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联合国教育、  
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**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE ACTIVITIES  
CARRIED OUT TO CELEBRATE THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

**OUTLINE**

**Source:** 34 C/Resolution 38; 179 EX/Decision 8, 180 EX/Decision 9.

**Background:** 34 C/Resolution 38 invited the Director-General to submit a report to the General Conference at its 35th session on the commemorative activities celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on the ways in which those activities specifically advanced the objectives set forth in the plan of action for the commemoration.

**Purpose:** The present document informs the General Conference on the above. A list of commemorative activities carried out by UNESCO and its partners is available on request.

**Decision required:** paragraph 22.

## I. BACKGROUND

1. The United Nations Secretary-General invited the United Nations system to actively commemorate, in 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), under the motto “Dignity and Justice for All of Us”, under the responsibility of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The General Conference, at its 34th session, discussed elements of a draft UNESCO Plan of Action for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the UDHR (34 C/59) that had been elaborated in consultations with Member States, their National Commissions and Permanent Delegations, as well as with other relevant partners, including human rights NGOs, UNESCO Chairs and human rights research and training institutions. By 34 C/Resolution 38, the General Conference requested the Director-General to further refine UNESCO’s plan of action and to report on the progress of commemorative activities to the Executive Board at its 179th session. The Board, by 179 EX/Decision 8, welcomed the Plan. Further progress was reported to the Executive Board at its 180th session.

2. UNESCO’s commemorative activities were launched by the Director-General on 10 December 2007 during an event at UNESCO Headquarters. Eminent experts from various regions along with a representative of the OHCHR took part in that event. The commemorative activities were concluded, in accordance with 180 EX/Decision 9, by the signature of the Agreement on the Establishment of the International Centre for the Advancement of Human Rights in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 13 February 2009.

## II. UNESCO’s Contribution: Themes, Activities, Partnerships

3. UNESCO’s refined plan of action had three main objectives: (i) to promote the implementation of human rights within UNESCO’s fields of competence; (ii) to encourage reflection and exchange on issues linked to the core mandate of the Organization in the field of human rights, including on emerging ethical and social challenges; and (iii) to raise awareness about human rights standards and procedures for their promotion and protection. On each of these three themes, UNESCO and its partners organized a great variety of activities, including conferences and workshops, forums of ministers and experts’ meetings, film festivals and exhibitions, and issued publications and posters.

4. On the advancement of the rights within UNESCO competence (Part I of the Plan) the following activities could be mentioned:

- the World Press Freedom Day and the adoption of the Maputo Declaration on freedom of expression and empowerment of people (Maputo, Mozambique, May 2008), as well as the adoption of the Doha Declaration on media and dialogue (Doha, Qatar, May 2009);
- the 61st annual DPI/NGO conference entitled “Reaffirming Human Rights for All: the Universal Declaration at 60” hosted by UNESCO (3-5 September 2008, UNESCO Headquarters);
- the special meeting of the Executive Board dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the procedure laid down in 104 EX/Decision 3.3 (30 September 2008, UNESCO Headquarters);
- the International High Level Symposium on Freedom of Expression and the exhibition on safety of journalists (29 October 2008, UNESCO Headquarters);
- the 48th session of the International Conference on Education on the theme “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future” (25-28 November 2008, Geneva, Switzerland);
- the round table on “Putting Human Rights into Practice: Role of Education” (10 December 2008, UNESCO Headquarters).

5. Meetings and conferences on pressing human rights issues and emerging ethical and social challenges within the mandate of UNESCO were organized dealing with such issues as education for all, cultural diversity, the rights of migrants, the fight against discrimination, gender equality and the struggle against poverty. These included:

- the World Forum on Human Rights (Nantes, France, 30 June to 3 July 2008);
- the regional conference “Media, Education and Culture of Human Rights” organized by Colombia in collaboration with UNESCO (8-11 September 2008, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia);
- the round table of the Czech Republic on “Reporting Human Rights through Documentaries” (25 September 2008, UNESCO Headquarters);
- the third International Conference of the National Council for Human Rights of Egypt entitled “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 60 years later: between rhetoric and reality” (1-2 December 2008, Cairo, Egypt);
- the round table entitled “Human Rights and Cultural Diversity” convened by the Non-Aligned Movement (3 December 2008, UNESCO Headquarters);
- the round table on human rights held in Kabul, Afghanistan (in two steps, first on 10 December 2008 and then on 21 July 2009);
- the conference on “Universality of human rights and the Haitian revolution” (Port-au-Prince, Haiti, August 2009);
- the round table on social justice and human rights organized as a follow-up to the commemoration by the Permanent Delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to UNESCO (30 June 2009, UNESCO Headquarters).

