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Statement submitted by Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2011/100.



Statement***Working in the education sector in the occupied Palestinian territories: challenges regarding the implementation of Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015**

The Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture is an NGO working in the education sector in different regions of the world since 1995. Its wider and deeper experience in the sector has been developed in the Arab countries of the Middle East region. It has sought to contribute to the achievement of Goal 2 in all countries where it has worked. The commitment of both the Palestinian National Authority and international stakeholders for the achievement of Goal 2 is undeniable. In this sense, since the Palestinian National Authority was created in 1994 there was an increase of 19 per cent in the gross enrolment ratio in primary education. In 1994 the gross enrolment ratio was 81 per cent versus 98 per cent in 2009. Although these figures show that Goal 2 by 2015 could be achieved, it is yet to be seen. In general, the occupied Palestinian territories have made great progress in ensuring universal access to primary education of Palestinian children, but much remains to be done and dependence on international funding is too high.

The Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture has been working since 1995 to achieve universal primary education through the construction and rehabilitation of schools in the area of Jerusalem where two schools have been fully rehabilitated in the East part, and 11 schools have undergone minor reconstruction, the West Bank where 13 schools have been rehabilitated and Gaza where 1 school with two sites has undergone major construction work. Furthermore, the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture has equipped classrooms, labs and other school spaces in 35 schools in the West Bank and Gaza. Two sports facilities have been built in Ramalah and Beit Sahour, respectively. Finally, the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture has rehabilitated four rehabilitation centres for disabled children in Gaza where 5,000 non-disabled are receiving psychosocial assistance. It is currently developing a field study on the reality of children with special needs in collaboration with the University of Bethlehem. It has been working on improving the quality of education for the past 15 years, primarily, through training programmes for teachers — 6,000 teachers from primary, secondary and preschool have benefited — and in the implementation of projects on psychosocial support for children affected by conflict — over 25,000 children benefit (currently two programmes are in place in the Gaza Strip).

In the current state of the sector, the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture has designed a new programme of Education funded by the Spanish Agency for Cooperation and Development. It will be implemented between 2010 and 2014 and it seeks to collaborate to establish uniform quality standards in primary and secondary education in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is a pioneering project, “Training of primary teachers in the diagnosis of Special Educational Needs and adapting curriculum to meet those needs”. The four-year programme involves 50 schools in the West Bank — 20,000 students (primary and secondary school), 750 teachers and 250 teachers-in-training. The programme aims to improve technical and human capacities of key stakeholders in the educational process through the collaboration

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

of all groups and organizations involved in the sector: schools, universities, Ministry of Education, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, local NGOs, parent and student associations. A special emphasis is to be placed on training of teachers and school managers, as well as the creation of physical and virtual spaces to encourage research, discussion and exchange of knowledge and experience in the educational field.

To achieve its objectives, the programme is structured around the following components: (a) Training of teachers and school administrators; (b) Creating spaces for research and development; (c) Strengthening educational institutions; (d) Creation of networks of exchange between the different groups involved in the education of Palestinian children; (e) Development of activities outside the academic curriculum to promote values of gender equity, respect for human rights, integration of minorities and cultural diversity.

Our recommendations regarding the accomplishment of Goal 2 in the occupied Palestinian territories in the coming years are the following: (a) Provide sufficient resources to ensure quality education for all Palestinian children, including groups of children with special needs and those who are directly affected by armed conflict. Special emphasis should be placed on training teachers to adapt their skills to the real needs of students and to the official curriculum; (b) Deepen the value system that is promoted in schools by ensuring the presence of democratic principles and promoting an equitable education that enhances equality between men and women in a profound and durable way; (c) Expand programmes of psychosocial support to children in school, combining the educational and medical aspects. Teachers and social workers' emotional support to children should be promoted through specific training of teachers in this field so that Palestinian childhood does not fall behind. The fact is that academic performance and motivation of children is much lower in areas affected by armed conflicts; (d) Build bridges between training and employment to facilitate job placement for young Palestinians in order to promote both specialized vocational training and efficient public education policies by getting all public and private actors to participate.

Finally, the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture is organizing a meeting in Madrid on 28 April 2011 where the main stakeholders of education in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as representatives of the Economic and Social Council and the Government of Spain will seek to define future goals and to coordinate efforts in the Palestinian education sector. This meeting is part of our contribution to the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2011.
