

## **Intervention of Leonardo Reales- (CIMARRON)/ Final Text**

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My name is Leonardo Reales. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the Forum organisations and thank you again for the invitation and send you the warmest greetings from the afro Colombian people. I am the coordinator of the National Movements CIMARRON, the Afro-Colombian NGO leading the National Union of Afro-Colombian organisations that is associated with various networks of African descent and indigenous peoples in the Americas.

Based on recent academic articles and reports on the educational situation of minorities, particularly in Latin America, I would like to highlight five points and/or relevant conclusions, in order to promote the improvement of the curriculum within the basic primary and secondary education within the countries of the region.

Firstly, the recommendations should highlight the fact that despite the recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity that is composed in almost all the countries of the region in the past two decades, equal access to the education system and the establishment of a curriculum that is in line with the historical needs of minorities' remains uncertain or non-existent. One of the consequences of this disadvantage is the continuing of a curriculum that tends to exclude and discriminate, already establishing self-rejection and undervaluing. Therefore the curriculum should include well documented studies on racism and the harmful impact of this on the development of the nation.

Secondly, I believe that the recommendations should also highlight the fact that one of the consequences of having a Eurocentric and discriminative curriculum results in young people, who belong to these minority groups, often being excluded from grants and loans that would aid them to carry on their studies in higher education. Therefore, it is of no surprise to find that in Latin American Universities the percentage of students of African and indigenous descents are normally part of the bellow 1% of the total student population. Furthermore, there are very few educational institutions that implement positive actions for minorities, action which are crucial for these groups, which has been highlighted by several of the Forum experts.

Thirdly, it is important to emphasize that improving the curriculum should begin with the inclusion of studies on the history of minorities, their tradition through their countries cultural and material heritage, which should be conducted along the basic primary and secondary education. The contribution of minorities to the development of the Latin American nations, as well as other regions of the world, can no longer be ignored by school textbooks.

Fourthly, I would like to emphasize the fact that when we implement the curriculum according to the needs of minorities we must look beyond national, regional and international standards. In Latin America, the case law is quite broad however it is not effectively implemented. We must invite educational institutions, media outlets, the private sector and the relevant authorities to establish an intellectual and ethical strategy to commit to the overall

improvement, not only of the curriculum, but on the general education of minorities in the region.

On this specific point I would like to make reference to a Colombian case. In Colombia, The General Education Act and its implementing regulations make the inclusion of Afro-Colombian Studies **mandatory**, which is essential to a curriculum that is tailored to the needs of the afro Colombian populations as a minority group- and this should be done in *all* public and private schools in the country. However, this implementation still remains a utopia.

Fifth, it seems important to note that when designing the curriculum in question we should take advantage of the expertise and knowledge of leaders and people from the civil society. Needless to say, parallel to the search for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and intolerance, the curriculum should include and promote respect for the languages and the traditions of minority groups.

Finally, I would like to invite you to promote effective and committed improvements, not only through the recommendations during the Forum, but also through the continuous involvement of communities of African and indigenous decent in Latin America in future events organised on improving education and human rights of minorities in the world.