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COMBATING VIOLENCE AND BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: UNESCO'S ACTION

SUMMARY

This item has been included in the provisional agenda of the 201st session of the Executive Board at the request of Morocco, with the support of Algeria, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, France, Italy, Lebanon, Qatar and Sudan.

An explanatory note, together with a proposed decision, is attached hereto.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 18.



EXPLANATORY NOTE

INTRODUCTION

1. According to the UNESCO report of 17 January 2017, entitled “School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report”, violence and bullying in schools violate the rights of children and adolescents, including their right to education and health. School violence and bullying has a negative impact on the academic performance, physical and mental health and emotional well-being of those who are victimized.
2. Violence in schools is a complex concept in several respects: its definition, the parties concerned, the types of violence, its causes and consequences.
3. Its definition varies from one school environment to another and changes with different, school, family, social, economic, even political contexts.
4. School violence includes physical, verbal, psychological and sexual violence and bullying, and its perpetrators and victims include students, teachers and other school staff.
5. Bullying is a recurring intentional and aggressive behavior, characterized by an actual or perceived imbalance of power, in which the victim feels vulnerable and unable to defend himself or herself. It can be physical, verbal or social.
6. Another type of bullying that is more difficult to identify is online or cyberbullying, which entails a new and more dangerous dimension of risk and suffering.
7. Work conducted¹ on the phenomenon of violence and bullying in schools shows that the impact of violence on children can vary depending on its nature and severity, but the short- and long-term effects are very often serious and detrimental.
8. On the personal level, violence and bullying can lead to a greater predisposition in the child to social, emotional and cognitive disorders. It can lead to dangerous behaviour that can put the child at risk.
9. International law is equipped with an arsenal of international normative instruments and normative frameworks to protect children and to combat the different forms of violence against them. However, researchers and policymakers in this field are convinced of the need to create or reinforce elements of protection and levers of national action. Research has shown that work on the ground is essential to measure the phenomenon in order to better identify, understand, prevent and act on it in order to combat its causes.
10. UNESCO is the United Nations agency that provides leadership in strengthening national education systems to promote inclusive and quality lifelong learning for all.
11. The purpose of UNESCO’s action in combating school violence and bullying is to guarantee a safe and inclusive learning environment for all children and adolescents. In order to make this objective a reality, the Organization has organized a whole series of meetings and international symposia and the publication of reports designed to encourage educators, decision-makers, professionals and practitioners in the fields of education, health and others to act on the basis of factual data.
12. The Organization aims to provide policy-makers, stakeholders and education communities with access to data and key publications, and to contribute to the follow up of the relevant Sustainable Development (SDGs) and their targets, in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

¹ 2017 UNESCO report entitled, “School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report”.

13. Conscious of the harmful and universal impact of this phenomenon on education systems, Morocco has equipped itself with a national benchmark framework in public policy in favour of children, namely the Childhood Plan of Action, drawn up in 2005. The Plan of Action designates child protection against all forms of violence as a priority field, through the establishment of an integrated, multidisciplinary protection system.

14. The Moroccan Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has developed its own sectoral strategy to combat school violence with the support of partners, particularly United Nations agencies.

15. In 2015, Morocco set up the National Observatory to Combat School Violence which aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of schools, to convey the values of tolerance and respect for the rights of the child, and to record and pursue cases of violence through the establishment of an online platform, to record all cases of school violence.

16. The draft decision submitted by Morocco is intended to draw attention this phenomenon, which is steadily growing in school environments, and invites UNESCO to strengthen its action accompanying Member States in the field.

17. Finally, the draft decision invites the Director-General to keep Member States informed, at its 205th session, of the efforts made by UNESCO to accompany them in preventing and combating school violence and bullying.

