

# STRATEGY ON HUMAN RIGHTS

I Further integrating a human rights-based approach into all of UNESCO's programmes. II Advancing human rights in an era of globalization. III Strengthening partnerships.



## Foreword

In October 2003 the General Conference of UNESCO adopted, without a vote, the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights. Hereby the 190 Member States of the Organization reaffirmed their commitment to the cause of human rights. They acknowledged that human rights need to be better promoted and protected, especially in the face of numerous threats and challenges to them, such as poverty, pandemics, extremism and terrorism.

UNESCO has an impressive record of human rights activities. Its Constitution, adopted sixty years ago, proclaimed that the main purpose of the Organization is "...to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms..." UNESCO was actively involved in the elaboration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as of many international human rights conventions. The Organization has adopted its own human rights instruments and has created monitoring mechanisms and a special procedure to consider alleged violations of human rights within its competence.

By adopting this Strategy, UNESCO confirmed its dedication to further strengthening the human rights dimension of its activities. The Organization also expressed its commitment to the current reform of the United Nations system, within which the advancement of human rights is a priority. The overarching purpose of the Strategy is to ensure a better division of labour within the system and to join efforts in the common struggle for human rights in an era of globalization.

The Strategy presents a road map for the entire Organization for the years to come. First and foremost, UNESCO is integrating a human rights-based approach into all its programmes. In practice this means that all activities should contribute to the realization of human rights. It implies that basic human rights principles, such as equality in rights, participation and accountability, together with human rights standards, should guide the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of all programmes.

UNESCO's human rights activities focus on those areas where the Organization has a clear comparative advantage, experience and expertise. In order to advance human rights, UNESCO is further strengthening its traditional functions: human rights research, human rights education, standard-setting as well as monitoring and protection of the rights within its competence. These rights include: the right to education, the right to take part in cultural life, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information, and the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications.

The principles of interrelatedness, interdependence and the equal importance of all human rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social – is at the core of all these activities. They are particularly relevant to human rights research and human rights education. As a result of UNESCO's actions in these fields, people should become better aware of their human rights and the means to defend them, while actors that are responsible for the implementation of human rights should fulfil their obligations and adopt measures in order to promote and protect human rights.

Close cooperation among all actors dealing with human rights is an absolute prerequisite to achieve progress in this field. The Strategy implies strengthening UNESCO's partnerships with governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the academic community. UNESCO has cooperation agreements with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the International Labour Organization and maintains close relationships with other bodies and agencies of the United Nations system.

The adoption of the Strategy has renewed UNESCO's commitment to the cause of human rights. Its implementation should ensure the fulfillment of the goal proclaimed by the United Nations and UNESCO sixty years ago: to achieve the enjoyment of all human rights for all.

The text of the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights is reproduced in its entirety as adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at the 20<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of its 32<sup>nd</sup> session on 16 October 2003 by 32 C/Resolution 27.

# UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights

## Introduction

**1** The Charter of the United Nations proclaims the promotion of respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all as a major objective of the entire United Nations system. Article I of the **UNESCO** Constitution reaffirms this commitment.

**2** From the outset, **UNESCO** has played an important role in the field of human rights. It was actively involved in the elaboration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, immediately after its adoption, proclaimed the importance of this Declaration for all **UNESCO** activities. The Organization assisted in drafting the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

**3** **UNESCO** has a constitutional mandate to contribute to the promotion of all human rights. At the same time, it has special responsibility with regard to certain rights, in particular the right to education, the right to participate in cultural life, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information, the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications. The Organization also has an important role in the promotion and protection of cultural diversity, which is an ethical imperative inseparable from respect for human dignity and implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms. **UNESCO** protects and promotes cultural heritage in its tangible and intangible expressions. Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism and equal access for all cultures to cultural life including equal access to knowledge, including its digital form, are all guarantors of cultural diversity and consequently for respect of human rights. The promotion of the rights<sup>1</sup> of women is a priority for the Organization.

**4** **UNESCO** has adopted a number of standard-setting instruments relating to human rights. It has conducted research in order to clarify the content of human rights to promote their advancement. It has a recognized role in the field of human rights education and has issued numerous publications, educational and information materials on human rights, contributing significantly to their universal promotion and protection and to the creation of a culture of human rights.<sup>2</sup>

**5** **UNESCO**'s commitment to human rights has been reconfirmed and further elucidated in the decisions of its governing bodies. At its 31st session, the General Conference authorized the Director-General to enhance **UNESCO**'s contribution to the promotion of all human rights, focusing on those within the Organization's competence (31 C/5, para. 03200). The Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007 defines the promotion and protection of human rights as one of the priorities for the entire Organization (31 C/4, paras. 90-92).

