

HRC46 NGO Oral Statement

Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child (morning meeting)

1 March 2021

Recent decades have seen the growing involvement of private actors in the provision of a range of social services, from education and health, to water, social security and housing. This trend has had devastating impacts for human rights, in particular children's rights, and threatens to undermine the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the commitment to leave no one behind. In the last few years, a range of human rights bodies and mechanisms have highlighted how the privatisation and commercialisation of these services result in unequal access, increase inequalities and segregation, and reinforce unbalanced power relations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this situation. Thousands of private education providers have been revealed as lacking the will and capacity to continue providing education during the crisis. This demonstrates the unsustainability of market-driven systems to deliver on human rights and ensure access for all, and underscores the importance of building robust, quality, public services to face this crisis, and the many that are to come.

Human rights law requires States to provide quality, universally accessible, adequately funded and transparent public services that are responsive to the needs of those they serve. As the pandemic has shown, such services are essential to realising children's rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, and are crucial in responding to the intersecting crises of rising inequalities, the ecological breakdown, and the economic and social consequences of COVID-19.

Statement read by Sarah Jameson (Programme Officer on Human Rights and Public Services)

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