6. Several events and activities were aimed at sensitizing the public at large on the message of the Universal Declaration, among which the following could be mentioned:

- the award of the UNESCO/Bilbao Prize for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights (10 December 2008, UNESCO Headquarters);
- the exhibition “UNESCO speaks out for human rights” (2 December 2008 to 27 February 2009, UNESCO Headquarters);
- the translation of the text of the Universal Declaration into indigenous languages in Venezuela and South Africa, conducted with the support of Member States.

7. UNESCO’s commemorative activities represent good examples of the Organization’s important role in the promotion of human rights, with emphasis on those within its competence. The list of commemorative activities undertaken by UNESCO and its partners is available under [http://www.unesco.org/shs/humanrights/udhr\\_60anniversary](http://www.unesco.org/shs/humanrights/udhr_60anniversary).

8. UNESCO’s appeal for participation as wide as possible in the commemoration received a positive response. Member States further reaffirmed their commitment to human rights by organizing numerous events dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the UDHR.<sup>1</sup> These activities mobilized a broad array of traditional and new partners: National Commissions for UNESCO and

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<sup>1</sup> The information received by UNESCO from a number of National Commissions, as well as UNESCO Chairs in Human Rights and other partners about activities they implemented in their respective countries/regions is available on the following web page: [http://www.unesco.org/shs/humanrights/udhr\\_60anniversary](http://www.unesco.org/shs/humanrights/udhr_60anniversary).

Permanent Delegations, national authorities, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, human research and training centres, UNESCO chairs, clubs, associated schools and the academic community, human rights defenders, non-governmental organizations working in the fields of human rights, gender equality, the struggle against all forms of discrimination and poverty, as well as other civil society associations and the media. All these partners worked in close cooperation with UNESCO Headquarters and Field Offices for the realization of many commemorative events.

9. The momentum of the commemoration led to the creation of new partnerships. The end of the year-long campaign was marked by the establishment of the International Centre for the Advancement of Human Rights as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO (13 February 2009, Buenos Aires, Argentina). The aspirations that fueled the creation of this centre were presented at a round table organized in cooperation with the Permanent Delegation of Argentina to UNESCO on the theme “Memory and Human Rights”, one of the core themes the new centre will be focusing on (14 April 2009, UNESCO Headquarters). In September 2008 UNESCO signed a memorandum of understanding with the European Inter-University Center for Human Rights and Democratisation (EIUC), which unites more than 40 universities in Europe and is a very important ally in human rights research and education.

10. The International Coalition of Cities against Racism was created during the third edition of the World Forum of Human Rights in Nantes (France), which was launched at the initiative of and in partnership with UNESCO in 2004. A memorandum of understanding was signed with the City of Bilbao (Spain), which became the donor of the UNESCO/Bilbao Prize for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights. The commemoration was also an opportunity to further strengthen interaction with existing partners. Within the United Nations, UNESCO maintained regular contact with the OHCHR throughout the year.

11. Additionally, numerous activities implemented both at Headquarters and in the field within the context of the programme activities envisaged in document 34 C/5 acquired a stronger human rights dimension and were placed under the banner of the 60th anniversary.<sup>2</sup>

### **III. KEY MESSAGES, LESSONS LEARNT AND FUTURE PRIORITIES**

12. The core message of the commemoration was that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is as valid today as it was at its adoption 60 years ago. It has become even more pertinent in the face of negative trends and new challenges with which the world is confronted today, including the global economic and financial crises. The principles and norms enshrined in the UDHR, such as respect for the dignity and rights of all human beings, non-discrimination, gender equality, the need to ensure a decent life for everyone, remain the common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. The commemoration also highlighted the fact that, while the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, is to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also reaffirmed the interrelatedness and interdependence of all human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social, and their equal importance to ensure a decent life in dignity for everyone.

