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Joint written statement* submitted by CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the International Alliance of Women (IAW), the International Council of Women (ICW), the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), Soroptimist International (SI), New Humanity, the Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI), non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, the Human Rights Education Associates (HREA), the International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDEL), the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA), the Teresian Association, the Association Points-Coeur, Myochikai (Arigatou Foundation), the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), the International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), the Al-Hakim Foundation, the International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB), the Planetary Association for Clean Energy, Inc., the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (OSMTH), the Worldwide Organization for Women (WOW), the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), the Equitas International Centre for Human Rights Education, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), the Association of Peace Messenger

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

Cities (IAPMC), the Association Apprentissage sans Frontieres (ASF), the Rencontre Africaine pour la defense des droits de l'homme (RADDHO), the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders), the Institute of Global Education (IGE), non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, Soka Gakkai International (SGI), Servas International, the Association for World Education (AWE), the Association of World Citizens (AWC), the Institute for Planetary Synthesis, 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.

[14 February 2011]

NGO assessment of the draft United Nations Declaration on human rights education and training**

This statement, jointly submitted by 39 organisations, reflects discussions facilitated by the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO) and Human Rights Education Associates (HREA).

We recall the views of Member States expressed in the three meetings (on 24 June, 3 September and 14 December 2010) of the Human Rights Council informal consultation on the draft UN declaration on human rights education and training, facilitated by the Platform Member States: Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia and Switzerland.

We also recall the intensive process of finalising the draft text of the declaration and the outcome of the meeting of the Human Rights Council working group on the declaration, held from 10-14 January 2011.

The views of NGOs expressed in this statement refer to the draft UN declaration on human rights education and training as of 14 January 2011 contained in document A/HRC/WG.9/1/2 (26 January 2011), which is the outcome of the aforementioned meeting of the Human Rights Council working group.

We appreciate constructive and devoted efforts of Member States in the intergovernmental negotiation in preparing the final draft text, and we particularly thank the Platform Member States for proactively advocating human rights education and training among Member States and for their best effort not to undermine the language of the draft declaration in achieving a consensus of Member States, after having come so far.

We also appreciate that NGOs were given opportunities to make frequent interventions during the meeting of the working group.

While we agree with and welcome the present draft text, we would like to draw the attention of Member States to our assessment of the draft declaration with reference to specific articles, for the effective implementation of human rights education and training.

1. Principles of human rights education and training

We consider human rights education and training a fundamental and sustainable endeavour for dealing with the root causes of human rights violations and abuses. We believe that the ultimate goal of human rights education and training is the full realisation of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural, for all persons in all countries through building a universal culture of human rights.

In this regard, we support in particular Article 1, paragraph 2, which refers to “universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all” and “the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights” and Article 5, paragraph 1, which stipulates the principles of equality, human dignity, inclusion and non-discrimination.

** Operation Peace Through Unity (OPTU), Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace, and Marist International Solidarity Foundation ONLUS (FMIS), NGOs without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

Human rights education and training concerns all persons including women, men, children, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, elders, migrants, and all minorities and vulnerable groups of people, as Article 5, paragraph 2 refers to “all persons” and “the particular challenges and barriers” and “the needs and expectations” that human rights education and training “should take into account”.

Human rights education and training contributes to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses as provided in Articles 2, paragraph 1 and Article 4, sub-paragraph (e) of the draft declaration.

We uphold human rights education and training as “a lifelong process that concerns all ages”, “in all forms of education, training and learning, whether in a public or private, formal, informal or non-formal setting” that “should use languages and methods suited to target groups, taking into account their specific needs and conditions” (Article 3, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3).

2. The rights-based approach to human rights education and training and State responsibilities

To ensure the effective realisation of all human rights and the prevention of human rights violations and abuses, the implementation of human rights education and training requires the rights-based approach, which recognises the duty-bearers and rights-holders and incorporates the principles of non-discrimination and equality, participation and inclusion, accountability and the rule of law.

Many human rights education and training activities carried out at both national and international levels already integrate a rights-based approach as they refer to various international human rights instruments, norms and standards, reflect the rights-based principles of implementation and recognise the duty-bearers and rights-holders.

The World Programme for Human Rights Education clearly specifies the duty-bearer with the primary responsibility and the specific sectors that are considered to be relevant actors in the perspective of both the rights-holders and other duty-bearers, provided in the Plan of Action for its first phase and second phase respectively.

3. Access to human rights education and training

Article 1, paragraph 1 of the draft declaration reads: “Everyone has the right to know, seek and receive information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms and should have access to human rights education and training”.

We support the formulation of this article and call upon all Member States to ensure that everyone in their territory has access to human rights education and training.

In this regard, we appreciate the recognition provided in Article 10 that “various actors within society” including “NGOs, human rights defenders and the private sector have an important role to play in promoting and providing human rights education and training”.

Taking this into account, we urge all Member States to ensure necessary support available for human rights education and training as necessary, politically and financially, by the State government or, where applicable, relevant governmental authorities. We believe that such action will be part of the implementation of Article 7 paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 regarding the responsibility of States and relevant governmental authorities and of Article 14 which also refers to the necessary resources that “States should ... make available for the effective implementation of and follow-up to” this declaration.

We believe that this declaration, with particular significances enshrined in Article 1 and Article 7, furthers cooperative and constructive relations between civil society actors and States and relevant governmental authorities of all countries in implementing human rights education and training.

4. International and regional human rights mechanisms

At the both international and regional level, various human rights mechanisms exist and are available to be used for the promotion and implementation of human rights education and training. In turn, human rights education and training promotes the application of human rights mechanisms by States, relevant government authorities and civil society actors.

In light of Article 12 and particularly Article 13, we consider that the Universal Periodic Review process and the monitoring system of human rights treaties, as well as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council are of the utmost importance for such international mechanisms within the UN system.

In this regard, we call upon all Member States, once the declaration is adopted, to demonstrate in practice their commitment to human rights education and training by including “information on the measures that they have adopted in the field of human rights education and training in their reports” to relevant bodies of such mechanisms.

As for the monitoring bodies of human rights treaties and the Special Procedures mandate holders, we would like to expect them to incorporate human rights education and training in the activities within their respective mandates, with appropriate cooperation with and support from Member States by, inter alia, making recommendations to the Member State concerned, regarding its national policies on human rights education and training or on specific thematic issues, respectively.

5. Toward adoption and proclamation of the declaration

Based on the assessment and the views with an emphasis expressed in this statement, we support the draft declaration that should be adopted by the Human Rights Council without vote.

We are aware that in some cases human rights education has been implemented effectively, and in some other cases, it has faced very difficult challenges. Once this declaration is adopted, we believe that its implementation, particularly Article 1, will contribute to the reduction of difficult challenges in effective and mutually cooperative manners by all relevant stakeholders including the government, relevant governmental authorities, NGOs and other civil society actors.

We would like to stress the significance and impact of the eventual proclamation of the declaration by the General Assembly, whereby international standards for human rights education will be officially proclaimed by the UN for the first time, and we hope that it will be an opportunity for all stakeholders to work together to encourage a more conscious and robust culture of human rights in all countries.
