



SHS/EGC/GEC/2011/PI/H/1

The 1st World Humanities Forum

Busan, Republic of Korea, 24-26 November 2011

Busan Declaration

Towards a New Humanism for the 21st Century

We, the participants in the first World Humanities Forum held in Busan Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea, from 24 to 26 November 2011, which has brought together humanities scholars, artists and visionaries to further reflection on key challenges and questions facing the world in the 21st century,

Aware of the urgent need to address social transformations stemming from the convergence of economic, technological, environmental, social, cultural and political forces, as well as rising tensions between belief systems, ideologies, loyalties and identities,

Recognizing the high expectations of policy makers, the media and the general public with respect to visions and insights to address these challenges and create more inclusive, just and equitable societies,

Concerned about the current state of the humanities, which are sometimes perceived to be in “crisis”, hampering their capacity to perform their historic role of shaping the self-understanding of peoples and societies, and thereby giving meaning to life,

Noting the need to rethink the meaning of humanism in the face of divisive globalism, environmental crisis and the uncertain horizons of rapid scientific and technological development,

Inspired by the constitution of UNESCO, which states that the defenses of peace must be constructed in the minds of men and that peace must be founded upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind,

Taking into consideration the UNESCO Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy¹, which emphasizes that philosophical analysis and reflection are undeniably linked to the establishment and maintenance of peace, the core mission of UNESCO,

Commending UNESCO, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Korea, Busan Metropolitan City, the National Research Foundation of Korea and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO for their initiative in launching the process that has led to the World Humanities Forum,

We formulate the following recommendations at our closing session on 26 November 2011 and bring them to the attention of the international community.

1. We reaffirm the invaluable contribution that the humanities can make to critical reflection on human values and societies and on the renewal of values in times of increasing globalization, of greater interdependence and also of rising uncertainty.
2. We are convinced that the world, to guide it through the challenges of the 21st century, needs a renewed humanism that respects the place of people in nature and our responsibilities towards the natural world and other life-forms, which can be developed on a pluralistic, critical, and inclusive basis through rigorous

¹ UNESCO Executive Board Document 171 EX/12 (2005)

analysis, dialogue and cooperation between humanities scholars, artists, thinkers and innovators from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives.

3. As scholars, artists and intellectuals, we undertake to promote and support the principle of pluralistic, inclusive and open-ended reflection, across disciplinary, national, linguistic and cultural boundaries, in collaboration with the social and natural sciences, with a view to enhancing the capacity of research systems, the media and societies to understand their present and to imagine their futures.
4. We conclude, from the discussions on “Universalism in a Multicultural World” at the first World Humanities Forum, that each society needs to achieve an appropriate balance between the necessary respect for diversity and the shared values without which diverse societies cannot live in peace and prosperity, and that the world as a whole needs to establish a renewed humanistic basis for universal values.
5. We strongly encourage UNESCO to strengthen this initiative, to make its outcomes visible through partners, including the media, to spread the knowledge to wider audiences and to facilitate similar initiatives at the regional level at the request of its Member States and in full cooperation with their National Commissions.
6. We also encourage the Republic of Korea to continue to support and enhance activities in the humanities, with specific reference to the World Humanities Forum.
7. We call upon UNESCO to establish concrete mechanisms to support international cooperation in and reflection on the humanities and to facilitate their contribution to addressing contemporary challenges through public and widely disseminated debate and policy-relevant activities. We request specific

proposals in this regard to be developed and brought to the attention of the second World Humanities Forum, scheduled for 2012.

8. We further call upon UNESCO to establish such connections as may be appropriate between the humanities and the social and natural sciences in order to enhance the capacity of contemporary societies to address the current and future challenges they face.
9. With respect for the autonomy and with a view to enhancing the impact of the humanities, we encourage the establishment of new networks and the strengthening of existing ones at the national and regional level to bring together humanities scholars, policy makers, practitioners and media.
10. We suggest that the World Humanities Forum be organized regularly in order to facilitate collective humanistic reflection on contemporary challenges at the global, regional, and national levels to support the emergence of more inclusive, just and equitable societies.