



## Economic and Social Council

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**Social and human rights questions: social development**

### **Statement submitted by Mundo sin Guerras, 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.



## Statement

### **Culture through education: an approach to development in Central America**

The statement was produced at the second University Conference for Peace, held in Honduras in March 2013. The forum was organized by Mundo sin Guerras and the Evangelical Christian University New Millennium and was attended by students from that university, the National Autonomous University of Honduras and Dr. Andrés Bello University (El Salvador). We at Mundo sin Guerras encouraged the participants to take direct action to solve their problems and to use the United Nations system so that civil society could be heard in the rest of the world.

The statement has been made from the point of view of an average student in Central America: someone who works to be able to pay for his or her studies, who may be a young single mother, who comes from a rural area and/or who has very few economic resources. It contains opinions, worries and hopes. Most of the participants were, if not familiar, at least aware of the Millennium Development Goals, which have been taught in their lectures (the National Autonomous University of Honduras has the Goals as one of its educational axes).

Discussion focused on the potential of culture in promoting development, the sole weapon of the participants against poverty and marginalization.

Together, they concluded that it was true that culture could become one of the main paths for development, but that it faced many problems in Central America. Such problems could be solved by:

(a) Requiring States to allocate the budget necessary to promote culture. The impression is that the problem is not the lack of money, but the order of priorities of Governments. Education programmes and prevention policies should be among the main targets;

(b) Fairly assigning resources for programmes to modernize education, to fulfil the Goals and to build educational models that strengthen the social fabric;

(c) Promoting arts and culture as a strategy to combat violence, in addition to fitting out public spaces accessible to everyone;

(d) Implementing technology as a tool for education and transfer of skills, enabling the teaching of languages, arts and culture to all;

(e) Promoting social service, volunteerism and community solidarity as agents of change. We cannot let Governments do all the work: society as a whole is responsible for its own development;

(f) Developing alternative production models to make it possible for students to work and study at the same time, to have access to decent education and to enable local and sustainable development;

(g) Putting an end to corruption, especially that which limits the access of young people to educational scholarships and exchange cultures. In fact, scholarships currently go to the elite;

(h) Ensuring the sustainability of projects, programmes and social policies stopped because of political instability to the detriment of those most affected and hampered by marginalization.