

## Award Ceremony of the 2023 North-South Prize of the Council of Europe Speech by Manfred Nowak

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

At the **Vienna World Conference of Human Rights** in 1993, Heads of State and Government unanimously underlined that **all human rights are universal, equal, indivisible and interdependent**. This was a compromise between the Global South and the Global North. While the governments of the Global South accepted the universality of human rights, governments of the Global North recognized the equality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights. This means that **economic, social and cultural rights**, including the rights to social security, an adequate standard of living, equal access to health care and education, shall be treated on an **equal level with civil and political rights**. The **Portuguese Constitution** of 1976 has often been hailed as a **model** for upholding such equality between these different categories of human rights. In addition, many African and Asian States also stressed that **collective human rights**, such as the rights of peoples to self-determination, development and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment should be included in the notion of the equality and interdependence of all human rights. Unfortunately, many governments of the **Global North** continue to give priority in their internal and external policies to civil and political rights, while many governments of the **Global South** put again the universality of human rights into question and consider them as so-called “Western values”. This undermines the historical compromise of the Vienna World Conference at a time when human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the core values of the Council of Europe, are increasingly under threat in many regions of our planet.

I consider the awarding of the prestigious **North South Prize of the Council of Europe** to the Global Campus of Human Rights as a reminder that human rights in all their dimensions, namely civil, political, economic, social, cultural and collective rights, are not only “Western values”, but the **only universally recognized value system of our time**. As the world’s largest institution of post-graduate human rights education, the **Global Campus of Human Rights** with more than 100 participating universities in all world regions, eight regional Master programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, the Arab World, Central Asia, South-East Europe and Europe, and with thousands of graduates working as human rights ambassadors in governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, business corporations and academia, **takes the universality, equality and interdependence of all human rights very seriously**. We are deeply convinced that only a **universal human-rights-based approach will be able to solve the most urgent global crises and challenges** of our time, be it increasing use of arms and wars to solve real or perceived conflicts, the triple planetary crisis, outraging economic inequality between and within States, digitalization, artificial intelligence, polarization, radicalization and extremism.

I am deeply honoured and grateful to the **Council of Europe**, the oldest and truly pioneering inter-governmental organization fully dedicated to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, to the **North-South-Centre** as a pillar in the implementation of the Council of Europe's external dimension, and to the **Government of Portugal** for having awarded the prestigious **North-South-Prize to the Global Campus of Human Rights**. This Award will encourage us to continue our work of educating many thousands of future human rights defenders spreading the message of universal human rights, democracy and sustainability to all corners of our planet and to stand up for human rights defenders, the rights of children, and the rights of future generations to a better world.

I thank you for your attention.