



Human Rights Council**Forty-seventh session**

21 June–14 July 2021

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development****Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council
on 12 July 2021****47/5. Realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every
girl***The Human Rights Council,**Guided by the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations,**Reaffirming* the human right of everyone to education, which is enshrined in, inter alia, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,*Recalling* all relevant Human Rights Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 32/20 of 1 July 2016 and 35/22 of 22 June 2017,*Recalling also* that gender equality and the right to education have been recognized in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences,*Reaffirming* General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which the Assembly addressed the need to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in order to ensure that no one is left behind, and stated that the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is crucial,*Recognizing* that the full realization of the right to education for all is an essential condition for achieving sustainable development, and in this regard encouraging States to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda, including Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, underlining the commitment therein to eliminate gender disparities in education, and Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls,

Recalling the need to ensure that all children enjoy the right to education and are ensured equal access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education, the need to eliminate gender disparities in education by 2030, and the need to build and upgrade education facilities that are child-focused, disability- and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, accessible and effective learning environments for all,

Recalling also the Incheon Declaration: Education 2030 – towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, adopted at the World Education Forum 2015, held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 19 to 22 May 2015,

Noting with appreciation the work carried out by all relevant organs, bodies and mechanisms of the United Nations system within their respective mandates, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the efforts of organizations and civil society to promote all girls' full and equal enjoyment of the right to education,

Recognizing that the right to education is a multiplier right that supports the empowerment of all women and girls to claim their human rights, including the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs as well as in economic, social and cultural life, and to fully, equally and meaningfully participate in the decision-making processes that shape society, and the transformative potential of education for every girl,

Reaffirming the equal right of every child to education without discrimination of any kind, and concerned by the continuation of the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by girls,

Recognizing that gender stereotypes about the role of women and girls underpin many of the barriers to girls' equal enjoyment of access to at least 12 years of quality education, and that stereotypes are also perpetuated in school curricula and materials,

Deeply concerned by the wide-ranging, negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the equal right of every child to education and on the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, as an estimated 11 million girls are at risk of not returning to school,

Deeply concerned also by the mass school closures and the estimated 58 million children who were not enrolled in primary school prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, of which approximately 54 per cent were girls,

Deeply concerned further that the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social and economic situation of all women and girls and their access to education, and the reported surge of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and violence and sexual harassment in digital contexts, during lockdowns, are deepening already existing inequalities and risks, reversing the progress made in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in recent decades,

Recognizing that, despite gains in providing access to quality education, rural girls are still more likely than rural boys to remain excluded from education and that among the gender-specific barriers to girls' equal enjoyment of their right to education are the feminization of poverty, child labour undertaken by girls, child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, early and repeat pregnancies, all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, abuse and harassment on the way to, from and at school and in the technology-mediated environment, the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work performed by girls, and gender stereotypes and negative social norms that lead families and communities to place less value on the education of girls than that of boys and may influence the decision of parents to allow girls to attend school,

Noting with concern that millions of girls are engaged in child labour and its worst forms, including those who have been victims of trafficking in persons and affected by armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies, that children without nationality or birth registration are vulnerable to trafficking in persons and child labour, and that many children face the

double burden of having to combine economic activities with unpaid care and domestic work, which deprive them of their childhood and hamper the full enjoyment of their right to education and opportunities for decent employment in the future, and noting in this regard the need to recognize, reduce and redistribute girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work,

Noting with concern also that, despite gains in providing access to education, girls are still more likely than boys to remain excluded from primary and secondary education, and recognizing that the attendance of girls at school can be affected by negative perceptions of menstruation and by lack of means to maintain safe personal hygiene, such as water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools that meets the needs of girls,

Deeply concerned that the lack of access to adequate water and sanitation services, including for menstrual hygiene management, especially in schools, negatively affects gender equality and women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to education and the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and that widespread silence and stigma surrounding menstruation and menstrual hygiene mean that women and girls often lack basic information and education thereon and are excluded and stigmatized, and are thus prevented from realizing their full potential, including in accessing at least 12 years of quality education,

