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Statement submitted by Institute of Asian Culture and Development, 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 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Education is the key: a Korean perspective

Having only recently acquired special consultative status, the Institute of Asian Culture and Development would like to introduce itself and its work in the hope of providing helpful insight to other organizations, based on its experience in Asia, and to learn from the experience and knowledge offered by other organizations.

The Institute is a non-governmental organization that has been registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea since 1993. It focuses on promoting mutual understanding between the nations of the Eurasian continent, primarily through the exchange of professionals in the fields of the humanities, arts, culture and social work, as well as by providing academic resources. The Institute is an official member of the Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation and works in cooperation with the Korea International Cooperation Agency.

The Institute was awarded special consultative status by the Economic and Social Council in 2012. To date, the Institute has carried out most of its work in Asia, including in many undeveloped and remote areas of countries such as Afghanistan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Uzbekistan.

Asia is a region that has recently experienced rapid change and continues to develop and change at a rapid pace. The people of Asia are at the core of this rapid development and change. People are the focus and purpose of social development. Education and communication are the keys to changing people's lives. This reality is borne out by the experiences of the Republic of Korea and other Asian nations that have risen out of from abject poverty in recent times.

As one of the beneficiaries of the development of the Republic of Korea, the Institute strives to share with other Asian countries lessons from the experience of the Republic of Korea and to promote education as one of the best strategies for social development. The Republic of Korea is a land with few natural resources other than its people. Nevertheless, the country has been able to develop itself at a tremendous pace over the past six decades in the wake of the devastation of the Korean War. Education has been at the very centre of its rapid development.

The Institute of Asian Culture and Development regards education as the most efficient means of communication between the countries of Asia. While the Institute has carried out much relief work and has sent many people to various countries and disaster areas (for example, to Syrian refugee camps and landslide disasters in Afghanistan) to help the local population, its main philosophy is that people should use their own strength to develop their own society.

The Institute provides various types of education in every country in which it works. It focuses on community service with an educational purpose, providing both basic and advanced education. Through basic education, the Institute provides general knowledge that can help ordinary people live better lives. Through advanced education, it develops professionals who can contribute to society in meaningful ways. For example, the Institute teaches preventive hygiene as part of basic

education while providing the latest medical school education to produce medical doctors who will serve their communities.

The Institute sends specialists and highly qualified experts from the Republic of Korea, the United States of America and other developed nations who are dedicated to serve, often with little or no pay, and are determined to improve the health and livelihoods of the local people. Its specialists are able to help those who live in extreme poverty to overcome their circumstances and become vibrant contributors to their communities. The Institute provides education in the areas of health care, agriculture, culture, language, business, sports and recreation and computer and information technology, among others.

Education leads to a virtuous cycle of development. When people are educated, they will ensure that subsequent generations are also educated. Those who become educated professionals will teach and train their own people and bring about rapid change and development, just as was done in the Republic of Korea.

Education also leads to community development, which is an important aspect of social development. The Institute has completed various community development projects in areas of need such as the creation of health-care facilities, kindergartens, schools and other educational facilities, language centres, small businesses and women's cultural centres that also provide job and trade skills training.

The education of women remains a challenge that is perhaps the most critical element in social development. In order to obtain an education and/or gainful employment, women throughout Asia must overcome cultural and societal barriers deeply rooted in history and religious and societal norms. The only way forward is through education, including the education of the men who exercise power over women.

The Institute of Asian Culture and Development believes that nations and societies throughout Asia will continue to experience rapid development through education. The Institute strives to be a significant instrument in the dynamic of change and development in Asia both today and tomorrow.
