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Organización
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للترقية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

International Symposium on Freedom of Expression to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights / Exhibition on Safety of Journalists

29 October 2008

UNESCO, Room II

125, avenue de Suffren, 75007, Paris, France

On December 10, a milestone in the history of promoting Human Rights will be celebrated. This day will mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Even today, the Declaration is regarded as the first universal statement on the basic principles of inalienable human rights and the foundation of international human rights law.

The right to freedom of opinion and expression was number 19 of the 30 articles articulated in the Declaration. Some three years earlier, however, the idea that these freedoms were critical to human development surfaced in the UNESCO Constitution, adopted in November 1945. UNESCO would be charged with promoting “the free flow of ideas by word and image,” setting the stage for the Organization’s work in the area of mass communication for decades to come.

UNESCO’s Constitution stresses the need for information and communication within and between nations as a means of preventing war. The idea is a simple one: advancing mutual understanding among peoples in order to strip away the ignorance that breeds mistrust and suspicion, which can lead to conflict.

In combination, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UNESCO Constitution provide irrefutable evidence in the belief that freedom of opinion and of expression constitute the cornerstone of any democratic society and a fundamental basis for development.

To celebrate the UDHR, UNESCO is hosting an *International High Level Symposium on Freedom of Expression* focusing on the central role it plays in promoting dialogue, democracy and development.

The Symposium will take place on 29 October 2008 and will involve around 400 participants including Heads of State, government officials, policymakers, Nobel Prize Laureates and World Press Freedom Prize winners, as well as representatives of major non-governmental organizations and media professionals.

The Symposium is divided into an opening session, followed by three forums:

- Opening Session - Welcome speech by UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura; Lydia Cacho Ribeiro and May Chidiac, World Press Freedom Prize Laureate’s of 2008 and 2006 giving testimony; Keynote address by David Schlesinger, Reuters Editor-in-Chief;
- Session 1 - A discussion about Freedom of Expression and Development;
- Session 2 - Freedom of Expression and Democracy;
- Session 3 - Freedom of Expression and Dialogue.

The Symposium will provide a forum for debate and discussion of the challenges and opportunities that exist at the nexus of freedom of expression, dialogue, democracy and development. Monitoring the latest trends in journalism, such as violence against journalists and restrictions on media outlets, shows the need to bolster the work of freedom of expression advocates along with the media institutions that are threatened.

Journalists are under increasing attack and good journalism is endangered, especially in societies that would most benefit from a pluralistic and independent media. A very small percentage of the crimes committed against journalists, including murder, is investigated and rarely is anyone held accountable for these crimes. This violence constitutes one of the greatest threats to freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

In conjunction with the symposium, there will be a two-day *exhibition on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists*. UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura, and Anna Maria Busquets Cano, President of the Guillermo Cano Foundation will inaugurate the event at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

The exhibition will display photos, texts, videos and publications provided by UNESCO's Division for Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace and its partners. Among the photos will be images from conflict and post-disaster areas. These are intended to bring attention to and raise awareness about the difficult work and often unsafe conditions that many journalists face regularly in order to deliver information from crisis points around the world. The exhibition is organized in partnership with Reuters.