



International IDEA

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***Agenda item 14: Integrated and coordinated implementation
of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations
conferences and summits in the economic, social and related
fields***

*Statement by
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*United Nations Headquarters
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Mr President,

Distinguished Delegates,

International IDEA commends Mongolia for the leadership role played in the promotion of the draft resolution on “Education for Democracy” (document A/67/L.25) and welcomes its consideration and approval. We strongly support the resolution’s encouragement of the integration of education for democracy into national education standards and the development of national and subnational programmes, through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, given the mobility of students, existing regional institutional education frameworks and the limited harmonization of curricula, cooperation and collaboration in the field of education for democracy at the regional level should also be strengthened.

There is solid evidence that by doing so it is possible to contribute to “citizens’ empowerment and participation in political life and policy making at all levels”. Our experience, as well as the work of many UN funds, agencies and programmes, and other international organizations, shows that investing in education is important for both democracy and development. It is possibly the most effective way of generating simultaneously impacts on human development and the consolidation of democratic institutions and processes.

This is true in two different and inter-linked perspectives: the right to education and the transformative power of education for the development of democratic governance.

As regards the first perspective, any democratic constitution enshrines and guarantees **the right to education**. This is a fundamental issue for the assessment of whether economic and social rights are equally guaranteed for all. For example, the State of Democracy assessment methodology developed by International IDEA and applied by citizens groups and organizations in over 20 countries, has a question on “how extensive and inclusive is the right to education, including education in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship?”

As witnessed by the debates on constitutional reforms characterizing political transitions – not least in the Arab region – the constitutional dimension of the right to education is one of the most important issues addressed. It has a direct impact on an inclusive concept of citizenship, especially in relation to gender equality.

The second perspective – **the transformative power of education for democracy** – is particularly important for democracy building and democracy assistance. In the electoral field, it has a direct impact on democratic values, practices and behaviors. In fact, education for democracy is directly linked to voter education and therefore it contributes to one of the most visible and traditional forms of democratic participation. But it is equally important in other areas of democracy building, like parliamentary support and political party development. In fact, education for democracy and the consolidation of a democratic constitutional culture shapes the institutions and the substance of democratic dialogue among political stakeholders.

It should ultimately contribute to effective legislative and executive action within the framework of democratic accountability.

International IDEA, in partnership with the UN and other international actors, has developed a global training curriculum on electoral processes, known as BRIDGE, Building Resources for Democracy, Governance and Elections. BRIDGE is widely used in political transitions for training election administrators on the basis of adult education techniques. It is no coincidence that one of the key modules of BRIDGE focuses on civic education, covering such areas as the rationale for citizen participation in the democratic processes; strategies for increasing participation of key stakeholder groups and beneficiaries (like youth, media, women, and people with disabilities); and techniques for identifying different educational needs of all stakeholders in the civic education processes, by considering both community-based and school-based civic education.

This example underscores the importance of adult education – alongside formal education – for the attainment of the objectives set in the resolution that is being considered today. Education for democracy is, in fact, a lifelong endeavor.

In conclusion, International IDEA welcomes the recognition by the resolution that “education is key to the strengthening of democratic institutions, the realization of human rights and the achievement of all international goals, including the MDGs”. In the MDGs context, education is an “enabler” at many levels. It is, at the same time, one of the goals of the MDG framework, with specific indicators and targets, and a crucial factor for the consolidation and development of democratic institutions and the achievement of the other MDGs. IDEA thinks that the inter-linkages between education, democratic institutions and the MDGs should be further stressed in the ongoing policy debates regarding the post-2015 development agenda.

International IDEA stands committed to strengthening its partnership with the United Nations to promote Education for Democracy.

I thank you for your attention.