Draft decision

18. The Executive Board may wish to adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling the International Bill of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989),
2. Also recalling UNESCO conventions and recommendations in the field of education, namely the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education and the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,
3. Further recalling that in 2015 it adopted 196 EX/Decision 30 “Learning without fear: preventing and combating school-related gender-based violence”,
4. Bearing in mind the commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children by 2030, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which calls to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”, and all of the targets associated with SDG 4: 4.a “provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all” and 4.7 “ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”,
5. Also bearing in mind the data and recommendations contained in the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General “Protecting children from bullying” (A/71/213), drawn up as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/158, and submitted to the General Assembly at its 71st session in 2016,

6. Further bearing in mind new General Assembly resolution 71/176, which requests the Secretary-General to draw up a second report on the implementation and follow-up of the recommendations of the first report, to be submitted in 2018,
7. Noting resolution 25/10 adopted by the Human Rights Council entitled “Ending violence against children: a global call to make the invisible visible”,
8. Affirming that violence in schools includes physical, psychological and sexual violence and that bullying is a specific and very widespread form of school violence, and its perpetrators and victims include students, teachers and other school staff,
9. Expressing its concern at the global scale of school violence and bullying and their negative impact on the academic performance, physical and mental health and emotional well-being of students,
10. Emphasizing that violence and bullying create a climate of anxiety, fear and insecurity that is incompatible with learning, and has harmful repercussions on the school environment as a whole,
11. Also emphasizing the importance of building a school environment conducive to respect for living together and caring,
12. Taking cognizance of new types of school violence, in particular cyberbullying by means of different social media, blogs, emails and mobile telephones,
13. Drawing the attention of Member States to the very often serious and detrimental consequences and impact of violence and bullying in schools that may, in the medium and long term, lead to dropping out of school, desocialization, somatization and self-destructive and even suicidal behaviour,
14. Noting with concern the alarming number of children and adolescents in the world who are victims of violence and bullying in school, estimated at 246 million,
15. Also emphasizing the importance of the culture of peace, living together and global citizenship education as essential tools in preventing and combating school violence and bullying,
16. Condemns school violence and bullying;
17. Welcomes the launch by UNESCO on 17 January 2017 of a report entitled “*School violence and bullying: global status report*” and the production by UNESCO in 2016 of “Global Guidance on Addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence”;
18. Also welcomes the organization by UNESCO of a number of international meetings concerning school violence and bullying, including in particular the International Symposium on School Violence and Bullying, held in Seoul (Republic of Korea) from 17 to 19 January 2017, in conjunction with the Institute of School Violence Prevention at Ewha Womans University of Seoul (Republic of Korea);
19. Further welcomes the establishment by UNESCO of a platform to monitor school violence and bullying, which will include the following elements: (a) a dedicated website page; (b) a biennial world report and (c) a space for exchange to improve data-gathering tools;
20. Encourages UNESCO to accompany Member States, according to their needs, in the framework of the established platform, so as to implement the recommendations and measures on school violence and bullying contained in its report of 17 January 2017, in

line with the 2030 Agenda, by pursuing partnerships with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and other key actors in the field;

21. Invites UNESCO to carry out other actions, according to the resources made available to the Organization, to accompany Member States in the implementation of a comprehensive approach to prevent and combat school violence and bullying at the national level, which should include the following elements:
 - (a) strengthening the legislative and regulatory framework;
 - (b) introducing intersectoral strategies that promote the participation of the entire education community, and in particular children;
 - (c) encouraging schools to put students at the centre of all activities, so that their participation helps to effectively prevent the phenomenon of violence and bullying;
 - (d) building capacities and training for teachers and other education staff so as to prevent and manage cases of school violence and bullying;
 - (e) introducing effective mechanisms to report cases of school violence and bullying, and support services;
 - (f) improving data and evidence gathering;
22. Invites in particular UNESCO, on the one hand, to encourage partnerships and exchanges of experience between Member States, so as to contribute to the implementation of effective approaches to preventing and combating school violence and bullying and, on the other hand, to ensure the consistency and coordination its actions with other United Nations agencies;
23. Calls for a significant mobilization of resources, including financial resources, to support efforts implemented by Member States to prevent and combat school violence and bullying, with technical support from UNESCO;
24. Requests the Director-General to keep Member States informed, at its 205th session, of the efforts made by UNESCO to accompany them in preventing and combating school violence and bullying.