

Global Student Declaration¹

UNESCO, Paris, January 13th -15th 2010

Preamble

We, the representatives of student organizations from all over the world met on the 13th-15th of January 2010 in the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris. The goal of our meeting was to identify the role of the global student community in the follow up on the World Conference on Higher Education +10, 2009 as well as to decide on the way ahead for the further global student cooperation.

Having participated in the discussions held at the WCHE+10, 2009 we have to state that six months later the implementation of the World Conference Communiqué goals is not yet addressed sufficiently by the member states of UNESCO.

The student organizations present are hereby expressing their commitment to further work together. On one hand we deem it necessary to stress the importance that follow up on the World Conference is taking place and would like to play our role in it as one of the key stakeholders in the higher education settings. On the other hand we as student platforms from all over the world want to restate our willingness to work together and to intensify our global cooperation in order to jointly fight for the rights of the millions of students we are representing, especially in respect to global processes, trends and actors which are influencing higher education in all parts of the world.

^{1 1} References to the World Conference 2009 communiqué to be formulated finally and adopted by the participants via online circulation.

Global Student Cooperation

The participants of the Global Student Cooperation meeting will continue their cooperation and invest our efforts to make this work. We consider our self as a multilateral cooperation between regional and sectorial organizations, rather than as an international organization. The global student cooperation is in an evolvement process and needs care and commitment. In order to progress in our work we establish a communication committee that is mostly involved in working for our joint goals in the mid-term perspective. This shall however leave open the possibility of other organizations joining in future meetings. The communication committee at this point shall consist of representatives of:

- Regional organizations:
 - All-African Student Union (AASU)
 - Asian Student Association (ASA)
 - European Student Union (ESU)
 - General Union of Arab Students (GUAS)
 - Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes (OCLAE)
- International sectorial organizations
- National organizations of regions not represented in any of the regional organizations:
 - National Union of Students Australia (NUSA)
 - Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)
 - United States Students Association (USSA)

To make this global cooperation work there should be a meeting with all representatives (preferably every 6 months, but at least once a year). Ideally these meetings should rotate between the regions. Referring to paragraph 52 e) of the World Conference Communiqué of the 8th of July 2009 we will strive for the possibility of further working together with UNESCO and potentially its regional offices to support our efforts.

In order to ensure continuity and effectiveness of our cooperation, the reports of the activities of the global student cooperation shall be made available to all the communication committee members and be distributed within the membership of the communication committee member organizations.

In between our joint meetings, tasks should be assigned to the different organizations to split the necessary workload and improve the productivity of the meetings.

Tasks:

- General coordination, defining working dynamics, monitoring and assigning tasks, supporting tasks done by the group and maintaining contact with key stakeholders as UNESCO and EI
- Meetings organization, including fundraising
- Defining the content of the meetings, the documentation and publication of the discussions, obtaining the agreement of all the parts involved.
- Working on the concrete working areas outlined below in the document.
- Listing possible stakeholders of the cooperation group, monitoring their activities that might be of our interest and defining how should be involved with them. Furthermore listing key players and processes relevant to higher education

Priority areas of cooperation:

The Global Student Cooperation has outlined two areas of work that needs special attention and work at this meeting, which needs follow-up until the next meeting.

Financing and Commodification

Key Messages:

- The student community holds that Higher Education is a public good and a public responsibility. By public responsibility the student community means that the financing aspect of Higher Education is the responsibility of governments and any private funding should not have an impact on academic autonomy neither on the missions of higher education. This is in accordance with the Preamble of the World Conference 2009 Communiqué.
- The student movement notes that under article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights education is an essential right of all people and hence, it is the responsibility of governments to ensure this right is realized.
- Furthermore, education should be viewed as a public good as it is beneficial to an entire society on a number of levels. Education can lead to both enhancing democracy and the development of human rights. Increasing the general level of education in a society can furthermore lead to peace building on the condition that prerequisites for access to, progression in and completion of higher education are granted. Nations also economically benefit from a skilled and highly educated workforce. This relates to paragraph 2 in the World Conference 2009 Communiqué.
- Higher Education is an integral part of education and the educational system and needs to be regarded as such by all UNESCO member states.
- The student community condemns the growing challenges to access, progress and completion of higher education for students around the world. We oppose restricting access by imposing of tuition fees or increases in the levels of fees. The student community is also concerned that constraints on the financing of higher education seriously threaten

the quality of higher education programmes offered. This is in relation to paragraph 8 in the World Conference 2009 Communiqué.

