Education and training schemes in developing countries

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Adopting the report by Mrs Maren GÜNTHER (PPE, D), the committee called for all children, irrespective of sex or origin, to have access to appropriate basic education and to at least five years of school education. Efforts should also be intensified with a view to ensuring full adult literacy and the education of women, who until now have been neglected. The committee called for the introduction of compulsory school attendance without exception and the use of financial incentives in order to deter people from using children as a source of income, recommending in particular that parents be guaranteed a minimum income which would allow their children to be sent to school. It called for priority to be given to measures which aimed at strengthening decentralized education systems and the participation of local authorities. Teaching objectives and methods should take account of the cultural characteristics and natural, economic and social realities in the developing countries. Cooperation between developing countries should also be supported through the use of twinning and school and university exchanges between the institutions within the main regions. Any consideration of basic education should include those children who are living in disaster areas, in deprived areas and in refugee camps. If possible, refugees and displaced persons should be educated in their own language in order to make it easier for them to return to their homeland. As far as teaching is concerned, priority should be given to basic and primary education which receives public funding, without discrimination towards young girls or children who belong to the underprivileged sections of the population. The committee stressed the importance of mobile schools and teaching to help itinerant peoples and street children. It was important for parents, teachers and local organizations to be actively involved in the setting up of optimum education systems. The committee advocated establishing a link between primary education and the acquisition of elementary knowledge of vital aspects such as health (particularly perinatal care), diet, the environment, handicrafts, agriculture, manual work and human rights. Special attention should be paid to the transfer of know-how in those areas of work which are traditionally the domain of women (the small-trade sector, food production and processing). Special support should be given to women who wish to join the labour market, to enter the civil service and local authorities and to set up their own businesses. The committee emphasized the importance of cooperating with NGOs which are able to adapt education programmes to the needs of the local population. All action taken in the field of education calls for long-term policies if it is to have a positive impact. The committee recommended that a percentage of EDF appropriations be devoted exclusively to education and training and felt that it was worth examining the possibility of converting certain developing countries' debt repayments into "education appropriations".