**6** The Strategy on human rights is **UNESCO**'s response to the United Nations Secretary-General's Reform Programme, which affirms that "... a major task for the future will be to enhance the human rights programme and integrate it into the broad range of the Organization's activities...".<sup>3</sup> It reflects the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, in particular, the principles of universality, indivisibility, interrelationship and interdependence of all human rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social.<sup>4</sup>

It was prepared with due account of the specific responsibilities of other bodies, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, in particular of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).<sup>5</sup> The Strategy aims to ensure a significant **UNESCO** contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>6</sup> Its purpose is to strengthen **UNESCO**'s contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights through the application of a coherent and Organization-wide vision of human rights.

**7** The Strategy was elaborated by an Intersectoral Task Force set up at the request of the Director-General by the Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences. It follows up on document 165 EX/10 "Elements of an Overall **UNESCO** Human Rights Strategy", which was presented to the Executive Board in October 2002 and incorporates the results of its debates.

In conformity with the decision of the Board, the Task Force continued its work on the strategy. Information on the progress made in the preparation of the strategy was presented to the Executive Board at its 166<sup>th</sup> session.<sup>7</sup>

**8** The present document also reflects the results of a consultation with Member States and Observers, based on document 165 EX/10, which was launched by a circular letter of 17 October 2002.<sup>8</sup> In their replies, all States agreed on the pertinence of a UNESCO human rights strategy. At the same time, not all elements of the proposed Strategy in document 165 EX/10 received their full support. Bearing in mind that, quite often, States expressed divergent views on the same elements, the modifications introduced to this document reflect the views of the majority of States.

**9** The present document also reflects the results of the consultations with partners within the United Nations system, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Labour Office (ILO), as well as with leading human rights research and training institutions, non-governmental organizations and UNESCO Chairs in Human Rights.<sup>9</sup>

**10** The Strategy is aimed at integrating a human rights-based approach into all of UNESCO's programmes, encouraging theoretical and empirical research and disseminating knowledge on human rights, further promoting human rights education as an integral part of the right to education, and developing and implementing UNESCO's human rights standards. In all these activities, the promotion of human rights of women, equal gender opportunities and the equal participation of women in all spheres of life will be a priority. Moreover, the Strategy is aimed at further strengthening cooperation in the field of human rights within the United Nations system, as well as with regional intergovernmental organizations and other partners. Actions relating to advisory services and technical assistance, which are subject to the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources and which will be implemented in close cooperation with UNESCO partners, are also mentioned in several sections of the document. The implementation of the strategy involves all UNESCO sectors and field offices.

**11** The overall goal of the Strategy is to increase UNESCO's contribution to the advancement of human rights in an era of globalization and to reaffirm UNESCO's specific role in promoting all human rights, in particular by means of education and research, and in protecting those rights within its fields of competence. The implementation of the strategy will contribute to the creation of a global culture of human rights, which is an important step to bring about globalization with a human face.

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| <p>1 - UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, unanimously adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2001 (in particular Art. 4-6).</p> <p>2 - Additional information can be found in a "Review of UNESCO's past and present work on human rights". This document is available (in English) upon request.</p> <p>3 - Report of the Secretary-General, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", A/51/950, 1997, paragraph 79.</p> <p>4 - Adopted by consensus by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993.</p> <p>5 - Additional information is contained in a "Review of United Nations agencies mandates and work in human rights". This document is available (in English) upon request.</p> <p>6 - See the United Nations Millennium Declaration, A/RES/55/2, 8 September 2000, and the Report of the Secretary-General, "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration", A/56/326, 6 September 2001.</p> | <p>7 - Report by the Director-General on the follow-up of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its previous sessions (166 EX/5).</p> <p>8 - As of the end of May 2003, UNESCO has received 40 replies: Austria, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Montenegro (formerly the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Slovakia, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey and Viet Nam.</p> <p>9 - Consultations were held with UNESCO Chairs in Human Rights during the World Forum of UNESCO Chairs (November 2002), with non-governmental organizations in Paris in March/May 2003 and with human research and training institutions in Maastricht in June 2003.</p> |
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# Section I

## Further integrating a human rights-based approach into all of UNESCO's programmes

**12** The United Nations Secretary-General stressed that human rights are a central tenet of the United Nations reform. Emphasizing that human rights are at the core of all United Nations activities, he urged for human rights mainstreaming within the United Nations system.<sup>10</sup> Such mainstreaming implies that:

- (a) all programmes, policies and technical assistance should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments;
- (b) human rights principles and standards should guide the programming process in all fields and all stages, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- (c) programmes and activities should contribute to the development of the capacities of "duty-bearers" to meet their obligations and of "rights-holders" to claim their rights.<sup>11</sup>

**13** Further integrating a human rights-based approach into all phases of the programming process will increase UNESCO's contribution to the implementation of human rights. The integration will be done on the basis of human rights principles and standards, with due account of the concluding observations and general comments by the human rights treaty monitoring bodies. Mainstreaming the human rights of women in order to respect, protect and fulfil their rights, which is a task of the United Nations system as a whole, will be a priority within the present strategy.<sup>12</sup>

**14** To further integrate a human rights-based approach in UNESCO and to ensure in-house capacity-building on human rights, the following **objectives** are set:

- (i) integration of a human rights-based approach into all UNESCO activities and projects in line with the United Nations Reform Programme;



- (ii) intensified in-house coordination of human rights activities, ensuring a more effective contribution to the advancement of all human rights, particularly those within UNESCO's competence;
- (iii) increased awareness and knowledge on the part of UNESCO staff of human rights standards, major challenges to human rights and human rights-based programming.

