



Graz Declaration on Principles of Human Rights Education and Human Security

5th Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network
Graz, 8 – 10 May 2003

Preamble

We, the Members of the Human Security Network¹,

Guided by the fundamental and universal principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and reaffirming Article 26 of the UDHR, which states that “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”,

Guided by the international human rights instruments, as well as documents, declarations and reports adopted by relevant regional and international conferences, especially the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 and its outcome document the “Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action”, and UNESCO’s International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy in Montreal 1993, which both reaffirm the importance of human rights education for an effective implementation of human rights mechanisms and recommend that States develop specific programmes and strategies for ensuring the widest human rights education,

Recalling also the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights concerning the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995–2004, which has defined Human Rights Education as “training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights”,

Welcoming the Declaration of San Jose of 2 December 2001 on Human Rights as an Essential Component of Human Security, stating “human rights and the attributes stemming from human dignity constitute a normative framework and a conceptual reference point which must necessarily be applied to the construction and implementation of the notion of Human Security”, reaffirming that Human Rights Education can function as an important means to promote and strengthen Human Security while acknowledging the norms and principles of International Humanitarian Law as another essential component of Human Security.

Convinced that Human Rights Education and Learning should enhance knowledge, clarify values, promote solidarity, change attitudes and develop critical thinking and skills contributing to the respect for and enforcement of human rights and the promotion of human dignity, leading to an active commitment and to the defence of such rights and to the building of a holistic, fully comprehensive culture of human rights,

Recognizing the important and creative role that non-governmental and community-based organizations play in the promotion and protection of human rights, having human rights education as part of their agenda, disseminating information and engaging in dialogue on human rights, especially at the grass-roots level and in remote and rural communities,

Affirming that human rights education and learning is a collective responsibility of States, peoples, individuals and the various components of civil society,

Decide to adopt the following Principles of Human Rights Education,

¹ These are Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa as an observer, Switzerland and Thailand.

Reinforcing Human Security Through Human Rights Education

1. HSN members affirm that human rights and human security are inextricably linked as the promotion and implementation of human rights is a goal and integral part of human security. This linkage is realized through a long-term commitment of all HSN members to a holistic Human Rights Education and Learning. Human Rights Education and Learning can make a vital contribution to human security by expressing the objectives of human security within a human rights framework. In this respect, cooperation will be developed amongst the HSN members.
2. Human Rights Education and Learning is a strong instrument for conflict prevention and the prevention of human rights violations, but also in processes of post-conflict transformation and consolidation, thus a key factor for achieving human security. Human Rights Education can provide a valuable basis and common vision with regard to norms and standards for sustainable conflict resolution. Strategies of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation) should therefore be built integrally upon strategies of promoting and protecting human rights.
3. HSN will aim at reaffirming Human Rights Education and Learning as a necessary operational development strategy towards human security, societal development and the affirmation of human dignity.
4. Human Rights Education and Learning needs to be incorporated into training programmes for all target groups, and, together with the learning about international humanitarian law, raises the awareness about the moral, political and legal concepts of human rights of those involved in armed conflict and thus contributes to the implementation of human security. Furthermore, the learning about the human rights of the child, in particular in armed conflict, is a pivotal strategy of the HSN in the efforts to achieve human security.

The Right to Know One's Human Rights

5. HSN members underscore the importance that every woman, man, youth and child has the right to know, understand and demand their human rights, which is part of the human dignity of each individual and which forms an important dimension of ensuring human security.
6. The HSN reaffirms that Human Rights Education and Learning is an imperative for the promotion and protection as well as the full enjoyment of all human rights.
7. HSN members acknowledge that Human Rights Education and Learning is an integral part of the right to education and the fight against illiteracy, thus guaranteeing the dignity of women, men, youth and children and their capabilities to play an effective role in the realization of human, societal and economic development.
8. Human Rights Education and Learning encompasses the right to know, seek, obtain, receive, hold and disseminate information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including information as to how human rights and freedoms are given effect to in domestic legislative, judicial or administrative systems.

Strengthening Society and Empowering the Individual

9. HSN reaffirms that Human Rights Education and Learning is a future-oriented proactive process of gaining knowledge, raising awareness, transferring knowledge and building consciousness that provide skills for meeting common future challenges and contribute to a culture of human rights.

