

ARADESC

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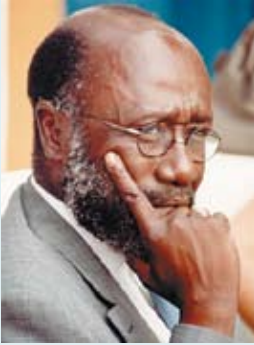
UNESCO/ISESCO arab  
research-policy network  
on economic, social  
and cultural rights



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للثربية والعلم والثقافة

# Foreword



The UNESCO/ISESCO Arab Research-Policy Network on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ARADESC) was launched in Rabat, Morocco, in March 2006. The 26 founding members, representing national human rights organizations, universities and research institutions, as well as UNESCO Chairs, non-governmental organizations in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, have identified cultural rights as a priority for research.

Since its foundation, the ARADESC Network has strived to offer a more conducive framework for cooperation between different actors working in the field of research, policy-making and policy implementation.

The Rabat Meeting, which was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2008, gave the participating representatives a valuable opportunity to discuss the results and recommendations of various studies conducted throughout the Maghreb region and Egypt. As well, the Rabat Meeting aspired to further enlighten the public and relevant actors of the many challenges to be addressed in the field of cultural rights. The Network's members have also been mobilized to lead advocacy initiatives regarding policies and other measures that improve cultural rights situation. Moreover, the Network has encouraged national and sub-regional efforts in the field of cultural rights, which conform to the principles of universality, indivisibility, inter-independence and interrelatedness of all human rights.

The value of the ARADESC Network lies both in the diversity and complementarity of its members and its commitment to the significant domain of cultural rights. In fact, the cross-sectional character of these cultural rights centered initiatives nourishes the realization of economic and social rights, as well as political and civil rights.

This booklet highlights the Network's activities and objectives, while presenting all partners who have played a significant role in their effective implementation. In addition, it brings to light the Rabat Declaration, which was unanimously adopted by the Network in December 2008.

Thus, the ARADESC Network allows governmental institutions and civil society to get involved and work together in all steps of research-policy so as to bridge the gap between research and the drafting of public policies.

*Pierre Sané*  
*UNESCO Assistant Director-General*  
*For Social and Human Sciences*



« The creation of this kind of network aims to bridge existing gaps by improving cooperation between the different categories of actors at each phase of research, policy-making and policy implementation. By addressing political concerns in relation to human rights research, it is hoped that this research will play a key role in policy-making. No existing network has brought together all these partners before in such a way or to such an extent. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 29-30 March 2006.*

# Why ARADESC ?

ARADESC is the UNESCO/ISESCO Arab Research-Policy Network on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

In March 2006, by the initiative of UNESCO and ISESCO, the National Human Rights Institutions, NGOs, UNESCO Chairs, Universities and Research institutions in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia held a meeting in Rabat and concluded that it was necessary to encourage and promote more research on economic, social and cultural rights and to make this knowledge available in the service of public initiatives carried out throughout the region.

« UNESCO's efforts to bring together policy-makers, NGOs, universities and research institutions will greater enable communication and information sharing amongst each other. It will also allow to escape from the logic of the university isolated in its ivory tower and to increase the value of the research done within this network. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 29-30 March 2006.*

The consensus decision to provide a network that will help forge closer links between all the various entities concerned with the issues related to the promotion of human rights is the first of its kind in the Arab region.



« The implementation of human rights, including cultural rights, is an essential duty that

concerns all of us. »

*Najib Rhiati, ISESCO*

*ARADESC Meeting, 18-19 December 2008.*

The two principle areas of focus were identified as the domain of education and human rights and the rarely considered issue of cultural rights which the Network decided to prioritize first.

« The concept of the universality of human rights [...], necessary to confront the relativism that is the source of so many conflicts in the world, does not prevent the recognition of diversity but in fact pledges to achieve the contrary. If universalism affirms the existence of essential values common to all human beings, culture, by its diversity, shows a universal truth higher than all particularities. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 18-19 December 2008.*

# What objectives are targeted ?

The purpose of ARADESC is to create a dynamic exchange and dialogue, promoting interaction and stronger links between researchers and policy-makers.