10 - Report of the Secretary-General, "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration", A/56/326, paragraph 201, 6 September 2001.

11 - Based on the conclusions of the second inter-agency workshop on implementing a human rights-based approach to development in the context of United Nations reforms (Stamford, Connecticut, 5-7 May 2003).

12 - Strategic Objective I.1, Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 231.

**15 Proposed action** includes:

- (a) development, with due consideration of the mainstreaming experience accumulated within the United Nations, of a phased plan to mainstream human rights into all of UNESCO's programmes and activities on the basis of human rights instruments and the conclusions of treaty monitoring bodies;
- (b) staff training in human rights at Headquarters and in the field, including staff meetings on major challenges to human rights with leading experts;
- (c) regular exchange of information and implementation of joint intersectoral projects;
- (d) regular evaluation of the activities implemented and the results achieved.

**16 Expected outcomes** are:

- (a) an Organization-wide coherent vision of UNESCO's role and specific responsibilities in the field of human rights and a human rights-based approach to the activities of all Sectors;
- (b) increased awareness and knowledge on the part of staff members of human rights standards, challenges and trends, as well as clearer articulation of the human rights dimension of the Organization's work;
- (c) use of the results of the evaluations in programming and in adjusting accordingly ongoing projects;
- (d) increased international recognition of UNESCO's specific role in the field of human rights.

**Advancing human rights in an era of globalization**

**17** While globalization has created unprecedented wealth and well-being, it has been accompanied by increasing poverty, inequality and exclusion for many countries, groups and individuals. Activities to respect, protect and fulfil human rights require urgent strengthening, in order to bring about "globalization with a human face", as it is acknowledged in the current UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy.

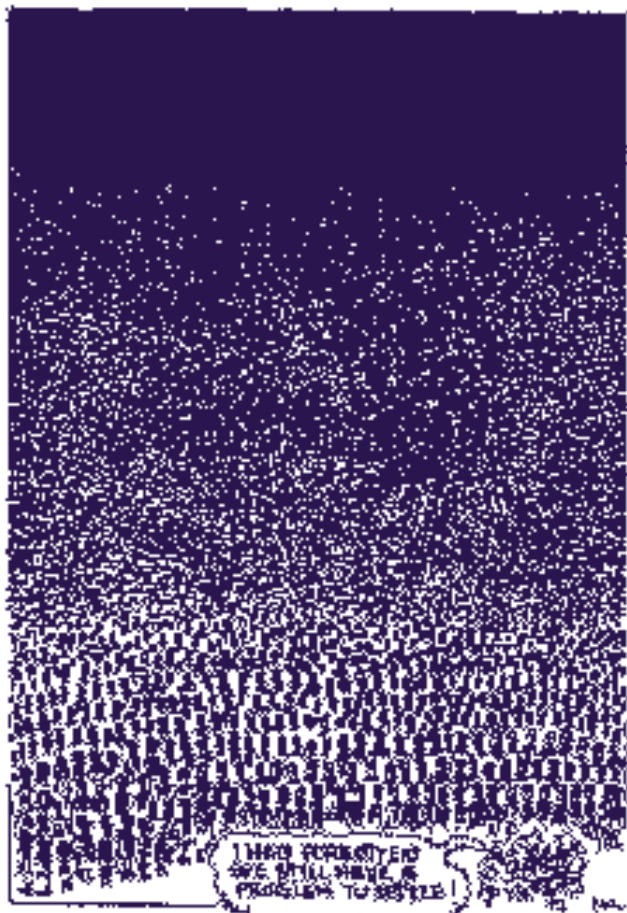
**18** UNESCO's human rights activities focus on those areas where the Organization has a clear comparative advantage, experience and expertise. Drawing upon UNESCO's functions as a laboratory of ideas, a standard-setter and a clearing house,<sup>13</sup> the main axes of the Strategy are "promotion of research and dissemination of knowledge on human rights", "human rights education as an integral part of the right to education", and "standard-setting, monitoring and human rights protection within UNESCO's fields of competence".

