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**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

## Right to education

### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Koumbou Boly Barry, submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 8/4 and [26/17](#). In her report, the Special Rapporteur focuses on the ways in which the right to education contributes to the prevention of atrocity crimes and mass or grave violations of human rights.

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\* [A/74/150](#).



## Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education

### *Summary*

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur considers ways in which the right to education contributes to the prevention of atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations. Stressing that education has a key role to play at all stages of prevention, the Special Rapporteur underlines the particularly forceful preventive potential of the right to education in the very early stages, before warning signs are apparent. That role is to be linked with the aims of education and the right to inclusive and equitable quality education, as established in international instruments.

Peace, acceptance of the “other”, respect for cultural diversity, the participation of all in the development of society and an education that is adequate and adapted to the specific needs of people in their own context are objectives of education that have been widely recognized by States and in human rights mechanisms at the international and regional levels. However, education is not afforded the importance or the funding it deserves and needs in order to play those roles.

The Special Rapporteur, highlighting circumstances under which schools can become tools for division and lay the groundwork for future violent conflicts, focuses on a number of steps regarding the organization of school systems, pedagogy and the values and skills to be transmitted to learners that are crucial in terms of prevention. She proposes an education framework (known in English as the “ABCDE framework”) that encompasses the interrelated features of education needed in order for the preventive potential of the right to education to be fully deployed. Namely, education should promote acceptance of self and others; a sense of belonging to society; critical thinking; diversity; and the capacity of learners to feel empathy for others. The right to inclusive and equitable quality education must be taken seriously and be prioritized if States and other stakeholders are serious in their commitment to prevent violent conflicts, atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations.

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## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 8/4 and 26/17. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education examines the interlinkages between the right to inclusive and equitable quality education and the prevention of atrocity crimes, understood as encompassing all crimes defined in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity) and ethnic cleansing (A/HRC/37/65, paras. 4–5), as well as, on a more general scale, mass or grave violations of human rights.

2. The report is meant to serve as a contribution to past and current discussions in the area of peace and security on the topic of prevention, which remains high on the agenda of the Secretary-General and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is aimed at complementing the work of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights on the writing and teaching of history (A/68/296) and of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (Special Rapporteur on transitional justice), in particular his 2017 report (A/72/523) and his joint study with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide on the contribution of transitional justice to the prevention of gross violations and abuses of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and their recurrence, who plead for more upstream prevention, including in the field of education (A/HRC/37/65).

3. Many recent studies on genocide and mass atrocities have focused on prevention, treating such crimes as processes that take a long time to unfold. Identifying and targeting risk factors and putting in place early warning systems and long-term strategies is important but insufficient. It is also crucial to put in place a continuum of preventive strategies,<sup>1</sup> from programmes for the protection of human rights and the rule of law to transitional justice programmes. Education has a key role to play at all stages of prevention, including primary or upstream prevention (i.e. before warning signs are apparent), secondary or midstream prevention (i.e. during a crisis) and tertiary or downstream prevention (i.e. after a crisis, to prevent a recurrence).

4. Education is an important element of the way in which a society responds to and tries to prevent the recurrence of human rights violations because such violations often lead to missed education or the provision of education in ways that legitimize repression and reproduce violence. The legacies of such violations in educational systems can be significant and long lasting. Education in itself, however, can be an important instrument for ensuring that the past is remembered, as well as for transmitting the goals of transitional justice efforts and facilitating the engagement with children and youth. Transitional justice measures can help in identifying the legacies of repression and conflict in education and can inform the reconstruction of educational systems with the aim of preventing a recurrence. Truth-telling initiatives, for example, often produce findings about the role of education in past injustices and lead to recommendations for education reform, while both truth commissions and criminal justice processes can produce educational material to be used in schools. Transitional justice measures can also affect access to education, such as when educational assistance is provided to students in the form of reparations to help victims of human rights violations overcome obstacles to gaining access to education.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See James Waller, *Confronting Evil: Engaging Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> See Clara Ramirez-Barat and Roger Duthie, eds., *Transitional Justice and Education: Learning Peace* (New York, Social Science Research Council, 2017).

5. The Special Rapporteur stresses the importance of addressing those issues, not only because of the preventive potential of education, but also from a “right to education” stance, which implies a number of principles and State obligations that are crucial when contemplating the prevention of atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations.

6. In many international and regional instruments, national constitutions and laws, educational systems are tasked with promoting peace, human rights and collective and individual development. Those systems, however, do not operate in isolation from their own contexts, and they mirror the societies in which they are situated, including the power and domination relationships that they tend, sometimes by design, to reproduce. While human rights violations can have a significant and long-lasting impact on educational systems, it is also true that educational systems often play a role in fostering a context favourable to either the protection or the violation of human rights.

7. Despite fruitful dialogue on the issue, education is accorded neither the importance nor the funding that it deserves and that is needed if it is to perform the roles it is assigned. As stated in the Education 2030 Framework for Action, “in a globalized world with unresolved social, political, economic and environmental challenges, education that helps build peaceful and sustainable societies is essential. Education systems seldom fully integrate such transformative approaches, however. It is vital therefore to give a central place ... to strengthening education’s contribution to the fulfilment of human rights, peace and responsible citizenship from local to global levels, gender equality, sustainable development and health” (para. 61). The reality is indeed worrying, with signals from all over the world about rising economic inequality, deteriorating relationships between groups and peoples, the increase of intolerant and xenophobic messages, including those aimed at migrants and refugees, and the promotion of fundamentalist and extremist ideologies, which have a particularly detrimental impact on women.

8. The significant defunding of public education over the past 20 years provides actors promoting intolerant and extremist ideologies with an opportunity to fill a gap left wide open by States. Simultaneously, the push to reduce education to the basics, aiming to ensure only that individuals become economically effective and contribute to building countries’ wealth while completely disregarding the other important aims of education, runs counter to the objective of building peaceful societies.

