



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
26 February 2010

English only

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## Human Rights Council

Thirteenth session

Agenda item 5

Human rights bodies and mechanisms

**Joint written statement\* submitted by CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation), International Alliance of Women (IAW), Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches (CCIA/WCC), International Council of Women (ICW-CIF), Good Neighbors International (GNI) and Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI), non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, Human Rights Education Associates (HREA), International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education (OIDEL), International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), Teresian Association, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), Association Points Cœur, Myochikai (Arigatou Foundation), Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (OSMTH), Al-Hakim Foundation, Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA), Universal Peace Federation (UPF/IIFWP), International Federation of University Women (IFUW), World Federation For Mental Health (WFMH), Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF), David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Planetary Association for Clean Energy (PACE), Worldwide Organization for Women (WOW), International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Helsinki Foundation for**

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

**Human Rights, International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development-VIDES, SOS-Kinderdorf International (SOS-KDI), Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice (IIMA), International Bureau for Children's Rights and Equitas International Centre for Human Rights Education, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, Soka Gakkai International (SGI), Servas International, Association for World Education (AWE), Association of World Citizens (AWC) and United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society (UMC-GBCS), non-governmental organizations on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 2010]

## **The first draft of United Nations declaration on human rights education and training<sup>1</sup>**

1. This statement reflects discussions among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) facilitated by the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO), Geneva, and views of civil society actors on various topics related to human rights education expressed through the global network of Human Rights Education Associates (HREA).
2. We, the co-signed organisations, believe that human rights education is a fundamental and sustainable approach to human rights issues. It is vital for the prevention of human rights violations and violence and for addressing their root causes. Human rights education is a lifelong process for all persons in all nations.
3. The ultimate purpose of human rights education should be the full realisation of human rights of all through building a culture of human rights in all nations.
4. Human rights education contributes to the promotion of gender equality, the rights of the child, religious and cultural understanding, the rights of all vulnerable and marginalised groups of people and elimination of racism and all forms of discrimination including xenophobia.
5. Upholding these views, we would like to draw the attention of Member States to the joint NGO written statement, A/HRC/10/NGO/112, on the United Nations framework for human rights education and civil society participation, submitted to the 10th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2009. The statement with 365 signatories of 56 organisations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and 309 organisations without consultative status including 5 national human rights institutions indicates that NGOs and other civil society actors are committed to human rights education and are important stakeholders in the implementation of human rights education in the United Nations framework.
6. We take note with appreciation that the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training in the Council is now comprised by 7 Member States with Senegal having joined in September 2009 (Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia, and Switzerland).
7. We appreciate the progress made in the drafting process of a United Nations declaration on human rights education and training submitted by the Advisory Committee. We recognise a substantive improvement of the draft since its preliminary draft.
8. We also recognise that the first draft prepared by the drafting group of the Advisory Committee contains qualitative input by a wide range of stakeholders.
9. We appreciate the consultation process with civil society including NGOs during the preparation of the preliminary draft and the first draft.
10. Views of civil society including NGOs and grassroots organisations, particularly those engaging in implementation programmes of human rights education and training in many parts of the world are of utmost importance to be further incorporated in the drafting

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<sup>1</sup> Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE) Network (without consultative status) also shares the views expressed in this statement.

process in order to have a truly meaningful United Nations declaration on human rights education and training.

11. The first draft referred to in the following part of this statement is the amended version of the first draft annexed to Advisory Committee recommendation 4/2 adopted at its fourth session.

12. In order to refine the first draft, we would like to draw the attention of the Member States to the following aspects that we believe necessary to reflect in the draft declaration.

13. In the first draft, various paragraphs are redundant that should be more properly formulated. Further, more inspirational and encouraging expressions should be included in the declaration for all stakeholders engaging in the implementation of human rights education with or without challenges and obstacles.

14. We believe that education encompasses training and learning, whether formal or informal, and concerns all ages in all situations and all parts of society. Therefore, the term “education” should be used in a global manner in order to avoid confusion between the terms of education, training, and learning.

## **I. The First Draft**

### **Definition and Principles**

15. We appreciate that the first draft specifies the right to human rights education. This approach should be retained consistently until the declaration is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

16. The declaration should clearly indicate the aim of human rights education (para.1) at “promoting the realisation of human rights” through building a universal culture of human rights. In addition, the definition should include the concept of human rights education as “education in” and “education for” human rights as well as “education through” respect for human rights.