**A Promotion of research and dissemination of knowledge on human rights**

**19** UNESCO has a special role to play in promoting research, intellectual reflection and debate on obstacles preventing the full implementation of all human rights in all its fields of competence, as well as in identifying "good practices" and directions of possible action. The results of this research should serve to inform policy-making at all levels and support standard-setting, capacity-building and technical assistance, as well as support human rights education activities.

**20** UNESCO's multidisciplinary human rights research agenda is to be determined in close cooperation with OHCHR, leading research and training institutions from all regions of the world, UNESCO Chairs and other partners. The results of research should be widely disseminated to increase general awareness about human rights issues. This will be carried out in cooperation with National Commissions, UNESCO partners and networks, including national human rights institutions, research and training centres, UNESCO Chairs, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society.

<sup>13</sup> - Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007, paragraph 30.



**21** To promote research and disseminate knowledge on human rights, the following **objectives** are set:

- (i) identification and analysis of threats and obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights in UNESCO's fields of competence, as well as of emerging challenges at regional and global levels;
- (ii) further elucidation of the principle of universality, indivisibility, interrelation and interdependence of all human rights in particular related to UNESCO's areas of expertise, of the inherent link between human rights, democracy, peace and development and of equal rights of men and women and gender equality;
- (iii) development of cooperation in setting and implementing UNESCO's research agenda with Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, the networks of UNESCO Chairs and human rights research and training centres.

**22 Proposed action** includes:

- (a) development of a research agenda on the content, nature of obligations, state of implementation, indicators and justiciability of human rights within UNESCO's fields of competence, including economic, social and cultural rights, and taking into account regional and subregional priorities and the need to ensure the equal participation of women and men in economic, social and cultural spheres, also considering thematic priorities, such as freedom of belief and conviction, and rights of persons belonging to various groups;
- (b) wide dissemination of information on UNESCO's activities in the field of human rights, documentation, and results of research to contribute to policy-making, capacity-building and awareness-raising;
- (c) identification and dissemination of "good practices" in the implementation of human rights;
- (d) encouragement of research, in particular that undertaken by young researchers from all regions of the world, and especially from developing countries, through small research grants.

**23 Expected outcomes** are:

- (a) empowerment of civil society organizations so as to work more efficiently for the advancement of human rights for all, women and men, within UNESCO's fields of competence;
- (b) influence on policy-making and standard-setting to contribute to the advancement of human rights within UNESCO's fields of competence;
- (c) strengthened partnerships with research networks and governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners;
- (d) development, within UNESCO's fields of competence, of research on human rights worldwide and in particular in developing countries;
- (e) increased knowledge and sensitization of the general public on challenges, threats and obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights in UNESCO's fields of competence, through the wide dissemination of the results of research, in particular within the framework of human rights education activities with a view to bridging the gap between theory and practice.

## **B Human rights education as an integral part of the right to education**

**24** UNESCO has a longstanding experience in the field of Human Rights Education (HRE), a domain in which it has been active since its inception in 1945. Since 1995, UNESCO's activities have been placed within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) and are based on different normative instruments adopted by UNESCO and the United Nations. In the UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy, as well as in 30 C/Resolution 16 and different decisions of the Executive Board, Member States indicated HRE as one of the strategic priorities for UNESCO's action and a key element for the promotion of the right to quality education and equal access of girls and women to such education.

**25** UNESCO considers that HRE is itself a human right within the framework of the fulfillment of the right to education, which is one of the priorities of the Millennium Declaration. In major human rights instruments, human rights education is considered as an integral part of the right to education, which shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, women and men, and shall promote the values of peace, understanding and tolerance.<sup>14</sup>

**26** In today's world, it is crucial to address HRE through a holistic perspective. HRE should therefore constitute the basis for the democratization of education systems in the context of national education reforms with a view to integrating the learning and practice of human rights. This includes not only the content of the curriculum but also the educational processes, the pedagogical methods and the environment within which education takes place, including management of education systems. Human rights education implies the practice as well as the learning of human rights. Therefore, HRE should not only be theoretical but should provide opportunities for learners to develop and practise the skills to respect human rights and democracy through "school life". HRE should be an integral part of formal, non-formal and informal education.



**27** In the framework of the above considerations and following consultations undertaken with Member States, experts<sup>15</sup> and NGOs in this regard, the following **objectives** are set:

- (i) monitoring of human rights education as part of the right to education in Member States;
- (ii) mainstreaming human rights education into national education systems, in conformity with the principles of universality, indivisibility, interrelation and interdependence of all human rights, taking into account the diversity of cultures, historical developments and the history of education in each country;
- (iii) integration of human rights education in Education for All (EFA) national plans of action;
- (iv) assisting in the preparation and implementation of national plans of action for human rights education, with due account of the results of the Decade;



- (v) building strategic partnerships with United Nations specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other civil society associations, research community, parliamentarians, etc., in order to enhance effective implementation and impact of human rights education at international, regional and national levels. National Commissions for UNESCO have an essential role to play in this regard;
- (vi) promotion of existing UNESCO networks (UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs, Associated Schools, UNESCO Associations and Clubs) and establishment of new ones.