9. Peaceful societies are not societies without conflict; rather, they are without violent conflict – they are able to suppress conflict and disagreement in a non-violent manner. Peace cannot, however, be reduced to an absence of violence; it also implies social or societal peace – the building of strong solidarity and relationships of mutual understanding.

10. The Special Rapporteur underlines a number of tangible steps, which can be adopted by States and other stakeholders, that are aimed at ensuring that educational systems contribute to peace by heightening the prevention of atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations. It is important to know when, how and in which circumstances education, on the one hand, increases intolerance, discrimination and violence and, conversely, helps to mitigate them, by, for example, building strong and deep solidarity among people and within and between groups. Areas of action concern not only explicit or hidden curricula that conveys messages of hatred, but also the ways in which educational systems are organized, the types of pedagogical approaches that are used and the knowledge, values and skills that are transmitted to learners. A gender focus must also be adopted to reveal how education may be used to combat gender inequality to prevent atrocity crimes that specifically target women.

11. In educational processes, it is crucial that education be considered as an important socialization space that enables individuals to understand and build their own identities (i.e. to develop self-knowledge) and teaches acceptance of the identities of others. Acceptance here is to be understood as a step towards tolerance, lowering hierarchical relationships between those who tolerate and those who are tolerated and conveying more forcefully a notion of equal dignity. Acceptance, together with the recognition of other human beings as such, with different views and equal rights, and of the need for solidarity and equality within diverse and inclusive societies, is among the key values that must be promoted through education. The Special Rapporteur proposes an education framework (known in English as the “ABCDE framework” for its goals of acceptance, belonging, critical thinking, diversity and empathy) setting out key conditions for ensuring the full deployment of the preventive potential of the right to education. Such education must not only impart knowledge of the past and foster an understanding of the roles of victims and perpetrators, but must also build the capacity to witness the suffering of one’s own community and that of others, to tolerate ambiguity, to understand various perspectives and to imagine a new and more just and vibrant future.

12. It would be a mistake to believe that the present report concerns only adverse situations, such as violent conflict, major political changes or economic turmoil, or societies that are profoundly divided along ethnic, religious, political or social lines. It also relates to countries hosting diverse and complex but apparently peaceful societies. In such societies, events, whether planned or unexpected, such as adverse economic conditions or acts of unscrupulous political leaders unearthing and amplifying old grudges and resentments, may suddenly reveal that the sense of solidarity and spirit of mutual understanding are too superficial or weak to prevent a slide towards violence. Implementing the right to inclusive, equitable and quality education, from early childhood to tertiary and lifelong education, is a crucial and urgent step to take in times of relative peace to prevent future atrocity crimes and human rights violations. As mentioned earlier, preventive measures have to already be in place at an early stage.

13. Education is understood in a multidimensional manner as including formal, non-formal (i.e. that which falls outside of official educational institutions but that is still offered in a planned and structured manner) and informal (e.g. acquiring a skill at home) learning. While the report is concentrated mainly on formal education in terms of the concrete steps proposed, it is also relevant for non-formal educational structures, which should adopt the standards established for formal structures when it comes to the prevention of atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations. Informal education has to be kept in mind as well, as it can either complement formal and non-formal structures in efficiently preventing atrocity crimes and human rights violations or serve to deter such objectives.

14. For the purpose of preparing the present report, the Special Rapporteur held a meeting of experts in New York on 7 and 8 May 2019. She warmly thanks all who contributed.

## **II. Legal framework**

15. In numerous legally binding global and regional treaties, declarations and recommendations, States have committed to implementing the right to education. Those instruments jointly form a very detailed legal expression of the obligations of States, in particular, to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education of everyone without discrimination; to provide free public education of the highest attainable quality to all as effectively and expeditiously as possible, to the maximum of their

available resources; and to respect the liberty of parents or legal guardians to choose for their children an educational institution other than a public educational institution and the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct private educational institutions, subject always to the requirement that such institutions conform to standards established by the State in accordance with its obligations under international human rights law.<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in the previous report of the Special Rapporteur, it is the responsibility of States to regulate private actors to ensure in particular that they implement the goals of education as set out in international standards and contribute to ensuring a quality education for all (A/HRC/41/37, paras. 46–53).

16. As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the “Education 2030” agenda contributes to moving forward the full realization of the right to education, whereas the Education 2030 Framework for Action details its implementation. The Special Rapporteur is pleased to note that the transition from Millennium Development Goal 2 (achieve universal primary education) to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) reflects a significant amplification of States’ commitments in the field of education. The reference to inclusive and equitable quality education, which is now expressed in many international documents, is crucial.

#### A. Aims of education

17. The Special Rapporteur recalls the importance of implementing Sustainable Development Goal 4 in accordance with human rights standards and notes that human rights and Sustainable Development Goal instruments include similar or overlapping sets of objectives for education, which have been added to and refined since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 of the Declaration states that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace”. Such requirements have been reaffirmed and developed in subsequent instruments, in particular article 5 of the Convention against Discrimination in Education, article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that education shall be directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; and the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin; and to the development of respect for the natural environment. Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child stresses that education shall be directed to the preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures; the preservation of national independence and territorial integrity; the promotion and

<sup>3</sup> See in particular the Abidjan Principles: guiding principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education, overarching principles 1–3.

achievement of African unity and solidarity; and the promotion of the child's understanding of primary health care. Notably, article 13 of the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Protocol of San Salvador) states that education should strengthen respect for ideological pluralism and enable everyone to participate effectively in a democratic and pluralistic society.

