UNESCO Gets off the Track Again

by Phyllis Schlafly October 9, 2009

Would you belong and pay dues to a foreign organization that is anti-morality and anti-marriage? If not, why do we allow the United States to use our taxpayers' money to pay dues for membership in UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)?

One of President Ronald Reagan's many excellent decisions was his 1984 termination of U.S. membership in this United Nations affiliate because it was corrupt, anti-Western, and a vehicle for far-left propaganda. We enjoyed a nearly 20-year splendid absence from UNESCO's expensive gatherings in Paris of foreign bureaucrats promoting globalist mischief.

President George W. Bush put us back in UNESCO in 2003 as part of his steady retreat from Reaganism, and devotion to an undefined new world order. President Obama hasn't yet said anything about UNESCO but, as a self-proclaimed "citizen of the world," we can assume he is pro-UNESCO.

Riding on the word "educational" in its name, UNESCO has adopted the pretense that it is in charge of prescribing curriculum for schoolchildren all over the world. UNESCO has even been trying to position itself to influence U.S. school curriculum.

In 2004 in Paris, UNESCO signed a 26-page "Cooperation Agreement" with Microsoft Corporation to develop a "master curriculum (Syllabus)" for teacher training in information technologies based on standards, guidelines, benchmarks, and assessment techniques. This agreement states that the Syllabus will "form the basis for deriving training content to be delivered to teachers," and "UNESCO will explore how to facilitate content development."

UNESCO's Director General boasted that one of the goals is to foster "worldwide curricula reflecting UNESCO values." This fall, UNESCO has been busy writing guidelines for the teaching of sex education, supposedly in order to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

In these guidelines, UNESCO tells teachers in all countries to present abstinence until marriage as "only one of a range of choices available to young people" to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Other choices would surely be more fun.

The working draft of the guidelines calls for children aged five to eight to be taught in school about masturbation (age five means starting in kindergarten). Five- to eight-year old children would also be taught about same-sex couples and tolerance of different sexual orientations.

Schoolchildren aged nine to 15 are to be given more detailed discussions about masturbation. New topics on the list for nine-year-olds include orgasm and abortion.

It's no surprise that the guidelines feature enthusiastic support of abortion. UNESCO's guidelines assert that teachers should discuss "advocacy to promote the right to and access to safe abortion" for students starting at age 15.

According to UNESCO, students should be taught that "legal abortion performed under sterile conditions by medically trained personnel is safe." Teachers should also discuss "emergency contraception" and how to get "access to safe abortion and post-abortion care."

After the news broke about what was actually in the guidelines, one of the key agencies that funded UNESCO's guidelines, the United Nations Population Fund

(UNFPA), asked that its name be removed. It's unclear whether UNFPA is critical of the guidelines, or of their explicit wording, or merely of the bad publicity generated by release of the working draft.

UNFPA's announced goal is "universal access to reproductive health services by 2015." UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programs "to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS."

The week after UNFPA pulled its name from the UNESCO guidelines, UNFPA held a conference in Berlin to train 400 activists to advocate for abortion around the world. At the end of the conference, UNFPA issued a statement urging all nations to provide taxpayer-financed abortions, to "eliminate parental ... and age restrictions" for young people to access "the full range of sexual and reproductive health information and services," and to increase funds for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) advocating abortion and other "reproductive health care services."

Public reaction to the UNESCO sex-ed guidelines caused UNESCO to make several changes before presenting them at the UNESCO meeting in Birmingham, England, in September. However, there was no apology for the explicitness of the sex-ed curriculum; UNESCO asserted that its guidelines are "evidence-informed and rights-based."

Criticism was not universal. Time Magazine went on the attack against what it called "the knee-jerk outrage of conservative pundits," and reminded Time's readers that the UNESCO guidelines will "undergo sober and thoughtful examination in more open-minded places ... like Ethiopia."

Further reading: