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Gender Concerns *International*



Welcome

Gender Concerns International and the Embassy of Pakistan in the Netherlands embraces the voice of human rights to the cause of all children of primary school age who do not have equal opportunities to education and are being denied these basic rights.

As a result of this event a special committee will be established with the cooperation of The Embassy of Pakistan to ensure the best peace, security and democratic conditions prevail to promote Malala's vision of equal education rights for all – regardless of their gender.

We will strive to reach this goal through support from Dutch and European Parliamentarians, The European Union and the international community.

Human Rights Day advances Malala's vision

Gender Concerns International has organised a public event with the support of the Embassy of Pakistan to The Netherlands on Human Rights Day which advances Malala's vision to eliminate gender barriers to education.

In cooperation with the Embassy of Pakistan, Gender Concerns International held the event, "Malala's Vision: Gender No Barrier to Education", in The Hague on Human Rights Day, 10 December, 2012 as a tribute to Malala Yousafzai, the 15 year old Pakistani schoolgirl who was shot for promoting girls education. Her condition has now improved.

This public event was held at The House of Europe and discussed the rights of girls and boys to equal education opportunities which complement their communities.

It also focused on meeting the 2015 UN millennium goal on universal primary education.



Malala Yousafzai

The panelists were, the Pakistan Ambassador, Mrs. Fauzia Mazhar Sana; Kenya's Ambassador to The Netherlands, Professor Ruth Chepkoech Rono; the director of Gender Concerns International, Sabra Bano; Coordinator Global Campaign for Education, Ms. Jeanne Roefs, and Professor Pieter W.A. Huisman, Professor of Education Law at The Erasmus School of Law, Rotterdam.

The date was chosen for this meeting of multi stakeholders because it also marked two months since Malala was shot. The global action message of Malala Day on Saturday, 10 November, 2012 highlighted the lack of education for 32 million girls worldwide.



Sabra Bano
Director

Support from the EU and The Netherlands is needed for Pakistan's aspirations to provide education for all

Whether one looks at the issue from a social and economic point of view or a human rights perspective, the fact is that no community can claim to be enlightened and progressive unless and until women are given full access to education, employment, intellectual freedom and political participation.

The Pakistan Government has declared 2013 as the Year of Child Rights, and 11 October every year as the Day of the Girl Child in recognition of Malala's role towards promotion of girls' education.

This has been announced by the Pakistan's Ambassador to The Netherlands, HE Fauzia Mazhar Sana to the audience of representatives of the international, diplomatic and Pakistan communities. She also stated that the National Assembly has recently unanimously passed, 'The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Bill 2012'.

Malala was "a symbol of resistance against extremism and terrorism. She is a symbol of hope for the thousands of girls in Pakistan who are going to school sometimes in difficult and inhospitable circumstances and for those who cannot go to school at all."

Mrs. Sana said Malala had energised the people and the Government of Pakistan to innovate strategies to address issues related to education for children, both boys and girls.

Recently a Parliamentary Forum on Child Rights has been formed to ensure Parliamentarians role in effectively monitoring public sector institutions engaged in provision of education, health care, nutrition and safe environment. The focus is to improve both the quality and the coverage of education through effective policy interventions and resource allocations.

She asked that the European Union, especially The Netherlands, support Pakistan's aspirations to provide education for all.

Kenya's initiatives on education

The Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya to The Netherlands, HE Prof Ruth Chepkoech, Rono, pictured right, outlined Kenya's initiatives to guarantee the country meets the UN Millennium goal on



universal primary education.

To achieve equal education rights, resources should be brought to schools, and maybe some economically sustainable projects were needed to generate income to families so that children could go to school instead of work, she said. She advocated a holistic approach to impact on the atten-

portunities. Partnerships and networks should be established between ministries, teachers, parents and local administrations.

She spoke about the great success of mobile schools in Northern Kenya and other arid and semi regions, the need for a gender balance in the appointment of teachers; and the provision of safe schools and sufficient sanitary facilities because a safe and hygienic learning environment increases retention.

She also recommended, with the focus on basic human rights, the development of a school health, nutrition and meal strategy to improve inter-sectoral collaboration.



