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Right to education must be supported with adequate resources – UN expert



School children in Kakuma, Kenya

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Education is a fundamental human right that must be protected from economic difficulties and supported with adequate funding, an independent United Nations human rights expert said today.

An estimated 67 million school-age children worldwide are unable to attend classes because of financial, social and other obstacles, according to the latest estimates.

Kishore Singh, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, told the high-level segment of the annual meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is focusing on the theme of education for all, that even among those lucky enough to get into classrooms, many receive low-quality education.

“Education is a human right and must be protected from turbulence,” Mr. Singh [told](#) the gathering in Geneva.

“National budgets must recognize the need for increased and sustained investment in education. Decreasing domestic and international support to this crucial sector in periods of economic crisis can affect the destiny of an entire generation,” he stated.

Launched in 1990, the Education for All movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults, through six key education goals which aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

According to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), achieving the Education for All goals will require a global investment of \$16 billion. In addition, nearly two million teachers will be needed by 2015 to achieve the goal of universal primary education.

Mr. Singh said it was disappointing that in a number of countries, military spending continues to outpace expenditure on primary education.

“Given the central role of education in the promotion of development, it is equally disappointing to see that international aid levels continue to fall short of the amount required to close the financial gap in low-income countries,” he added.

“Recognizing education as a fundamental right is vital to ensure adequate progress towards the achievement of the Education for All goals to which over 160 countries committed themselves in 2000,” he stressed.

“Ensuring universal access to primary education of good quality is not a mere policy choice but a human rights obligation.”

This year’s ECOSOC high-level segment, which brings together top UN officials, government ministers, experts and policy-makers, wraps up on Friday.

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