

DECLARATION OF CHILD RIGHTS-CENTRIC EDUCATION (2024) (DRAFT 2024.10.12)

Preamble

WHEREAS the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) was the first legally binding treaty recognizing Children as the Subjects of their own Rights, obliging member states to respect, protect and fulfill every child's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and

BEARING IN MIND that the United Nations General Assembly, in the "First phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education", affirmed that

- *"It is essential to ensure that educational objectives, practices and the organization of the schools are consistent with human rights values and principles"*; and

RECALLING that General Comment 1 (2001) of the UN CRC on Article 29 (1) "The Aims of Education" recognized that

- *"'Education' in this context goes far beyond formal schooling to embrace the broad range of life experiences and learning processes which enable children, individually and collectively, to develop their personalities, talents and abilities and to live a full and satisfying life within society"*; and
- *Called for "the fundamental reworking of curricula to include the various aims of education and the systematic revision of textbooks and other teaching materials and technologies, as well as school policies"*; in recognition that
- *"Approaches which do no more than seek to superimpose the aims and values of the article on the existing system without encouraging any deeper changes are clearly inadequate"*; and
- *"Efforts to promote the enjoyment of other rights must not be undermined, and should be reinforced, by the values imparted in the educational process. This includes not only the content of the curriculum but also the educational processes, the pedagogical methods and the environment within which education takes place, whether it be the home, school, or elsewhere"*; and

REASONING that

1. It is self-evident that mainstreamed practices of Education cannot be Child Rights-Centric, because they evolved and were mainstreamed when Children were still considered Property (of the State or Parents), several decades, or even centuries, prior to the 1989 recognition that Children are the Subjects of their own Rights; and yet
2. Child Rights are inalienable, indivisible, and interdependent and there cannot be any justification for practices of Education to violate them; and
3. Whilst the essentiality of ensuring that “*educational objectives, practices and the organization of the schools are consistent with human rights values and principles*” arise from *schools being the institution established explicitly for education*, to fulfill in fulfillment of the State’s obligation as the Duty Bearer to compulsorily ~~provide~~ ensure access to at least primary education (UN CRC Article 28) to all children without discrimination, the recognition that education encompasses a “*broad range of life experiences and learning processes*” which can take place at “*the home, school, or elsewhere*” makes it imperative that the protection of human rights values and principles be extended to *all environments* providing education.

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, CALL FOR

1. All Duty Bearers with a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfill Children’s Rights to, in, and through Education to absolutely and without reservation recognize Children as the Subjects of their own inalienable and indivisible civil, political, economic, social and cultural Rights; and
2. All Education Practice (defined broadly as “*all experiences and processes which enable children, individually and collectively, to develop their personalities, talents and abilities and to live a full and satisfying life within society*”) in *all Environments* (*home, school or elsewhere*) to be *fundamentally reworked* to ensure they are *consistent with human rights values and principles*, and especially the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and
3. This reworking to be prioritised in *schools and other institutions*, both State and non-State, *established explicitly for the purpose of Education* of the Child; and
4. Be *extended to reworking the evaluation of the education provided for children in non-institutional¹ environments*.

¹ International Human Rights law has no explicit acknowledgement of Rights to, in and through Education outside of Schools (e.g. in family- and community-based environments, including nomadic settings). Even where it is permitted under Domestic law, there is no assurance that it will be assessed on Rights-Centric criteria. We call for Human Rights, and especially Child Rights, to be used as the standard for evaluating such education, recognizing that the Rights of Children in such environments should enjoy the same protection as the Rights of Children in schools.