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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1974 RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING, COOPERATION AND PEACE AND EDUCATION RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

SUMMARY

By 182 EX/Decision 35, the Executive Board's Committee on Conventions and Recommendations decided to continue, at its 184th session, consideration of the implementation of the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. This document therefore provides an update on the status of work in this area (Section 1) and reproduces paragraphs 20-28 of document 182 EX/35 on the results of the Fourth Consultation on the Implementation of the 1974 Recommendation (Section 2).

This document has no financial or administrative implications.

Section 1: Current status of work

1. At its 182nd session, the Executive Board decided to continue consideration of the implementation of the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in particular the obstacles and continuing challenges as well as suggestions for future action described in paragraphs 20-28 of document 182 EX/35 on the results of the Fourth Consultation on the Implementation of the 1974 Recommendation (see 182 EX/Decision 35). The aim of this discussion is to allow Member States to analyse key challenges and make recommendations for the way forward, as emphasized by the Members of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (182 EX/68, para. 26). For this reason, paragraphs 20-28 of document 182 EX/35 are reproduced in Section 2 below.
2. Moreover, as requested by 182 EX/Decision 35, the Secretariat submitted the results of the Fourth Consultation to the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights as UNESCO's contribution to the consultation on the first phase of the Plan of Action of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE, 2005-2009). This was done through the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Human Rights Education in the School System (UNIACC).
3. UNESCO has been actively involved in the work of UNIACC. As required by Human Rights Council Resolution 12/4 (1 October 2009) and the WPHRE Plan of Action for the first phase, the UNIACC will prepare and submit an evaluation report on the first phase of the World Programme to the United Nations General Assembly at its 65th session. The results of the UNESCO Fourth Consultation will be fully taken into account in the evaluation process.
4. The results of the Fourth Consultation were also submitted to the drafting group for the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training in order to inform it of UNESCO's efforts in promoting human rights education at all levels of formal and non-formal education.
5. Finally, the results of the Fourth Consultation were submitted to the 35th session of the General Conference (35 C/INF.23).

Section 2: Excerpt from 182 EX/35 on the results of the Fourth Consultation on the Implementation of the 1974 Recommendation (paras. 20-28)

“IV. Lessons learnt and the way forward

(i) Obstacles and continuing challenges

20. Education for peace, human rights and democracy should ideally be integrated in all spheres and at all stages of education. However, experiences point to difficulties in achieving this due to limited financial and human resources as well as capacity and the lack of clearly defined tasks among the different levels of policy-making. Some countries also mentioned the importance of developing leadership to strongly promote education. Finally, a comment was made concerning poor coordination at the international level, with overlapping frameworks. UNESCO is conscious of the need for action to respond to these challenges and is actively working with UNIACC to better coordinate United Nations actions in this area, at both the global and national levels. In this regard, the Organization has increased cooperation with other actors such as the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and major non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations. Significant efforts are also being made to enhance the visibility of these coordination mechanisms through a series of joint activities.

21. Several countries raised obstacles concerning insufficient pre-service and in-service training as well as the lack of clear guidelines and relevant materials for teachers and school personnel,

including managers and administrators at the local level. Teachers are also often overwhelmed by the diverse demands put on them. In regard to the curriculum, it was pointed out that it is often overloaded and not always updated. A lack of culturally relevant educational materials was also mentioned. Teachers appreciate practical materials ready for use in their classrooms.

22. At the conceptual level, some countries underlined religious and cultural resistance to integrating human rights-related values and principles in education. Teachers are often confused regarding related disciplines (education for citizenship, peace, etc.). Lack of effective partnerships with the media limits the social change that education in and for human rights seeks to encourage.

(ii) Suggestions for future action by some Member States

23. Effective implementation of education in this area requires a holistic approach that takes into consideration the curriculum, teaching materials, teacher training, teaching methods and the school environment. Education for peace, human rights and democracy must be integrated into national education strategies as a whole, particularly policies and strategies for EFA. To achieve this, it is useful to establish a national coordinating unit among concerned ministries and stakeholders. One report also stated the need to integrate human rights education as a separate, examinable subject. A more systematic approach to human rights education encompassing the diverse aspects of formal and non-formal education and training is necessary at the different levels.

24. The role of human rights education was underlined, in particular regarding post-conflict situations, remembrance and interreligious dialogue. It is essential that adequate resources be allocated in order to secure a solid follow-up to these issues and others, facilitating the innovation and renewal of human rights education.

25. Parents and learners must be further engaged in promoting human rights in order to build and strengthen a human rights culture throughout the education system. A change in the mindsets of societies is necessary for the full respect of everyone's rights. Closer cooperation with media professionals is important in this regard.

26. The role of research and higher education was underlined with the following suggestions: further development of university degree programmes specialized in human rights education; development of methods to measure the impact of human rights education, serving to ensure sustainability through well-planned follow-up; and better coordination of the various stakeholders involved in human rights education research.

27. To build further on achievements to date, some National Commissions in some States proposed to create a practical online platform for sharing materials and good practices and to increase networking, in particular between human rights institutions, parents and teachers associations, NGOs, international organizations, the media, universities and teacher training colleges.

28. To ensure more effective implementation of the 1974 Recommendation, UNESCO is mobilizing the education policy, research and practice communities from different geographical regions around reflections on how to put human rights into practice. Thus, greater awareness of the Recommendation and human rights education has been achieved through the involvement of National Commissions in a series of activities on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is anticipated that UNESCO will continue to provide support to its Member States in this field, with focus on the production of practical tools for teachers and educators, capacity-building, networking and the development of research on the monitoring and evaluation of education policies."