

Statement of the Global Student Leadership Summit

(London, 18-21 September 2012)

Preamble

We, the representatives of student organisations from all over the world met in London at the Global Student Leadership Summit from the 18th to the 21st of September 2012, hosted by the National Union of Students in the UK and the European Students' Union. The Summit gathered at a time of great societal challenge and uncertainty. Students still face demonization, imprisonment, expulsion and murder. For often leading protest movements, they are thus victimised by various regimes.

Furthermore, many governments and decision-makers around the world have adopted massive cuts in education budgets and increased the financial burden on students and their families. Technology and the emergence of the digital age has served to change the way in which education institutions operate, posing new challenges for the future. The summit aimed to bring together student leaders from a wide range of national and regional student organisations to discuss the challenges students are facing today and how greater levels of international cooperation can serve to improve the lives of students as well as wider society.

The summit focussed on challenges in areas of "Peace and Social Justice", "Education", and "Sustainability". We pledged to organise and mobilise students together in the pursuit of peace and justice for students and to champion students as citizens of the world.

The student organizations who have signed below hereby express their commitment to improve collaborative involvement at a global level in order to fight more effectively together for the rights of the tens of millions of students we represent.

Education

We are united in believing and asserting that education is a fundamental human right, public good and public responsibility. We maintain that this right must be assured primarily by governments through means of public funding. All relevant stakeholders (especially Education Providers), should work collaboratively to create and foster equal access and equal opportunity to education.

Access to education should be universal regardless of gender, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic background, disability, political persuasion, religious and faith beliefs or sexual orientation.

Education plays many roles, including bestowing the ability to think critically, teaching tolerance and empathy, social and practical skills, the opportunity to obtain meaningful employment, participate in community development, as well as to simply expand a field of knowledge for universal benefit. Without these we cannot envision progressing towards a society that provides a high quality of life for all.

As a global student movement, we strive to represent all learners in tertiary education, and work to defend their involvement in student representation.

Educational institutions, national governments and international institutions should actively seek genuine involvement of students in decision-making processes and policy-formation initiatives, championing students as partners in education. International student mobility has been increasing rapidly and will continue to do so. We are in support of student mobility and movement across borders in the pursuit of academic and cultural aspirations. Unjustified

restrictions with entrance, registrations, recognition of studies, labour and arbitrary expulsion of students, among other violations, are unacceptable.

The student community notes with concern, the continuing and increasing commercialisation of tertiary education and the perception of students as consumers. We oppose international trade in education being promoted through processes such as the WTO negotiations and bi- or multilateral free trade agreements.

We hold that knowledge and the research that informs it are a public good, and should not be treated as a private commodity. Rather they should be utilised to contribute to societal and human development and education should be framed in a narrative of its impact on society. Thus, universal access to research and resources is key to spreading knowledge equitably and promoting community development in the pursuit of public interests.

We demand that governments and international organisations revise legislation and rules to require all publicly funded research to be published in open access journals, and support the agenda for Open Educational Resources initiated by UNESCO.

We view access to and opportunity to succeed in all levels education as a fundamental human right, not a privilege, particularly the education of women in the pursuit for justice and peace. Furthermore, a range of human rights and international commitments are essential for active participation of students in education and society. The principle of academic freedom must also apply to students. Students must be guaranteed the right to freedom of association and the right to representation in tertiary education governance.

Peace and Social Justice

The student movement has a long history rooted in the peace movement, with previous attempts having sprung out of the world wars. Within the original aims of global student cooperation, we see that peace and anti-imperialism should be a

fundamental aim of a global movement and surely if there is peace amongst students today, we can hope for lasting peace among all people.

That access to education serves to liberate people and thus helps to build a more peaceful world.

Education has proven to be especially vulnerable when faced with conflict and war. We demand that education institutions are protected and kept as safe havens during war, conflict, and when under occupation.

That the global austerity agenda and the ensuing cuts to public services have added to political marginalisation of youth and students. We see the importance of empowering students around the world to challenge austerity and anti-democratic government agendas.

We call on the United Nations' Human Rights Council and UNESCO to continue to monitor attacks on education and we commit to increase the sharing of information across all regional and national student organisations to play our part in bringing the violation of students' rights to light.

We commit to initiate work on developing a Student Rights Charter on the Global level and consult student organizations worldwide on the content and to explore potential mechanisms of implementation.

To support and offer asylum for students who are fleeing persecution and are unable to continue their studies in their respective countries, and we aim to offer practical support, where possible, to citizens of regimes whose lives are under threat by oppressive activities; hereunder by supporting international students studying in our respective countries from oppression they may be facing from their governments.

Sustainability

Student unions from several countries demonstrate remarkable efforts to drive actions and strategies to promote environmental consciousness, and green

education institutions. We encourage students' unions and tertiary education institutions to lead by example and share best practice in this area.

We see tertiary education institutions as key players in introducing and champion new technology; in reaching out to local and regional communities; and in driving the public debate based on science and research evidence, to promote greater sustainability.

We see the development of economies, social equality and democracy, as central to education's role. While education has proven to be crucial for economic prosperity, it is clear that equity and access to the education system, within and between countries, needs to be improved through the investment in education.

We therefore demand that the global community commit to new educational targets post the 2015 Millennium Development Goals that set an ambitious development agenda and aim in particular to challenge underrepresentation of women and other groups in education.

We commit to working together on developing policies for improving the sustainability in financing public higher education systems. At the same time we deplore irresponsible exploitation of income sources, such as disproportional fees for international students and unethical investments through endowment funds.

Follow-up

We commit to follow-up and seek implementation of the policies and action lines in this statement through international cooperation. The concrete strategy for cooperation is further outlined in the Memorandum of Global Student Cooperation.