

Thank you, chair/madame moderator.

My name is Beathe Øgård, and I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group.

All over the world, students, academics and activists are at the forefront in non-violent struggles for peace, democracy and human rights. Many are risking their own lives and security for what they believe in – asking critical questions can be dangerous.

Globally attacks on education are increasing. Between 2013 and 2017, there were more than 12,700 attacks, harming more than 21,000 students and educators in at least 70 countries (GCPEA: Education Under Attack) These violations include attacks on schools, teacher trade unions leaders being persecuted and imprisoned for speaking out, killings, violence, arrests, and disappearances, and at the same time many violations go unreported.

Additionally, around 75 million children and youth are in need of educational support, due to conflicts, protracted crisis, displacements or disasters.

The alarming number of violations is a call for immediate action.

We urge governments to strongly condemn the recurring attacks on students, teachers, schools and universities, which impair the realization of the right to education and cause severe and long-lasting harm to individuals and societies (as urged by the HRC)

It is great that 91 states have endorsed the Safe Schools declaration to protect schools and universities in armed conflict, and we urge more member states to endorse.

We also urge governments to implement strong policies and adequate funding to guarantee the right to education in times of conflicts or disasters, as education is crucial in ensuring peace, justice and strong institutions.

Attacks and the shrinking spaces for civil society and the academic communities are holding back progress to achieve the SDGs. It is of huge concern that activists and human rights organisations are being targeted and criminalized. The SDGs can never be reached without active civil societies, and critical voices from academia as watch dogs and drivers for new policy and research, governments must step up their commitments to ensure protection of education and meaningfully include youth and women in peace building processes.

Thank you.