

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Education Under Attack Must be Addressed Now

Edinburgh, UK – 18 May 2009. Violence targeting educational systems and personnel ought to be an issue of rising concern for all governments, according to a UK National Commission for UNESCO Scotland Committee event. The UNESCO report *Education under Attack*, which provided the focus for the event, details how political and military violence targeting educational systems is depriving a growing number of children of the right to education. During the event, steps for governments and the international community to take towards tackling this issue were outlined by Brendan O'Malley, the report's author, and Mark Richmond, UNESCO's Director for the Coordination of UN Priorities in Education.

The event, held at the Scottish Parliament on 12th May, was co-organised by the UK National Commission for UNESCO Scotland Committee and the Cross-Party Group on International Development, and was attended by a number of Development organisations, members of Parliament, and other stakeholders.

"There has been an alarming increase in recent years in the number of reported incidents around the world of innocent children and teachers and academics being murdered by militants and repressive regimes," said Brendan O'Malley, author of *Education under Attack*. "We need our politicians to press for better protection for schools under attack, both in practice and in law. It is time to end impunity for these war crimes and ensure the perpetrators are punished. This means ensuring that our government, when making aid, trade or military aid deals, ensures that the recipient governments are adhering to the principle of respecting the right to education in safety." The report also calls for the allocation of more resources to the International Criminal Court so that more education-related cases can be brought to trial.

Mark Richmond said that UNESCO calls upon all governments, including those of the UK and Scotland, to condemn all violent attacks directed against schools, teachers, students, university staff, government officials and aid workers and to push for an end to impunity for those responsible for these acts of violence. He added that UNESCO also calls for regular data collection and systematic reporting on attacks on education in all parts of the world, and welcomes the initiative of several Member States to present a draft resolution on 'education in emergencies', including aspects of the 'education under attack' agenda, to a forthcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly.

In the session of the Cross-Party Group on International Development, attention was drawn to the need for greater international support to education in emergencies and post-conflict situations as a bridge to reconstruction and longer-term development. At the same time, it was noted that such cases as Gaza, the Swat Valley in Pakistan, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia show that attacks of education have increased in several parts of the world since the report was originally published in 2007. UNESCO announced that a new second edition of *Education under Attack* would be prepared and published in 2009.

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Notes to Editors:

- **The UK National Commission for UNESCO** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is the focal point in the UK for UNESCO-related policies and activities. As an independent body, the UK National Commission brings together a network of nearly 250 experts from across the UK in the fields of education, culture, sciences and communication. Working closely in partnership with HM Government and UK civil society, the UK National Commission aims to provide expert advice to the Government on UNESCO-related matters, develop UK input into UNESCO policy-making, promote reforms within UNESCO, and encourage support in the UK for UNESCO's ideals and work.
- **The Scotland Committee** was established in 2007 with the support of the Scottish Government, to facilitate activity and coordination of UK National Commission for UNESCO activities in Scotland. Drawing upon UNESCO's theme of "contributing to peace and human development in an era of globalisation through education, the sciences, culture and communication", UNESCO Scotland works to advance the United Nations development goals by building upon: Scotland's **Enlightenment tradition**, the diversity of the **Scottish environment**, and contemporary **civil society** in Scotland which involves the breadth of experience amongst Scottish civil society. The Committee further promotes, facilitates and supports national and international projects that reflect its vision of Scotland.
- **UNESCO** is a United Nations Specialized Agency. Through its focus on education, culture, the sciences and communication and information, UNESCO applies an interdisciplinary approach to complex, global problems. UNESCO is not a Development Aid agency, but plays a crucial role in development by fostering international debate, supporting the establishment of global standards and indicators, and the sharing of analysis and experience.