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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Fifty-third session  
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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF  
THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations  
Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004)

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights

1. At its fifty-second session, in resolution 1996/44 of 19 April 1996, the Commission on Human Rights took note with appreciation of the report presented to the Commission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (E/CN.4/1996/51). It requested the High Commissioner to accelerate, within existing resources, the implementation of the Plan of Action and, in particular, to encourage and facilitate the establishment in each country of national plans of action, focal points (national committees) and centres of human rights education, in accordance with national conditions.

2. The Commission invited all Governments to consider the establishment of national focal points (national committees) for human rights education and the development of national plans of action for human rights education, as envisaged in the Plan of Action, including the building and strengthening of programmes and capacities for formal and informal human rights education and cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the private sector in pursuing the objectives of the Plan of Action.

3. Furthermore, the Commission requested the human rights monitoring bodies to consider adopting a general comment on human rights education, placing emphasis on the implementation by Member States of their international obligation to promote human rights education; invited all relevant specialized agencies, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Labour Organization, United Nations programmes, especially the United Nations Children's Fund, and other intergovernmental organizations to enhance their contribution to the implementation of the Plan of Action; and called upon international, regional and national non-governmental organizations, as well as other social justice groups, human rights advocates, educators, religious and community organizations and the media, to increase their involvement in formal and non-formal education in human rights and to cooperate with the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights in implementing the Plan of Action.

4. Finally, the Commission invited the High Commissioner to seek the views of States on ways and means to increase support to the Decade, with special emphasis on activities of non-governmental organizations in the field of human rights education, and on the advisability of establishing a voluntary fund for this purpose, and to report on that issue to the Commission at its fifty-third session. The present report is submitted in accordance with this request.

#### B. Fifty-first session of the General Assembly

5. At its fifty-first session, the General Assembly, recalling the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights concerning the promotion of human rights, including those on the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights, the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the UNESCO project "Towards a culture of peace", the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted resolution 51/104 of 12 December 1996.

6. The Assembly took note with appreciation of the report presented by the High Commissioner on the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade (A/51/506), as well as of the report of the Secretary-General on the development of public information activities in the field of human rights, including the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights (A/51/558).

7. The Assembly urged all Governments to inform their communities about the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights and to contribute further to the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade by establishing, in accordance with national conditions, broadly representative national committees for human rights education and training centres for human rights education or, where such bodies exist, to strengthen them to work towards the elaboration and implementation of an action-oriented national plan for information and education in human rights, with the involvement of national and local non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations.

8. The Assembly also appealed to Governments to accord priority to the dissemination in their relevant national and local languages of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other international instruments, human rights materials and training manuals, as well as reports of States parties under the human rights treaties, and to provide information and education in those languages on the practical ways in which national and international institutions and procedures may be utilized to ensure the effective implementation of those instruments.

9. The Assembly requested the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights to continue to coordinate the implementation of the Plan of Action to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency in the use, processing, management and distribution of information and educational materials, and to continue to coordinate and harmonize human rights information strategies within the United Nations system. It also stressed the need for close collaboration between the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights and the Department of Public Information in the implementation of the Plan of Action and of the World Campaign and the need to harmonize their activities with those of other organizations such as UNESCO and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

10. The Assembly encouraged the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights to continue the development of training courses and materials, including targeted training manuals for professional audiences, as well as the dissemination of human rights information materials as a component of technical assistance projects.

11. It also requested the human rights mechanisms to place emphasis on the promotion and implementation of programmes of information and education on human rights, and invited the specialized agencies and relevant United Nations programmes to contribute, within their respective spheres of competence, to the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade and the World Campaign.

12. Furthermore, the Assembly called upon international, regional and national non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations, in particular those concerned with women, labour, development, food, housing, education, health care and the environment, as well as all other social justice groups, human rights advocates, educators, religious organizations and the media, to undertake specific activities of formal, non-formal and informal education, including cultural events, alone and in cooperation with the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights, in implementing the Plan of Action.

13. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of establishing a voluntary fund to support activities for human rights education, including those undertaken by non-governmental organizations, to bring resolution 51/104 to the attention of all members of the international community and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with human rights education and public information and to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session a comprehensive report on the implementation of the resolution.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE  
UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

14. This section supplements the report on the implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education presented by the High Commissioner to the General Assembly (A/51/506 of 16 October 1996) by providing relevant new information on activities carried out or reported between November 1996 and January 1997.

15. As in the report of the High Commissioner to the General Assembly, the present report follows the structure of the Plan of Action, illustrating the advancement in the implementation of each component of the Plan; only the components for which some progress took place in the above-mentioned period are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

A. Components two and three: Strengthening international/regional programmes and capacities for human rights education

1. Mobilization of widespread support for the Decade

16. The High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights has continued to disseminate information on the Decade by answering related inquiries, on a daily basis, from interested representatives of Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academics, students and other individuals and organizations.

