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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.



Statement

Private education model: raising human capital through investment in science- and technology-based schools

Our general approach to sustainable development

As we have witnessed, the Millennium Development Goals have been a very ambitious initiative that have succeeded in some parts of the world while failing in others. Analyses at different levels indicate that there was a top-down approach during the development and implementation of the initiative. As most prominent development and political economists argue, a top-down approach to development often fails because of an overreliance on experts and a lack of feedback mechanisms. Comprehensive work on sustainable development should be citizen-driven and inclusive, rather than being a product of experts and policymakers.

The organization believes that a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches is crucial for sustainable development. Bottom-up approaches to sustainable development, which were mostly neglected during the development and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, emphasize the importance of empowering citizens through individual entrepreneurship, educating all segments of societies including minorities and women and providing equal opportunities for economic, social and political participation. Bottom-up approaches are necessary but not sufficient, because public policies and their enforcement by the Government are important to achieve the above-mentioned issues. Therefore, the will and commitment of Governments to achieve sustainable development are crucial. In order to credibly commit themselves to such initiatives, Governments need to develop institutions that will reinforce political accountability. This will create a genuine environment for the empowerment of citizens through equal economic, political and social opportunities.

In short, the organization's approach to achieve sustainable development is through building a partnership among the United Nations, Governments and empowered citizens.

Importance of science- and technology-based schools for sustainable development

As noted above, the empowerment of people is one of the essential parts of sustainable development. The organization believes that the rigorous education of all citizens in a nation significantly empowers people and contributes to the development of a nation on sustainable basis.

The organization finds inspiration in the ideas of our founding and honorary chairman, Fethullah Gulen, in working towards sustainable development throughout the world. As a prominent thinker and intellectual, Gulen lays out the basic principles of achieving sustainable development by focusing on the human element. The organization acts on the premise that the three greatest enemies of achieving sustainable development are ignorance, poverty and internal schisms. As required by a bottom-up approach, we believe that the political, economic and legal regulations for development can never have a lasting effect if the people who make up society are not educated on universally accepted values like human dignity, equality of opportunities, peaceful coexistence and above all wishing for others what one wishes for himself/herself. Sustainable development can be achieved by educated

citizens with diverse socio-economic backgrounds who have a will to build a common prosperous future for all. We are inspired by this brief statement of Gulen: “As ignorance is the most serious problem, it must be opposed with education, which has always been the most important way of serving humanity. Ignorance can be defeated through education, poverty through work and the possession of capital and internal schisms and separatism through unity, dialogue and tolerance. As the solution of every problem in this life ultimately depends on human beings, education is the most effective vehicle, regardless of whether we have a paralyzed social and political system or one that operates like clockwork”.

Inspired by this philosophy, thousands of people around the world have mobilized to establish schools which focus on education at universally acknowledged level and social responsibility.

Rigorous maths and science curricula in these schools have been of the highest quality and therefore have started to raise students to compete at the international level with their counterparts in science and technology projects worldwide. Winning gold, silver and bronze medals for their nations in these competitions is only a small part of the significance of these schools. Science education lays a foundation for the development of new technologies and creates opportunities for innovation. Sustainable development is achievable if citizens of a nation are empowered through education, particularly in the fields of science and maths, which require extra effort and additional materials to be learned thoroughly. As noted above, however, this education is not sufficient if Governments do not enforce equal education for all and create equal opportunities for participation of citizens in economic, political and social lives. A highly educated population is not enough for sustainable development if some part of the population is excluded from economic, political and social opportunities.

The organization strongly endorses such schools, not only because they focus on maths, science and technology, but also because students are educated to be socially responsible. A major part of the education method is to teach students to be aware of the environmental consequences of misusing technologies, to engage them in voluntary works in their localities in order to raise awareness and knowledge about their communities and to teach them to give back to and serve their own communities in the future. Such education is necessary for sustainable development, because citizens become aware of the consequences of different public policies on the local communities.

The organization believes that this model of education needs to be encouraged because of their contribution to the culture of peaceful coexistence in their respective localities. In this education model, the schools provide secular education following the national curricula of each country in which they are established. They accept students from all ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, enabling the students to experience living in a pluralistic society in their school environment, while accessing the universal tools for scientific and technological innovation as well as being equipped with necessary language, writing, artistic and thinking skills to be the agents of sustainable development in their regions.

Seeing the success of this education model in creating a harmonious coexistence in many countries, the organization undertook an initiative that would mark its place in history on 19 September 1995. On that day, the Turkish national football team and the world mixed team stepped onto a soccer field for a game to

demand a stop to the ongoing war in Bosnia, which was taking place in the middle of Europe. The ticket and live television broadcast revenues from the match were used to open three schools in Sarajevo, in which Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian children would be educated side by side in peace. Those children, whose fathers and grandfathers were fighting, stood on a mark that symbolized a brand new start towards building a peaceful future together.

Today, the number of these schools has reached 10, with four primary schools, five high schools and a university. These schools have high-tech equipment and are receive many awards in maths and science games, such as the International Mathematics Olympiad, the International Physics Olympiad, the International Olympiad in Informatics, the International Environmental Project Olympiad, the International Young Inventors Project Olympiad, the International Eurasia Environmental Project Olympiad and international informatics project competitions.

In conclusion, we believe that this innovative project, from its beginning to its current situation, could be considered by the United Nations as an example of best practices for using science and technology. Utilizing science and technology as an agent for peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery is a success that is worth the endorsement of the Economic and Social Council. At the same time, this case study of Bosnian schools opened by the organization indicates how the above-mentioned education model inspired by Fethullah Gulen can be utilized as an example to realize different United Nations goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development goals.