## 28 Proposed action includes:

- (a) review how Member States have ensured that national legislation and administrative regulations are in compliance with normative instruments on the right to education and HRE, as well as how these obligations have been put into practice. Compile and publish national practices;
- (b) support the conduct of studies by national research institutes on how the universal values of human rights are embedded in the national and local culture(s);
- (c) implement national and subregional projects (financed through extrabudgetary resources) in a number of regions, primarily focusing on: revision of curricula and textbooks; training of trainers, educators and administrative personnel in the education system; and production of educational materials, teacher guidelines and training materials;
- (d) conduct research on human rights education, including on methods, content, techniques and quality indicators for the evaluation of human rights education and the practice of rights in education;
- (e) publish and disseminate “good practices” of human rights education in cooperation with OHCHR. Furthermore, innovative pedagogical approaches in the field of human rights education will be recognized through the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education;
- (f) encourage integration of HRE into EFA planning through the development of guidelines to Member States, describing the step-by-step process for

inclusion of HRE into EFA plans, and through dedicated workshops;

- (g) provide, as required, advisory services and technical assistance to Member States on the elaboration of national plans of action for human rights education in line with the specific guidelines formulated by OHCHR;
- (h) promote the effective use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as through the UNESCO multilingual education server D@dalos for human rights and democracy in South-East Europe, the multilingual electronic network of human rights education experts in Latin America, and the possible creation of a portal for sharing and disseminating information on curriculum, teacher training, research, evaluation and “good practices” on HRE. A database of experts on HRE will also be created;
- (i) enhance collaboration with existing international, regional and national networks, in particular with UNESCO Chairs.

## 29 Expected outcomes are:

- (a) international normative instruments on the right to education and human rights education monitored;
- (b) HRE mainstreamed in national education systems;
- (c) HRE integrated within EFA national plans;
- (d) national plans for HRE elaborated and implemented;
- (e) strategic partnerships for the implementation of HRE built and cooperation enhanced with existing networks;
- (f) “good practices”, including innovative pedagogical approaches documented, published and disseminated.

14 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26(2); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 13(1); Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29(1).

15 - An expert meeting on “The practice of rights in education: a renewed commitment to human rights education” was organized in UNESCO Headquarters on 30-31 January 2003 in this regard. The final report is available in English and French.

## **C Standard-setting, monitoring and activities related to human rights protection within UNESCO's fields of competence**

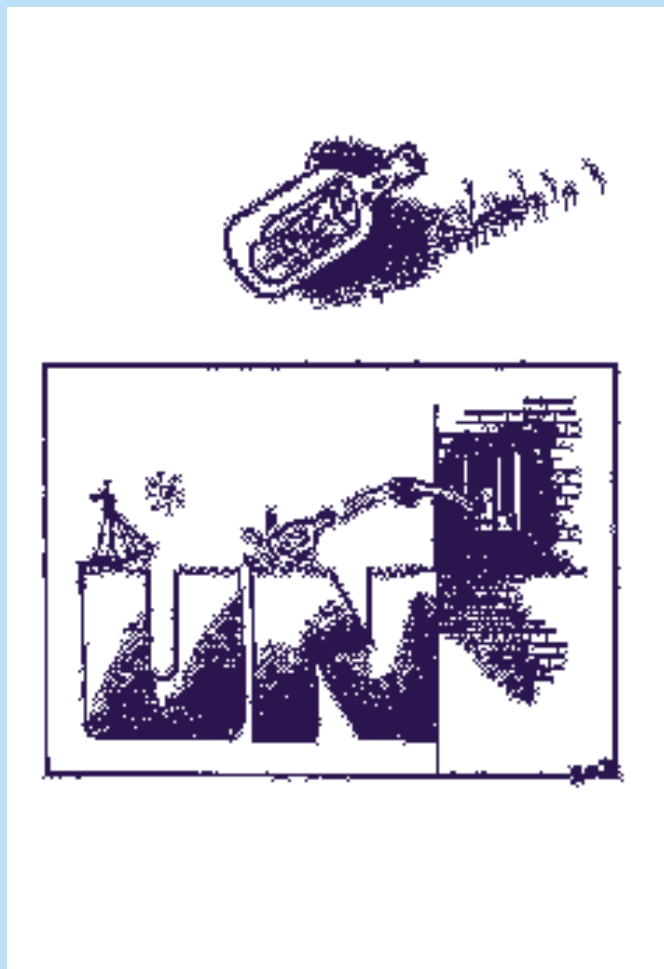
**30** UNESCO has over the years adopted a number of standard-setting instruments directly or indirectly relating to human rights within its fields of competence. These conventions, declarations and recommendations mainly address the right to education, the protection of moral and material interests resulting from the scientific, literary or artistic production, the right to take part in cultural life, etc.

