multi-stakeholder Forum — 5th Innovation Fair. The face-to-face meetings promoted the United Nations Development Agenda and fostered dialogue between actors. Thirteen meetings were held in six countries

between June 2010 and April 2011 in the following locations: Montes Claros, São Paulo, Londrina, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Porto Alegre and Salvador, in Brazil; Porto, Portugal; La Paz, Bolivia (Plurinational State of); Asunción, Paraguay; Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Montevideo, Uruguay.

Below are the recommendations made, also based on a broad survey:

- Improve the use of information and communications technologies in schools, involving educators, parents and relatives in educational programmes, as well as developing interdisciplinary projects that allow the use of these tools in actions that benefit communities
- Involve various social actors (such as companies, universities and civil society organizations) in joint strategies to strengthen the teaching process, creating new educational spaces in communities
- Strengthen the performance of professors, emphasizing academic courses oriented to education, adopting continuous learning programmes and incentives to make an educational career more attractive
- Train and prepare teachers to work with diversity, including children with special educational needs. Greater emphasis should also be given to themes aimed at promoting social justice and sustainable development
- Develop actions to promote multilingualism in Latin America, beginning with teacher training courses, in order to rescue the original people's culture
- Create or strengthen mechanisms to make the management of schools more decentralized, counting on the effective participation of parent associations and members of the community
- Improve the management of schools and education networks, optimizing spending and relieving professionals of the pedagogical area from bureaucratic and administrative processes
- Establish effective legal mechanisms for cooperation between the public power and community schools, considering their specificities
- Promote a broad global discussion regarding the parameters for testing students, considering the cultural characteristics of each country and the needs of the new economy

The organization makes itself available to collaborate with United Nations member civil society organizations committed to strengthening education worldwide. The Legião da Boa Vontade reiterates its vanguard defence that the deepest and longest-lasting social transformation begins with education.

In the words of the Legião da Boa Vontade's leader: "People who are educated, instructed and ecumenically spiritualized are those who have broken the chains of poverty and thrown them away. (...) While efficient education, desired by all those of common sense, does not prevail, a nation will suffer the captivity of the limitations it imposes upon itself."