

PRESS RELEASE

12 October 2016

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UN Committee Recommends a Strong Philippine Public Education System to Ensure the Right to Free Education

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), in its [Concluding Observations](#) on the periodic report on the Philippines, asks the Philippine government under President Duterte to “strengthen its public education sector,” noting the “insufficient” funding for education, the “segregation” arising from the privatization drive, and the lack of access to quality education particularly among the marginalized sectors, including the indigenous peoples, children with disabilities and the rural poor.

The report, released on October 11, 2016, was adopted by the Committee during its 59th Session, following the constructive dialogue it held with Philippine government representatives on September 28 and 29, 2016. Several NGOs and international organizations, including [E-Net Philippines](#) and the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education ([ASPBAE](#)), also attended the series of meetings and presented their respective alternative reports to the Committee.

In its concluding observations, the CESCR expresses concern about the “insufficient level of resources dedicated by the Philippine government to finance school facilities and qualified teachers, and to ensuring the effective enjoyment of the right to free primary and secondary education for all.” The Committee further notes the “discriminatory access to education, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized children,” arising from the imposition of top-up fees to cover the full cost of private education, and the “lack of regulation by State authorities on these (private) schools.”

In its recommendations, the Committee underscores the need to “strengthen public education sector” by increasing the education budget, improving access to quality education for all “without hidden costs”, and the regulation of private schools according to relevant guidelines. In particular, it asks the State party to “review the Education Service Contracting scheme to address its adverse impacts on the right to education of disadvantaged and marginalized children and their parents” and to “improve access to inclusive education for children with disabilities.”

The Committee further recommends the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the creation of “independent mechanisms” to monitor the SDG progress. It calls for participation, accountability and non-discrimination” in the SDG implementation to ensure that “no one is left behind in the process.” Finally, the Committee “encourages the State party to engage non-government organizations and other members of civil society in the follow up to the present concluding observations.”

In his presentation to the Committee, Addie Unsi, National Coordinator of E-Net Philippines, expressed concern about the large number of out-of-school children and youth, and the “selective admission policies and practices of private education providers which discriminate against the poor, those with disabilities, the indigenous peoples, and low-performing students.” He recommended the implementation of “effective

regulation and monitoring of private education providers in view of the potential wide-ranging impact of the commercialization of education on the enjoyment of the right to education.”

Earlier in June 2016, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a landmark resolution during its 32nd regular session, urging all States to “address any negative impacts of the commercialization of education,” in particular, by putting in place a regulatory framework and by monitoring private education providers.

Citing this resolution, Rene Raya of ASPBAE, reiterated to Committee members the adverse impact of commercialization of education, noting that “commercialization is not just about profits. It cannibalizes and undermines the public education system and engenders segregation in society.”

E-Net expresses confidence that under the new administration of Education Secretary Leonor M. Briones, meaningful reforms can be achieved towards ensuring the right to education and achieving the SDG targets on education.