**31** The monitoring mechanism of UNESCO's standard-setting instruments is based on a State reporting procedure, as laid down in Article IV(6) and Article VIII of the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure concerning recommendations to Member States and international conventions covered by the terms of Article IV, paragraph 4 of the Constitution. There is a clear distinction between the "initial reports" and the "periodic reports", some of which are considered by the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (CR). The CR Committee reports to the Executive Board, which then submits its comments to the General Conference for consideration.

**32** In order to improve the effectiveness of UNESCO's reporting mechanisms, the CR Committee started to examine a number of options for reform,<sup>16</sup> and suggested to the Executive Board to adopt several transitional measures on the matter bearing in mind the similar efforts undertaken within the United Nations system to improve the monitoring procedures of the various human rights treaties.<sup>17</sup> These measures contained in 165 EX/Decision 6.2 of the Executive Board<sup>18</sup> are applicable only to the conventions and recommendations entrusted to the CR Committee until an appropriate decision by the General Conference. In the same spirit, the Executive Board<sup>18</sup> and ECOSOC established in October 2001 a Joint Expert Group on the monitoring of the right to education, composed of two representatives of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and two representatives of CR. This UNESCO (CR) and ECOSOC (CESCR) Joint Expert Group held its first meeting at UNESCO Headquarters on 19 May 2003 and examined, within the framework of its mandate, the possibilities for reducing the reporting burden on States in relation to the right to education and to identify ways in which arrangements could be both streamlined and made more effective.

**33** The main mechanism for the protection of human rights within UNESCO's competence is the communications procedure established by 104 EX/Decision 3.3 of 1978, which provides for the examination of cases and questions submitted to UNESCO concerning alleged violations of human rights in its spheres of competence. The communications procedure is strictly confidential and seeks a friendly settlement with the State concerned.

**34** In addition to the above and in accordance with well-established practice, the Director-General may, through the right of intercession vested in him by 19 C/Resolution 12.1, personally undertake humanitarian representations for individuals who have allegedly been victims of human rights violations in UNESCO's fields of competence and whose cases call for urgent consideration.



**35** The UNESCO Constitution in Article I, paragraph 2(a) stipulates that the Organization will “collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image”. This has enabled UNESCO to play an active role both in promoting freedom of expression and in protecting the rights of journalists, artists and others who may be at risk as a result of their professional activities by enhancing the role of free and pluralistic media in democratic society.

**36** The following **objectives** are set:

- (i) to achieve universality and greater effectiveness of UNESCO’s instruments related to human rights;
- (ii) to rationalize and increase the efficiency of UNESCO’s reporting and monitoring procedures related to human rights within its fields of competence;
- (iii) to raise awareness about the importance of UNESCO’s instruments related to human rights for peace and security.

**37 Proposed action** includes:

- (a) encouraging universal ratification of UNESCO instruments and increasing knowledge on their content;
- (b) updating existing UNESCO instruments on human rights and elaborating new instruments, where appropriate;
- (c) awareness-raising on the work of the CR Committee in human rights protection, especially among NGOs, human rights activists and other civil society actors;
- (d) providing assistance to Member States, at their request, concerning the implementation of UNESCO instruments and/or recommendations emerging from the examination of State reports, as well as in adapting their legislation to internationally recognized principles;
- (e) participation in and contribution to the standard-setting activities of United Nations bodies and agencies related to human rights within UNESCO’s fields of competence.

**38 Expected outcomes** are:

- (a) strengthened normative basis of UNESCO’s work in the field of human rights with particular emphasis on the right to education;
- (b) more effective reporting and monitoring procedures;
- (c) improved implementation of UNESCO’s instruments related to human rights;
- (d) freedom of expression and freedom of the press as basic human rights and elements of democracy further promoted and safeguarded by UNESCO, through raising public awareness, normative action and operational projects;
- (e) cultural diversity and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion better protected, and the intercultural and interreligious dialogue further promoted.

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16 - See documents 164 EX/23 and 165 EX/21.

17 - Report of the Secretary-General, “Strengthening of the United Nations: an Agenda for Further Change”, A/57/387, 9 September 2002, paras. 52-54.

18 - See 162 EX/Decision 5.4.

