

## France and Canada: 58<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> Countries to Endorse Safe Schools Declaration

### *Commit to Protect Students, Teachers, Schools, and Universities during War*

(February 21, 2017 – Paris) The French and Canadian governments should be congratulated for becoming the latest countries to endorse the international political commitment known as the [Safe Schools Declaration](#), said the [Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack](#) (GCPEA). The endorsement came during the international conference on the protection of children in armed conflicts being hosted by the French foreign ministry in Paris today.

“France and Canada’s support for the Safe Schools Declaration is a welcome addition to the growing community of countries demanding that schools be safe places for children, even during war,” said Diya Nijhowne, GCPEA Director. “The Safe Schools Declaration lays out many common-sense steps that countries can take to help ensure that students and schools are better protected.”

Fifty-nine countries have now endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, including the majority of both European Union and NATO member states.

The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental political commitment that provides countries the opportunity to express support for protecting students, teachers, schools, and universities from attack during times of armed conflict. It stresses the importance of continuing education during armed conflict.

By joining the Declaration, countries pledge to restore access to education when schools are bombed, burned, and destroyed during armed conflict, and undertake to make it less likely that students, teachers, and schools will be attacked in the first place. They agree to deter such violence by promising to investigate and prosecute war crimes involving schools, and to minimize the use of schools for military purposes so they do not become targets for attack.

The Declaration was developed through consultations with states in a process led by Norway and Argentina in Geneva in early 2015, and was opened for endorsement at the Oslo Conference on Safe Schools on May 29, 2015. Argentina has announced that it will host the Second International Conference on Safe Schools in Buenos Aires on March 28-29, 2017.

Today’s conference in Paris marks the tenth anniversary of the Paris Principles and Commitments, which are dedicated to protecting children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups.

“France and Canada have a strong tradition of advocating for the protection of children during armed conflict, and have reinforced their commitment through today’s endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration,” said Nijhowne. “We urge all countries that have yet to join the Safe Schools Declaration to consider doing so at next month’s international conference in Buenos Aires.”

*The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) is a unique coalition of international organizations, including CARA (Council for At-Risk Academics), Human Rights Watch, the Institute of International Education’s Scholar Rescue Fund, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Save the Children, the Scholars at Risk Network, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNESCO. GCPEA is a project of the Tides Center, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Learn more at [www.protectingeducation.org](http://www.protectingeducation.org)*