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Statement submitted by Gray Panthers, 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.

* E/2011/100.

Statement*

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “[e]veryone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.” Unfortunately, this is not what has happened globally. Statistics show that nearly 113 million children are not able to attend primary school. About 774 million adults, mostly in rural areas of South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, are unable to read and write. Two thirds of illiterate adults are women. In some developing countries, parents exercise traditional culture in keeping their daughters from attending school. In addition, indigenous groups, minorities, migrants and people with disabilities are among populations with lower literacy rates. Evidence from 30 developing countries also indicates that literacy levels correlate strongly with wealth.

Education is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is also a tool to achieve the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development. Although education shows slight improvement in the past 10 years, it is still far from reaching the education goal of the MDGs.

Recommendations

Gray Panthers’ recommendations on implementing the internationally agreed goal in regard to education are:

- Qualified teachers and programmes that combine general education with skills training specific to both the individual and local labour market.
- Parent involvement and empowerment: Teachers, parents, local government representatives, community representatives, civil societies, the private sector and education specialists should organize a committee to plan, implement and review the programmes and measure their achievement.
- The educational programmes need to be fun and motivated to encourage students to reach beyond their goal.
- Mainstream all minorities and supply them with equal access to education and resources.
- Use information technology to post programme and fund distributions to minimize corruption and increase transparency. Use information technology as a tool for teaching and access to resources.

Gray Panthers believe that education from childhood through adulthood requires a holistic approach. It must combine with job training, family service and ethnicity consideration to achieve skill development, economic development and social development.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.