



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

Hundred and seventy-ninth session

# 179 EX/54

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## REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (CR) held two public working meetings on 4 April 2008, with Mr Günter Overfeld, representative of Germany, in the Chair. It met on 15 April 2008 to adopt the present report. In accordance with Rule 16.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations elected Mr José Duarte Ramalho Ortigão, representative of Portugal, as temporary Chairperson. The Committee examined the following agenda items:

**Item 8 Report by the Director-General on the progress of the commemorative activities and the review of the implementation of UNESCO's plan of action for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (179 EX/8)**

2. Further to a proposal by the Chairperson, the Bureau recommended that the CR Committee examine the item. In the presence of the Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences, a general debate was held in addition to a debate focused on the action of the CR and its visibility. While recognizing the importance of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, members felt that it should be linked with this year's 30th anniversary of the Executive Board's 104 EX/3.3 procedure.

3. It was agreed that a special meeting of the CR should be held at its next session to celebrate that anniversary, to be prepared in line with existing UNESCO rules in consultation with the Member States, during which, *inter alia*, the book prepared by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Sweden) on CR cases between 1978 and 1988 – a publication already included in the programme for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Annex IV to document 34 C/59) – would be launched and witnesses of the procedure, victims or initiators, invited to take part in the meeting.

4. The temporary Chairperson conveyed the Committee members' comments to the joint meeting of the Programme and External Relations Commission and the Finance and Administrative Commission which then examined that item.

5. The Committee recommended that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 19 C/Resolution 6.113 and 19 C/Resolution 12.1 and also 104 EX/Decision 3.3 of the Executive Board for whose implementation the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations is responsible,
2. Further recalling 34 C/Resolution 38 concerning the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

3. Recalling also UNESCO's key role in the promotion of human rights,
4. Having examined document 179 EX/8, which contains the refined UNESCO plan of action for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the report of the CR Committee thereon (179 EX/54),
5. Decides that the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the procedure laid down in 104 EX/Decision 3.3 and hold a special meeting on the occasion of its 180th session;
6. Decides to grant the CR Committee an extra half working day at its 180th session in order to hold the celebration referred to above in paragraph 5 of this decision;
7. Urges the Director-General to explore the possibility of extrabudgetary resources to provide for that celebration.

**Item 24 Report of the seventh meeting of the Joint Expert Group UNESCO (CR)/ECOSOC (CESCR) on the Monitoring of the Right to Education (179 EX/24)**

6. On 4 April 2008, the CR examined the Report on the Seventh Meeting of the Joint Expert Group UNESCO (CR)/ECOSOC (CESCR) on the Monitoring of the Right to Education (179 EX/24).

7. The Chairperson of the CR introduced this agenda item and highlighted the mandate of the Joint Expert Group and the importance of its work. He announced that following consultations with the Chairperson of the Executive Board, it was decided that Professor Brian Figaji, member of the CR, will replace Mr Olabiyi B. Joseph Yai, who was a member of the Joint Expert Group.

8. Upon the invitation by the Chairperson, His Exc. Mr José Duarte Ramalho Ortigão, Member of the Joint Expert Group, presented the Report and highlighted its main elements. He noted that the prominence given by the Joint Expert Group to UNESCO's role in upholding the right to education in the United Nations system and its contribution to UNESCO's EFA agenda was remarkable, and that greater visibility should be given to the right to education in UNESCO's work. Finally, Mr Ortigão highlighted the recommendations contained in paragraphs 8, 11 and 17 of the Report, and presented the proposed draft decision.

9. A rich discussion followed. Interventions covered the results of research and analysis on the constitutional bases of the right to education and the means by which UNESCO publicizes these latter. It was considered important that reports submitted by Member States for the Seventh Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education be rendered accessible, for example by making them available on the Internet. Within the national context, Member States could be encouraged to publicize their reports and ensure that they are available in local languages. The dissemination of practical examples, as mentioned in paragraph 8 of the document, was also cited as significant. Finally, as mentioned in the document, technical assistance and capacity-building were considered essential in supporting countries in meeting their reporting obligations.

10. The CR noted that promoting action for ensuring non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities in education *in law and in fact* was critical in meeting the continuing challenges faced by Member States. Making education accessible to marginalized and disadvantaged groups, in particular by reaching the unreached, was a priority concern in monitoring the right to education. It was necessary to give added impetus to UNESCO's work on intensifying the Organization's normative action for inclusive approaches and wider access to education as proposed by the Joint Expert Group, keeping in mind the theme to be addressed by the forthcoming session of the International Conference on Education in November 2008.

11. The representative of the Education Sector, Mr Kishore Singh (Secretary of the Joint Expert Group) responded to the queries. He furnished clarifications on both UNESCO's ongoing work on the constitutional and legislative bases of the right to education, and on issues involved in making the reports submitted for the seventh consultation available on the Organization's website. Emphasizing the normative framework established in the conventions and recommendations adopted by UNESCO in the field of education provides a basis for advocating for inclusive approaches, so as to universalize access to education for all, without discrimination or exclusion. Special consideration must be given to the right to education of various categories of people such as ethnic and linguistic minorities, marginalized and indigenous populations, vulnerable groups, and especially children from poor households who remain deprived of education.

12. The Committee commended the work accomplished by the Joint Expert Group and expressed the wish that it be encouraged to pursue its mandate. During the discussion on the draft decision, it was suggested that the report by the Joint Expert Group should be more exhaustive and reflect in future follow-up given by the Director-General to recommendations by the Joint Expert Group.

13. As a result of the debate, the draft decision proposed in paragraph 20 of the document was amended.

14. The Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 162 EX/Decision 5.4, 171 EX/Decision 27 and 177 EX/Decision 37,
2. Having examined document 179 EX/24,
3. Expresses its appreciation of the work of the Joint Expert Group UNESCO (CR)/ECOSOC (CESCR) on the Monitoring of the Right to Education and activities of the Secretariat of the Joint Expert Group for promoting the right to education;
4. Recognizes the key importance of the theme it addressed at its seventh meeting, especially in relation to an effective follow-up of Education for All;
5. Invites Member States to promote action for ensuring non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities in education *in law and in fact* so as to meet the continuing challenges they face to fulfil their respective commitments and international obligations in this field;
6. Requests the Director-General to consider suggestions and recommendations made by the Joint Expert Group as mentioned in document 179 EX/24, in particular those relating to assistance in preparation of reports for follow-up action, and especially to enhance advocacy and visibility with considerable improvement in monitoring procedures and practices;
7. Recognizes that greater emphasis needs to be placed on action at national level on universalizing access to quality education for all and, to that end, requests UNESCO's Secretariat to emphasize wider access to education for promoting the full realization of the right to education, especially in the context of the forthcoming International Conference on Education (November 2008);
8. Invites the Joint Expert Group to continue its consultations relating to monitoring the progressive achievement of the full exercise of the right to education with emphasis on existing normative bases of inclusive approaches to education;
9. Requests the Joint Expert Group to report to the Executive Board at its 181st session.