**Education as empowerment for children and youth: Moderator speaking notes**

Tena koutou katoa - greetings in the indigenous language of my country New Zealand. I would like to give particular welcome to the children we have with us today.

The past two days have framed our discussions here squarely in the context of how we can do more to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, and the critical importance of viewing education through a rights-based lens.

As the Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds us,

While this year we are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is also twenty years since the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights produced its General Comment No 13 on the right to education.

In the first paragraph, it states

“Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty…”

“But the importance of education is not just practical: a well educated, enlightened and active mind, able to wander freely and widely, is one of the joys and rewards of human existence.”

These concepts were reinforced in SDG 4, which highlights the importance of lifelong learning. SDG4 also stresses that this education must be inclusive, equitable, and of good quality. This goal is something that we have to work hard to achieve – it should be a key legacy of my generation, and the right of all children and youth.

When I was growing up in New Zealand, I loved to read. I particularly loved Dr Suess, who I will quote now:

“The more you read, the more things you will know, the more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”

As always, Dr Suess’ seemingly simple words contain a strong message about the incredible potential of education to unlock opportunity, change, and empowerment.

As a diplomat, I’ve had the opportunity to travel to many parts of the world. Wherever I have gone, it has been clear to see that inequitable access to education, whether on grounds of gender, disability, race or any other factor can and will have multi-generational impacts.

Through education, a greater understanding of history and culture can sustain peace. An understanding of the environment can help to preserve and protect it for future generations. Understanding your own body gives the power to make better choices that will lead to a longer, more productive life. And an education that includes knowledge of your rights can help you to stand up for them, for yourself and for others.

It is an honour to introduce our panel for this session.

      Ms. Monica Ferro, Director, United Nations Population Fund Geneva Office  – *Integrating sexual education in a section on curriculum for schools*

      Ms. Kristeena Monteith, UN Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals – *How education can help children and youth reach their rights*

      Ms. Hamda Hasan Abd-al-Rahman Abu Za’in Al-Sulaiti, Secretary General of the Qatari National Committee for Education, Culture and Science – *Youth and children’s education, and economic and cognitive empowerment*

      Mr. Alex Conte, Child Rights Connect –  *Children’s views on education as an essential pillar for empowerment and the promotion of human rights*

      Mr. Jorge Cardona, Professor of Public International Law, University of Valencia, former member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child – *Empowering children with disabilities through inclusive education*

      Ms. Sigall Horovitz, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – *Empowering youth through education on the corruption-human rights nexus*

We will start our panel with Ms Monica Ferro. **Monica Ferro** is the director of the Geneva office of the United Nations Population Fund. Monica has had a varied career in the public service in Portugal, including serving as Secretary of State for National Defense, as a university lecturer, a media personality, and an activist.

**[To Ms. Monica Ferro:]**

Monica, as Director of the UN Population Fund Geneva Office, can you please expand on the need for, and ways in which sexual education can be integrated into the school curriculum, and how this will empower children and youth?

I will now turn to **Kristeena Monteith**

**Kristeena** is 1 of 17 United Nations Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals, appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth.

In her home country of Jamaica, she is the Lead Producer of Talk Up Radio. Talk Up Radio is a public radio programme tackling global social and political issues, and is staffed by young people under the age of 25 years old. She has also led production for Talk Up Youth, a television show giving a voice to Jamaican youth, and written for Ackee Walk Children’s Puppet Show, a televised series teaching children as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**[To Ms. Kristeena Monteith:]**

Kristeena, you produce a public radio programme tackling global social and political issues with a staff of young people under the age of 25 years old in Jamaica, and have produced other media with an aim of empowering children and youth and developing and supporting solutions to social issues in Jamaica and globally. In your experience, how can education help children and youth reach their rights and address such social issues?

Our next panellist is **Dr Hamda Hasan Abd-al\_Rahman abu Za’in Al-Sulataiti**. Dr Hasan is the Secretary-General of the Qatari National Committee for Education, Culture and Science. Throughout her career, she has focused on education, as well as human rights, including being a board member of the Qatari Human Rights Committee. She is a prolific writer and has written, edited, and contributed to books on education and Arabic textbooks. For her work, she has received numerous honours and awards.

**[To Ms. Hamda Hasan:]**

Dr Hasan - Could you please share your experiences in terms of youth and children’s education and their economic and cognitive empowerment?

We will now hear from **Mr Alex Conte**.

Alex has over 20 years’ experience as a human rights lawyer and advocate, having worked as a criminal law barrister, with international intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations, and in academia as a professor of international law and human rights. He joined Child Rights Connect in in July 2019. Alex is currently adjunct professor of law at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

**[To Mr. Alex Conte:]**

Alex, you represent Child Rights Connect, the coordinating NGO for the Committee on the Rights of the Child, a child rights membership-based network with members around the world. Based on your experiences empowering children, can you share the views they have shared on education as a key tool for empowering them and promoting their human rights?

I would now like to introduce **Jorge Cardona**, Professor of Public International Law at the University of Valencia. He was a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 2011-2019, and member of the Committee appointed by the Secretariat of the Ibero-American Youth Organisation for the monitoring of the compliance by States of the Ibero-American Convention on Young People’s Rights. He has had a distinguished academic career and published extensively on international law, human rights, and children’s rights, among many other subjects.

**[To Mr. Jorge Cardona]**

Jorge, children with disabilities often find themselves excluded from school because there is a lack of information around their numbers or needs, or they attend special schools and are separated from other children. How can inclusive education empower children with disabilities?

Finally, I would now like to introduce **Dr Sigall Horovitz**.

Dr Horovitz works at the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime where she leads the development and implementation of educational materials on anti-corruption, integrity and ethics and coordinates anti-corruption projects involving the private sector. Sigall previously worked at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the International Nuremberg Principles Academy, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has also published extensively on transitional justice and international criminal law.

**[To Ms. Sigall Horovitz:]**

Sigall, corruption directly affects human rights. Often resources that should be used to provide access to services such as education and health care are not available.  In which ways can we empower youth through education on the corruption-human rights nexus to claim their rights and fight corruption?

Summary points on key messages:

Education is a key tool for empowerment of children and youth. It breaks down barriers, enables children and youth to realize their rights, improve their lives, achieve sustainable development, secure peace, prevent violence, and it makes their dreams a reality.

         Empowering children and youth is the first step to them realising their rights. Alongside protecting and promoting their rights, this means giving them a platform to speak, engaging with them, and involving them on an equal basis in processes about them.

         Children and young people are agents of change, leading the call for human rights and sustainable development.

         There are numerous initiatives and strategies that can be harnessed to engage with and empower children and youth such as the Youth2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth, the Sustainable Development Agenda, empowering children human rights defenders following the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s 2018 Day of General Discussion on this topic.