

Madame High Commissioner,
Madame Chair
Ladies and Gentlemen

UNICEF welcomes the opportunity to speak at this forum which seeks to address the problems of access as well as participation and completion of quality education for members of disadvantaged and minority groups.

UNICEF endorses statements which suggest sharpening the formulation of the recommendations; as well as those regarding shared responsibility and the necessity of international cooperation. UNICEF thinks that voices at different levels should be linked up and this 1st forum provides a unique opportunity to do so.

For UNICEF, the child's best interest should be at the center of every decision, even in extreme situations. We would therefore recommend special attention to the issue of Education in emergencies, conflict and post conflict when children of minorities or vulnerable populations find themselves the most deprived of social protection and services including education.

Emergencies can be silent: producing asylum seekers, refugees, new settlers, internally displaced populations, child workers, over aged children and young people of minority groups who find themselves in difficult situations.

Every child counts: disaggregated data is required.

UNICEF also strongly recommends that the gender perspective be consolidated in the recommendations, including teaching girls and women about their rights and how to exercise these rights. Empowerment is a key educational outcome.

Achieving MDGs 2 & 3 and the right to education calls for an affirmative action through extra effort, extra funding, specific strategies by governments and international community: to reach out to the last 10%, the bottom billion of out of school children and young people. .

We recommend diverse learning systems to deliver quality formal and non formal education that is contextualized, culture specific and relevant within a holistic system of education, o that people from minorities are prepared to address emerging issues such as food crisis and climate change.

UNICEF welcomes collaboration with governments, civil society and UN organizations in the implementation of these recommendations and the opportunity to support the important work of the Independent Expert. Thank you.