

**CEDAW Committee Half-Day General Discussion on Girls/Women's Right to Education on
the occasion of the 58th session of CEDAW Committee
(10:00-13:00, 7 July 2014)**

Opening remark for the Director, UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva,
to be delivered on behalf of the Director-General

Ms. Violeta Neubauer, Madam Vice-Chair of the CEDAW Committee, and the distinguished
Committee Members,

Ms. Barbara Bailey, Chair of the CEDAW Working Group on girls and women's right to
education,

Ms. Navi Pillay, High-Commissioner for Human Rights of OHCHR,

Ms. Marie-Pierre Poirier, Regional Director of UNICEF Regional Office for CEEAC in
Geneva,

Distinguished Keynote speakers,

Representatives of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

It is a great honour for me to be here this morning among the distinguished members of the
CEDAW Committee, to represent UNESCO and deliver this opening remark on behalf of the

Director-General, Ms. Irina Bokova, who unfortunately could not be with us due to her prior commitments at ECOSOC in New York this week. The Director-General is strongly committed to the cause of girls' and women's right to education and has requested me to convey her profound personal regret for not being able to join you today.

First of all, allow me to congratulate the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for selecting girls' and women's right to education as the theme for the Half-Day General Discussion on the occasion of the 58th session of the CEDAW Committee.

UNESCO is very proud to be supporting the Office of the High Commissioner, jointly with UNICEF, in organizing this General Discussion and also to be engaged in the process of elaborating the "General Recommendations on Girls' and Women's Right to Education". We also appreciate the opportunity to submit a set of recommendations for the consideration by the CEDAW Committee, which is also supported by UN Women.

Gender equality is one of two global priorities of UNESCO for its current Medium-term Strategy period 2014-2021, the second being Africa. UNESCO considers gender equality in education as a basic human right in and of itself and a precondition for realization of all other human rights. Education empowers girls and women. The right to education has a multiplier effect. It unlocks other rights when it is guaranteed and implemented. Conversely, its denial leads to compounded denials of other human rights and the perpetuation of poverty. For these reasons, promoting girls' and women's right to education towards the ultimate goal of gender equality is central in UNESCO's efforts to achieving Education for All.

I therefore wish to thank the Office of the High Commissioner for inviting UNESCO to be part of this process, which is an extraordinary opportunity to reinforce our common mandate to

promote girls' and women's right to education, provided for in article 10 of CEDAW.

The General Discussion on girls' and women's right to education and the foreseen General Recommendation cannot be timelier when the global discussions around the education goal for the post-2015 development agenda are being intensified. Within this framework, and as the lead UN agency for education, UNESCO hopes that this general discussion will contribute to the elaboration of specific and concrete recommendations based on lessons learned with a view to address systemic and persistent challenges that hamper efforts promoting girls' and women's education through a human rights -based approach. Since a rights-based approach to education depends upon regulatory and institutional coherence, it requires the development of a uniform and comprehensive legal framework that takes into account girls' and women's education goals of EFA and the roles of various government departments/sectors in achieving these goals.

Within the proposed set of education targets for the post-2015 development agenda, UNESCO, together with UNICEF and other key stakeholders, has been advocating for mainstreaming gender equality in the entire goal, and ensuring that the needs of girls and women are reflected in all the targets as a priority.

Given persistent gender inequalities manifest in all aspects of education to the disadvantage of girls and women, there is no way that we will be able to achieve not only the 2015 Education for All Goals and Millennium Development Goal 3, but also the newly proposed post-2015 education goal and its targets, if girls and women's right to education is not fulfilled.

UNESCO stands ready to share years of experience in promoting, monitoring and implementing the right to education in general under its mechanisms and procedures for monitoring the implementation of the 1960 UNESCO Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination

in Education (CADE) and Article 10 of CEDAW.

UNESCO is strongly committed to working closely with the Office of the High Commissioner and is extending its support to the CEDAW Working Group on Girls' and Women's Education, in the coming months, towards the adoption of the General Recommendation by the Committee.

I wish you all very productive discussions on this critical theme.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.