



Statement of Rev. Monsignor John Putzer, Chargé d’Affaires a.i.  
Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International  
Organizations in Geneva  
at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Regular Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education  
*Geneva, 27 June 2023*

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education as well as the 25th anniversary of the mandate on the right to education.

In her report, the Special Rapporteur describes how the many crises affecting education also present new opportunities for reform, multilateralism, and a renewed social contract. Education beyond just schooling is imperative for the integral human development of all. Consequently, the Holy See welcomes the Rapporteur’s call for greater support to appropriate forms of pre-primary, technical, and older-population education to aid those persons to develop their skills, acquire information and receive an education that would help them along their path.

In fact, recognizing the need for an integral approach to education, in 2019 Pope Francis called for a *Global Compact for Education*, noting that “[n]ever before has there been such need to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity.”<sup>1</sup> The Holy See notes that some of the practical goals outlined in the report could help galvanize such efforts.

Nevertheless, the Holy See must express its concern for the report’s assertion that “*Demands from parents and communities that children be barred from certain educational content (...) would be at odds with the right to education*” (cfr. § 50). Unfortunately, such assertion contradicts art 29, letter c), of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms that “*the education of the child shall be directed to: (...) c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language*

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Message for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education, 12 September 2019.

*and values, [and] for the national values of the country in which the child is living”.*

In addition, the CRC protects the rights and duties of parents in directing their children in the exercise of their rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (cf. Art. 14.2).

Mr President,

Educators and educational institutions should seek not to erase or discredit their community’s culture and values. On the contrary, true inclusion respects cultural sensitivities and diversity. The imposition of a uniform, inflexible and intolerant agenda constitutes in fact a form of ideological colonization, which, in the words of Pope Francis, clashes *“with the reality of life, stifle the natural attachment of peoples to their values, and attempt to uproot their traditions, history and religious ties. This mentality, presumptuously thinking that the dark pages of history have been left behind, becomes open to the ‘cancel culture’ that would judge the past purely on the basis of certain contemporary categories. The result is a cultural fashion that levels everything out, makes everything equal, proves intolerant of differences and concentrates on the present moment, on the needs and rights of individuals, while frequently neglecting their duties with regard to the most weak and vulnerable”*.<sup>2</sup>

True inclusion, as a legitimate goal for education, should spur us instead to adopt, with patience and determination, educational processes that offer creative and responsible paths for human maturation for all, while respecting inherent dignity of every man and woman, boy and girl.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Meeting with civil authorities, representatives of indigenous peoples and members of the diplomatic corps*, Citadelle de Québec, Canada, 27 July 2022.