19. The Committee on the Rights of the Child quoted article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the aims of education, which states that education should be directed to a wide range of values. According to the Committee, at first sight, some of the diverse values expressed in article 29 might appear to be in conflict with one another in certain situations. Thus, efforts to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all peoples might not always be automatically compatible with policies designed, for example to develop respect for the national values of the country in which the child is living. The Committee went on to state that part of the importance of that provision lay precisely in its recognition of the need for a balanced approach to education and one that would succeed in reconciling diverse values through dialogue and respect for difference. Moreover, children were capable of playing a unique role in bridging many of the differences that had historically separated groups of people from one another (CRC/GC/2001/1, para. 4).

20. Peace, acceptance, the participation of all in the development of society, knowing and understanding the "other", the recognition of cultural diversity and an education that is adequate and adapted to the specific needs of people in their own context are objectives that have been widely recognized by States and human rights mechanisms at the international and regional levels. Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 envisions that by 2030, States and all other stakeholders would ensure that all learners acquired the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. The Incheon Declaration underlines the transformative nature of education and the important role of education as a main driver of development and in achieving the other Sustainable Development Goals. The Declaration reaffirmed that education was a public good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights; that it was essential for peace, tolerance, human fulfilment and sustainable development; and that it was key to achieving full employment and poverty eradication (para. 5). The Education 2030 Framework for Action contains important references along the same lines, underlining that educational systems must be relevant and respond to rapidly changing labour markets, technological advances, urbanization, migration, political instability, environmental degradation, natural hazards and disasters, competition for natural resources, demographic challenges, increasing global unemployment, persistent poverty, widening inequality and expanding threats to peace and safety (para. 6).

21. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes the importance of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, recalling that the right to education includes instruction in the area of human rights. Human rights education contributes to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and violent conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development and the enhancement of participation in decision-making processes within a democratic system. In its resolution 12/4, the Human Rights Council included teachers and educators as a target group in the second phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (para. 2). In its resolution 39/3, the Council decided to make youth the focus group of the fourth phase of the Programme, with a special emphasis on education and



training in equality, human rights and non-discrimination, and inclusion and respect for diversity with the aim of building inclusive and peaceful societies (para. 3).

## **B. Right to inclusive and equitable quality education**

22. To attain such ambitious goals in a context where individual identities consisting of multiple layers with infinite possible combinations need to be imbued with a sense of global citizenship, quality education must be provided. The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs emphasize the importance of providing basic learning, comprising both essential tools (e.g. literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem-solving) and basic content (e.g. knowledge, skills, values and attitudes), as well as the transmission of common cultural and moral values in which the individual and society find their identity and worth.

23. The targets associated with Sustainable Development Goal 4 define the meaning of inclusive and equitable quality education in terms of access (e.g. no gender disparity, equal access for the vulnerable); infrastructure (e.g. educational facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all); the availability of qualified teachers; and content (e.g. relevant and effective learning outcomes; skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship; literacy and numeracy).

24. In the Incheon Declaration, States and other stakeholders stressed that quality education and the improvement of learning outcomes require ensuring that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems. The Declaration also states that quality education fosters creativity and knowledge and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development and global citizenship education.

25. Adopting a human rights-based approach to education requires understanding the right to education as a right to inclusive and equitable quality education. This means that children as well as adults must be able to gain access to a kind of education that is aimed at helping them to attain the objectives mentioned above and that is organized and provided in a manner that ensures its high quality. As underlined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its general comment 13 (1999) on the right to education ([E/C.12/1999/10](#), para. 6) and in the Abidjan Principles, functioning educational institutions and programmes have to be available in sufficient quantity (i.e. the availability condition) and be accessible to everyone without discrimination (i.e. the accessibility condition, encompassing non-discrimination, physical and economic accessibility, to which must now be added an information accessibility component). The form and substance of education also have to be acceptable (e.g. relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality) to students and, in appropriate cases, parents, subject to the educational objectives required under human rights law and national minimum educational standards (i.e. the acceptability condition). Finally, education has to be flexible so that it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings (i.e. the adaptability condition). The Special Rapporteur adds the importance of ensuring “relevant” education as part as the quality requirement, meaning that it enables individuals to fully develop in their own context, navigate within the complexities of their own communities and societies

and participate in and contribute to the building of peaceful social relationships in the spirit of solidarity. Furthermore, as stated in the Abidjan Principles, the criteria of quality must be understood as continuing to evolve, and States should aim to ensure the right to education of the highest attainable quality.

26. To attain the goal of quality education, the development of the creative and critical spirit of learners, whether children or adults, must be respected. Indeed, the Education 2030 Framework for Action demonstrates the commitment of 184 States and the education community to ensure that all individuals acquire a solid foundation of knowledge, develop creative and critical thinking and collaborative skills and build curiosity, courage and resilience. Critical thinking is also included as a crucial learning outcome of the programmes led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on education for sustainable development and global citizenship education, in particular to prevent violent extremism.<sup>4</sup>

27. Some documents focusing specifically on the teaching of history stress the importance of critical thinking. For example, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights recommended that history teaching aim at fostering critical thought, analytic learning and debate (A/68/296, para. 88 (a)) and indicated a number of international documents pointing in that direction (*ibid.*, paras. 14 and 16). The Special Rapporteur is of the view that the development of such critical spirit should take place at all levels of education and through all disciplines, in line with the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

### C. Academic freedom

28. Academic freedom is an essential feature of democratic societies that are able to address social tensions and conflicts in a peaceful manner, through mutual understanding and dialogue. It is guaranteed under international human rights law, as underlined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its general comment 13 on the right to education (E/C.12/1999/10, para. 38).

29. According to the Committee, “members of the academic community, individually or collectively, are free to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, through research, teaching, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation or writing. Academic freedom includes the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfil their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the internationally recognized human rights applicable to other individuals in the same jurisdiction. The enjoyment of academic freedom carries with it obligations, such as the duty to respect the academic freedom of others, to ensure the fair discussion of contrary views, and to treat all without discrimination on any of the prohibited grounds” (*ibid.*, para. 39).