- The student community notes that increasingly higher education is being viewed as a commodity with students as consumers. This process jeopardizes the possibility for student participation as equal partners in higher education governance and their contribution to the progress of higher education systems.
- The student movement opposes the tendency towards the commodification of education since it is inherently contradictory to the concept of higher education as a public good. We especially oppose the opening up of higher education as a free market through processes such as the WTO negotiations and the GATS agreement. Private corporation contributions to Higher Education can also challenge the academic freedom.

Action Areas:

- Sharing of information: creating an online database to share and gather research, share best and worst practices and create factsheets.
Internationally coordinated action around processes of GATS and WTO.
Within this the student movement will collaborate with Education International. Specific members of the communication committee will be responsible for tracking progress of international negotiations and disseminating information.

Student rights and student solidarity

Key Messages:

- Fundamental student rights refer to rights every student should have to ensure that they are provided with a conducive environment to study, excel and actively participate in higher education.

- The international student community regards student rights in a holistic way without isolating or prioritizing any specific group of students; student rights shall be applicable to each and every student all over the world. This is related to paragraph 51f in the World Conference 2009 Communiqué.
- All students have the right to academic freedom, the right of association and the right to have representation in higher education governance, as stated in the Communiqué, paragraph 51l. As these rights come increasingly under attack, students need to be particularly vigilant that they are respected.
- However, there have been increasing reports of violations of human rights of students. We stand in solidarity and support students who are affected by occupation, blockade, refugees and students living in conflict zones or areas. We are also committed to fighting for those who do not have the financial capacity to access higher education.

Action Areas:

- Share information about the work of students' organizations on student rights activities and student right situations in specific countries through a potential online database; write joint statements on students rights
- Draft a common report about the student rights situation worldwide. The different regions have committed themselves to producing the necessary information for such a joint report.
- Work with the UN Human Rights Council
- Investigate the possibility of establishing a concrete mechanism for the defense of student rights
- Establish a World Charter on Students Rights

- Draft direct solidarity letters, potentially in cooperation with Education International, International Association of Universities, Amnesty International in reaction to explicit human rights abuses to students

Further areas of cooperation

The topics outlined above shall be regarded as political priorities for the midterm perspective in order to make our work as productive as possible. We would however like to emphasize that we are also committed to working together on the issues outlined in the Global Student Statement from January 2009 (Education for all; Access and success; Quality in Higher Education; Students' rights; Students as partners; The learning experience and critical thinking; Higher Education and social justice). Also, the world conference communiqué priorities shall be areas of future cooperation of students on the global level (Social responsibility of Higher Education; Access, equity and quality; Internationalization, regionalization and globalization; Learning, research and innovation and Higher Education in Africa).

Political arenas, players and processes to address

The student cooperation prior to and during the WCHE showed a clear need of a strong coordinated student voice in order to have influence in large international processes. We the students of global cooperation, see that we need stronger access and participation in international organizations and processes. With cooperation, information sharing and shared responsibility, we aim at strengthening the student voice in the United Nations in general, its bodies, UNESCO and UNHRC and at confronting the involvement of the following organizations in the higher education arena with the student needs and priorities: G20, World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International

Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Potential Partners

We, the global student cooperation have resolved to build strong partnerships with the existing partner organizations:

- UNESCO, the United Nations bodies in general
- Amnesty International and other human rights advocacy organizations
- Education International
- International Association of Universities.

And furthermore we will strive for extending our partnership to further international and regional organizations.

The student movement believes that, in line with 52e of the Communiqué, there must be meaningful student participation in UNESCO forums, advocacy and research activities

Paris, the 15th of January 2010,

adopted by the organizational delegates' present:

ASA - Asian Student Association
Rabi Prasad Aryal, Regional Secretary

AASU – All-African Student Union
Abdul Karim Hakib, Deputy Secretary-General

GUAS - General Union of Arab Students
Ahmed AlShater, President

USSA - United States Students Association
Lindsay McCluskey, Vice-President

NUS – National Union of Students Australia
Stefie Hinchy, Education officer

CFS - Canadian Federation of Students
Katherine Giroux-Bougard, Chairperson

ESU – European Students’ Union
Ligia Deca, Chairperson

IYCS-JECI - International Young Catholic Students
Edouard Koutsava, Secretary General

JADE - European Confederation of Junior Enterprises
Adelina Peltea, Head of Internal Communication, PR and Events

AEGEE- Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l’Europe
Denis Maksimov, Director for European Institutions

Brazil Junior
Tiago Mitraund