10. The core elements of Human Rights Education and Learning are:
 - emphasizing the universal character of human rights
 - strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular
 - capacity-building for society and the empowerment of the individual or of groups to make full use of its/their human rights
 - intensifying efforts against discrimination, racism, xenophobia and related intolerance
 - ensuring gender equality
 - the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity
 - enabling participation in democratic processes
 - the promotion of understanding, respect and mutual dialogue
11. HSN members will promote Human Rights Education and Learning as a tool for peaceful societal transformation with a gender perspective and a framework for social development aiming at the empowerment and the building of capabilities of women, men, youth and children through critical thinking, understanding, applying and claiming all human rights, including civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development.

Respecting Diversity: Gender, Culture, Equality and Good Governance

12. A key challenge for the future of Human Rights Education and Learning is to enhance the universality of human rights by rooting these rights in different cultural traditions, taking into consideration the cultural diversity of communities and societies. However, cultural diversity must not be used to justify or excuse discrimination or violations of human rights obligations.
13. The HSN members recognize that Human Rights Education and Learning should be free of gender bias, racial and other stereotypes, be sensitive to particular needs and be based on the principles of non-discrimination and equality in the enjoyment of all human rights, recognizing that all people are born equal in dignity.
14. In recognition of the interdependence and mutually reinforcing nature of democracy, development and human rights, the HSN members will cooperate closely to ensure that Human Rights Education and Learning should seek to further effective democratic participation in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. It should be utilized as a means of promoting economic and social progress and people-centred sustainable development and thereby contribute to strengthening the Rule of Law and capacity building for Good Governance, recognized as an important strategy towards democratization, accountability and global governmental stability.

Implementing New Methods of Human Rights Education and Learning

15. Human Rights Education and Learning has to address human rights in a pro-active, cohesive and holistic way, giving equal attention to all parts and dimensions of the human rights framework, illuminating the universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated nature of human rights.
16. Human Rights Education has to be a participatory learning process, using inter-active methodologies and pedagogies in addressing the relevance of human rights to people's daily lives and concerns.
17. Human Rights Education and Learning has to involve and be integrated as a life long process of learning in formal education, included, in particular, in the curricula on history, political education and democratic citizenship, non-formal learning at the community level, and informal education for example through cultural means. It has to be culturally sensitive, practical and skills-oriented and adequately address the needs of learners across all sectors of society.

Being Responsible for Human Rights Education

18. HSN members acknowledge that states have the main responsibility to ensure the promotion of Human Rights Education within public institutions on all levels - executive, legislative and judiciary on national and local level - by disseminating knowledge about human rights and encourage its incorporation into the education on all levels, the creation of instruments and the promotion of networks for reviewing, systematizing and disseminating experiences and materials on Human Rights Education – in collaboration with NGOs, academic institutions, National Human Rights Commissions and other national human rights institutions (ombudsmen) as well as international organizations – to be internalized by society.
19. HSN members further believe that Human Rights Education and Learning is also the responsibility of all public institutions and civil society as well as the media, which have an important role in informing people, in reporting about human rights violations and in ensuring that the standards of reporting reflect human rights principles (e.g. non-biased, respectful of people and non-racist). Private companies are encouraged to contribute to the education and learning of Human Rights.
20. HSN underscores the importance of ensuring that Human Rights educators and learners are protected from any persecution or oppression resulting from their educational activities. The HSN members therefore welcome cooperation between the Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders, UNESCO and OHCHR in developing monitoring and protection procedures.

The Way Ahead: Steps to be taken

21. HSN members will assist the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to coordinate relevant UN education and public information programmes in the field of Human Rights as set out in his mandate.
22. HSN members will give attention to the concrete implementation of the remaining part of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education and promote the continuation of strengthened Human Rights Education activities beyond December 2004, including the development of comprehensive, participatory and effective national strategies for Human Rights Education.
23. As an important contribution HSN members will advance human rights training programs held locally, nationally and regionally to increase the numbers of human rights educators at the community level.
24. HSN members will also consider supporting new innovative approaches for Human Rights Education and Learning such as, inter alia, the building of Human Rights Cities and Communities which provide new opportunities for enhanced respect for Human Rights at the local level. Regional Learning Institutions for Human Rights Education can contribute to capacity-building in Human Rights Education and form a flexible and regionally relevant resource base.
25. To this end, HSN members welcome the Manual “Understanding Human Rights” as a concrete contribution to the work of the HSN under the Austrian chair and will encourage respective training institutions to use and distribute it by, inter alia, considering to translate the manual into different languages in order to introduce it into their respective regional and cultural settings. HSN members will furthermore promote and support the creation of a network of civil society institutions in the field of Human Rights Education and Learning and stimulate activities based on intercultural materials and information on Human Rights Education.