## III. Preventive potential of the right to education

### A. Preventive potential of education

30. The preventive potential of education has been recognized in various United Nations documents. For example, in his report on the responsibility to protect: State responsibility and prevention, the Secretary-General argued that “education can

<sup>4</sup> See <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd>; <https://en.unesco.org/preventing-violent-extremism/education>; and Abidjan Principles, para. 8.

promote tolerance and an understanding of the value of diversity. Changing the behaviour, attitudes and perceptions of young people can contribute to creating a society that is resilient to atrocity crimes. Educational systems should reflect the ethnic, national and cultural diversity of societies, set an example of inclusiveness in their policies, and prescribe textbooks that promote inclusiveness and acceptance. Education curriculums should include instruction on past violations and on the causes, dynamics and consequences of atrocity crimes” ([A/67/929-S/2013/399](#), para. 63).

31. The Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes ([A/70/741-S/2016/71](#), annex), developed by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, is a tool designed to facilitate early action. It is based on the premise that atrocity crimes are not usually single or random events, but rather tend to develop in a dynamic process that offers entry points for action to prevent their occurrence. Although education is not explicitly mentioned in the Framework, many of the risk factors and related indicators for atrocity crimes listed therein may be read in the context of the role that educational institutions can play in fostering atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations. Although the capacity and role of education to prevent such crimes will differ greatly depending on the timing of adopted measures (in stable or post-conflict societies or in crisis situations, those measures would play a much more limited role), the Framework points to a number of crucial fields for upstream as well as downstream preventive action where education can help to reduce risk factors and promote resilience, development, citizenship and solidarity behaviours.

32. The Special Rapporteur on transitional justice has also underlined the importance of education for the prevention of and reparations for atrocity crimes (see [A/69/518](#) and [A/72/523](#)). In particular, in his 2018 joint study with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, he underlined the importance of cultivating individual dispositions related to tolerance, solidarity and respect for the “other”, which requires a more long-term strategy than that which is currently undertaken, including in the field of education ([A/HRC/37/65](#), para. 20 (c)). The study states that “education has great prevention potential by imparting information that has gone through well-known methods that aim for a high degree of reliability. While nothing guarantees absolute transparency, accuracy, completeness, inclusiveness or finality in the construction of accounts of the past, certain methods have proved better than others. Procedural safeguards that will more likely lead to an objective and thorough accounting of history can be put in place” (*ibid.*, para. 79). In particular, “the importance of including in national curricula history education that includes objective, multifaceted accounts of past atrocities” is highlighted (*ibid.*, para. 97). According to the study, “education also has great preventive potential by helping people to internalize a conception of themselves and others as rights holders and deserving of moral consideration, and by instilling intellectual habits of independent and critical thinking. Finally, education can help to prevent atrocities and violations by contributing to the development of empathetic responses and of emotional dispositions of consideration and respect” (*ibid.*, para. 80).

## **B. Adopting a right to education approach**

33. The Special Rapporteur is convinced that it is only through a right to education approach that the preventive potential of education can be fully developed. The right to education encompasses a number of principles, such as quality, inclusiveness, equity, non-discrimination, equality and respect for cultural diversity, as well as State obligations that are crucial for preventing atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations.

34. The right to education does not have as its sole purpose the prevention of crimes, having the wider objectives described above, from personal development to the building of stronger societies. However, education can actually help to prevent crises from degenerating into violence only when the right to education, understood as the right to an inclusive and equitable quality education, is realized, and the multifaceted and interrelated objectives of education, as set out in international instruments, are attained. The fulfilment of the right to education in all its dimensions is essential for prevention upstream, at a stage where the effect is most efficient.

35. Adopting a right to education approach means that children as well as adults have the right to a quality education that will enable them to live in and contribute to peaceful and democratic societies. This implies learning and understanding the complexity and diversity of one's society, being equipped with tools that make it possible to navigate in such complexity and to appreciate such diversity and exercising one's critical and creative spirit as it develops throughout life.

36. Education must therefore be free of propaganda and must always imply access to information and a focus on the free development and exercise of critical thinking. Policies of control and repression carried out by authoritarian regimes, including through educational systems, create situations of defiance among groups that can burst out in violence. More generally, practices and policies conducted in the field of education to prevent atrocity crimes, terrorism or violent extremism must always respect the right to education, as well as other human rights.

#### **IV. Threats to the preventive potential of the right to education**

37. An issue that is debated is whether the preventive effects of education are manifested at the individual level, where the values, skills and knowledge of people serve as safeguards, inducing them to decline to participate in crimes and to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner, or at the collective level, where educational systems are conducive to an environment of equality, inclusiveness, solidarity and mutual understanding, preventing crises from erupting too powerfully or degenerating into violence.

38. The right to education has an impact on both the individual and the collective levels, which are interrelated, provided that the objectives of education as set out in international human rights standards, aimed at both individual and collective developments, are pursued. The Special Rapporteur notes with concern, however, the many challenges faced by educational systems, which threaten the very mission of education.

##### **A. Underfunding of school systems**

39. The underfunding of education undermines the right to education across the board and impedes the fulfilment of its aims, in particular its preventive potential. Without proper funding, highly educated teachers and sound curricula and educational practices, public education systems cannot be strong enough to promote credible and forceful messages able to contradict narratives of hatred, in particular those circulating on social media in a so-called "post-truth" context. They are not robust enough to provide learners with the knowledge, values and skills necessary to build societies able to prevent atrocity crimes and human rights violations.

