



Amidst COVID-19, UN Human Rights Council reaffirms recognition of the Abidjan Principles and calls for joint action between UN and GPE

Public statement, 16 July 2021

In a [resolution](#) adopted by consensus on Monday 12 July, and sponsored by 54 States, the United Nations Human Rights Council reaffirmed its recognition of the [Abidjan Principles on the right to education](#), urging States to act against commercialisation of education, and requested the UN to work with the [Global Partnership for Education](#) to implement it.

The resolution in particular:

- Notes the development by experts of guiding principles such as the **Abidjan Principles** on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education (preliminary paragraph);
- Recognises the “significant importance of investment” of the **maximum of available resources in public education** (paragraph 5), at all levels of education, including pre-primary education (paragraph 6);
- Urges all States “**to regulate and monitor all education providers**, private and public, including those operating independently or in partnership with States, [...] **to address the negative impact of the commercialization of education**” (paragraph 12); and
- Expresses concerns at the increasing **digital divide**, and stresses that the incorporation of digital technologies in education “is not a long-term replacement for on-site schooling” and has “potential unintended negative effects”, including on “the changes it may create in the organization of education systems” (preliminary paragraph).

This resolution is the second one adopted by the Human Rights Council that recognises the Abidjan Principles, after a [previous one](#) in 2019, adding to the similar [recognition](#) by all major global and regional human rights institutions and mandate-holders working on the right to education.

Crucially, the 2021 resolution of the Human Rights Council also encourages “the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to **collaborate with relevant United**

Nations agencies, including UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and civil society organizations to provide technical support to States to realize the right to education in the COVID-19 and post-COVID context”. This recommendation will be critical to help governments integrate the right to education in their plan to build better education systems after the COVID-19 period.

The connection between [GPE](#), which is the main multilateral funding organisation for education, and human rights, is particularly important. Collaboration between GPE, as a harmonised funding body, and UNESCO and OHCHR, as human rights and policy organisations, could be essential to ensure that human rights are translated from commitments to effective education programming. In particular, UNESCO recently designed a series of tools to support States in addressing the right to education in educational planning and management, which could help bridge this gap. The signing organisations will be engaging with these institutions and are committed to working with them to support the practical use of the right to education in education sector planning and implementation, in accordance with the resolution.

The [Abidjan Principles](#) were adopted in February 2019 by 57 of the most qualified global education and human rights [experts](#), following a three-year [consultative process](#) with decision-makers, communities and practitioners. This landmark text unpacks existing human rights law in the context of the growth of private involvement in education. The Abidjan Principles have quickly become the reference instrument to put the right to education in practice.

Signatories

1. ActionAid International
2. Alliance Globale pour l'Éducation et de Développement - Niger
3. Amnesty International
4. Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education
5. Center for African Studies of the University of Porto
6. Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour le Développement (CRAD), Haiti
7. Civil Association for Equality and Justice (ACIJ)
8. CONAMEPT coalition de Madagascar
9. East African Centre for Human Rights
10. Education For All Sierra Leone Coalition (EFA-SL)
11. Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
12. Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)
13. Mouvement Ivoirien des Droits humains (MIDH)
14. National Coalition for Education (NCE), India
15. OMEP - Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire /World Organization for Early Childhood Education
16. Organisation pour la Démocratie, le Développement Economique et Social
17. Oxfam India
18. Oxfam International
19. Peoples Alliances in Central East (PACE) - India
20. Regroupement Education Pour Toutes et pour Tous (REPT), Haiti
21. Right to Education Forum (RTE Forum) - India
22. Right to Education Initiative
23. Solidarité Laïque
24. Syndicat National des Agents de la Formation et de l'Éducation du Niger

Key documents

- 2021 Resolution of the Human Rights Council on the right to education:
<https://bit.ly/3B4tW4C>
- Website on the Abidjan Principles on the right to education:
<https://www.abidjanprinciples.org/>

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