



Statement of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 47th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Geneva, 24 June 2021

Madam President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education which emphasizes the strong cultural dimensions of this right. Indeed, education is not simply the transmission of knowledge, but it involves a living relationship between educators and students. In this regard, Pope Francis has noted that “today the right to a good education means protecting wisdom, that is, knowledge that is human and humanizing”.¹ Education must not be constricted to the accumulation of knowledge, which is evaluated merely on the basis of standardized tests. It is unfortunate that numerous education systems seem to take a reductive approach to the cultural dimension of the right to education². At the same, the recurrence of the concept of “cultural diversity” in the report raises some concern, especially given its complexity and its breadth and that it does not yet enjoy international recognition.

In this regard, the Holy See welcomes the references made in the Report to the fundamental role of parents in providing for quality education for their children, specifically with regard to their moral and religious formation³. Indeed, parents have the right and responsibility to ensure that their children receive an adequate and holistic education that is capable of promoting the wellbeing of children in all of their human dimensions, including the physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social. Parents have a pivotal role in

¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, Post-Synodal exhortation to the young people and to the entire people of God, 25 March 2019, n. 223.

² Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, A/HRC/47/32, §§ 2, 4.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, §§ 24, 63, 79(f).

ensuring that approaches to education are neither reductive nor overly generalized since they are the first to understand the particular needs, background and personal development of their children.

Madam President,

The neglect and underfunding of the public educational system raise concern because a system whereby the accessibility of education is determined by a family's wealth will have long-term negative impacts on society and further entrench inequalities along socio-economic lines⁴. At the same time, overly standardizing leads to the risk of the homogenization of educational systems, rendering them incapable of adapting to the needs of individual students. The Holy See is convinced that a commitment to sincere dialogue among stakeholders, that goes beyond the approach of the proposed Principles of Abidjan, is necessary to attain a robust and holistic approach to education.

Indeed, "Concern for education is concern for future generations and for the future of humanity. It is a concern profoundly rooted in hope and it calls for generosity and courage. (...) Today we are called to renew and consolidate the dedication of all in favour of education, in order to forge a new educational compact, because only thus will education be able to change. This will enable the promotion of a culture of dialogue, a culture of encounter and mutual understanding, in a spirit of serenity and tolerance. An education that enables young people to identify and foster true human values from an intercultural and interreligious perspective."⁵

Thank you, Madam President.

⁴ Right to Education Project (RTE): Privatization of Education – Global Trends of Human Rights Impacts, pp. 28, 29.

⁵ Pope Francis, Address to participants at the seminar "Education: the global compact", 7 February 2020.