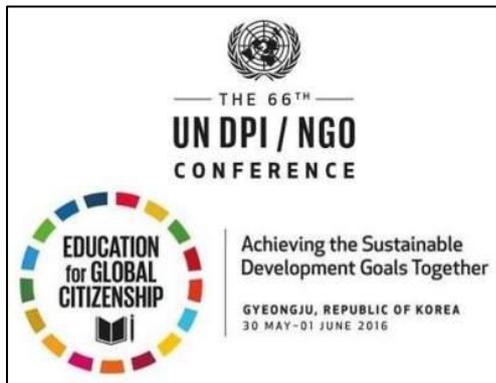




SDG 4 takes centre stage at 66th UNDPI/NGO Conference

30 May - 1 June 2016, Gyeongju, Korea



The Republic of Korea hosted the 66th United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI)/Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Conference in Korea.

Organised in cooperation with the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, the NGO community, the Government of the Republic of Korea, and the National Organising Committee of Korea, the Conference was held under the theme 'Education for Global Citizenship: Achieving the Sustainable

Development Goals Together'. It was the first time the DPI/NGO conference was held in Asia.

The Conference, which hosted 45 workshops, 69 exhibitions, and a series of youth-related events, provided a unique opportunity for participating NGOs to engage members of civil society, diplomats, United Nations officials, policy experts, scientists, educators, businesses, trade unions, parliamentarians, local authorities, and others from around the world in discussing key issues relevant during that given year. The 2016 conference focussed on creating and strengthening global partnerships in support of the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) – to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all – was front and centre of the conference, providing face-to-face opportunities for tackling a range of issues, including the gaps in education.

“Education is becoming more and more of a commodity being sold in the market rather than a public good,” warned Rasheda K. Choudhury, Vice President of the Global Campaign for Education and Executive Director of the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Bangladesh, at the inaugural session of the conference. *“This worrying sign is becoming more prominent when we see the ever-increasing quality divide in education.”*



L-R – Kazi Alam, Chairman, CAMPE; Rasheda Choudhury, Vice President, GCE, and Executive Director, CAMPE; Jose Roberto Guevara, President, ASPBAE.

Speaking at the Conference's first roundtable discussion, 'The right to Accessible, Safe and Inclusive Learning Spaces,' Rasheda Choudhury saw this as a regressive process in which learners from poor families become the biggest victims. *“The million dollar question is, if we want to achieve education for global citizenship, can we do it when our children, young people and adults are becoming more and more victims of the quality divide in education?”* Rasheda emphasised that to truly achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), everyone must recommit themselves to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. *“Let's not only dream of*

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a global society that is economically viable, environmentally sustainable, and socially just, but let us also work together to realise that dream,” she concluded.



ASPBAE President, Jose Roberto Guevara, spoke as a panellist on ‘Making the SDG 4.7 Target Happen Globally’. ASPBAE’s Bernie Lovegrove co-chaired a workshop on the challenge of promoting education for global citizenship.

In her assessment of education during the roundtable discussion on ‘Children and Youth: Tomorrow’s Global Citizens Today’, Teopista Birungi Mayanja, Deputy Director of Uganda Education Services and Commissioner of the International Commission on Financing for Global Education Opportunities, highlighted as a significant barrier, a narrow education agenda promoted by many governments – often owing to pressure from donors, testing companies and agencies. Teopista raised concerns that *“promoting competition, testing, and the publication of league tables quite often forces teachers to ‘teach to the test’ and exclude crucial non-examinable areas, such as physical education, music, and art. The narrowness of some of the global*

indicators that have been proposed to monitor and review SDG 4 implementation is likely to lead to more narrowing of the curriculum.” She concluded by stressing that, *“Civil society organizations should unite to challenge international assessments and the narrowing of national curricula promoted by some donors, testing companies and similar private providers.”*

ASPBAE President, Jose Roberto Guevara, spoke as a panellist on ‘Making the SDG 4.7 Target Happen Globally’ along with other civil society representatives from Nepal, Korea, Finland, Thailand, and the USA. ASPBAE’s Bernie Lovegrove co-chaired a workshop with Anselmo Lee of the Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC) and the Korea Human Rights Foundation. A key focus of the workshop was the challenge of promoting education for global citizenship, taking into account the multi-faceted yet intertwined components of SDG 4.7 such as education for sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, and peace and non-violence.

This write-up includes information provided by CAMPE, Bangladesh.

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