- Mobilize different actors for the purpose of sensitizing them to the relevant issues and advocating for policies and other measures aimed at improving human rights.

« The main objective of this network is to conduct research on topics relating to its prioritized themes that could be used and applied directly by policy-makers and other development entities. The overarching objective is the creation of concrete policies and actions aimed at promoting and protecting human rights with particular attention to economic, social and cultural rights. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 29-30 March 2006.*

## The Network aims to:

- Encourage and promote research on economic, social and cultural rights in the fields of UNESCO's competence;
- Determine the needs of policy-makers and practitioners in the field of research;



« Beyond the academic freedom of the ARADESC Network, the ultimate objective is to encourage

all the relevant actors, including governments, contribute to research in the area of cultural rights. Though many obstacles may arise, the mere fact of having a platform which unites different countries and actors and injects the issue of cultural rights into the public and political debate, is a landmark in itself. »

*Patrice Meyer-Bisch, Interdisciplinary Institute for Ethics and Human Rights (IIEDH) and UNESCO Chair for Human Rights and Democracy, Freiburg University (with its Observatory for Diversity and Cultural Rights linked to « La Francophonie »)*

*ARADESC Meeting, 18-19 December 2008.*

# ARADESC and Cultural Rights

In partnership with the Arab Institute for Human Rights in Tunisia and the Observatory for Diversity and Cultural Rights of Freiburg University, linked to the International Organization of “la Francophonie”, the ARADESC Network has conducted six studies on the present situation of cultural rights in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.



« The studies on cultural rights are an innovation in the Arab region, as far as the subject, the methodology and approach are concerned. »

*Taïeb Baccouche, Arab Institute for Human Rights (IADH)*

*ARADESC Meeting, 18-19 December 2008.*

The studies, published in Arabic and French, deal with: the right to education, intellectual property, the right to information, cultural and linguistic diversity, participation in cultural life, freedom of religion, the use of languages in the judicial system, identity and the use of first names.

« The issues related to cultural rights have been historically marginalized and underdeveloped, in addition to the fact that concepts related to these rights, cultures and identity, are still very sensitive, and that the reality is that they are often used for purely political means. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 18-19 December 2008.*

The analysis assess the implementation of laws, policies and practices related to cultural rights, and highlight the most important questions for the region. They are accompanied by the Cultural Rights' Contrasted Observation Grid, developed by the Observatory for Diversity and Cultural Rights. The grid is a tool to analyze the divergence between the norm and its implementation, shed light on significant cases, but mainly to observe the seriousness of violations of cultural rights.

« A cultural heritage may include practices that undermine the realization of human rights. The thing is to value the elements of a cultural heritage which favour human rights, and to encourage a reinterpretation of these practices that impede the full realization of these rights. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 29-30 March 2006.*

# ARADESC and Cultural Rights

The meeting held in Rabat, from 18 to 19 December 2008, was organized in the framework of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The meeting identified questions related to cultural rights and the procedures that should be put into place in order to surmount obstacles to their realization.

« Cultural rights should be framed in a precise manner in order to avoid arbitrary interpretations and particularly subjective legal interpretations. Moreover, it is important not to disassociate cultural rights from economic and social rights. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 18-19 December 2008.*

Notwithstanding a political evolution relating to the recognition of cultural diversity, it must be observed that the implementation of these rights has always been limited, and that concepts related to cultural rights, culture or identity are sensitive.



« Cultural rights are directly linked to human security and development, which explains why the respect of cultural specificity is a necessary path to peace. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 18-19 December 2008.*

The Rabat Declaration (pages 8-9) emphasized, inter alia, cultural diversity as an important factor for peace and stability, and the need to harmonize political discourse, legislation and practices in view of a better protection and enjoyment of cultural rights.

