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**Round Table: The role of international institutions in supporting sustainability of  
 citizenship and human rights education**

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In the last 20 years of working experience in the field of human rights, I have realised that the prevention of human rights violations is crucial. For this end, human rights education is a vital approach.

The ultimate purpose of human rights education is the full realisation of human rights for all in all nations of the world.

There are many educators concerned with human rights education. However, there are not equivalently many human rights workers engaged in human rights education.

It is my understanding that in many European countries, human rights education is generally integrated in citizenship or civic education where formal education setting is concerned.

I refer to human rights education based on this understanding

1. Issues on the sustainability

Sustainability is a challenge to human rights education.

There are three basic “ingredients” of sustainability of human rights education namely; political will; monitoring system; and evaluation system.

As for the political will, at both international level and the European regional level, the increased recognition by States of the importance of human rights education is evident, today. In practice, many initiatives have been taken and relevant programmes have been in place.

But with regard to monitoring and evaluation systems, these are generally far from sufficient.

We need guiding principles internationally agreed by all States on their clear responsibility with a common definition of human rights education.

At present, for some States, such a responsibility is seen to be about the promotion but not

the implementation of human rights education.

The real issue here is why they are missing or difficult to equip with.

This question is also related to certain factors or conditions including; poverty; political instability; illiteracy; and cultural traditions which may contradict human rights standards.

We all know that human rights education can be implemented in formal, non-formal or informal setting.

In non-formal education settings, it is often NGOs, individual human rights educators and trainers as well as human rights defenders that are engaged in human rights education.

I often hear that especially in such non-formal settings, sustainability often becomes a major challenge.

This might be due to the misperception that human rights education is the exclusive property of schools in formal education setting. On the other hand, some people or school teachers may believe that education and human rights cannot be mixed because human rights are “political”, or simply they don’t know how to integrate human rights education in school teaching.

In non-formal and formal education settings both, the difficulty of sustainability could be caused by the lack of political support from local or national authorities and the lack of financial resources, for example.

We should also know that there are many ways human rights education can be described and understood.

This is the gap between international standards and actual practice on human rights education that should be filled by common guiding principles.

International institutions are in the best position to contribute to filling this gap.

This is because such guiding principles should be endorsed by all Member States with their explicit political will to comply with them. It also requires consensus of civil society as a whole.

At the European regional level, a charter on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education is expected to be adopted soon.

At the international level, a UN declaration on human rights education and training is now in the process of being finalised in the UN Human Rights Council.

The definitions and principles of human rights education should be consistent between regional and international levels. At least they should not be contradictory each other.

Several Member States of the Council of Europe are proactively committed to the drafting

process of the UN declaration - to name just a few, Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland.

These Member States together with other Member States could play a very important role to contribute to ensuring such consistency between the regional and international levels.

To add a few more points regarding the draft UN declaration, its content would be further elaborated for finalisation, and to my knowledge, it is expected to be adopted by the end of 2011 by the United Nations General Assembly.

One of the questions is about the right to human rights education. The current draft text is based on this rights-based approach. Some Member States implied and explicitly expressed that it was not so welcome if it was an attempt to create a “new” right through this declaration.

Among NGOs and civil society actors, however, strong consensus already exists on the point that the right to human rights education is not a new right which needs to be created, but an already existing right and that it signifies both the right to provide and the right to receive human rights education.

In terms of the sustainability, we have the World Programme for Human Rights Education at the international level, and it is an open-ended programme.

Its second phase started from this year, and the plan of action is currently being prepared by the Office of the UN Higher Commissioner for Human Rights. From civil society, input was made and submitted to the Office of the Human High Commissioner for Human Rights.