# Section III

## Strengthening partnerships

**39** An effective response to numerous challenges impeding the full enjoyment of human rights in an era of globalization requires the concerted action of the world community as a whole. The strengthening of cooperation within the United Nations system is indispensable. The increasing number of bodies and mechanisms dealing with the promotion and protection of human rights together with the adoption of a human rights-based approach by the United Nations entities make the need for clear “division of labour” and complementarity of roles and responsibilities in the field of human rights an imperative. The principles proposed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations provide the general framework.<sup>19</sup>

**40** Within the United Nations, OHCHR is entrusted with the coordination of all human rights activities throughout the system. To strengthen cooperation with OHCHR, UNESCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office in February 2003. The Memorandum identifies priority areas of common interest and sets the modalities of a more dynamic and effective interaction. Cooperation will cover the implementation of the UNESCO strategy on human rights and of the integrated strategy to combat racism and discrimination, as well as joint efforts to promote human rights of women and gender equality. Necessary steps will be taken to establish equivalent or similar agreements with other United Nations bodies, programmes and specialized agencies, as well as to implement existing agreements, such as the Agreement of Cooperation with the International Labour Organization (signed in 1947). The increased cooperation with treaty bodies, thematic special rapporteurs and representatives is also a priority. In this context, it is important to mention the establishment of the Joint Expert Group UNESCO (CR)/ECOSOC (CESCR) on the Monitoring of the Right to Education.

**41** Better coordination and closer cooperation is indispensable particularly in the area of technical assistance to Member States in the field of human rights. Almost all United Nations entities and the majority of regional intergovernmental organizations provide technical assistance in various forms. The clear determination of roles and responsibilities would maximize the impact of such activities to the benefit of States and their target groups.

**42** The promotion and safeguarding of human rights is the joint task of a multitude of diverse actors, including intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the corporate sector. In order to achieve its goals related to mainstreaming and advancing human rights for all, women and men, at all levels, UNESCO intends to strengthen partnerships with National Commissions for UNESCO, national authorities, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, research and training centres, UNESCO Chairs and the academic community, non-governmental organizations and other civil society associations, the corporate sector and the media.

**43** To strengthen partnerships, the following **objectives** are set:

- (i) to further increase cooperation with Member States, National Commissions for UNESCO, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, the academic community and UNESCO Chairs, human rights research and training centres, non-governmental organizations and civil society associations, religious representatives, indigenous leaders, the media and the corporate sector;
- (ii) to ensure better coordination and full cooperation with United Nations bodies, programmes, and specialized agencies and regional intergovernmental organizations, and to institutionalize cooperation with other interested intergovernmental organizations, such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues;
- (iii) closer cooperation with all partners on the implementation of the strategy on human rights as a whole, in particular in the field of research, education, monitoring and technical assistance.

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<sup>19</sup> - “Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change”, Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, A/57/387, paragraph 124.

**44 Proposed action** includes:

- (a) implementing existing agreements of cooperation, as well as institutionalizing cooperation with other interested partners;
- (b) designing and implementing joint projects and activities in areas of common interest with partners from the United Nations system, as well as with other intergovernmental organizations, in particular with regional ones, non-governmental organizations and various partners at the national level;
- (c) mutual representation in meetings and regular exchange of information on programme priorities and activities with interested partners;
- (d) preparing and widely disseminating information materials and documentation on the human rights dimensions of UNESCO's work to involve traditional and new UNESCO partners more actively in the implementation of UNESCO human rights projects;
- (e) development of a joint plan of action with OHCHR in the priority areas as identified in the Memorandum of Understanding signed in February 2003.

**45 Expected outcomes** are:

- (a) better "division of labour" and institutionalization of cooperation with United Nations bodies, programmes and specialized agencies and regional intergovernmental organizations;
- (b) increased cooperation in monitoring implementation of human rights standards with the United Nations bodies, programmes, agencies and treaty bodies;
- (c) implementation of an increasing number of projects and activities jointly with UNESCO partners, in particular in human rights research, human rights education and technical assistance;
- (d) increased international acknowledgement of UNESCO's contribution to the advancement of human rights.



This Strategy was adopted by the General Conference at its 20<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, on 16 October 2003, by 32 C/Resolution 27 entitled UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights:

*The General Conference,*

*Reaffirming* the principles of universality, indivisibility, interrelation, interdependence and equal importance of all human rights laid down in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993,

*Recognizing* that the present challenges to the enjoyment of human rights require a coherent and coordinated response by the United Nations system as a whole,

*Taking note* of the role entrusted to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to coordinate all human rights activities within the United Nations system,

*Taking into consideration* the United Nations Secretary-General's programme for reform (A/51/950), the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly resolution 55/2),

*Recalling* the provisions of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007 (31 C/4),

*Bearing in mind* UNESCO's commitment to human rights and the need to enhance UNESCO's contribution to the advancement of all human rights for all, women and men, in particular the rights within its fields of competence,

*Welcoming* measures to mainstream human rights into all UNESCO's programmes and to reinforce internal coordination in the field of human rights, both at Headquarters and in the field,

