Declaration of the 69th Assembly and World Conference of OMEP
HIGHER INVESTMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE)
Opatija, Croatia, June 20, 2017

Early childhood education is a personal and social right, whose realization is essential for the integral development of the human being, the fulfilment of all other rights and the construction of a full citizenship from birth, in peaceful environments.

However, due to poverty and inequalities, many children do not have access to ECCE programs and services, so that, instead of a right, it is, in many cases, a privilege of a few. According to UNESCO data for 2016 in the world, 67% of children aged 5 to 6 are enrolled in pre-school education, but receive education with noticeable differences in quality. Children aged 3 to 4 from the richest families in low and middle-income countries, are almost six times more likely to receive education than the poorest children. Meanwhile, many children, under age 3, are invisible in studies and public policies for ECCE.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) specifies that States have the legal obligation to promote, protect or restore the rights of children, considering the principle of “the best interests of the child”. Therefore, investing in protecting the rights of children must be a priority for governments.

Insufficient investment in many countries has led to social injustices, discrimination in access, low quality services and weak sustainability of policies, with grave consequences for the present and future lives of children. UNESCO argues that the lack of fair and sufficient funding has been a key reason for the world’s failure to meet the EFA goals in 2015. Currently, development aid for education is less than the one provided in 2009. Also, the percentage of the total expenditure on education that the families must pay for, is usually much higher in poorer countries than in richer ones. It is therefore essential to reduce it, to make equality a reality, according to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development goals.

That is why the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in the General Comment No. 19, demands that States must meet their budgetary obligations to guarantee compliance with the rights of the child, according to the principles of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, transparency and sustainability. Also, the Sustainable Development Objective 4 (ODS 4) and the Education Action Framework 2030 emphasize the importance of adequate funding to accomplish it, and the responsibility of all countries to achieve the goal.

Therefore, OMEP demands governments comply with the financial commitments related to the development and sustainability of ECCE, ensuring with urgency that States:

- increase public investment and give priority to ECCE,
- ensure quality public and free ECCE.
- allocate the necessary resources to ensure equity and quality in ECCE, extending the rights of the most disadvantaged sectors;
- invest in improving quality of teacher training

OMEP members around the world are committed to participating, collaborating, monitoring, evaluating, and enforcing the fulfilment of global commitments to Early Childhood Care and Education.

OMEP is the oldest and largest non-governmental organization in the world for early childhood education, with special consultative status in the United Nations, UNICEF and UNESCO. It is present with national committees and members in more than 70 countries.

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