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IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED "HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL"

Joint written statement* submitted by Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU), International Alliance of Women (IAW), New Humanity, Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI), World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) and World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, African Commission of Health and Human Rights Promoters (ACHHRP), International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), International Federation of University Women (IFUW), International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education (OIDEL), International Young Catholic Students (IYCS), IUS PRIMI VIRI International Association (IPV), Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs and International Movement of Catholic Students), People's Decade of Human Rights Education (PDHRE), Planetary Association for Clean Energy, Inc. (PACE), Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF), World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA), World Federation of Methodist and United Church Women (WFMUCW) and Worldwide Organization for Women (WOW), non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG), Institute for Planetary Synthesis (IPS) and Soka Gakkai International (SGI), non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[28 February 2007]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Human rights education and learning in the institution-building of the Human Rights Council

The institution-building process of the Human Rights Council is an opportunity to bring human rights education and learning to the pre-eminent position they deserve - and they are indeed attributed such importance in the mandate given to the Council by General Assembly Resolution A/60/251, operative paragraph 5, according to which the Council will:

“Promote human rights education and learning as well as advisory services, technical assistance and capacity-building, to be provided in consultation with and with the consent of Member States concerned”.

Human rights education and learning are highlighted in several international instruments. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in Article 26, paragraph 2, states that *"education must be directed to the full development of human personality and strengthening of (...) human rights and fundamental rights and freedoms"*. Other instruments include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (article 13), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 29), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (article 10), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (article 7), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (Part I, paras. 33-34 and Part II, paras. 78-82) and the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001 (Declaration, paras. 95-97 and Programme of Action, paras. 129-139).

We, the co-signed NGOs, urge the Human Rights Council to recognize that human rights education and learning are essential to help redress and prevent human rights violations as they empower people with awareness of their rights and related responsibilities. Human rights education and learning are also one of the key elements to effectively meet the requirements for achieving gender equality, the issue of which requires coherent, non-discriminatory and sensitive approaches.

While it is fully understandable and necessary for the Human Rights Council to focus its attention on ways and means to alleviate human rights violations, this institution-building process of the Council is also a very important opportunity to establish foundations and sustainable mechanisms for preventing human rights violations.

The Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE) contains a comprehensive set of indicators for the implementation of human rights education (A/59/525/Rev.1). Such indicators are also important to be mainstreamed in the Special Procedures to deal with each issue by mandate holders, as human rights education is a life-long process for all and interacts with all human rights issues. We appreciate the initiative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNESCO for making available the brief version of the Plan of Action of WPHRE which helps all relevant actors to understand better its contents. In this regard, the already published human rights education materials by OHCHR and other relevant UN entities including UNESCO and UNICEF as well as many NGOs and other actors, which explain human rights principles in a simple form and in the daily-life

language, are highly appreciated, particularly for grassroots NGOs. More work should be accomplished in this area.

According to Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2004/71 (adopted without a vote, April 2004), this year 2007 will conclude the first phase of the World Programme, dedicated to the integration of human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems. As a matter of fact, it was the Commission on Human Rights that identified the specific sector/issue of the first phase (2005-2007) being "*human rights education in primary and secondary school systems*", in its resolution 2004/71.

The Human Rights Council, entrusted with all mandates and responsibilities of the Commission on Human Rights, bears therefore the responsibility to carry out the task to identify the sectors/issues of the following phases of WPHRE, as also indicated in paragraph 6 of the Plan of Action of WPHRE which reads, "*(...) in order to further focus national human rights education efforts on specific sectors/issues periodically identified by the Commission on Human Rights.*"

For effective implementation of human rights education and learning, monitoring and evaluation of national action by governments at both the local and national levels are imperative. For this reason particularly, we strongly call for mainstreaming human rights education and learning into the Special Procedures and in the work of each mandate holder.

The co-signed organisations request the Human Rights Council to consider with special attention the following recommendations and to take necessary actions:

1. Mainstreaming human rights education and learning in the Human Rights Council proceedings including;
 - (1) To have as one of the priority items in the Agenda of the Council the "*Promotion of human rights education and learning*".
 - (2) To place the development of national policies on human rights education and learning and implementation of those policies as one of the indicators for evaluation in the process of the Universal Periodic Review.
 - (3) To mainstream human rights education and learning in the mandates of Special Procedures by providing mandate holders with guidelines to indicate the fact(s) and recommendation(s) regarding human rights education and learning in their reports; guidelines should also include the need, in their missions and reports, to identify the duty bearers of human rights education and learning, the State obligations to fulfil, and the beneficiaries as well as the expected effects and impacts, for the purposes of both redressing and prevention of human right violations.

In view of this crucial point of the institution-building process by the Council, some elements of this recommendation are reiterated from the previous NGO joint statement A/HRC/1/NGO/29 (6/28/2006) endorsed by 25 organisations and submitted to the first session of the Council.

2. Urgent action needed with regard to the World Programme for Human Rights

Education by the end of 2007:

- (1) To decide to extend the first phase of the World Programme, due to the slow pace of national implementation as evidenced in the low number of replies to the joint letter of the High Commissioner and the Director General of UNESCO (see the High Commissioner's report to the Human Rights Council A/HRC/4/85). Alternatively, to identify the sector/issue for the next phase of the WPHRE after the end of the first phase (2005-2007).
- (2) To further promote the WPHRE globally, and ensure implementation of the WPHRE by each government in cooperation with civil society, NGOs and all other relevant actors.