*Having examined* document 32 C/57,

- 1** *Authorizes* the Director-General, in the context of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007 (31 C/4), to take all necessary measures to implement the UNESCO strategy on human rights, and to pursue its integration into all UNESCO's activities, in conformity with the United Nations Secretary-General's appeal to mainstream human rights within the United Nations system;
- 2** *Invites* the Director-General to that end to strengthen cooperation with governments, parliaments, National Commissions for UNESCO, civil society and the academic community in Member States;
- 3** *Calls upon* the Director-General to further strengthen coordination and cooperation in the field of human rights with United Nations bodies, programmes and specialized agencies, with regional intergovernmental organizations, as well as with non-governmental organizations;
- 4** *Encourages* the Director-General to strengthen UNESCO's cooperation with OHCHR based on the Memorandum of Understanding signed in February 2003;
- 5** *Invites* the Director-General to seek, as appropriate, all financial means to implement the UNESCO strategy on human rights and to increase UNESCO's contribution to the advancement of human rights;
- 6** *Further invites* the Director-General, taking into account the discussions on documents 32 C/13 and 32 C/57, to report, if necessary, to the Executive Board at its 170<sup>th</sup> session about revised implementation measures launched for the 2004-2005 biennium.

## Appendix

### **Integrating a human rights-based approach into all activities of UNESCO**

The promotion and protection of human rights are at the heart of all the activities of the United Nations system. Human rights were proclaimed a central tenet in the reform process of the UN. In 2005, UNESCO launched a programme to integrate a human rights based-approach into its programmes and activities. The purpose of this programme is to increase the knowledge of staff on human rights standards and procedures and to enable them to apply a human rights based-approach in designing, implementing and evaluating UNESCO programmes.

### **Human Rights Education**

UNESCO has always played a very active role in the field of human rights education, which is considered as an integral part of quality education. UNESCO was given a lead in the implementation of the Plan of Action for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). In December 2004, the General Assembly proclaimed the World Programme for Human Rights Education. UNESCO, in cooperation with OHCHR, developed the Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme, which focuses on primary and secondary school systems. The Plan was adopted by the UN General Assembly in July 2005.

### **Human rights research**

By virtue of its comparative advantage as an Organization specialized in sciences and education, UNESCO encourages policy-oriented research in the field of human rights. The results of research, undertaken by UNESCO and its partners – UNESCO Chairs, universities, research centers – should equip decision-makers with knowledge of existing problems impeding the full enjoyment of human rights and provide them with recommendations for actions to better implement human rights. In full conformity with the principles of indivisibility, interrelatedness, interdependence and equal importance of all human rights, UNESCO pays particular attention to economic, social and cultural rights, and in particular to the rights within its competence: the right to education, the right to take part

in cultural life, the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to enjoy the benefits from scientific progress and its applications.

### **Standard-setting and monitoring**

For many years, UNESCO has contributed to the strengthening of the legal bases for the promotion and protection of human rights within its competence. At its recent session in October 2005, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted two new international instruments: the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. UNESCO's instruments are monitored by a general reporting procedure, which is laid down in UNESCO's Constitution. Articles IV and VIII provide that Member States shall submit reports to the General Conference on how they implement UNESCO's recommendations and conventions. Apart from this obligation stemming from the Constitution, several UNESCO instruments include a specific provision concerning the presentation of reports by States to the General Conference.

### **UNESCO's procedure for dealing with alleged violations of human rights**

UNESCO has a special procedure for the examination of complaints concerning alleged violations of those human rights within its field of competence. This procedure was established by UNESCO's Executive Board in 1978 (document 104 EX/Decision 3.3). Individuals, groups of individuals and non-governmental organizations may submit communications to UNESCO, whether they are victims themselves of such violations or whether they have reliable knowledge of such violations. These communications are examined by the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations, a subsidiary body of the Executive Board, composed of representatives of 30 Member States. The purpose of the procedure, which is confidential, is to seek a friendly solution. The Committee does not play the role of a judicial body, but instead tries to improve the situation of the alleged victims by establishing a dialogue with the governments concerned.

**The UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights involves the whole Organization, including all Programme Sectors:**

- Communication and Information Sector (CI)
- Culture Sector (CLT)
- Education Sector (ED)
- Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS)
- Natural Sciences Sector (SC)

**Integrating a Human Rights-Based Approach into all Activities of UNESCO**

**Human Rights Research**

**Human Rights Education**

**Standard-setting and Monitoring**

**UNESCO's Procedure for Dealing with Alleged Violations of Human Rights**

### **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**OHCHR** plays the role of coordinator of all human rights activities within the United Nations system. In February 2003, Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of **UNESCO**, and the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, then High Commissioner for Human Rights, signed a Memorandum of Understanding between **UNESCO** and **OHCHR**. The Memorandum envisages regular consultation and interaction in order to ensure a division of labour, avoid any duplication and mutually strengthen efforts to advance human rights. **UNESCO** is closely cooperating with **OHCHR** in implementing its human rights activities, in particular in efforts to mainstreaming human rights throughout **UNESCO's** programmes.

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