40. Neo-liberal policies, sometimes promoted in the wake of conflict or natural disaster, further jeopardize the capacity of national and local authorities to create and maintain educational systems able to promote human rights, peace and social

cohesion. In too many countries, budget cuts and the decline in the quality of State education have opened the way for exploitation by private religious institutions that elevate exclusive religious identity above other shared cultural identities. In other cases, a focus on what is considered “basic” education is reduced to the preparation of children to gain access to the job market, and the resulting cuts in civic education, arts and culture have reduced the fostering of social cohesion across diverse communities.<sup>5</sup>

41. Underfunding affects the level and quality of teacher education, which should enable teachers to broaden their knowledge and to adopt new active and learner-centred teaching methods that impart important lessons for preventing conflict and mass crimes. It also reduces the social standing of educators, lowering their salaries, decreasing their motivation and diminishing their authority in the eyes of students, parents and society at large, which is detrimental when societies need intermediaries able to build bridges between communities. Underfunding also undermines the influence of formal education itself, which can be particularly damaging when narratives of hatred, contempt, discrimination or victimization are propagated through informal and non-formal educational processes, whether at home or in communities.

42. Insufficient funding also inhibits the modernization of school premises that would facilitate the introduction of new teaching methods, such as working in groups and other creative approaches. It also implies poorer teaching materials, including textbooks, and the lack of up-to-date materials in keeping with societal developments and knowledge, including historical knowledge, adapted to modern educational goals and designed to promote peace.

43. The Special Rapporteur notes with concern that, consequently, it is extremely difficult for teachers to fulfil their educative mission and to keep up with the rapid changes brought about by globalization, global migrations, the revolution in communications and social networks. They are unable to forestall the dangerous effects and tensions that those processes can have on today’s societies. Many teachers feel that they are not trained to explain such global changes to their students and to prepare them to think critically and recognize fake news. Such situations worsen when coupled with a lack of strong universities and restrictions on academic freedom in the school system at all levels, which inhibit independent research, thinking and training.

## **B. Schools as tools for division**

44. A first step towards conflict is the separation of people into opposing groups, and in too many cases, schools remain spaces for segregation and tools for division rather than integration. Physical separation based on religion or ethnic origin still occurs as a result of direct discrimination policies, whereby schools are organized so as to ensure that children do not meet each other and do not study the same curriculum. Division also occurs when educational systems do not reflect cultural diversity, for example when children belonging to minorities are obliged to attend separate schools in order to be able to study in their own languages and gain access to their own cultural heritage.

45. Indirect or de facto segregation also occurs in many countries as a result of urban planning, when the wealthiest quarters of a city, and therefore their schools, are inaccessible and unaffordable to other segments of society. The Special Rapporteur underlines the destructive role played by social segregation, when too often the gap

<sup>5</sup> International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), *Education, Identity and Rising Extremism: From Preventing Violent Extremism to Promoting Peace, Resilience, Equal Rights and Pluralism* (Washington, D.C., 2017).

and the mistrust between the so-called elites and the rest of society are not given the attention they deserve. Social segregation prevents wealthier students from grasping the complexity of their own society and measuring the depth of the economic gap. It leads to mutual mistrust and makes it easier later to justify biases and discrimination and to impede the building of more caring societies. Many conflicts, including those usually labelled as ethnic, are fuelled by economic as well as cultural gaps between cities and peri-urban and rural areas, the richest and the most destitute, those who are in power and those who are not.

46. In such circumstances, from a young age, division, mistrust and possible conflict in society are intensified. Disrespect and alienation open the door to engaging with conflicts in violent ways. Irreconcilable groups are created, and in some cases the “enemy” is marked, making it an easy target in the future. At the same time, those who are excluded may become receptive to different external influences that can lead to their radicalization because of early segregation or discrimination.

47. Many extremist or fundamentalist movements also seek to create boundaries between women and men, including through education and the promotion of a rigid understanding of religious texts that define what it means to be a good wife, daughter or woman, or through exclusion from educational opportunities. Such subjugation of women is a central feature of the ideology of violent extremism today, and it should be fully addressed to prevent atrocity crimes against women.<sup>6</sup>

48. The Special Rapporteur regrets that very often school systems remain insufficiently linked to local communities, parents and civil society organizations. Because of insufficient inclusivity, schools become a world of their own, separated from the reality in which the students live. This can make them believe that teaching conveys only “official” discourses, including particular interpretations of the past, which should be rejected. Instead, communities form parallel systems of knowledge, which can very often be based on rejecting the “other” or even developing hate speech, laying the psychological groundwork for violence.

### **C. Schools as tools for propaganda**

49. When school systems reproduce an official authoritarian order, which transfers the authoritarian hierarchy from the political top to the youngest members of society, education is prescriptive and knowledge is static, closed and devoid of discussion and reconsideration. This results in a totalitarian system that closes in the government, the society and every individual who is subordinated to the collective. It dehumanizes both the society and individuals, which can be the basis for violent conflicts and crimes.

50. Schools can also be used as tools to disseminate military ideologies. Too many remain unsafe places where children learn violence. Before, during or after an open conflict, schools are sometimes used for military exercises or become training grounds where children are directly taught military ideologies, are recruited or even kidnapped for war or are taken hostage.

51. Today, violent extremist movements enter school spaces to manipulate and recruit individuals on the basis of core determinants of human identity, notably ethnic origin, religion and gender. They are spreading rigid interpretations of religion and culture that contribute to rising intolerant, and in some cases violent, environments.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, “Challenging Conventional Wisdom, Transforming Current Practices” (Berlin, Berghof Foundation, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> ICAN, *Education, Identity and Rising Extremism*.

52. Schools are too often used as tools for constructing an image of the enemy. In identity-based conflicts, violence and mass crimes feed on stereotypes and negative perceptions of the “other”, which are formed during educational processes. The identification with a particular nation, class or religion, for example, is created through a long-lasting image of the enemy, who is essentialized, dehumanized, caricatured and in all respects treated differently.<sup>8</sup> Successful propaganda that precedes mass crimes connects with widespread ideas and emotions,<sup>9</sup> which arise strongly when the “enemy” is depicted as an aggressor, a threat that can be a legitimate target in any form of defence. Perpetrators, seeing themselves as victims, have no inhibition against the use of violence and are thus deprived of any empathy or sympathy for the victims.

