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pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Draft**

**Address by Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO  
on the occasion of the Special Face-to-Face debate:  
Education, Human Rights and Conflict**

**Geneva, 4 July 2011, 15:00 to 16:30**

DG's Role : Opening statement

Participants

- *Setting the stage*
  - o *Irina Bokova, Director General, UNESCO*
  - o *Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF*
  - o *Erik Solheim, Minister of the Environment and Development Cooperation, Norway*

Debate

- o *Asma Jahangir, Laureate of 2010/UNESCO Bilbao Prize, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan*
- o *Tove Wang, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Norway, Chair of the Rewrite the Future Campaign*
- o *Mamadou Diouf, Leitner Family Professor of African Studies and Director of Institute for African Studies, Columbia University*
- o *Imogen Foulkes, BBC Correspondent, Geneva (Moderator)*

## DG Talking points

I wish to commend the *United Nations Economic and Social Council* for choosing such an important and timely theme for this face to face debate.

Last Thursday, I was in New York for a special side event at the United Nations to raise awareness of the dramatic toll that violence is taking on education.

Children are missing out, because they are too scared to go to school, because their schools have been attacked, or simply because they have no place to go to learn.

We are talking about 28 million children in conflict situations who are not in school, about an intolerable epidemic of rape and sexual violence affecting young children and youth.

UNESCO 2011 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* has defined this as a "hidden crisis".

We face an immediate human rights crisis and a long-term development disaster.

The time has come for the international community to take stronger action to prevent attacks on schools and to ensure access to safe and secure education for children and young people in conflict situations.

This is the thrust of the resolution that Germany will present to the Security Council later this week, during its presidency.

The resolution would make attacks on schools and hospitals a 'trigger' for inclusion in the Secretary General's annual report on children and armed conflict. This would mark an important step in fighting a culture of impunity and in taking action at country level to make schools safe.

Education is a universal human right, recognized by numerous international instruments, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols which establish ground rules for protecting civilians during wars, with specific provisions for children and their right to education.

This is not an optional provision. It is an entitlement that comes with binding commitments and obligations on governments.

It is being violated every day, in dozens of countries.

So the first obligation is to protect the right to education in conflict settings and to combat gender discrimination.

International reporting on human rights violations relating to education must be strengthened. We need systematic and comprehensive reporting system that documents attacks on school children, schools and teachers and other learning institutions. Better data are vital for understanding the nature of the challenge and for ending impunity.

UNESCO has played a role in documenting the challenge – through our *Education under Attack* studies and the 2011 *Global Monitoring Report*.

Our second obligation is to make education a force for peace.

Education that incites hatred, reinforces intolerances and prejudice can fan the flames of violent conflict.

Education plays a pivotal role in peace building and must be integrated into emergency responses. It sows the seeds of peace.

We heard this last month at UNESCO when Forest Whitaker accepted to become a *UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation* and talked about how child soldiers in Uganda have found hope and a future through education.

Education must be at the centre of reconciliation and peace building -- to teach basic competencies and skills, to impart understanding about human rights, about living together peacefully, about tolerance and solidarity.

Psycho-social support for teachers and students is crucial to recovery.

This requires a political commitment – from governments, from donors, from the international community.

It calls for integrating education into wider peace building negotiations and strategies.

UNESCO is working to make education a driver of peace and opportunity.

In Afghanistan, UNESCO leads the largest education program in the country, reaching some 600,000 learners in 18 provinces, and focusing on literacy.

In Iraq, we are providing for teacher training and the rehabilitation of higher education, and have recently launched a Literacy Initiative for Empowerment project with support from Qatar.

In Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, UNESCO runs UNRWA's education programme, operating nearly 700 schools and three teacher training institutions.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, I signed an agreement with the Government to establish a *Research and Documentation Center on Women, Gender and Peace-building* in Kinshasa.

We must also fix the humanitarian aid system, because education accounts for just 2% of humanitarian aid (2009 figures). Donors need to bridge the gaps between humanitarian and development aid.

Just ten days ago, UNESCO launched our Global Monitoring Report in Juba, South Sudan – to become the world's newest state later this week.

No other country makes the stakes as clear.

South Sudan has the world's lowest primary school enrolment rates. Teenage girls are more likely to die in childbirth than complete their schooling.

The challenge is clear. Statehood must be built in schools, nurtured in the minds of boys and girls, and constructed through the capacities of every woman and man.

Quality education based on universal culture of human rights is the path to break cycles of violence and counter intolerance.

I am honoured that Asma Jahangir, laureate of the UNESCO/Bilbao Prize, is with us today. She has courageously devoted her life to promoting women's economic rights and, above all, to defining the universality of human rights.

I look forward to hearing the panelists and hope this session will sensitize our viewers to the centrality of education for empowering people, for building a culture of human rights and for advancing democracy.

Thank you.