***Call for ending apartheid in education: Statement of Schüler Helfen Leben Foundation***

Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been at a crossroads for a long time, and we, as Schüler Helfen Leben, an NGO advocating for youth education, have been monitoring the development of the educational system in BiH since 1994.

With this letter, we express the **need for an education system free of segregation** **and to appeal to end educational apartheid** in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Right now, more than 50 schools in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina are still operating by the principle commonly known as „two schools under one roof“, dividing pupils based on their religious and/or ethnic background. The school buildings are usually split into two parts without any connection, or students of different backgrounds attend school at different times, so they have no opportunity to interact with each other, even though they come from the same town or community. Students who do not identify as a part of any dominant ethnic or religious group or belong to a minority have to choose one of the dominant groups to attend with, forcing them to learn an “ethnically dominant curriculum”.

Even though the principle has been ruled as discriminatory towards the pupils attending these schools on the 16th of July 2021 by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, students are still being divided into schools by their ethnic background. This decision of the Constitutional Court (which is the highest court in the country) is not being enacted. Croatian and Bosniak pupils in three cantons continue to attend school in a segregated environment of systemic apartheid more than 27 years after the war.

According to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which states that inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all have to be ensured, we call for an apartheid-free educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where all students regardless of their ethnic or religious background have access to equitable education and that their right to learn in an environment free of discrimination.

Most importantly, we want to highlight and empower the voice of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina who are actively fighting against being segregated. In 2017, the Government of Central Bosnia Canton decided to build a new school which would have been intended just for one ethnic group. High school students from the town of Jajce successfully fought against being segregated by ethnic background by protesting and were joined by their peers from all over the country, resulting in the decision being taken back by the government of the Central Bosnia Canton. Their inspiring solidarity and unwillingness to be segregated should be supported and pave the way for a new vision of education without apartheid in Bosnia and Herzegovina. With this example, we kindly remind the importance of Hofstede’s model of culture, which indicates the importance that schools should promote multidimensionality that includes critical analysis of teaching content, reconstruction of school relationships with an emphasis on detecting discriminatory practices, developing culturally responsive and inclusive teaching methods and reflecting on the role of the school in the changed and/or existing social state.

We believe that a critical aspect of transforming education to ensure inclusive schools where children are safe, healthy and equal, including in emergencies and protracted crises, is that **schools must be free of any segregation and discrimination and are open to all youth**.

**Therefore, we urge Summit to take a stand against apartheid in education.**