

IYCS-JECI Statement at the 39th Session of UNESCO General Conference, 2017

Mr President, Madam Director General, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

In 2015, several world leaders gathered at the United Nations to decide the fate of the planet and its people for peace and prosperity with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. Central to achieving this global agenda is the aspiration to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, by 2030.

Key claims for education are that it provides individuals with a route to a better life; better possibilities for fulfilment and prosperity; greater chances for social, political and economic participation. However, whilst many people are able to use education as springboard to a more economically and socially secure existence; this is by no means universal due to marginalisation of all forms and constructs. This is evident from the 2016 UNESCO Global Education Mentoring Report which indicated that about 750 million youth and adults cannot read or write and 250 million children are failing to acquire basic literacy skills.

As a strong voice for students across the world since the 1920s, the International Young Catholic Students (IYCS) reiterate our call to governments across the world especially those of you here present, to create stronger formal and non-formal educational systems, that addresses all form of exclusion and marginalisation, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. To meet current global educational needs, we call on all government leaders to embrace 'Progressive Universalism'; an approach in pursuing quality education for all while prioritising education in the early years of a child's life and reaching out to the most disadvantaged populations, where the Social returns is the highest.

So today, I stand as a strong voice for millions of children across the world to remind you all seated here that 'every child, in every country, in every neighbourhood, in every household, has the right not only to a seat in a classroom, but to a quality education. So, I implore you all to invest in Education, invest in quality and invest in equity and ensure that indeed, no one is left behind.

Thank you very much.