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Statement submitted by Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Global Education Motivators, Global Family for Love and Peace, Institute of Inter-Balkan Relations, Service for Peace, Soroptimist International and United Religions Initiative, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Global Citizenship: A conceptual and practical prerequisite to the eradication of poverty

“The idea that some lives matter less, is the root of all that is wrong with the world” — Paul Farmer

This statement is written on behalf of the Coalition for Global Citizenship 2030, an ad hoc coalition of diverse stakeholders dedicated to the oneness of humanity who work to advance the concept of our shared identity — that of human beings — at the United Nations.

In a world where there are enough resources for all to live dignified lives, poverty is not inevitable. A state of poverty is not only related to economics and social services, it is inextricably tied to spirit. Spiritual impoverishment, tied to greed and ignorance of privilege, is a result of defective mental models and decisions based thereon. From individuals to communities to international and governmental institutions, it will take all of us to eliminate poverty in all its forms. We must reorient our notions of existence to focus on human dignity, universality, shared destiny, and peace as an inner and outer experience in order to properly embed partnership in all action, to ensure more equitable access to and distribution of resources, and ultimately to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development for all.

This begins with a holistic education rooted in our common humanity, acknowledging the equal value of each individual. This statement will elaborate on how and why this is a key long-term strategy, which must supplement addressing the exigencies of the day. By analogy, while other interventions may treat the symptoms of an unjust world, global citizenship education contributes to the prevention and cure of the root disease.

Long term poverty alleviation must include education for global citizenship in its design. In order to achieve the SDGs by 2030, there is a need to transcend the present education paradigm; from narrowly individualistic and economic concepts of success towards the idea that education exists to better the world by affirming the interconnectedness of all and by equipping and inclining every young person to live for the common good. That shift will drive society to an elevated consciousness where poverty is no longer acceptable in any form, except filed in the annals of history under “primitive practices no longer humane.” Too often, discourse and action at the United Nations is focused solely on what is urgent, neglecting the structural, social, mental, and spiritual shifts necessary to achieve true sustainable development. While band-aid solutions can have some impact, until the community of nations realistically and comprehensively addresses the causes of the harm we see, the sustained eradication of poverty, the culture of peace, and the transformation of society will not be achieved.

Education is key in this regard, and early education has the potential to make a tremendous impact. We must ensure that educational programs have a balanced focus on self-initiative and global interdependence and explore the corrupting influence of education models focused narrowly on materialism and individualism.

Moreover, an emphasis on creativity and character building through formal and informal global citizenship curricula (see UNESCO's and APCEIU's resources on education for global citizenship) will produce currently unimaginable solutions to critical world problems, including poverty. Curricula must continue to include, but should not be limited to, linking the education students receive to real world opportunities for advancement while also emphasizing entrepreneurship, innovation, and global solidarity. Admittedly, this will take a cadre of educators familiar with the concepts and pedagogies of global citizenship. The resources required to train such educators can best be found in the funds currently directed to excessive military budgets around the world.

Additionally, many of the SDGs themselves do help to advance these same notions, demonstrating that the expression of global citizenship takes many forms. The empowerment of all women and men contributes to the eradication of poverty and war. If we promote gender equality and ensure that all are invested in it - men, women, old, young - and provide equal pay for equal work, we can tackle poverty and sustainable development. Even the collection of data from communities and regions suffering from opportunity deficits can have an important constructive impact on global citizenship, especially when we research the deeply seated causes rather than the momentary ones. The expansion of debt forgiveness programs with no strings attached for the poorest nations will give them the opportunity to redirect vital resources to holistic solutions and their own appropriate paths of development. And, around the world, an understanding of our common humanity will have the all-important impact of reducing corruption in government and the private sector.

United Nations agreements around the world make great rhetorical steps towards global citizenship and the bounties that will accrue to all humanity from this concept. Ranging from conventions on the oceans to campaigns to reduce food waste which can ensure environmental sustainability; from fulfilling the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants to respecting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which do much to ensure no one is left behind; and from the importance of retaining and learning from the diversity of indigenous practices and knowledge, to the 8 Programme of Action areas for the Culture of Peace which can strengthen the diverse tapestry that makes our humanity so rich, there is much to draw from to ensure global citizenship is a part of the solution to eradicating poverty.

In this light, we call upon:

- The United Nations and its Member States to focus their attention on the root causes that underlie the exigencies — including poverty — the world faces today, and on the structural and social solutions that address these root causes.
- Member States to promote, introduce and implement a plan that puts education for global citizenship at the very heart of the experience of education at all levels and life stages of the population.
- Governments to support and improve efforts to ensure cooperation and integration of international education systems, civil society, the private sector and social structures, to embed SDG17 in all actions.
- Civil Society and all stakeholders to include global citizenship in their discourse, education initiatives, and social programs.