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Minister of Education
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Political Dialogue: “Reduction of Disaster Risks”

Respected Colleagues,

Reduction of disaster risks and prevention of violence are actual issues in the context of inclusive education within the framework of Education for All as it impacts every student.

As it is evident through experiences developing countries such as Kyrgyzstan are particularly affected by considerable risks. Besides, Kyrgyzstan is a mountain country and therefore the disaster risks are much higher because of the seismic and geographical situation.

Kyrgyzstan is impacted by more than 20 different natural factors such as earthquakes, spring floods, landslides, snow slips, floods, glacial lakes floods.

Any of these disasters and particularly when they go together may cause deaths of thousands of people and leave millions without roofs and resources for leaving, destroy the infrastructure, including the social one.

Among many kinds of disasters earthquakes rank the first. According to UNESCO earthquakes take the first place by causing economic damage and by numbers of victims.

Kyrgyzstan belongs to the areas of high seismic activities. Just in the 20th century there were several most destructive earthquakes: in 1946 it happened in Ketmen-Tjubinsk valley, in 1970 in Issyk-Kul hollow, and so on. Most recent one happened in the village of Nura in 2008 when 70 people died, including 40 children, it showed how dangerous it could be.

Currently many schools in Kyrgyzstan because of shortage of government resources are built by ashara method using bricks made of clay mixed with straw. But even when typical buildings are constructed there are violations of construction norms. As a result these buildings are not able to resist the disasters. The following cases could serve as examples: during the earthquake in the south of Kyrgyzstan 137 schools received different degrees of damages, from them 108 light and average degree, 29 high degree damages. From these 29 schools 11 had to be rebuilt anew: in Karasujsk district (4), Nookatsk district (2) Uzgensk district 3 and town of Osh 2.

But if built properly following the construction norms buildings could resist even the strongest degree of disaster.

Kyrgyzstan is in need of new types of school building design that are located in different zones and intended for different quantity of students, buildings that

meet the highest demands ensuring comfortable conditions for learning as well as safety. For this we may need international support.

It is important to mention that in line with the UN classification education is included in the sector facing (along with nutrition safety, healthcare, water supply and sanitary issues) the highest degree of threats during natural disasters. For Kyrgyzstan it is even more actual because from 2113 schools 1117 are heated by electricity. It means that in case a disaster breaks electricity supply schools will not light and heating. Winter 2008-2009 is going to be very severe and there is a threat that children will not be able to attend schools because of low temperatures.

That is why currently the Ministry of Education and local communities transform heating systems in schools to allow use of alternative sources that will make schools less effected by natural disasters and safer for children. We badly need new technologies and expect support from the international community.

Education is one of the strategic means to reduce negative impact by natural disasters. People who are aware of natural disasters and understand the importance of risk reduction have more chances to survive,

The Law on “Protection of population and territories from extreme situations of natural and technological origin” adopted on February 24 2000 assigns the system of education to work for natural disaster risks reduction.

The requirements set in this document are reflected in the national curriculum of Kyrgyzstan.

Currently we are adopting the Framework national curriculum for secondary education in Kyrgyzstan. In this document for the first time we clearly define 7 educational areas. One of them is “Culture of Health” that includes subjects that are also teaching how to behave in emergency situations. Among these subjects are “Insuring Safe Leaving” and program “Culture of Health”.

There is one more threat that is not of natural but of technological origin. This is the problem of existing stockpiles of wastes of procession of Uranus ore.

However we should admit that there is still no common system of risk education because of weak methodologies, absence of textbooks and manuals. Kyrgyzstan needs support in developing and publishing such textbooks. We also welcome assistance by international consultants.

In 2007 the government of Kyrgyzstan and UN developed a joint project document “Strengthening cooperation in reaction to emergency situations in Kyrgyz Republic”. It defines clusters (section groups) as leader in reaction to emergency situations in Kyrgyz Republic. These groups have been approved on May 16, 2008. UNISEF will lead the group in education. Its partners are such organizations as “Save the Children”, Oshansk Regional Centre for Medical and Social Aid to Families” and other.

Still the activities of these clusters are focused on comparatively small groups of people while Kyrgyzstan needs to develop a system of education of its whole population and first of all of children and youth who comprise 40% of the country population.

Dear Colleagues,

One more issue is being discussed in our political dialogue. This is safety of our children in schools. It is a burning issue for the entire world.

It is connected both with the violence that happens inside schools and also with risks associated for example with terrorism in certain states. The world understands this well particularly after the tragedy in Beslan, Russian.

The problem of escalation of violence in schools does exist and we understand that it cannot be solved only through administrative methods – we need a well-developed educational system that unites efforts of schools, local communities and society.

Dear Colleagues,

Kyrgyzstan as well as other countries present here, is doing a lot to secure safety of its population, including safety of children during different natural disasters and also to reduce violence in the society. We will strive further to integrate into the curriculum for children and adults the topics focused on teaching behavior and risk reduction during natural and other disasters, and also educate students based on principles of inclusive education. IN doing these we very much need expertise and support by international organizations.

Let me thank the organizers of this political dialogue dedicated to the most important issue of our children's safety.