53. Images of the enemy can be created explicitly through the school curriculum and narratives. However, they are more often created through hidden curricula<sup>10</sup> or, more precisely, through “the norms and values that are implicitly, but effectively, taught.”<sup>11</sup> The hidden curriculum aims at consolidating the basic rules and building a system of assumptions that, after it is internalized by the students, begins to set the limits of legitimacy. Theories of education start from the fact that this “incidental learning” within the school system is more effective in the political socialization of citizens than is the formal part of teaching and various methods of targeting the transmission of values. Since it is unspoken and implicit, such “knowledge” cannot even be called into question, which is why it acquires a binding status in society. This is the best method for transmitting stereotypical, negative images of neighbouring or competing peoples, minorities or social groups.

54. While the teaching of history has received much attention as a means of passing on or constructing historical traumas through narratives justifying aggressive behaviour, all disciplines in education may convey open or hidden curricula through what is taught or not taught, the invisibilization of the contributions of specific groups or societies to human development and prejudices and stereotypes about designated enemy groups. Rather, teaching should become a space for deconstruction, debate and confrontation of opinions.

55. Some disciplines merit particular attention and scrutiny. Geography, for example, may be used to create mental maps that in a time of conflict can become important triggers for crimes against those who find themselves on a supposedly “owned” territory. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes that, conversely, the implementation of a multi-perspectivity approach in the teaching of geography, including on migration and demographic dynamics, as well as the study of controversial territories and other contentious geographical questions, would help to foster an understanding of the viewpoints of others, inclusivity, acceptance of diversity and respect for the rights of others. This would be even more efficient if conducted in collaboration with such related disciplines as history and sociology. Teaching examples of past migrations alongside those of today would reveal a clearer picture of their complex causes and, in particular, the conditions in which refugees and migrants live, which would help to foster empathy and prevent prejudice in the societies that have been exposed to great waves of immigration in recent migratory crises.

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<sup>8</sup> Simon Baron-Cohen, *Zero Degrees of Empathy: A New Theory of Human Cruelty* (London, Penguin Group, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Abram de Swaan, *The Killing Compartments: The Mentality of Mass Murder* (New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 3rd ed. (New York, RoutledgeFalmer, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Philip W. Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).

56. Learning about national art and cultural heritage<sup>12</sup> can be an important method for conveying concepts about “oneself” and feelings of superiority, where a culture is presented as unique and sharply separated from others, with emphasis placed on autochthonism instead of diversity and interconnection<sup>13</sup> and on essential differences that are insurmountable and irreconcilable. This can become a cornerstone for stimulating the spectacular and almost ritual destruction of symbols of cultural heritage. Conversely, art education could be based on a multi-perspectivity approach through, for example, the comparative presentation and analysis of works of art from the same historical period, revealing not only the scope of cultural interdependence in nearby countries,<sup>14</sup> their similarities and differences, but also the connection of one’s culture to the wider regional, continental or global cultural scenes.

57. In addition, as underlined by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, engaging people and encouraging their interaction through artistic and cultural expression can open a space in which individuals and groups can reflect upon their society, confront and modify their perception of one another, express their fears and grievances in a non-violent manner, develop resilience after violent or traumatic experiences, including human rights violations, and imagine the future they want for themselves and how to better realize human rights in the society in which they live. The increased social interaction and the mutual understanding and trust that can be built or rebuilt through such initiatives are essential for achieving a range of human rights goals and ensuring respect for cultural diversity.

58. There are also cases in which the teaching of languages is used to deepen a divide between people, when differences between the languages of “hostile neighbouring nations”, although minor, are enhanced, and a “newspeak” forced on teachers and students. Instead of pointing out similarities, this method aims at strengthening conflict. Conflict can also be reflected in the persecution of an alphabet marked as hostile and by the systematic demolition of objects that bear inscriptions in that alphabet, making the script into a symbol for carrying out symbolic violence as a prelude to physical assaults on members of the opposite group. Such processes can be advanced through the literature curriculum, which may be cleansed from politically or ethnically unsuitable authors or works. Such motives explain the removal of books by undesirable authors from public libraries and those written in undesirable alphabets. The teaching of languages also often introduces hierarchies whereby certain communities have “languages” while others, by virtue of belonging to a specific community or continent, have “dialects”. Conversely, the teaching of languages can demonstrate the development of language over time, as well as cultural influences involved in language formation in different historical situations. That would help to foster an understanding of language more as a product of mutual cultural influences than as a factor of insurmountable separation and self-isolation.

59. In the area of natural sciences, all too often a notion of science is taught as something that only describes a given state of nature, without underlining that it is the result of a struggle between different scientific ideas and schools of thought.<sup>15</sup> Such an approach emphasizes the concept of an almost sacralized truth in which essential worldviews are legitimized as scientific through the educational system. Other approaches can be adopted by which natural sciences are taught by explaining that scientific results are achieved through a competition of opposing paradigms. Therefore, science needs to be presented as truth until proven otherwise, which

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<sup>12</sup> James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, eds., *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (New York, Macmillan, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> James Banks, *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies* (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1975).

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London, Sage Publications, 1977).

<sup>15</sup> Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*.



introduces critical thinking in education and the importance of assessing arguments and counterarguments as a way of expanding the boundaries of knowledge, primarily by questioning truths.

