

## **RESOLUTION 2.10**

### **ISSUES IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES**

Proposed by the Executive Board

Original language: English

#### **The role of teachers unions towards education, peace and tolerance in the Arab Countries**

**The Seventh World Congress of Education International, meeting in Ottawa, Canada, from 21<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

#### **Whereas,**

1. Education indicators for Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa have improved relatively over the past 20 years. However, almost every current study of education in the Arab region indicates that the ongoing and relatively low quality of education harms the potential for economic growth in the region;
2. Access to education is still a major problem for a number of Arab countries, especially in rural areas. Girls, as in many parts of the world, are at a disadvantage in relation to access to education, especially in areas where there is a bias against the education of girls;
3. Poor quality of education in some Arab countries is the result of ineffective education management and the lack of adequate investment in teacher training and in learning tools and materials;
4. Quality education, in its different definitions and scopes between the countries, requires social stability and a secure environment;
5. It also requires teachers unions, as independent bodies, to lobby their respective national governments effectively to make education for all a priority;
6. Another important factor contributing to low performing education systems in the Arab region is the impact of recent armed conflicts, and consequentially, the huge numbers of refugees;
7. The early months of 2014 brought some drastic and difficult developments for a number of Arab countries. Although the so called Arab springs brought more freedom to many oppressed people in Arab countries, it did not lead to what the masses hoped for, and was transformed to armed conflicts in a number of countries (such as in Yemen, Libya, Syria, Iraq and to a certain extent in Egypt);
8. It is known that half of the out of school aged children around the world- around 28.5 million- live in conflict affected countries;
9. Children make up the majority of refugees (both those who are internally displaced and those forced to move to other countries) in the recent conflicts in Syria and Iraq. The same applies to other Arab countries such as Palestine, Libya, and Yemen, but education is not as severely interrupted;
10. The unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees since early 2011 and that of Iraqi refugees since June 2014 has resulted in a whole generation of school aged children out of school;

11. In view of the lack of any political solution or possible ways for the refugees to go back to their countries or districts, it is reported that in short time there will be a population of young refugees – with no education or jobs - holding big social and ethnic animosities. This is further complicated by the escalating cycles of violence due to recent ethnic tensions and armed conflicts in a number of Arab countries (Yemen , Syria, Iraq , Libya) , and terrorist attacks on the new fragile democracies in some Arab countries;
12. The dire conditions of the refugee is hugely affecting the figures of child labours , in addition to children forced to join armed conflicts , or early marriages for young girls;
13. Another important concern is the economical, security and social strain that these refugees have on the host countries. It is reported by UN agencies that the number of Syrian refugees entering neighbouring countries rose to 3.7 million by the end of 2014, and is projected to rise to 4.3 million by the end of 2015. Around 52% of these figures are under 18 years of age, and in some small population host countries like Lebanon and Jordan, refugees make up around 25 % of the population of the host country;

**Recognising that,**

14. There have been limited national efforts to improve education in certain parts of the Arab region, which is reflected in the improvements in education in the primary grades;
15. That the current diversity of education quality in Arab continues, and the recent setbacks in the cases of interrupted education in conflict areas, affects the region’s chances to achieve sustained economic growth, development and stability;
16. EI affiliates in the Arab countries are fully committed to the principle that there should be equal education opportunities for all;
17. Teachers’ organisations in some Arab countries operate in countries that do not apply international labour standards and ILO conventions, and even in many of the countries which have ratified these conventions, they have done so only for international political reasons and have not implemented it in the national contexts;
18. In spite of the above difficult restricting conditions, and in addition to the distracting developing political and security conditions, EI affiliates in countries that are going through political transitions or armed conflicts have stepped up- whenever possible- to the responsibility of maintaining the educational process;

**Resolves that:**

19. Teachers unions in the EI Arab Countries Cross-Regional Structure (ACCRS) will advocate effectively for equal education opportunities for all school children and, especially for those in conflict areas and for refugee children.
20. EI member organizations in the ACCRS will insist on EI and its member organizations, to support their moderate civil voices amid the violent cycles, in order to try to minimize the increasing generation of young refugees lacking any schooling and driven into the cycles of violence and war.
21. EI member organizations in the ACCRS will lobby to safeguard children’s education rights, and abuses of human rights including trying to end the use of child soldiers and sexual exploitation.
22. EI and its member organizations of the ACCRS will call on the global community to provide the needed resources to aid in the education right of a whole generation of refugee children.