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Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

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## **REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNESCO'S REFINED PLAN OF ACTION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **SUMMARY**

This document is presented pursuant to 179 EX/Decision 8, by which the Director-General was requested to continue implementing UNESCO's refined plan of action to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to report on the 60th anniversary commemorative activities to the Executive Board at its 180th session.

Financial implications: see paragraph 4 of the document as well as paragraph 8 of the proposed decision.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 16.

## I. BACKGROUND

1. The 179th session of the Executive Board welcomed UNESCO's refined plan of action for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (179 EX/8) which is aimed at ensuring UNESCO's active involvement in the year-long United Nations system-wide commemoration campaign with focus on the 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. By 179 EX/Decision 8, the Executive Board requested the Director-General to further implement the refined plan of action and to report to it at its 180th session on UNESCO's commemorative activities.

## II. IMPLEMENTATION OF UNESCO'S REFINED PLAN OF ACTION

2. The Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, focal point for UNESCO's commemoration, in order to ensure coherent action within the Organization in relation to the Plan, established an Intersectoral Coordination and Implementation Team. One of the issues which the Team is considering is how to give greater visibility to UNESCO's commemoration activities.

3. To mobilize UNESCO's partners, a letter was sent in May 2008 to Permanent Delegations and National Commissions for UNESCO, inviting them to make an active contribution to the implementation of the Plan of Action. Several National Commissions (Austria, Burundi, Denmark, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Republic of Serbia, Russian Federation, Senegal and South Africa) have already sent information on the activities to be organized by them at the national level. Several Permanent Delegations submitted to the Director-General their proposals on the organization of round tables at UNESCO Headquarters in autumn 2008 (under Part II of the Plan), as well as at national and regional levels.

4. The implementation of a number of activities included in the refined Plan of Action depends on extrabudgetary resources. In his letter of 6 June 2008, the Director-General invited Member States to consider making contributions to this purpose.

5. In conformity with Part I of the Plan concerning the rights within UNESCO's competence, on 3 May 2008, World Press Freedom Day, the Director-General awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize to the Mexican reporter Lydia Cacho Ribeiro in a ceremony held in the presence of the President of the Republic of Mozambique Armando Guebuza. At a two-day conference which was organized on this occasion, some 150 media professionals from around the world adopted the "Maputo Declaration: Fostering Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Empowerment of People". The Declaration emphasizes the importance of freedom of expression and free access to information for participatory democracy, good and open governance, transparency and accountability. It encourages UNESCO Member States to implement policies that promote the basic and universally recognized human right to freedom of opinion and expression and that facilitate public access to information. World Press Freedom Day was celebrated throughout the world by the United Nations, UNESCO field offices, non-governmental organizations, media and other actors. Preparations have begun for the organization of the high-level symposium on freedom of expression, including an exhibition on the safety of journalists and press freedom, planned for 28 October 2008 at UNESCO Headquarters.

6. The 61st Annual Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI/NGO), on the theme: "Reaffirming Human Rights for All: The Universal Declaration at 60", will be held at UNESCO Headquarters from 3 to 5 September 2008. It will be attended by approximately 2,000 NGO representatives, affiliated with

UN/DPI and ECOSOC, UNESCO, and OHCHR. The three-day event will comprise opening and closing sessions, five round tables followed by two to three breakout sessions per round table and 42 midday workshops. Some of the breakout sessions and midday workshops will be organized by NGOs maintaining official relations with UNESCO. The opening remarks will be delivered by the representative of the French Government, the Director-General of UNESCO, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and a Keynote Speaker, and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information will act as moderator after a welcome address to all participants on behalf of the United Nations. The President of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (CR) of the Executive Board will take part as a panellist in one of the round tables, presenting the procedure set out in 104 EX/Decision 3.3 for the examination of cases submitted to UNESCO concerning the exercise of human rights in the spheres of its competence.

7. A regional conference on the Contribution of the Media and Education to the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights in the Context of Latin America and the Caribbean will be hosted by the Government of Colombia (Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 8-11 September 2008) in conformity with 179 EX/Decision 8.II with an active involvement of the CI, ED and SHS Sectors.

8. The Executive Board requested that a stronger human rights perspective be integrated into 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 United Nations Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Human Rights Education in the School System (UNIACC) – of which UNESCO is an active member – will organize a side-event, with the aim of promoting human rights education within the framework of this Conference.