13. The commemoration of the Declaration confirmed the pertinence of UNESCO’s mandate which stipulates that the Organization’s main purpose is to “further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations” (Article I). It also reaffirmed the pertinence of UNESCO’s Strategy on Human

<sup>2</sup> A non-exhaustive list of the activities implemented by the Programme Sectors and Field Offices placed under the banner of the 60th anniversary of the UDHR is available on UNESCO’s website: [http://www.unesco.org/shs/humanrights/udhr\\_60anniversary](http://www.unesco.org/shs/humanrights/udhr_60anniversary).

Rights and the Integrated Strategy to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, both adopted by the General Conference in 2003, and the relevance of their main lines of action.

14. The commemorative activities underscored the need to pursue efforts for the advancement of the rights within UNESCO's competence, namely, the right to education; the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information; the right to take part in cultural life; and the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications. These rights are becoming ever more important in the light of globalization, unprecedented scientific and technological progress and increasing movement of people. At the same time it became evident that dialogue and reflection on pressing human rights issues, emerging rights and ethical and social challenges should be pursued with greater intensity. The commemoration confirmed or placed new emphasis on such issues as the struggle against poverty, access to water and sanitation, bioethics, protection of cultural diversity and preventive action to cope with climate change. Moreover, it reiterated the strong support of Member States expressed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document for the mainstreaming of human rights across the United Nations system.

15. The Organization should therefore further intensify its efforts aimed at: (i) mainstreaming human rights throughout its programmes; (ii) developing human rights research; (iii) promoting human rights education; (iv) continuing standard-setting and monitoring; and (v) further strengthening partnerships.

16. The mainstreaming of human rights in UNESCO requires integration of a human rights-based approach into all its activities and projects. To reach this goal, capacity-building to increase the knowledge on the part of UNESCO staff of human rights standards, major challenges to human rights and the human rights-based approach to programming should be continued.<sup>3</sup> Activities in the field of human rights and gender equality should be further articulated and their in-house coordination should be further intensified in order to ensure a more effective contribution to the advancement of all human rights, particularly those within UNESCO's competence and ensuring gender equality.

17. UNESCO's specific mandate in education, science, culture and communication places the Organization at the forefront of research in order to further elucidate the content of the rights within its competence, namely the right to take part in cultural life and the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, which are both considered as underdeveloped.<sup>4</sup> In this connection, the Organization will continue its close cooperation with the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It will also work in concert with the new United Nations Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights. Particular attention will also be paid to emerging ethical and social challenges. UNESCO's long-dated experience in the field of water management and the work of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) is particularly pertinent to complement the work of the Human Rights Council's newly appointed Independent Expert on the Issue of Human Rights Obligations Related to Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation. Likewise, the identification of obstacles to the implementation of the right to education needs to be particularly emphasized when global economic and financial crises impact negatively on access to education and on its quality, before the spectre of rising extremism and intolerance in societies suffering from the lowering standard of living for many of their members. Cooperation with the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty is being developed. UNESCO's work aiming at ensuring the right to freedom of opinion and expression, promoting safety of journalists, fostering free, pluralistic, independent and professional media, advancing media education and applying the Media Development Indicators should be further encouraged.

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<sup>3</sup> With the support of the Bureau of Human Resources (HRM), more than 300 staff members in Headquarters and Field Offices have undergone human-rights based approach (HRBA) training. Mainstreaming and human rights training efforts will be further continued with a main emphasis on the staff in UNESCO Field Offices as well as personnel of National Commissions for UNESCO.

<sup>4</sup> Experts' meetings on each of these rights are organized respectively in May and July 2009.

18. In the area of the struggle against discrimination and racism, the Organization will continue to provide intellectual support and advice to the Regional and International Coalitions of Cities. The clear support for this initiative voiced by the Durban Review Conference in paragraph 142 of its outcome document demonstrated clearly that working with municipal authorities and local governments constitutes a real niche for UNESCO. It will also pursue its work against HIV/AIDS-related discrimination through capacity-building and policy-oriented research. In relation to gender equality and women's rights, UNESCO will continue to promote policy-oriented research, *inter alia*, by providing support to the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre in Ramallah (PWRDC) and the Regional Centre for Research and Documentation on Women to be created in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, covering the Great Lakes region.<sup>5</sup>

19. Ever since the adoption of the UDHR, human rights education has been a priority activity for UNESCO. A first teaching aid produced by UNESCO was published in the early 1950s, and since that time the Organization has always been in the forefront of dissemination of knowledge on human rights and the sensitization of the general public on the problems and challenges in this field. The culture of human rights for which UNESCO has been working for many decades could become a main antidote against intolerance in contemporary societies, which are becoming more and more multilingual, multi-religious and multicultural. Education for memory, which is one of the main tasks of the Centre established in Buenos Aires, is also an important means to establish constructive dialogue and prevent the repetition of the atrocities of the past. Constructive dialogue, together with education, is the most appropriate tool to advance human rights as pursued by the International Year of Human Rights Learning (2009) and the World Programme for Human Rights Education (from 2005 onwards). The participation of UNESCO in the preparation of a draft declaration on human rights education by the United Nations Human Rights Council is particularly important.

