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Statement

From the International Meeting on Peace Education in Cyprus

Famagusta 17-18 May 2013

The Meeting applauds the cooperation between The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and KTOS, KTOEÖS and DAU-SEN and wishes to express its support to the promotion of peace education as part of the reconciliation process in Cyprus. At the same time the meeting regrets that the Greek Cypriot colleagues choose not to participate.

In this context it is important to point out again that ETUCE does not recognise and does not co-operate in any way with the self-proclaimed "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", nor does ETUCE approve of the Turkish occupation of the Northern part of Cyprus since 1974. Furthermore, ETUCE does clearly not want to play a political role there and interfere in domestic affairs in Cyprus.

ETUCE has helped to organise an international meeting in Famagusta to first of all demonstrate solidarity with its three teacher trade union member organisations in the occupied area: KTOS, KTOEÖS and DAU-SEN. Over many years these teacher unions have expressed severe disapproval of the Turkish occupation of the Northern part of Cyprus. They have been strongly committed against the Turkish occupation and in the process of rapprochement between Greek and Turkish Cypriot teachers. Because of their activism, these teacher unions and their members have had to suffer from the reactions of the so-called "Northern authorities".

The meeting firmly believes that trust and peace building among people is a long and arduous process that should ideally start in early childhood. Families, communities and schools can and must make necessary contributions to raise the awareness of children and youth of their day-to-day behaviour with other people and the possible positive long-term impact of sensitive and respectful interaction with one another. This is where peace begins. This is how conflict can be resolved. This is where new conflict can be prevented.

Education has got a major role to play in peace development processes. This is why ETUCE stood by its decision to prepare a meeting on the topic of "Peace education in schools: The role of teachers in promoting peace through awareness raising and information on conflict prevention and conflict resolution in divided societies."

In pursuing this initiative, ETUCE intended to follow other existing good practices, programs and campaigns such as of the different UN agencies dealing with peace education and the many national and local organisations successfully engaging in the promotion of peace through education in various conflict areas in the world.

Within this context, the meeting

1. Welcomes the initiative to discuss and to develop in Cyprus the internationally proven strategy of peace education as a measure of support to conflict transformation and reconciliation in conflict areas;
2. Encourages the three teacher unions in Northern Cyprus to stand firm in their genuine and serious commitment against the occupation and political paternalism by the so-called “Northern authorities”;
3. Urges all Cypriot ETUCE member organisation to engage in a sensitive and efficient dialogue and thus to make a valuable contribution to the future of the next generations;
4. Calls on all Cypriot ETUCE members despite their differences to stand together in solidarity for their shared values and objectives and to build up a peaceful future in Cyprus;
5. Recommends to follow-up on further meetings in Cyprus to bring all teacher unions of Cyprus and their members together to the table promoting co-operation and dialogue between trade unions and the people of Cyprus.

**The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 135 Teacher Unions and 12.8 million teachers in all countries of Europe, 5.5 million teachers in the EU, from all levels of the education sector. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at the EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of teacher unions.*