Deeply concerned also that humanitarian crises and armed conflicts are depriving children, especially girls and girls with disabilities, of access to education, and that this has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in girls being two and a half times more likely than boys to be out of school in these settings,

Deploring attacks on and the abduction of girls because they attend or wish to attend school, as well as all attacks, including terrorist attacks, on educational institutions as such, their students and staff, and during girls' journeys to school, and strongly recognizing the negative impact that such attacks have on the progressive realization of the right to education, in particular of girls, and the obligations of States to provide an enabling and secure environment to ensure the safety of schools,

Noting that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected persons in vulnerable situations and that marginalized girls are at a high risk of not returning to school,

Stressing the crucial importance of the contribution of parliamentarians, national human rights institutions and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, women's rights organizations, faith actors and institutions and youth organizations, to ensuring the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl,

Determined to give full effect to the right to education and to guarantee that this right is recognized and exercised without discrimination of any kind,

1. *Recognizes* that the COVID-19 pandemic has generated a global learning crisis that risks reversing decades of progress and exacerbating the barriers that all girls face in the realization of their equal enjoyment of the right to education, and notes in this regard the statements made by the Secretary-General, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and other United Nations agencies and bodies indicating that evidence from past epidemics shows that adolescent girls are at particular risk of dropping out of school or not returning to school, even after the crisis is over;

2. *Reaffirms* that the right to education, enshrined in international human rights law, can help to enable the realization of many other human rights, particularly for girls;

3. *Recognizes* that the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 4 and 5, towards the full, equal and meaningful participation of all girls in society and to leave no one behind;

4. *Calls upon* States to place greater emphasis on ensuring at least 12 years of quality education for all girls in the COVID-19 recovery effort, as applicable, including catch-up, non-formal and literacy education for those who have not received formal

education, and special, well-financed initiatives for keeping girls in school and ensuring their return to school throughout post-primary education, and to promote access to skills and entrepreneurship training for girls;

5. *Urges* all States:

(a) To strengthen and intensify their efforts to take deliberate, concrete and targeted steps for every girl to fully realize the equal enjoyment of the right to education, to eliminate legal, administrative, financial, structural, physical, communication, social and cultural barriers that hinder girls' equal enjoyment of the right to education, and to appropriately ensure non-discrimination in the admission of girls and boys at all levels of education, particularly when designing policy measures, programmes and resource allocations;

(b) To review, repeal and eliminate, as appropriate, laws, policies and practices that negatively affect the right to education of every girl, in accordance with international human rights obligations, including discriminatory laws, policies, practices, customs, traditions or religious considerations, financial barriers, violence, including sexual violence and harassment on the way to and from school and in the school environment, the worst forms of child labour, early pregnancy, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, gender stereotypes and child, early and forced marriage;

(c) To eliminate gender stereotypes from all educational processes, practices and teaching materials, including through periodic review and revision of school curricula, textbooks, programmes and teaching methods, and the inclusion of human rights education, including on gender equality and non-discrimination, as part of the mandatory school curriculum, and to ensure that all girls are encouraged to freely choose non-traditional fields of study;

(d) To provide all girls with adequate access to water and safe, separate and quality sanitation facilities in schools and to promote appropriate hygiene behaviour and educational and health practices, in collaboration with civil society and other relevant actors, in order to foster a culture in which menstruation is recognized as healthy and natural and girls are not stigmatized on this basis, addressing the negative social norms around the issue and recognizing that girls' attendance at school can be affected by negative perceptions of menstruation and by lack of means to maintain safe personal hygiene, such as water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools that meet the needs of girls;

6. *Calls upon* States:

(a) To promote the progressive realization of girls' right to education by providing them with access to at least 12 years of quality education by implementing appropriate measures, as applicable, eliminating barriers to enable their return to school in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting continuous education throughout the pandemic;

(b) To strengthen and intensify their efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of school-related violence against girls, and to hold accountable those responsible for such acts;

(c) To ensure that girls, married and/or pregnant adolescents and young mothers, as well as single mothers, can continue and complete their education, and in this regard design, implement and, where applicable, revise educational policies to allow them to remain in and return to school, providing them with access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, as well as social services and financial and psychosocial support;