60. The teaching of social sciences can legitimize an existing order by portraying societies as homogenous and closed functional systems rather than as diverse and constantly changing communities within which conflicts can have creative potential. Social sciences may also perpetuate inequalities and hierarchies through the qualifications and classifications used, for example when communities in the global North become tribes or ethnic groups in the global South. Here again, other approaches are preferable. Social science teaching can demonstrate that society is a complex system of different groups with conflicting interests that shape the life of the community through competition. This primarily shows students that a given reality is not predetermined and unchangeable but is created by the citizens themselves, which instils in them a sense of responsibility and a desire to participate in and contribute to social life. It is essential that minority or oppositional views, as expressed in different periods of time, be presented as a way of demonstrating that there are several possible solutions to every situation, which deconstructs the idea of social determinism. This also undermines misconceptions of history, of the present or the future as destiny, which is often the ideological justification for crimes that are portrayed as historical necessities, predestined, fate, because such mystification makes it easier to carry them out.

61. Religious education or the teaching of the history of religion can also be used to promote animus towards different religions, which can encourage hostility, contempt or hatred. For that reason, religious architecture is often demolished in a symbolic gesture. Religious education should rather focus on the comparative history of religions and thought systems and should emphasize their mutual influences throughout history in order to deconstruct manipulative discourses portraying religions, cosmogonies or worldviews as antagonistic and irreconcilable, thus laying the groundwork for conflicts and mass crimes. This would be a way to understand religions, cosmogonies and worldviews as common cultural heritage, still to be approached with informed and critical thinking, and not just a symbol of the “enemy” that during conflict turns into a target.

## **V. Conclusions and recommendations: deploying the preventive potential of the right to education**

**62. The Special Rapporteur, in conclusion, reiterates the obligations of States to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education of everyone within their jurisdiction in accordance with the right to equality and non-discrimination and to provide free, public and relevant education of the highest attainable quality to everyone within their jurisdiction as effectively and expeditiously as possible, to the maximum extent of their available resources. Where private actors are involved in providing education, States must take all effective measures, including regulatory measures, to ensure the realization of the right to education. This includes situations in which private actors conduct their activities without any State involvement or control or when they operate informally or illegally.<sup>16</sup>**

**63. It is only by ensuring the right to a relevant, inclusive and equitable quality education for all that efficient prevention, in particular at the earliest stage, can be attainable. A holistic approach to the right to education, encompassing all of**

<sup>16</sup> See Abidjan principles, para. 51.

its aspects, dimensions and objectives, at both the individual and societal levels, is necessary.

64. Overall long-term vision and efforts towards the full realization of the right to education are to be understood as a sine qua non for societies striving to build sufficiently strong solidarity able to prevent atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations. They must be complemented, however, by more immediate and medium-term steps, in particular when crises are foreseen, occur or have just occurred. In tense situations, just before, during and after conflict, it is important to assess the context, the capacities of public institutions and the opportunities for all stakeholders to implement recommended steps, sometimes in a progressive manner.

65. Deliberate action must be adopted to fully deploy the preventive potential of the right to education. Education must be relevant in each context, enabling each individual to participate fully in society and to develop the multiple layers of their own identity as a sine qua non for the acceptance of and respect for the multiple dimensions of others' identities. The role of educational systems in increasing opportunities, reducing inequality and generating social trust can be met only if responsible institutions are established, norms and legal frameworks are put in place, curricula, textbooks, materials and pedagogy are reviewed and serious teacher training and evaluation mechanisms are created.

66. In all of those aspects, a gender perspective must be adopted that takes specifically into account the need to combat gender inequality as a means of preventing atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations targeting women.

67. Reform requires in all circumstances a participatory process involving communities, educators at all levels and students. Universities and other institutions of higher education should participate fully in the design of reforms that affect lower levels of education.

#### Education framework

68. On the basis of discussions with experts invited to discuss these issues, the Special Rapporteur proposes an education framework (the "ABCDE framework") in which the key interrelated features of education needed to fully deploy the preventive potential of the right to education are identified. Specifically, education should always promote:

(a) Acceptance, through developing knowledge about oneself, confidence in one's identity with its multiple components, awareness and acceptance of others' identities with their multiple components and recognition of shared dimensions of identity with others;

(b) Belonging, by creating, for all individuals and groups, a feeling of belonging to society, fostering a sense of security and thus averting policies and practices that lead to discrimination, exclusion and segregation;

(c) Critical thinking, understood as the capacity to question the authenticity or the plausibility of facts, their interpretation and their alleged relationships and to do so through an informed process, based on an objective analysis and evaluation of information and data by fact-checking, cross-checking, comparing and verifying sources. That skill also enables one to differentiate between, for example, the letter and the spirit of a text and to evaluate action against its intended purposes, whether declared or undeclared. A critical spirit requires knowledge that is dynamic and evolving and involves a

creative approach to knowledge, openness to research, informed scepticism and independent thinking;

(d) **Diversity**, by ensuring that the school environment and curricula reflect cultural diversity, enabling learners to feel recognized in their dignity and multilayered identity and part of the wider society. This is effectively addressed by inclusive and multi-perspective curricula and the inclusion of minority languages in bilingual education;

(e) **Empathy**, or the capacity of learners to feel compassion for others, in particular victims of atrocity crimes and human rights violations.

69. The Special Rapporteur makes additional recommendations for steps to be adopted to implement the education framework in various areas, which are summarized below.

#### **Organization of school systems**

70. Educational institutions at all levels, in both the public and private sectors, should be compelled by law to respect minimum standards of education and to comply with the goals of education as set out by States and in accordance with international instruments, taking into consideration the education framework proposed by the Special Rapporteur in the present report.

71. That includes respect for and the protection and promotion of children's rights, in particular their right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief, as well as their cultural rights in the school environment and in the educational process.

72. School staff, professors and teachers at all levels should receive education on human rights and, in particular, children's rights, as well as on how to promote critical and analytical thinking on the part of learners, to deconstruct stereotypes and to promote humanistic values and cultural diversity in teaching processes.

73. The prohibition of legal or indirect de facto segregation and discrimination should always be a principle in educational laws and practices.

74. School authorities, as well as executive and judicial authorities, should be trained to handle situations involving segregation and discrimination against children and educators.