17. Notes verbales were addressed in November 1996 to all Governments, drawing their attention to General Assembly resolution 50/107 and Commission resolution 1996/44 and soliciting their views, as requested by the Commission, on ways and means to increase support to the Decade, with special emphasis on activities of non-governmental organizations in the field of human rights education, and on the advisability of establishing a voluntary fund for this purpose.

18. In regard to the question of the advisability of establishing a voluntary fund for human rights education activities, Japan stressed that it is important to clearly define and ascertain the eligibility to receive aid before establishing such a fund. Morocco strongly supported the establishment of such a fund, and stated that this initiative could give impetus to national human rights education programmes since human rights education, being a comprehensive life-long process, requires a mobilization of human and financial resources that is beyond the possibilities of several countries. Also, it could create a sense of international mobilization of all countries towards the enhancement of human rights education and of international solidarity among Governments and individuals.

19. Concerning ways and means to increase support to the Decade, Morocco, while stressing the need to establish the voluntary fund, suggested that regional and international expert meetings should be organized to compare approaches, share information and learn from other experiences in this area. Also, the High Commissioner, in cooperation with relevant United Nations

agencies such as UNESCO, could at the end of the Decade collect and disseminate information about different experiences in human rights education and highlight those that have been most successful, in order to encourage countries to continue efforts in this area. In this regard, the establishment of evaluation criteria for human rights education programmes and their dissemination through Member States should be envisaged.

20. Oman informed the High Commissioner that the concerned authorities in the country have given their utmost attention to the Decade and that they are taking into consideration the constructive directives and recommendations on the basis of the Plan of Action for the Decade.

## 2. Coordination with international/regional partners

### United Nations system

21. In addition to the various United Nations agencies and programmes which have already highlighted their contribution to the Decade, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) expressed interest in working with the High Commissioner in promoting human rights. In particular, INSTRAW suggested that the High Commissioner, as part of the activities that are included under the Decade, consider the relevance of preparing a framework which could serve as a tool for mainstreaming, within the United Nations, the principle of interdependence between all human rights as well as the principle of gender equality. Such a framework could be prepared in the form of a training package, to be made widely available. INSTRAW assured the High Commissioner of its contribution, within its competence on gender and human rights, to the elaboration of this framework.

### Non-governmental organizations

22. The High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights has actively continued to support the establishment of human rights education programmes by non-governmental organizations through broad dissemination of the materials published by the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights (see component six).

## B. Components four and five: Strengthening national/local programmes and capacities for human rights education

### 1. Activities undertaken by States

23. This section only briefly supplements section D.1 (paras. 35-44) of the report of the High Commissioner to the General Assembly (A/51/506) by providing recent information received from the following countries:

(a) Croatia: The Government of Croatia has informed the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights that the National Committee for Human Rights Education established in the country is a consultative body headed by the Minister of Education. Its task is to promote human rights education by suggesting amendments and addenda to the national curricula ranging from primary schools to universities. Furthermore, a project with UNESCO entitled "Peace and human rights education for Croatian primary schools" has been

started, and its implementation has been entrusted to the Department of Pedagogical Sciences within the Zagreb University Faculty of Arts. This project incorporates field research and the publication of textbooks. Finally, the Government has requested technical assistance from the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights in the drafting of the National Plan for Human Rights Education, and a project in this regard is under discussion.

(b) Denmark: As a joint project between the Ministry of Education and the Danish Centre for Human Rights, a plan of action has been established with the purpose of strengthening human rights education in the Danish primary and lower secondary schools and among the youth. The aim of the plan is to enable key personnel from training institutions and professional organizations to carry out their own training of teachers, as the basis for concrete training courses and the development of human rights education programmes in schools. Also, a human rights education bibliography will be published. The Government highlighted the activities of the Danish Centre for Human Rights, which deals with human rights education in relation to schools, professional groups and the general public. Also, the Centre is engaged in international cooperation in the area of human rights education with educational organizations and human rights non-governmental organizations.

(c) France: The High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights has been informed that the National Committee for Human Rights Education has been established jointly by the National Commission for UNESCO and the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights. The Committee includes representatives from 11 relevant Ministries, such as Justice, Education, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Interior, Culture, Youth, Humanitarian Action, etc. Its mandate consists in: (a) conducting a survey on past/current activities in the area of human rights education; (b) assessing needs; (c) elaborating a plan of action. Four working groups have been constituted within the Committee to assess the state of human rights education in the following areas: primary and secondary schools; universities and higher education; adult education, including several professional groups (police, armed forces, judges, teachers, social workers, etc.); and activities undertaken by NGOs, associations and trade unions. Also, a national centre for information and training on human rights, publicly accessible and provided with a broad range of human rights documentation, was inaugurated in November 1996.