« The cultural rights approach has allowed us to consider, under a new angle, the cultural construction of categories of persons in vulnerable situations, namely women, children, elderly people, migrants, indigenous people, etc. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 18-19 December 2008.*

# ARADESC Members



The ARADESC Network brings together institutional and non-institutional actors representing national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations as well as UNESCO Chairs, Universities and research institutions in the Maghreb region and Egypt.

Among its members, the Network also counts institutions and organizations working in the field of human rights based outside the Arab region.



« These networks unite the world of research and the world of policy-making in order to

transform the results produced by research into concrete actions aimed at advancing the implementation of human rights. »

*ARADESC Meeting, 29-30 March 2006.*

Mr. El Habib Belkouch, President of the Centre on Human Rights and Democracy in Rabat, was appointed Coordinator of the ARADESC Network.

## Institutions Members

- Amsterdam Centre for International Law (ACIL), University of Amsterdam
- Arab Institute for Human Rights (IADH), Tunis
- Interdisciplinary Institute for Ethics and Human Rights (IIEDH) and UNESCO Chair for Human Rights and Democracy, Freiburg University (with its Observatory for Diversity and Cultural Rights linked to «la Francophonie»)
- ISESCO
- National Commissions for Education, Culture and Science (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia)
- North-South Centre of the Council of Europe
- UNESCO
- United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)



## ALGERIA

- Abdelhafid Hamdi-Cherif, Professor of Philosophy, Paris VIII University Saint-Denis
- Association for Defense and Promotion of Women's Rights (ADPDF)
- National Consultative Commission for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
- UNESCO Chair for Teaching, Research and Human Rights Education, Democracy and Peace, Oran-Es Senia University

## EGYPT

- Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR)
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
- Cairo University, Faculty of Political and Economic Sciences
- Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS)
- National Council for Human Rights
- Sameh Fawzy Henien, Researcher

## LIBYA

- General Congress, Human Rights Department and Legal Department
- Kar Younès University, Benghazi
- Libyan Centre for Human Rights, Al Fateh University
- Nasser University
- Omelez Ali Saad, Professor, Kar Younès University

## MAURITANIA

- Abdoulaye Sow, Teacher of Social Sciences and Coordinator for Interdisciplinary Centre for Cultural Rights (CIDC), Nouakchott University
- Commission for Human Rights,

- Humanitarian Action and Civil Society
- Mauritanian Association of Human Rights (AMDH)
- Nouakchott University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences and Faculty of Legal and Economic Sciences

## MOROCCO

- Advisory Council for Human Rights (CCDH)
- Ali Karimi, Professor, Hassan II University, Casablanca
- Amnesty International Morocco
- Centre for Studies on Human Rights and Democracy
- Hassan II University, Casablanca, Faculty of Law
- Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Department
- Mohamed 1<sup>st</sup> University, Oujda, Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences
- Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH)
- Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH)
- Nouzha Guessous Idrissi, Researcher and Consultant for Human Rights and Bioethics
- Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM)
- UNESCO Chair for a Culture of Peace
- UNESCO Chair on Education, Training and Research for Human Rights
- UNESCO Chair "Women and their Rights"

## TUNISIA

- Ben Ali's Chair for the Dialogue of Civilizations and Religions
- Ministry of Justice and Human Rights
- Moncef Ouannes, Professor, Tunis University

# Rabat declaration



The **ARADESC** Network,

Meeting on Cultural Rights in the  
Maghreb region and Egypt  
(18-19 December 2008)

*Committed* to the full implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two United Nations International Covenants and other relevant universal and regional instruments;

*Reaffirming* that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent, and that cultural rights are, as other human rights, an expression and requirement of human dignity;

*Referring* to normative instruments adopted in the field of cultural diversity, such as the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions;

*Reaffirming* that culture is considered as the whole of distinctive features, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, which characterize a society or a group; and that it includes, besides arts and letters, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs;

