

STATEMENT
UPR Pre-Session on the Republic of Ecuador
Geneva, August 30th, 2022
Delivered by Broken Chalk

1. Presentation of the organisation

This statement is delivered on behalf of Broken Chalk, a non-profit, independent, non-partisan, research and advocacy organisation set up to raise awareness on worldwide human rights violations in the educational sector. It is based in Amsterdam, and this is the first time it participates in UPR processes.

2. National consultations for the drafting of the national report

The Attorney-General's Department led inter-ministerial consultations for the development of the National Report. The said process included consultations with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). CSOs during the development of their various alternative reports invited the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice to participate in consultations for the development of said reports.

3. Plan of the Statement

This statement will address the following issues: (1) right to education (with a focus on vulnerable groups) (2) rights to education for disabled children and young adults

Change to slide 2

4. Statement

i. Right to Education

A. Follow-up to the first review

Since the end of the last century, achieving equitable and inclusive education for all has been the objective of educational policies promoted by most international organisations. In this sense, the UN, according to the 2030 Agenda and through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in its fourth objective, highlighted the need to guarantee inclusive, equitable, and quality education. During the previous review, several countries emphasised that Ecuador should continue to improve the quality of public education, paying special attention to those living below the poverty line, indigenous minorities, Afro-Ecuadorian women, and those living in rural areas. While ensuring a quality education remains a priority issue in Ecuador, segregation and lack of freedom in the educational system is still a critical gap in current interventions. Although Ecuador's Constitution states that education shall be developed taking into account freedom as a fundamental right, the needs and motivations of students are not always taken into account, and students end up limited regarding choice and divisions driven by segregationally traditionalist practices.

In many cases, traditional school conditions and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that has resulted in a technology-reliant education are primary causes of low performance levels and school dropouts. The latter has been one of the most serious consequences of the pandemic in the region. 3% of the total student population is at risk of dropping out of school,

while 90,000 children and young people dropped out of school because of lack of technological tools.

B. New developments since the first review

The Republic of Ecuador has made admirable efforts in improving its educational system. It has supported past recommendations related to tackling gaps in education accessibility for minority groups and rural areas and has scaled up the implementation of inclusive education policies.

Despite the recent notable efforts to achieve educational inclusion, its processes are still slow, and a homogenizing approach persists in educational cultures and practices. The overarching idea is that different persons must adapt to the physical and social conditions of an educational institution. It is necessary to stimulate the critical sense of students in educational processes by having an open and flexible system, capable of capturing the ideas that arise from the interests of vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups alike.

The COVID-19 pandemic heightened the educational lacunas in terms of quality and accessibility and reinforced the already existing challenges. The nation-wide school closures in April 3rd 2020 impacted over 4.6 million students enrolled in preschool through secondary education. Six out of ten children lack access to internet connection and are excluded from online remote learning. In this regard, there is a need to enforce the right to education in terms of accessibility and quality for all students equally.

Change to slide 3

C. Recommendations

We therefore urge that bridging the gaps in the accessibility and quality of education in Ecuador are made prominent issues in the upcoming UPR, with a priority on continuing to amend existing curricula in order to better account for the diverse groups that coexist in the region. We therefore recommend that the Republic of Ecuador:

- a. Establish monitoring systems for schools throughout the country to praise and promote diversity and be prepared to attend to it according to the interests, needs, and motivations of all students, regardless of their individual and collective conditions.
- b. Abolish traditional educational curricula and teaching practices and instead implement a more flexible and freedom-driven one focusing on removing physical and social barriers that limit the full exercise of the right to education in the Ecuadorian context.

Change to slide 4

ii. Disability rights

A. Follow-up to the first review

Students with psychosocial, physical, or mental disabilities suffer constant exclusion in the educational sector. Teachers are frequently unequipped or trained to teach students with hearing, visual, or mental disabilities or provide them with the assistance they may require. In the Republic of Ecuador, these deficiencies have prevented 56% of children with disabilities from attending school. Regarding the ones that do attend schooling, the lack of specialized services reduces their likelihood of finishing their secondary education, since classrooms lack inclusive equipment and teachers the required trainings to cope with different types of SENs.

In the previous Universal Periodic Review, several countries praised Ecuador's achievements in developing and implementing inclusive educational policies while others urged Ecuador to scale up its efforts towards developing comprehensive strategies for academic staff to better understand and cope with the diverse disabilities of students. Thailand recommended Ecuador to step up its efforts to ensure access to quality education for all children, including those from minority groups in rural areas, and Egypt recommended that Ecuador maintains its efforts in providing resources to protect and respect the rights of persons with disabilities, especially regarding access to education. Ghana encouraged Ecuador to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. All these recommendations were supported by the Republic of Ecuador.

B. New developments since the last review

According to the Ministry of Education, 78% of the total population (80,368) with disability-related SEN of school age (3-17 years) attend school. The goal for 2017 was to ensure access to education for all children and young people. This triggered the creation of 140 District Inclusion Support Units (UDAI), whereby professionals assess disability in children and young people and direct them towards either specialized education or ordinary inclusive education. Albeit admirable and worth praising, it fails to accommodate the needs of everyone into a curriculum and further strengthens segregation and division.

Change to slide 5

C. Recommendations

In order to address the issues faced by students with disabilities, Broken Chalk brings forward the following recommendations to the Republic of Ecuador:

1. Continue its efforts to facilitate students with physical and mental disabilities, by improving the school's infrastructure in order to account for wheelchair accessibility for instance.
2. Conduct awareness-campaign workshops for academic stakeholders on the matter of disabilities in education and implement teacher training programmes to provide for quality and adequate education for disabled students.
3. Establish a monitoring system to ensure that autonomous governments in Ecuador are complying with construction standards and adequacy of physical facilities for access of people with disabilities in schools.

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Thank you for your attention.