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Organización  
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para la Educación,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للترقية والعلم والثقافة

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## CIGEPS

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### Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda

#### **International Position Statement and UNESCO Support Statement on Physical Education**

**Documents:** Final Report [CIGEPS/10/Inf.]

**Background:** A Plenary Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS) was convened at UNESCO Headquarters on 7 and 8 July 2010. At this time, Member States emphasized the importance of the work of CIGEPS in promoting the inclusion of physical education and sport in educational curricula. It was also agreed that CIGEPS should have a stronger advocacy function, particularly regarding the benefits of physical education in terms of improved academic performance, health outcomes and as an important learning tool for young people both in formal and non-formal settings. Accordingly, this report presents the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education's (ICSSPE) Position Statement on Physical Education and UNESCO's Support Statement. The statements will be used to advocate for increased government investment in sport, especially physical education, to achieve broad socio-economic objectives.

**Decision Required:** Paragraph 10

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. At the Plenary Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (hereinafter referred to as "CIGEPS"), convened at UNESCO Headquarters on 7 and 8 July 2010, discussions were held regarding the role and priorities of the Committee. One of the fields of interest, identified by Member States, was quality physical education. Namely, Member States emphasized the importance of the work of the Committee in mitigating the decline of physical education globally, and in promoting its systematic inclusion in educational curricula as part of rounded development. In this regard, it was agreed that CIGEPS should have a strong advocacy function, working in partnership with expert organizations to promote increased government investment in sport, especially physical education.
2. This report presents the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education's (ICSSPE) Position Statement on Physical Education and UNESCO's Support Statement. The proposed statements, as presented in the annexes of this document, are submitted for endorsement by CIGEPS.

## **CONTEXT**

3. Quality physical education is important to the rounded development of an individual – physically, mentally and socially. UNESCO is particularly concerned about the increasingly sedentary lifestyles of young people. Participation in sport, notably physical education, improves academic performance and enhances a child's ability to concentrate, learn and absorb other subjects, as well as facilitating improved health outcomes. As such, an individual's participation in physical education and sport must form part of a life-long continuum. This participation should be substantiated by national policy and the implementation of quality programmes.

## **OBJECTIVES**

4. With a view to reversing the global decline of physical education in education systems, ICSSPE have drafted a Position Statement on Physical Education. This Position Statement will be substantiated by support statements from key actors in the sport movement, such as UNESCO, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).
5. The Position Statement and support statements will be used to raise awareness on the benefits of participation in physical education. Moreover, the documents aim at encouraging increased government investment in physical education, supported by adequately trained teachers and appropriate allocation of resources, spaces and equipment. The collective statements also aim at providing people, working at a national level, with leverage to negotiate with their governments. In this regard, the statements will contribute to reducing the gap which currently exists between physical education policy rhetoric, rules and regulations, and the reality on the ground.
6. The Position Statement and support statements will be disseminated to governments, key sport stakeholders and the general public through a wide variety of networks and through publication on partner websites. Additionally, the statements will be presented at relevant meetings, distributed at major events and used by academic partners such as the International Committee of Sport Pedagogy (ICSP) in their work to promote quality physical education. Specifically, ICSSPE will also organize national and continental summits on the subject where the Position and support statements will be used to structure the debates.

## DRAFT RESOLUTION

10. The Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport may wish to adopt the following resolution:

The Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport,

1. *Having* examined document CIGEPS/2011/Doc.6;
2. *Welcomes* the initiative undertaken by ICSSPE to produce a Position Statement and corresponding support statements to advocate for the importance of access to quality physical education for every child;
3. *Reaffirms* the objectives and continued relevance of the 1978 UNESCO International Charter on Physical Education and Sport;
4. *Endorses* the ICSSPE Position Statement and corresponding Support Statement from UNESCO.

## **Annex I: ICSSPE's International Position Statement on Physical Education**

Physical education develops physical competence so that all children can move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. The outcome, physical literacy, is an essential basis for their full development and achievement.

Physical education in school is the most effective and inclusive means of providing all children, whatever their ability/disability, sex, age, cultural, race/ethnicity, religious or social background, with the skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and understanding for lifelong participation in physical activity and sport.

It is the only school subject whose primary focus is on the body, physical activity, physical development and health; and helps children to develop the patterns of and interest in physical activity, which are essential for healthy development and which lay the foundations for adult healthy lifestyles.

It contributes to children's confidence and self esteem; enhances social development by preparing children to cope with competition, winning and losing; and cooperation and collaboration. It is increasingly being used as a tool in development, including recovery from trauma and conflict; and encouragement for school attendance and retention.

ICSSPE reaffirms the 1978 UNESCO International Charter on Physical Education and Sport and the Berlin Agenda for Governments, agreed at the 1st World Summit on Physical Education in 1999 in Berlin, and endorsed by the Declaration of Punta del Este at MINEPS III in the same year, which calls on governments' commitment to:

- implement policies for physical education as a human right for all children;
- recognise that good quality physical education depends on well qualified educators and scheduled time within the curriculum, both of which are possible to provide even when other resources like equipment are in short supply;
- invest in initial and in-service professional training and development for educators;
- support research to improve the effectiveness and quality of physical education;
- work with international financial institutions to ensure physical education is included as part of their aid programmes in education;
- recognise the distinctive role of physical education in health, overall development and safe, supportive communities.

## **Annex II: UNESCO's Statement on Physical Education**

Since 1952, UNESCO has worked actively to promote the power and cross-cutting potential of sport; and the Organization has had a clear mandate to facilitate access to physical education in formal and non-formal settings in particular.

An important contribution was the development of the 1978 UNESCO International Charter on Physical Education and Sport. This Charter, which guarantees sport and physical education as a fundamental right for all, still serves as a key reference document 33 years later. It lays the foundation for action in the field of sport and physical education.

Physical education and sport is essential to both physical and cognitive development. Not only does physical education improve a child's ability to learn and absorb information; it can also be used as a tool to promote understanding and cooperation, and to improve communication skills. Fundamental movement skills need to be taught at an early age and reinforced as young people continue grow and develop. The establishment of active lifestyles through the practice of physical education and sport can also reduce current negative health trends, such as growing obesity around the world.

Therefore, it is vital that governments incorporate physical education and sport into their educational systems. Accordingly, UNESCO calls for the development of quality physical education programmes, supported by teacher training and the allocation of sufficient resources. We also pledge our support, through the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport, to the global initiative ICSSPE to reverse the decline of physical education and sport. It is essential that all children and young people have the opportunity to develop and to achieve their potential.