▲ H.E. Fauzia Mazhar Sana

"Malala is a symbol of resistance against extremism and terrorism. She is a symbol of hope for the thousands of girls in Pakistan who are going to school sometimes in difficult and inhospitable circumstances and for those who cannot get to school at all."

dance and quality of education. For education rights to be achieved the specific needs of boys and girls needed to be recognised.

There had to be a gender responsive delivery, classroom interactions and management processes, equality in terms of completion rates, performance and life op-



▲ H.E. Prof. Ruth Chepkoech Rono



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Strong education system key to redressing gender injustice

The Coordinator of The Netherlands branch of the Global Campaign for Education, Jeanne Roefs, told the meeting a strong education system, in line with the principle of non-discrimination, is a key for redressing gender injustice in wider society, and for overcoming social and cultural norms that discriminate against girls and women from a general point of view.

Solutions needed to be tailor-made, adapted to national or local circumstances and demand-driven, she said. "It is not up to donor countries or donor agencies to decide national education policies. That is the responsibility of national governments, preferably in good cooperation with civil society. In Pakistan the National Coalition on Education could be an important partner in developing education plans and helping to implement them."

Shukria Hassani, a representative of Afghanistan's Regional Gender Development Peace Platform, (RGPP), said the platform wanted to support all boys and girls to



▲ Shukria Hassani

have equal rights to go to school and enjoy education. The RGPP was initiated in 2009 in Kabul with five neighbouring countries, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, India, and Uzbekistan.

Thirteen year old Dutch schoolgirl Rebecca Hagen also spoke at the event about how she motivated her classmates and the residents of her home town of Wassenaar to design greeting and 'get-well-soon' cards for Malala and send them to her in hospital.

The Director of Gender Concerns International, Sabra Bano, said the event was the forerunner of an ongoing commitment to gender and education.



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◀ 1. H.E. Fauzia Mazhar Sana, 2. H.E. Prof. Ruth Chepkoech Rono, 3. Sabra Bano, 4. Jeanne Roefs, 5. Prof. Peter W.A. Huisman

Message from Pakistan's Ambassador H.E. Fauzia Mazhar Sana

The government of Pakistan welcomes the voices of solidarity with Malala Yousafzai. The Government also welcomes the video message of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in support of Malala and education of girls. Pakistan strongly supports the right of every child to education. We firmly believe that education promotes the values of tolerance and paves the way of extremism and intolerance. The tragic attack on Malala has further strengthened the resolve of the people of Pakistan to fight the menace of extremism and terrorism.

The Government and the people of Pakistan had strongly condemned the dastardly attack on Malala, a youth icon and advocate of the right of girls to education. For her early recovery, the Government of Pakistan in collaboration with the British Government arranged for her treatment in the UK. The entire nation is pleased to know that she is recovering from her injuries. The Government of Pakistan is committed to making the utmost efforts to bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime to justice.

A system of education which is accessible available and acceptable

Professor Peter W.A. Huisman, below, Professor of Education Law at Erasmus School of Law, Rotterdam, said the most difficult task would be how to deal with competing values in society such as religious beliefs, cultures and customs.

Experts say that the process of transition maybe eased by the community being encouraged to reflect on its old value systems and traditions, and to consider them in the light of new rationalities and a sense of fairness and justice, he said.

But how did you arrange and facilitate such dialogue, he asked. In his opinion transition always is accompanied by conflicts, and the conflicts about gender roles are conflicts about power. The powerful were unlikely to give up their advantages and privileges easily.

I think the context varies from country to country, just as the solutions do. But I do think there's a task for governments and NGO's to empower those who don't have that power.

Prof. Huisman said the role of justice and legal instruments had to be considered in the very broad

sense: establishing rights in the education of girls and children in general.

"We should link the agenda of establishing peace and justice, with education. We have to think about the role of justice, justices and legal instruments – and I take that in a very broad sense in establishing rights in education for girls, and children in general," he said.

He also stated that, "Not new laws, no new resolutions, but bodies or procedures that can help to facilitate young brave women, such as Malala. A strong judicial system is, in my mind, a minimum requirement; people at least should feel protected by law.

Prof. Huisman said that those who monitored and were able to enforce the law could play an important contribution to achieve the ideas of Malala – a system of education which is accessible, available and acceptable for all.



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Photo Gallery Event Malala's Vision