(d) Italy: A comprehensive survey on human rights education and information at the national level, already mentioned in the report of the High Commissioner to the General Assembly (A/51/506, para. 44 (e) (ii)), was published in September 1996 by the Department for Information of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. It is being disseminated throughout the country, and in particular in all educational establishments.

(e) Japan: The Government of Japan had already informed the High Commissioner of the establishment, in December 1995, of the Headquarters for the Promotion of Human Rights Education, chaired by the Prime Minister. In a note addressed to the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights, the Government added that an interim National Plan of Action for human rights education had been announced in December 1996. The interim plan will be

revised, taking into consideration the suggestions of NGOs and other interested parties. The Government stressed that it regards the activities of NGOs as essential to achieving the aims of the Decade.

(f) Philippines: The High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights has been informed that the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, in accordance with the proclamation of the Decade, has prepared a national Plan of Action for human rights education, a copy of which has been forwarded to the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights. The Plan includes clear objectives, target audience (organized and unorganized elements of society), strategies (trainers' training, organization of networks, integration of human rights in all educational curricula, utilization of village-level officials to reach out to the community level, promotional campaigns including artistic and cultural activities, development of monitoring and evaluation systems, etc.) and programmes, including the creation of a human rights training, documentation and research centre (the Human Rights Academy). In the elaboration of the Plan, and in view of its implementation, the Commission has entered into a number of formal agreements with other national partners for human rights education, to define in detail specific areas of responsibility. These partners include: the Department of Interior and Local Government, the Liga NG MGA Barangay (an organization of barangay captains or village chiefs), the Department of Justice, the Department of National Defence, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, the Commission on Higher Education and Amnesty International/Philippine Section.

(g) Tunisia: The Government of Tunisia had already informed the High Commissioner of the establishment of a National Committee for Human Rights Education. In a note addressed to the High Commissioner, it presented a preliminary report, containing information on the status of human rights education in primary schools, secondary schools and higher education, on existing programmes of human rights training for professional groups (such as law enforcement agents, magistrates and lawyers) and in professional training centres, on programmes addressed to vulnerable groups (children, including juvenile offenders, women, people with disabilities, detainees) and on the existing information about human rights among the public in general, with an emphasis on the role of the media. The Government also stressed the important role of the Arab Institute for Human Rights, based in Tunis, in the dissemination of a culture of human rights through the organization of several national and regional seminars. Finally, the Government illustrated its envisaged national strategy for human rights education, which includes close cooperation with United Nations agencies. Annexed to the document is a list of the addresses of institutes and governmental and non-governmental agencies active in this area.

## 2. Practical assistance provided by the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights

24. As reported in document A/51/506, draft guidelines have been prepared to assist Governments in developing comprehensive (in terms of outreach), effective (in terms of educational strategies) and sustainable (over the long term) national Plans of Action for human rights education. The draft guidelines were revised during an expert meeting organized by the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights from 27 to 30 January 1997.

25. The meeting brought together 14 human rights education experts and practitioners from the five continents, and representatives from UNESCO and the Council of Europe. The participants reviewed the draft guidelines in detail; the final version will be made available to all Governments in the first months of 1997. Furthermore, the experts made comments on other draft documents prepared by the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights in the framework of the Decade and proposed suggestions on future activities to be undertaken in this area, also in view of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

26. The High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights has intensified its technical cooperation activities to strengthen national capacities in the field of human rights education; details of these activities at the national, regional and global levels are outlined in the relevant report of the Secretary-General to the Commission (E/CN.4/1997/86).

C. Component six: Coordinated development of materials for human rights education

27. The High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights has enhanced the production of human rights publications and materials and their dissemination among governmental and non-governmental organizations. Detailed information on these materials and on other relevant activities undertaken by the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat can be found in the report of the Secretary-General on the development of public information activities in the field of human rights, which has been presented in a separate report to the Commission (E/CN.4/1997/36).

28. Work has continued on the six training packages to support training activities addressed to professional and other target groups (prison officers; primary and secondary school teachers; judges and lawyers; national and local non-governmental organizations; journalists; human rights monitors) undertaken by the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights and by the national committees and training centres for human rights education. In the development of these materials, the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights works in close cooperation with relevant specialized experts and organizations.

29. Finally, the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights has continued to actively collect materials for human rights education, and access to this collection has been made available to human rights educators who have visited the Centre for Human Rights.

D. Component eight: Global dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

30. Information on activities recently undertaken in this area by the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights is included in the report of the High Commissioner to the Commission (E/CN.4/1997/98), which contains a section on the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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