7. *Also calls upon* States to promote and protect the right of women and girls to equal access to education through enhanced emphasis on free and quality primary and secondary education, including catch-up and literacy education for those who have not received formal education, have left school early or were forced to leave school because of, inter alia, marriage, pregnancy and/or childbirth, on re-entry policies and on vocational training and skills development, which empower young women and girls subjected to child, early and forced marriage to make informed decisions about their lives, employment, economic opportunities and health, including through scientifically accurate, age-appropriate comprehensive education, relevant to cultural contexts, that provides adolescent girls and

boys and young women and men, in and out of school, consistent with their evolving capacities, with information on sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and the empowerment of women, human rights, physical, psychological and pubertal development and power in relationships between women and men, to enable them to build self-esteem and informed decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills, and to develop respectful relationships, in full partnership with young persons, parents, legal guardians, caregivers, educators and health-care providers, in order to contribute to ending child, early and forced marriage;

8. *Urges* States to promote long-term awareness-raising initiatives in education, in communities, in the media and online, engaging men and boys, through the incorporation of curricula on all women's and girls' rights into teacher training courses, on topics including the root causes of gender-based discrimination;

9. *Requests* States to ensure equal access to inclusive, equitable and quality education, which may require transformations in education systems, mainstreaming a gender perspective into education programmes, infrastructure development and teacher training, and in this regard calls upon States to invest in quality education, including through adequate financing, to ensure that all girls, including those who are marginalized or in vulnerable situations, enjoy their right to education on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination;

10. *Also requests* States, in the COVID-19 recovery effort, to promote gender sensitivity and disability inclusion within education systems in planning, budgeting, implementing, monitoring and reporting, to gather data disaggregated by sex and disability and to share knowledge and experience on educational programmes and policies that support the empowerment of all girls and women;

11. *Encourages* States to support girls' access to skills development and technical and vocational education and training, such as by expanding the scope of education and training opportunities ranging from basic digital fluency to advanced technical skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and in information and communications technology, and to close the digital gender divide, addressing the barriers to girls' equal and safe access to online spaces, so as not to leave girls further behind, particularly during the mass closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic;

12. *Also encourages* States to increase investments and international cooperation to provide equal opportunities for all girls to complete free, equitable, inclusive and quality early childhood, primary and secondary education, including by scaling up and strengthening national, regional and international initiatives, as appropriate, such as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, the Out-of-School Children Initiative, the Global Partnership for Education and the United Nations Population Fund-United Nations Children's Fund Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, and to explore additional innovative mechanisms based on models combining public and private resources, while taking appropriate action to ensure that all education providers are qualified and adequately trained and to give due respect to human rights, including the right to education;

13. *Further encourages* States to allocate appropriate financial and technical resources in support of country-led national education plans, and an increase in voluntary contributions to the Global Partnership for Education at the Global Education Summit in July 2021, which has a critical role to play in the global education recovery from COVID-19;

14. *Encourages* international cooperation to complement the efforts of States in matters relating to girls' education, in particular with a view to effectively eliminating all forms of discrimination and stereotypes in education, and supports the efforts of the United Nations system in this regard;

15. *Reaffirms* the importance of continuing to develop and enhance standards and methodologies at the national, regional and international levels to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of gender statistics and data on access to education, in particular access to universal primary education, the gender gap in youth literacy, the number of out-of-school children, and others;

16. *Also reaffirms* the importance of enhancing the dialogue among the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UN-Women, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education and other partners who pursue the goals of girls' education with a view to promoting further the right to education and ensuring that all girls have access to at least 12 years of quality education, as applicable, in the operational activities of the United Nations system;

17. *Encourages* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant special procedure mandate holders to give the required attention to realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl in carrying out their mandates and in their reporting, and to work collectively towards its realization through practical and efficient steps;

18. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with States, United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, UN-Women, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, the treaty bodies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders, to prepare a report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, highlighting the most important challenges and barriers that girls face and making recommendations, for submission to the Human Rights Council at its fiftieth session, and to provide an oral update thereon to the Council at its forty-ninth session;

19. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

*35th meeting
12 July 2021*

[Adopted without a vote.]
