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Statement submitted by Make Mothers Matter, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council¹

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

¹ The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Make Mothers Matter is an international NGO that since 1947 has been advocating for the recognition and the support of mothers as key actors for social and economic development. The following statement focuses on the crucial role mothers play in education, passing on essential values to ensure social cohesion, sharing the wish of a better future for their children.

Throughout history, education has been a source of empowerment and a driving force for social, economic cultural and political change.

But, due to COVID-19, the world has been witnessing an unprecedented education crisis.

More than 90 per cent of the world's children have had their education interrupted by the Pandemic.²

The choice of distance-learning has worsened the digital divide. Eight hundred twenty-six million, or half of the world's pupils and students do not have computers at home with 706 million (43 per cent) not connected to the Internet.³

At MMM, we welcome and support the directions taken by the Transforming Education Summit convened in September 2021 to address this global crisis.

We agree that “A good education develops every person's values and the capacity to live together in peace; to respect and appreciate human diversity, gender equality, and human rights; and to exercise an active commitment to sustainable development. A whole-child, learner-centered approach to inclusion and equity should be at the heart of any education system.”

At MMM, we also believe that education should enable children to develop their personality and cultural identity, while learning and understanding the cultural values of other communities, so that they can become constructive actors in society.

Each person is rich in his or her own heritage, and to appropriate a cultural resource is to discover it, practice it and contribute to it.

In the context of a global climate crisis, rapid technological transformation, profound changes in the world of work, the rise of misinformation, hate speech, education systems must adapt to the changing professional skills required, but also develop critical thinking skills, respect, empathy, and creativity.⁴ The passing on of the values of respect and benevolence takes place in the family, through everyday behaviour.

As rightly stated by the International Commission on the future of education, education must be viewed from a holistic and lifelong learning perspective. It requires the strengthening of a wide range of cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioural skills that are essential. Such an approach will enable all learners, from early childhood to adulthood.

MMM wishes to recall the crucial importance of early childhood education and care for the acquisition of these skills (Tashkent Conference, November 2022). Scientific research shows how children's early environment contributes to their overall future development.

² <https://fr.unesco.org/courier/2020-3/crise-leducation-precedent>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit>.

We therefore would like to emphasize the importance of parents and the family context in the daily education of children. As primary educators, parents, especially mothers, play an essential role that must be recognized, valued and supported.

The COVID crisis has revealed the shortcomings of our educational systems which, instead of equity and equality has been reinforcing privilege and inequality. Young people and adults report that education does not equip them with the knowledge, skills and values they need. This has a direct link with the difficulty in accessing quality education for which trained, decently paid and valued teachers and educators are sorely needed.

The crisis also points to the vital importance of care work within the family with parents and especially mothers obliged to step in hands on and how difficult it is to juggle professional and care responsibilities given the lack of adequate services, support and recognition.

Education has entered a vicious circle that is sometimes out of step with reality.

These challenges were recently spotlighted during the UNESCO World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education held in Tashkent Nov 14–16 2022. Ample illustrations were offered on the lack of investment in this first and essential brick of human development. There is an unfortunate lack of investments globally, needed to fuel the continuum of education as a life-long process – the only way for achieving sustainable development.

Stefania Giannini, the UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education, shared a strong quote by Abdulla Avloni, expressing today’s challenges about education: “Education is a matter of either life or death, either salvation – or destruction, either happiness or disaster for us”.

It is time for the right to education to enter a virtuous and inclusive circle. It is time for formal and informal education to unite in the pursuit of a common goal. Informal education is also an essential component of unpaid care work, it complements academic education provided by trained professionals. Parents must be provided with scientific evidence-based information tailored to their needs as the primary educators of their children and parenting programs to help and encourage them regarding this important responsibility. Fathers must be involved too and invited to take their share of responsibilities for the well-being of all in the family. Education from the start is a significant leverage for more gender equality and reinforcing recognition on care and education.

And, for this to happen, mothers themselves must have access to life long-education from the very start as girls. When they become mothers, they must benefit from adequate services, including financial support when it is needed. Women should not be penalized when they choose to become mothers. Adequate policies taken to enable mothers to reconcile their mother’s role with their professional and other social roles will be a true marker for sustainable development.