

Education for Peace

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The above-mentioned non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council recall that the Forward-looking Strategies (FLS) for the Advancement of Women (A/CONF.116/28/Rev. 1) invite Member States as well as NGOs and the media to provide education for children in order to prepare them to live in peace in an atmosphere of understanding, dialogue and respect for others (paras. 272-273).

The NGOs take note that many studies on this question have been made in the United Nations and wish to call attention to the close relationship between peace, respect for human rights and international understanding. This is why, during this year's celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is especially important that the Commission deal with peace education.

The basis for peace education is apprenticeship in mutual tolerance, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for ethical values. This should be carried out at three levels: in the family; at school; and in the society as a whole.

The family has a determining role in developing a spirit of peace among its members. Parents who give the example of a true partnership will be more open to dialogue with, and to give responsibility to, their children; they will show understanding of those who have different opinions and thus demonstrate tolerance. They will therefore oppose the daily incitement of hatred and violence more effectively. It is also urgent that, after so many years of research and experimentation, education for peace become an integral part of school curricula and other school activities. What is meant here is not theoretical teaching of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but rather that school life at all levels reflect the principles of the Declaration. One example would be the generalized institution of class committees where even very young children can be trained to understand the ideas of others, to defend the weak and to settle their differences peacefully. This means that teachers must receive the appropriate training.

Society has to provide the basis to develop feelings of peace and agreement. NGOs are aware of their role in this process but they cannot act alone. Public opinion could be changed were the media to emphasize positive values, to promote mutual understanding and existing efforts leading to peace. Adults must also be trained continuously and by all available means to live in mutual respect, solidarity and to use political power to achieve equity and justice.

The above-mentioned NGOs therefore propose that Member States:

Promote education for peace for all students at all levels of the school system taking into account the different age-groups;

Provide training for such education to all teachers;

Encourage regular training courses in tolerance and understanding; and

Encourage the media, written, audio and/or visual, to create programmes relating to peace and human rights.

The Commission on the Status of Women is requested to follow developments in this area by designating one of its members to report on the question every two years.

UN Document #E/CN.6/1988/NGO/3

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