

UN expert hails Mongolia for successes in campaign to achieve universal education



National University of Mongolia

9 October 2009 – Mongolia has made great strides towards providing universal education for its children, a United Nations independent expert said today, praising the Asian nation for emphasizing the need for young people from both rural and urban areas to complete their educations.

Enrolment rates have reached over 93 per cent at the primary level and 95 per cent at the secondary level in “such a vast territory with so little population density,” **said** Vernor Muñoz, Special Rapporteur on the right to education.

He wrapped up an eight-day visit to Mongolia yesterday, marking the first mission by an independent expert on the right to schooling to the country.

The country, Mr. Muñoz said, “has shown innovation and creativity in order to provide education to such diverse groups such as nomadic communities and ethnic minorities.”

While in Mongolia, he met with Government officials, civil society groups, academics, students, parents and trade unions. He also witnessed first-hand the state of education in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, as well as the remote Khovd province in the country’s west.

Despite the current global economic crisis, the education budget has remained steady at around 20 per cent, but the rising population and inflation have made it difficult to provide a quality education to all children, the expert, who serves in his individual capacity and reports to the Geneva-based Human Rights Council, noted.

Urban areas have seen frequent school overcrowding, while access to water and proper sanitation is a problem in rural communities. “This lack of adequate facilities has resulted in many parents not registering their children at the start of compulsory schooling and should be addressed properly by the education authorities,” he stressed.

The Government, Mr. Muñoz said, should also consider the situation of children with disabilities, since little is provided for them. Mongolia has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

That treaty, which entered into force in May last year, asserts the rights to education, health, work, adequate living conditions, freedom of movement, freedom from exploitation and equal recognition before the law for persons with disabilities.

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