

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 50th SESSION

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education

23 June 2022

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Koumba Boly Barry, Special Rapporteur on the right to education**, invited all States and actors to put the right to education at the centre of the agenda. Countries must ensure the right to free pre-primary, primary and secondary education for all. Literacy and vocational training centres are also crucial. She also highlighted the Global Coalition on Education under Attack's report, which shows that attacks on education have increased in 2020 and 2021. She remarked the importance of the impact of terrorism on the right to education in the countries of the Sahel.

She presented her thematic report, which addressed the issue of the impact of the digitalization of education on the right to education ([A/HRC/50/32](#)). Her main recommendation is to articulate the debates concerning the introduction of digital technologies in education around the right of everyone to a public, free and quality education as well as the commitments made by States in this regard under international law. She also presented the advantages that digital education can offer. In addition, she highlighted the significant risks of the introduction of digital technology for the realization of the right to education for all. In particular, the reinforcement of exclusion rather than improvement of access; the commercialization of education; standardization rather than personalized teaching; reinforcement of stereotypes rather than increased respect for diversity, among others. She finally made several recommendations, including the need to broaden the notion of the right to education to include digital skills and digital access as a means to support the right to education, right to information and cultural rights as well as the need to guarantee academic freedom, for both educators and learners.

Interactive dialogue

The majority of the countries highlighted the importance of guaranteeing digital education for all, particularly for vulnerable populations, including girls and persons with disabilities. Also, urged for international cooperation in the field of education. They showed concerned over personal data protection and the need to promote equality, non-discrimination, protect privacy, and protect students from cybercrimes. **Afghanistan, the U.S. and several other countries** urged the Taliban to allow women and girls back in school, at all levels, and to receive a full education. **Finland (on behalf of the Nordic Baltic countries)** expressed the need to expand connectivity and opportunities for digital learning. The **EU** highlighted that digitalization should be used to promote the right to inclusive and equitable quality education for all and gender equality in and through education. **Kazakhstan (on behalf of Turkik states)** expressed that they will create an online platform for posting educational material. **Libya** emphasized the importance of adopting digital technology under the legal framework of human rights. **Cuba** mentioned that the polarization of wealth, inequality and lack of access to financial resources have a direct impact on the real capacity to promote digitalization in education, particularly in developing countries. **Venezuela** called upon the SR to report on the negative impact of UCMs on the enjoyment of the human right to education, in the growing number of countries subject to these illegal measures. **Russia Federation and Pakistan** emphasised the importance of personal data protection as well as the negative consequences of digitalization in the health of children in particular. **Ukraine** condemned Russia's illegal aggression against educational institutions as these have been damaged or destroyed. Children and teachers have been displaced and fled as refugees. Despite school closures distance learning has helped reduced gaps during war, the country called upon

the international community to support efforts of digitalising education in the context of war. The SR should refer to the consequences of the Russian aggression on the right to education. **Mali** mentioned that in Africa, more than elsewhere, digital technology opens up new learning perspectives and represents a real opportunity to improve education systems and lead African learners to global integration.

NGOs expressed concern over children's education in Ukraine amidst the war as most have poor or damaged internet connection and do not have access to study. These children live in stress and in fear for their lives. The territories temporarily occupied by Russia, Ukrainian textbooks are confiscated while forced to study the Russian educational program. Other NGOs mentioned that the digitalization of education is closely related to the engagement of private actors, and therefore there is risks leading to greater commercialization of education. Thus, in order to ensure the beneficiaries of the digitalization of education are learners and teachers, the developments must be adequately regulated and monitored by States, with a particular attention to vulnerable, marginalized, and disadvantaged groups. Some also stressed that the right to education should be provided not only by state-run schools, but also by civil-society-run schools. Children should be protected from online hate, prejudice and conspiracy myths that spread globally with incredible speed. Particular country-situations were highlighted: in the DR Congo, especially in the East, pervasive violence affects schools and children.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (78 country delegations):

Finland (on behalf of a group of countries), European Union, Côte d'Ivoire (on behalf of the African Group), United Arab Emirates (on behalf of a group of countries), Belgium (on behalf of a group of countries), Kazakhstan (on behalf of a group of countries), Qatar, Slovenia, United Arab Emirates, Israel, France, Ecuador, Libya, Senegal, Mauritius, Luxembourg, Iraq, Djibouti, Cuba, Bangladesh, Paraguay, Morocco, Lithuania, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Bahrain, Russian Federation, Thailand, Maldives, Malaysia, Egypt, China, India, Viet Nam, Republic of Korea, Nepal, Mr. Algeria, Italy, Holy See, Kenya, Portugal, Afghanistan, Mr. Georgia, South Africa, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Armenia, Pakistan, Benin, Yemen, Mali, Ukraine, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, United States, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Bahamas, Niger, Bulgaria, Mauritania, Ireland, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Tunisia, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Timor-Leste, Ghana, Poland, Gambia, Saudi Arabia, Namibia, Madagascar, Malawi, European Union (on behalf of a group of countries), Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania, Brazil.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor (18):

UN Women, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, National Human Rights Commission of India, Jain International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDEL) (Joint Statement), International Catholic Child Bureau, World Jewish Congress, Rutgers (Joint Statement), Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Federatie van Nederlandse Verenigingen tot Integratie Van Homoseksualiteit - COC Nederland (Joint Statement), Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, Society for Threatened Peoples, Society for Threatened Peoples, Catholic International Education Office, Edmund Rice International Limited.

To watch full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#)