75. Effective mechanisms should be established or enhanced to address complaints of discriminatory, including gender-based, content, intolerance or hate speech found in textbooks.

76. States should take a strong stand for the respect, protection and promotion of academic freedom. The creativity of teachers, educators and professors should be encouraged as part of their academic freedom, for example, in independently creating additional teaching materials reflecting cultural diversity and local knowledge. While it is important to facilitate and accelerate the accreditation process for contemporary teaching materials, especially those that promote acceptance, human rights and cultural diversity, it is also important to allow teachers to use alternative textbooks and additional teaching materials.

77. The ability of teachers to organize specific projects, including extracurricular activities, to foster students' knowledge and understanding regarding, for example, the complexity of narratives surrounding cultural heritage or past atrocity crimes, should be promoted as an important preventive tool. Such activities should help students to develop empathy for the victims,

personalizing them to the greatest extent possible, establishing a more direct connection to the victims and developing sympathy for human suffering and with victims of mass crimes.

78. Developing partnerships with actors external to the school can be beneficial in promoting an educational system that reflects cultural diversity. Teachers should be trained and encouraged to form links between the school system and local communities, in particular to identify and develop additional teaching materials. Special links to artists, as resources for developing learners' understanding of their own context and their creativity in overcoming tensions in society, should be encouraged.

79. Civil society organizations involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding may also be involved in the educational process, in formal, informal and non-formal settings.

80. Ensuring the wide participation of various stakeholders, including learners and parents, civil society representatives, teachers, psychologists, pedagogues and university professors, in the debate about local context, problems and needs should be seen as a tool for overcoming difficulties within the school system, bridging the gap between school and home narratives and values and preventing the occurrence or recurrence of crimes.

81. States should consider the interdisciplinary examination and teaching of sensitive and controversial topics as a crucial means of reducing stereotypes in schools and promoting the aims of education as set out in international standards. That requires the development of specific curricula with the joint participation of specialists in various disciplines, through, for example, gender-balanced and interdisciplinary commissions. For instance, the study of war from the perspective of philosophy, history, geography, migration, sociology, economics, human rights, biology and ecology, literature and painting, music and theatre presents a more comprehensive picture of events and helps students to grasp their complexity and drama, see their tragic consequences and develop compassion in the face of human suffering.

#### **Pedagogy**

82. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes that it is not only what is studied that matters, but also how it is studied and learned.

83. Schools should not reproduce authoritarian, patriarchal or other models of hierarchy and subordination, but rather should become open spaces for debate, conflicting arguments, individual and collaborative creativity and analytical and critical thinking. They should be learner-centred, participatory and humanistic.

84. Pedagogical and didactic methods should be developed with a view to cultivating a democratic culture in the classroom that is based on respect for cultural diversity and acceptance of others in all their diversity and complexity.

85. Art education should be considered not only as a means of transmitting content to learners, but also as a method of enabling socio-emotional learning and creative approaches to problem-solving. Art education offers different ways of knowing by engaging the body and the senses with stories, people, processes and concepts, enabling teachers and learners to understand and address in a different manner factors leading to atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations.

## Values

86. Because the reform of curricula and didactic methods cannot be satisfactory if values remain fundamentally intolerant and negative, specific values must be transmitted through education, in line with United Nations standards. From the perspective of a preventive approach, the Special Rapporteur stresses in particular the following values:

(a) Recognition of other human beings as individuals with different views and equal rights and recognition of the necessity to combat prejudice, stereotypes and hate speech. This includes understanding the extent to which offensive language that dehumanizes and humiliates the “other” may constitute a first step towards atrocity crimes and the moral absolution of their perpetrators;

(b) Acceptance, as described above;

(c) Recognition of the need for solidarity and equality within diverse and inclusive societies;

(d) Other positive values, such as honesty, humility, kindness, forgiveness and compassion.

## Skills

87. Specific skills are needed to build solidarity and peaceful societies. The Special Rapporteur underlines in particular the importance of developing:

(a) Literacy and numeracy skills, as recognized, for example, in the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which demands that all youth and adults acquire functional literacy and numeracy so as to foster their full participation as active citizens.<sup>17</sup> This is crucial not only to enable people to gain access to the job market, find their place in society and exercise their citizenship, but also as a way to give them the tools to express their views and emotions, including anger and fear, through a sufficient vocabulary and eloquence rather than through violence;

(b) Conflict resolution skills, which include the ability to engage in constructive dialogue through the acquisition of listening and argumentation skills, to accept other views that are based on stronger evidence or analysis and to study events or situations from multiple sides;

(c) The ability to empathize with victims. The individualization of victims can help students to identify with those who have suffered. It prevents the abstraction of crimes and their being reduced to numbers and enables the rehumanization of victims and perpetrators;

(d) Problem-solving, which implies encouraging students to identify challenging issues that they can address through their personal efforts;

(e) Creativity, which requires freeing students from dogmatic thinking, freeing their imagination and encouraging innovative approaches to conflict resolution;

(f) Media and social media literacy – developing an informed and critical approach to media, including social media.

<sup>17</sup> Education 2030 Framework for Action, para. 12.

**Multi-perspectivity approach in teaching**

88. The content of teaching – what is being taught and what is being silenced – may be used in all disciplines to foster hatred and violence, either explicitly or implicitly, through so-called hidden curricula. Conversely, hidden curricula can be used to promote peace, mutual understanding and acceptance, to prevent the occurrence or recurrence of atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations and to provide some form of reparations for past crimes.

89. The Special Rapporteur recommends that a multi-perspectivity approach be adopted throughout all disciplines as the most effective method of informing learners about viewpoints of others and encouraging them to practice critical thinking and understand the complexity of events or situations. Multi-perspectivity fosters learning about diversity, the complexity of identities with their multiple layers and dimensions, the inclusion of the “other” and empathy. In the end, the objective remains to build a world of justice, peace, prosperity and solidarity.

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