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**PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:
INFORMATION AND EDUCATION**

**Follow-up to the United Nations Decade for Human Rights
Education (1995-2004), including the proclamation of the
World Programme for Human Rights Education**

Report of the High Commissioner

Summary

The present report on progress made is submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/71. Accordingly, this report includes information on related events that took place during 2004 and, in particular, the proclamation by the General Assembly, on 10 December 2004, of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, to start on 1 January 2005.

1. In its resolution 2004/71, the Commission on Human Rights recommended “to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2004 to recommend to the General Assembly that it proclaim at its fifty-ninth session a world programme for human rights education, to begin on 1 January 2005, structured in consecutive phases, in order to maintain and develop the implementation of human rights education programmes in all sectors” (para. 3). The Council endorsed this recommendation in decision 2004/268.

2. In the same resolution, the Commission requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to prepare, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other relevant governmental and non-governmental actors, and submit for consideration and adoption to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, a plan of action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the proposed world programme, focusing on the primary and secondary school systems (para. 4). The Commission also requested the Office “to keep in mind that the plan of action of each phase of the world programme shall be properly structured, shall be formulated in realistic terms, with an indication of at least minimum action, shall be funded by voluntary means, shall include provisions to support activities undertaken by all actors, in particular non-governmental organizations, and shall be evaluated by the Office” (para. 5).

3. As the Commission decided to devote the first three years (2005-2007) of the proposed world programme to human rights education within the primary and secondary school systems, OHCHR joined efforts with UNESCO in developing the related draft plan of action, as that sector is a common concern of the two organizations.

4. From May to July 2004, OHCHR and UNESCO prepared a first draft of the plan of action on the basis of, inter alia, relevant United Nations instruments and documents, final recommendations of relevant regional intergovernmental meetings, as well as correspondence sent by Governments to OHCHR and summarized in reports of the High Commissioner. The first draft was then reviewed by over 50 specialists from all continents - from Ministries of Education, governmental and non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and United Nations agencies - during an expert meeting organized jointly by OHCHR and UNESCO from 13 to 15 September 2004 in Geneva. OHCHR and UNESCO reviewed and finalized the text during the second half of September, on the basis of the experts' comments.

5. The final draft plan of action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the proposed world programme was submitted to the General Assembly as document A/59/525. The draft plan is composed of six main sections and an annex. Section I provides a general introduction to human rights education based on internationally agreed principles and is intended to serve as a reference for all educational activities undertaken within the World Programme for Human Rights Education. Sections II to VI, as well as the annex, are devoted specifically to human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems. In accordance with the principles set by several international human rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the draft plan of action is based on the understanding that the infusion of human rights education in the school system is a complex process. It includes not only the integration of human rights issues in the curriculum, but also involves the educational processes, the pedagogical methods and the environment within which education takes place.

6. The draft plan proposes a comprehensive implementation strategy for the national level. The main responsibility for implementation rests with the Ministry of Education in each country, which should assign or strengthen a relevant department or unit responsible for coordinating the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the national implementation strategy. Member States are also encouraged to identify and support a resource centre for collecting and disseminating initiatives and information (good practices from diverse contexts and countries, educational materials, events) on human rights education at the national level. At the international level, the plan of action envisages the setting up of a United Nations inter-agency coordinating committee composed of OHCHR, UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other relevant international agencies, to be responsible for the international coordination of activities under the plan of action. The committee is to meet regularly to follow up on the implementation of the plan of action, mobilize resources and support actions at country level.

7. As decided at its fifty-eighth session (resolution 58/181), on 10 December 2004 the General Assembly held a plenary session on human rights education, to mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) and to discuss possible future initiatives for the enhancement of human rights education worldwide. The plenary session was opened by the President of the General Assembly, followed by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. A number of government delegations made statements.

8. At the end of the plenary session, the Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 59/113 in which it proclaimed the World Programme for Human Rights Education, structured in consecutive phases, to begin on 1 January 2005. It also noted with appreciation the draft plan of action for the first phase (2005-2007) and invited States to submit comments thereon to OHCHR, with a view to its early adoption.

9. In this regard, on 21 December 2004 OHCHR sent notes verbales to all Governments seeking comments on the draft plan of action by 31 January 2005. The draft will be revised in the light of the comments received and will be resubmitted to the General Assembly for adoption.