9. Between 8 December 2008 and 27 February 2009, an exhibition of human rights-related posters created by UNESCO over the last 60 years will be displayed on the fence surrounding Headquarters. While the posters, collected from various UNESCO sectors and field offices, vary in themes, each will be linked to specific articles of the Universal Declaration and other relevant human rights instruments. From 2 to 10 December 2008, an exhibition of human rights learning materials will be displayed at Headquarters, featuring materials collected from Member States through the National Commissions for UNESCO. The aim of the exhibition is to demonstrate the diverse ways that Member States are carrying out human rights education in their country. Visitors will have the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of materials, to better understand how human rights education is being implemented in different countries around the world.

10. UNESCO supported the organization of the Day of General Discussion (9 May 2008, Geneva) on the right to take part in cultural life within the framework of the 40th session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. An experts' meeting with a view to further elucidating the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications will be organized in cooperation with the Irish Centre for Human Rights in October 2008 in Galway, Ireland.

11. The first edition of the UNESCO/Bilbao Prize for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights which succeeds the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education will take place in 2008. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the City of Bilbao (Spain), Donor of the Prize, in May 2008. It is planned that the award ceremony will take place on 10 December 2008. It could be linked with the public event proposed in Part III of the Plan. However, funding has not been yet secured to implement the activities foreseen in this Part of the Plan.

### **III. UNESCO'S COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES UNDER THE BANNER OF THE 60th ANNIVERSARY**

12. All UNESCO's programme sectors and a number of field offices are organizing activities under the banner of the 60th anniversary in Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Ghana, Jordan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan,

Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Congo, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, South Africa, Thailand, Uruguay, Zimbabwe, and other countries.

13. Some examples of activities are: the Regional Seminar on Education in Human Rights with focal points and specialized technical staff from the ministries of education of the Latin American and Caribbean Region, organized in June 2008 in San Salvador, El Salvador; two round tables on the right of girls to education and the right of women with disabilities to access services, organized in March 2008 on the occasion of International Women's Day in Amman, Jordan; the meeting of Ministers of Women's Affairs from 11 countries of the Great Lakes Region was held in July 2008 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, to discuss establishment of a research and documentation centre for women in the Great Lakes and to harmonize policies in women's rights and gender for the subregion; the Subregional Experts' Meeting on Human Rights within UNESCO's Competence dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the UDHR (Moscow, Russian Federation, May 2008); the VI International Baku Conference of Ombudspersons on "Human Rights in the Globalized World" dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the UDHR was held in cooperation with the Azerbaijani National Commission for UNESCO and the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Azerbaijan, in June 2008.

14. UNESCO contributes to developing reflection on emerging challenges to human rights at the national, regional and global levels in the light of such issues as urbanization, globalization, environment, poverty, scientific progress and climate change. These issues have been discussed within the framework of the Third World Forum on Human Rights (Nantes, France, 30 June-3 July 2008) dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration and organized with the participation of UNESCO. The International Coalition of Cities against Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance initiated by UNESCO was launched on 30 June 2008 in the framework of the Forum.

15. Updated information on the activities implemented under the banner of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is presented on a special webpage: [http://www.unesco.org/shs/humanrights/udhr\\_60anniversary](http://www.unesco.org/shs/humanrights/udhr_60anniversary).

#### **Action expected of the Executive Board**

16. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 34 C/Resolution 38 concerning the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
2. Further recalling 179 EX/Decision 8 by which the Executive Board welcomed UNESCO's refined plan of action for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
3. Underlining UNESCO's key role in the promotion of human rights,
4. Taking note of the appeal of the United Nations Secretary-General for a year-long United Nations system-wide campaign to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
5. Having examined document 180 EX/9,
6. Welcomes UNESCO's contribution to the United Nations system-wide year-long campaign to commemorate this anniversary and encourages the Director-General to continue implementing UNESCO's refined plan of action in consultation with other

United Nations entities, and in particular with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in view of its role of coordinator of the activities of the United Nations system in the field of human rights;

7. 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 contribute to the commemoration of the 60th anniversary by undertaking activities in order to further promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms;
8. Invites the Director-General to continue his efforts to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to ensure the implementation of that plan and invites Member States and other funding sources to consider making extrabudgetary contributions in this regard;
9. Invites the Director-General to report to the 35th session of the General Conference on the 60th anniversary commemorative activities.