

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2004 A TRIBUTE TO HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATORS

Paris, November 16 - The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNESCO are dedicating Human Rights Day 2004 on 10 December to human rights education and encouraging other agencies and programmes of the United Nations System and relevant governmental and non-governmental actors to do the same.

This year's observance will help highlight deliberations in the United Nations General Assembly, which is devoting a special plenary session on Human Rights Day to human rights education, High Commissioner Louise Arbour and UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura said. The special meeting will mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) and discuss possible future initiatives for the enhancement of human rights education worldwide. The Assembly is expected to proclaim a World Programme for Human Rights Education. The first phase of the Programme, to run from 2005 to 2007, is to be devoted to human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems.

Announcing the December 10 observance, Mrs. Arbour said: "Every year, Human Rights Day reminds us of persisting human rights problems in our communities and in the world, and of the huge effort still needed, on the part of each and everyone of us, to make human rights a reality for all".

"Human rights education is indispensable for every individual to fully enjoy and claim a life of security and dignity," said Mr. Matsuura. "It is indispensable for public officials to give effect to human rights commitments by the State. Finally, it is indispensable for the entire society to develop and nurture a human rights culture – a prerequisite of harmonious and peaceful development," he added.

The High Commissioner and the Director-General called on all actors to take the opportunity provided by Human Rights Day to organize educational activities at all levels and in all sectors, disseminate good practices and launch future initiatives in this area, "in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect among all those involved".

"Human Rights Day should provide us with an opportunity to pay tribute to human rights educators - indeed, human rights defenders - who, in formal and informal settings, in small or large communities, and often encountering difficulties and hazards, contribute to building a universal culture of human rights," they concluded.