17. The right to human rights education and training signifies both the right to receive and the right to provide human rights education and training. This should be included in the definition provided by the declaration. Civil society actors are often not only the recipient but also the provider of human rights education and training. Such programmes include training trainers for human rights. As the provider, civil society actors often confront difficulties due to a lack of political support and financial resources.

18. The implementation of human rights education outside school is also effective and important. The declaration should place a more equal emphasis on formal education on one hand and non-formal and informal education on the other, rather than prioritising formal education in schooling sector.

19. Many forms of human rights education do not require school education or a school. Dissemination of information on human rights or capacity building activity in a rural community by human rights defenders is one of such examples. Human rights education is also a “life long” process, and human rights training includes also “in-service training” in the process of occupational pursuit. In this respect, paragraph 9 stating “Human rights education and training (...) begins at school” needs to be rephrased. Furthermore, if it really is “an ongoing process” “that concerns all ages” (para.9), this paragraph is a contradiction in itself.

20. In this respect, the whole section on definition and principles should include sub-sections on “formal education” and “informal and non-formal education”.

21. Whereas education systems are concerned, the delivery of human rights education should be participatory and inclusive without any form of discrimination.
22. In the context of the right to education and school education, the rights of parents should also be considered.
23. As for “quality education” in paragraph 5(d), at least minimum criteria of such quality should be indicated.
24. The cultural diversity and the continuity of cultures and traditions as well as their common values should be respected in consistency with international human rights standards and efforts to build a universal culture of human rights. In this respect, for example, paragraph 11 should read: “Human rights education and training should use language (or native language) and reflect relevant conditions to the target groups (...).”
25. As for the context of the implementation of the right to information, “equal access” should be ensured. For this, the second line of paragraph 12 should read “(...) It should promote equal access for all to, (...)”.

#### **Implementation Measures at the Country Level**

26. The declaration should clearly provide that States have the responsibility of acknowledging, facilitating and supporting the human rights education work carried out by NGOs and civil society bodies and institutions, especially those whose expertise and field of activity are focused on human rights education.
27. The important role of NGOs should be more clearly indicated. Paragraph 20 listing all members of the educational community as having “an important role to play” should also include “non-governmental organisations” and paragraphs 24 should state “(...) including non-governmental organisations and other civil society actors (...)”.
28. Within the national framework, civil society actors including grassroots organisations and local authorities at the community level, especially from remote and deprived areas, should be supported by the central national authority for participatory process of the implementation of human rights education as their views contribute to reflect the local needs and conditions relating to human rights.
29. The role of youth should be emphasized in the declaration as a substantial contributor to building a culture of human rights in all nations. In the first draft, only “youth workers” is referred to in paragraph 25 as one of the listed civil society actors. The declaration should indicate measures to ensure political support and financial resources for youth programmes and initiatives promoting human rights education.

#### **Implementation Measures at the International Level**

30. The declaration should incorporate the follow-up mechanism as concrete as possible. In this respect, the current first draft should be further elaborated.
31. We appreciate that the World Programme for Human Rights Education (para.36) and the United Nations human rights mechanisms are referred to such as the treaty monitoring bodies and the Universal Periodic Review (paras.28-40). This approach should be retained in the declaration.
32. Further, the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council should also be added to ensure inclusion of national policies on human rights education in the report of mandate holders within their respective mandate.
33. In paragraph 41, it should read “An international centre for human rights education and training should (...)” rather than “(...) could (...)”.

34. We appreciate that the first draft refers in paragraph 42 to the need for an international voluntary fund for human rights education. We emphasise that this paragraph should be retained and that once the declaration is adopted, its implementation should be closely followed up including particularly the establishment of such a fund.

## **II. Drafting Process**

35. Being aware that the draft declaration is now the matter of the intergovernmental negotiation among the Member States of the Human Rights Council as from its 13th session, we stress that the current first draft needs further elaboration.

36. In the drafting process to follow at the level of the Council, we urge Member States to ensure that views and suggestions of all stakeholders including NGOs and other civil society actors continue to be incorporated and reflected. Should a small group such as a working group within the Council be set up for finalising the draft declaration, it is imperative to make proper arrangements of modalities for NGO participation in the process of the finalisation of the draft.

37. Last but not least, the UN declaration on human rights education and training is to be added to international human rights standards. In this regard, the drafting process should continue to proceed with careful elaboration and thorough consultations with all stakeholders swiftly but without haste in order to make it a truly meaningful new international human rights instrument for the effective implementation of human rights education worldwide.

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