

Expert Meeting on “Assessment of progress in the area of citizenship and human rights education” (15 and 16 October)

Presentation on the reporting process under the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

(Introduction)

Dear experts and colleagues,

First of all, I again apologize for not being able to attend the present seminar, as it coincides with UNESCO's session of the Executive Board.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to present the monitoring process under the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the progress made in its implementation as well as future perspectives in light of the adoption of the new 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

(Background and historical perspective of the 1974 Recommendation)

- To be able to assess the progress made, let me briefly recall the context of the adoption of the 1974 Recommendation.
- From its very inception, after the end of the Second World War, UNESCO implemented a two-pronged strategy in the field of peace, human rights education and education for international understanding. A strategy based on standard-setting work and on practical activities and partnerships.
- The idea of adopting the 1974 Recommendation dates back to the years following the foundation of UNESCO. However, it took some time to adopt this instrument which was eventually endorsed as a Recommendation rather than as a convention opened to ratification.
- In addition to the 1974 Recommendation, in November 1995, the General Conference at its 28th session endorsed the Declaration adopted by the International Conference on Education (October 1994) and approved the Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy which, by virtue of its comprehensive scope, covers all other relevant instruments in this domain. A number of other instruments have been also developed under the auspices of UNESCO on issues related to education, non-discrimination, tolerance and international understanding.
- In parallel to this process, many provisions related to issues covered by the 1974 Recommendation have been included in international human rights treaties and instruments. And most recently, the Human Rights Council followed by the UN General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training in 2011. This shows that a number of Member States and stakeholders are mobilized around issues related to human rights education.

(1974 monitoring procedure: challenges and progress)

Let me underline instead the major challenges and progress made in both the monitoring procedure and the actual implementation of the 1974 Recommendation.

- As it is often the case in respect of legal instruments, in particular non-binding ones, the response rate by Member States is too low to provide a solid baseline. Yet, it is interesting and encouraging to note that significant progress has been made in this regard. Over the past twenty years, the response rate by Member States has more than doubled, from 13% to 29% per cent. We hope to reach an even higher response rate for the next reporting cycle. The periodic monitoring takes place every four years. Thus, the next one will be carried out in 2016, and will be covering the period 2013-2016.
- Another challenge faced in the monitoring process is the information-sharing outreach of the report. Before the 4th consultation process, Member States' submissions and UNESCO's consolidated report to its governing bodies were not made public. It is only since the 4th consultation round that Member States submissions and UNESCO's consolidated reports are made public. Now, these documents are also disseminated through the Global Database on the Right to Education and shared with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- A further challenge relates to the consultation process itself. Currently these consultations take the form of a questionnaire sent to Member States. This process will now be more participatory, as Member States will be consulted on the reporting guidelines and its content first. This will give us the possibility to enhance transparency, participation, ownership by Member States and the content of the questionnaire itself.

(Implementation by Member States: challenges and progress)

With regards to progress made in the implementation of the 1974 Recommendation, according to the conclusions of the last three rounds of consultations, the following findings are worth highlighting:

- A wide range of themes related to the 1974 Recommendation in Member States' educational plans have been integrated. While stand-alone and cross-cutting approaches are often mixed in education for peace and human rights, most of the countries have adopted a cross-cutting approach by integrating these components in major education policies, curriculum and teaching subjects.
- In the majority of the countries, human rights education has been included in pre-service and in-service training for teachers and head teacher training.
- Efforts have been made to go beyond a knowledge-based approach in their education systems, but also to promote and implement a competency-based approach with the aim of developing attitudes, skills and knowledge related to learner's personal and civic life and professional activities.
- Member States have taken measures not only in formal education but also non-formal and informal education.
- Efforts have been made towards a more inclusive education; particularly with regards to girls, learners with disabilities and minorities.

- Measures have been taken to improve the learning environment through the promotion of a healthy psycho-social environment, participatory processes, measures taken against violence including gender-based violence; bullying, and through the provision of school counselling and peer-to-peer mediation.
- Language teaching, including the teaching of foreign languages and the mother tongues of minorities and indigenous people, are deemed an effective means of fostering mutual understanding at the intercultural and international level.

Although progress has been made in the implementation of measures in the field of peace, human rights education and education for international understanding, we need to bear in mind the following gaps and challenges that have been highlighted in the various monitoring reports:

- States in post-conflict situation and democratic transition face numerous challenges in terms of political will and interest of educational professionals in a culture of peace and human rights.
- There still remains a gap between policies and practices. In most, teaching of peace and human rights is made compulsory by the national policies and curriculum, but some reported that the implementation is limited and that its quality remains as a challenge due to the lack of capacity of schools and teachers and inadequate teaching materials. In addition negative effects of media and the Internet need to be addressed, taking into account that young people learn informally from their home and environment.
- Another continuous challenge is the lack of coordination and synergy among diverse structures and actors (e.g. ministries, national human rights institutions, NGOs, universities, development partners).
- A number of Member States emphasized the need for a systemic framework and tools for assessing impact on learners.

In light of the foregoing, the following main recommendations have been addressed to Member States:

- Further promote legislative and administrative measures in view of a mandatory and systematic human rights education within a lifelong learning perspective;
- Promote continuous incentives for activities in this field using both bottom-up and top-down approaches;
- Ensure a systemic mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of the policy implementation;
- Develop tools and framework for assessing the impact on learners, in terms of attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviour;
- Improve coordination among existing structures and harmonize actions; and increase regional and international cooperation
- Increase awareness-raising and capacity-building of policy-makers;
- Increase community participation in educational activities;

- Formulate strategies valuing and linking with local knowledge as appropriate;
- Further improve quality of teaching materials and pedagogy and more participatory and practical training programmes and make them available also using with ICT and social media and other education media;
- Share good practices and lessons learned.

(The way forward)

- There are many different reporting mechanisms and procedures throughout the United Nations System and within other International Organizations. We need to be mindful of Member States' multiple reporting obligations and commitments. This could be done by allowing Member States to use cross-referencing from previous reports or reports submitted to other UN bodies.
- We also need to work together to enhance synergies and information-sharing among us. Good practices should be shared by Member States and widely disseminated.
- Furthermore, we need to make a link with the World Programme for Human Rights Education as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, in particular target 4.7.
- Least but not last on this issue, it is unquestionable that numerous actions have been taken to implement issues related to the 1974 Recommendation. Yet, little work has been done to assess their impact on learners and beneficiaries.
- This is where the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda may be helpful to ensure through the collection of data and the reporting process, that evidence can be gathered to respond to this need.
- With regards to the content of education, UNESCO has recently developed the age specific Topics and Learning Objectives which have been developed in the field of Global Citizenship Education and which include topics and learning outcomes covered by the 1974 Recommendation.