20. Strengthened partnerships and cooperation are indispensable. Within the United Nations system, cooperation with the OHCHR and sister agencies will be further developed and deepened.<sup>6</sup> The same applies to treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders, as well as to new partners such as the International Centre for the Advancement of Human Rights in Buenos Aires, which should launch its activities in 2010.

21. The momentum gained during the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the UDHR is a valuable asset and should not be lost. The Organization must build upon its recognized role in the field of human rights and continue its efforts in all its fields of competence in order to make dignity and justice a reality for all.

22. The General Conference may wish to adopt the draft resolution proposed below:

The General Conference,

Recalling 34 C/Resolution 38 concerning the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Recognizing that while the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, is to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming the interrelatedness and interdependence of all human rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social – and their equal importance to ensure a decent life in dignity for everyone,

<sup>5</sup> The second Forum of Ministers on Women's Affairs of the Great Lakes Region held in Mombasa, Kenya in June 2009 was a decisive step in the creation of the Centre.

<sup>6</sup> A new round of bilateral consultations took place in May 2009 in Geneva.

Stressing UNESCO's commitment to the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of race, sex, language or religion in line with its Constitution, the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights (32 C/Resolution 27), the Integrated Strategy to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (32 C/13) and the Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4),

Recognizing the increasing importance of the rights within UNESCO's competence, namely the right to education, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information, the right to take part in cultural life, the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, in the era of globalization, unprecedented scientific and technological progress and growing movement of people,

Reaffirming UNESCO's commitment to the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the need for additional emphasis on the promotion of gender equality – a global priority of UNESCO – and the struggle against poverty,

Concerned by the negative impact of global economic and financial crises on the enjoyment of all human rights, in particular those within the UNESCO mandate,

Having examined document 35 C/44,

1. Welcomes UNESCO's contribution to the year-long United Nations system-wide campaign to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through the activities carried out in the framework of the UNESCO refined plan of action;
2. Commends UNESCO Member States, as well as all traditional and new partners, for their contribution to the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
3. Recommends that UNESCO intensify human rights activities in line with the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights and the Integrated Strategy to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, both adopted by the General Conference in 2003;
4. Further recommends that efforts be pursued to mainstream human rights into all UNESCO programmes, in particular through training, capacity-building of UNESCO staff and programme reviews with a view to applying a human rights-based approach at all stages of programming, and to submit to the Executive Board at its 185th session a plan on human rights mainstreaming;
5. Invites the Director-General to further promote policy-oriented research and knowledge sharing on the rights within UNESCO's competence, including on the right to access safe drinking water and sanitation, gender equality and women's rights and the struggle against poverty, in full conformity with universal human rights standards;
6. Calls for further development of human rights education both in formal and non-formal settings, sensitization of public opinion on emerging problems in this field and participation in the elaboration of a United Nations normative instrument concerning human rights education;
7. Welcomes efforts to monitor the implementation of UNESCO standard-setting instruments related to human rights and to raise awareness about these instruments and the 104 EX/3.3 procedure;

8. Invites the Director-General to further increase coordination and cooperation in the field of human rights and gender equality with traditional and new partners, in particular with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council and special procedure mandate holders and to undertake, when necessary, steps to institutionalize such cooperation;
9. Urges all public and private institutions within the Member States, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and educators, National Commissions for UNESCO, as well as human rights institutions to build on the momentum created during the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the UDHR by undertaking activities to further promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms particularly at a time of global economic and financial crises;
10. Invites the Director-General to reinforce the implementation of the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights and the Integrated Strategy to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, by taking due account of new priorities and challenges in the area of human rights, notably those deriving from the global economic and financial crises, as well as the achievements and lessons learned from the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, and to present a report thereon to the Executive Board at its 185th session.