*Convinced* that violations of cultural rights provoke tensions and identity conflicts which constitute one of the main causes of violence such as armed conflicts and terrorism;

*Affirming* that respect for cultural diversity, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust, constitutes one of the best tokens for, stability and security at national and international levels;

*Noting* that cultural rights are claimed mainly in the context of minorities and indigenous people's rights, and that it is essential to secure these rights universally, particularly for the most disadvantaged;

*Considering* that a clarification and consolidation of the place of cultural rights within the human rights system, as well as a better understanding of their nature and the consequences of their violation, constitute the best way to prevent their misuse in favour of cultural relativism, or as pretexts to the fomentation of hostility and hatred among communities, groups or peoples;

*Aware* of the specific mandate given to UNESCO, within the United Nations system, to ensure the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity; the role played by ISESCO which adopted the Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity; the role of the International Organization of "la Francophonie" observing democratic practices, as well as diversity and cultural rights;

*Taking* note of the Freiburg Declaration on cultural rights, a text stemming from civil society;

- I. Expresses its determination to further reinforce its actions for the promotion of cultural rights, notably through regular gatherings of its members and partners, as well as through cooperation with institutions or organizations working in this field in the region;
- II. Reaffirms its commitment for the promotion and protection of cultural rights, notably through studies analyzing the implementation of these rights in the countries covered by the Network, as well as through actions aimed at sharing the results produced by research among political decision-makers, and sensitizing and mobilizing all concerned actors;
- III. Presents the following recommendations to the attention of political decision-makers, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and researchers, in order to ensure implementation of cultural rights for all, without any discrimination:
  1. Harmonize political discourse and applicable legislation for better protection and enjoyment of cultural rights;
  2. Respect the free choice of cultural identity, freedom of belief, conscience and cult, the freedom of opinion and expression, including corresponding values as well as the exercise of one's cultural practices which are in conformity with the principles of human rights and democracy. The freedom of opinion and expression may be subject to certain restrictions but these shall only be such as are imposed by law and are necessary for ensuring the respect for the rights or reputations of others; the protection of national security or public order, or public health or morals;
  3. Encourage creation and rehabilitation of memorial sites and cultural spaces;
  4. Monitor that certain freedoms and cultural diversity are protected as both play a primary role in the consolidation of democracy;
  5. Develop the role of mass-media in the reinforcement of intercultural dialogue and mutual respect between different cultures and religions;
  6. Ensure the right to education and universal access to quality education, which invariably enhance the development of a cultural identity respectful of human rights, including cultural rights, and cultural diversity;
  7. Promote human rights education and ensure the integration of human rights related issues into programmes of formal and non-formal education as well as in continuing education;
  8. Take necessary measures so that the right to participate freely and in conditions of equal access in cultural life are respected. Particular attention should be paid to women and other disadvantaged groups and peoples;
  9. Take necessary measures to de-legitimize and eliminate practices that violate cultural rights, and which target women, migrants, children and other vulnerable groups in particular;
  10. Encourage States to ratify the different international instruments on human rights, to lift reservation, to give adequate follow-up to the recommendations of different monitoring mechanisms, and to integrate necessary measures for the effective implementation of cultural rights in their legislations and national practices;
  11. Encourage States to ratify the optional Protocol relating to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 2008;
  12. Encourage the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to accelerate the drafting of a General Comment on the right to take part in cultural life;
  13. Contribute to the elaboration of indicators on cultural rights in order to evaluate progress achieved in this field and any subsisting obstacles;
  14. Pursue studies and research on cultural rights in order to identify obstacles to their implementation, as well as best practices and advancements.



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**SHS**  
Social and Human  
Sciences  
**UNESCO**

For more information, please visit our website:

<http://rabat.unesco.org/ARADESC> (MA/2009/SS/PI/1)

Any individual or institution who may be interested in taking part in the Arab Network UNESCO/ISESCO Arab Research-Policy Network on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, is invited to contact:

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