



UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
NATIONS UNIES
HAUT COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME

UNITED NATIONS
EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR L'ÉDUCATION, LA SCIENCE ET LA CULTURE

9 January 2006

Sir / Madam,

We have the honour to inform you that, on 10 December 2004, the United Nations General Assembly officially proclaimed (Resolution 59/113A) the World Programme for Human Rights Education to begin on 1 January 2005, in order to advance the implementation of human rights education programmes in all sectors. The World Programme provides us with a collective framework for action based on human rights education principles agreed upon by the international community. It aims at supporting existing initiatives, building on the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), and at providing an incentive to continue and expand them and develop new ones, through partnership and cooperation at all levels.

On 14 July 2005, the General Assembly adopted (Resolution 59/113B) the Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme, which is focusing on the primary and secondary school systems. According to the Plan of Action, human rights education in the school system includes both the integration of human rights issues in the curriculum and textbooks and the educational processes and the environment within which education takes place.

The Plan of Action, which is enclosed with this letter, recommends a concrete implementation strategy for the national level involving an analysis of the current situation of human rights education in school systems; setting priorities and developing a national implementation strategy; implementing, monitoring and evaluating activities. The main responsibility for implementation rests with the Ministry of Education in each country, which should assign or strengthen a relevant department or unit responsible for coordinating the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the national implementation strategy in close collaboration with all relevant actors. Member States are also encouraged to identify and support a resource centre for collecting and disseminating initiatives and information (good practices from diverse contexts and countries, educational materials, events) on human rights education at the national level.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION
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We are writing to you to engage your interest and support in this area, in particular by implementing the attached Plan of Action. As the international community pointed out when proclaiming the World Programme, human rights education represents a vital investment towards the realization of human rights; it contributes significantly to promoting equality, preventing conflict and human rights violations and enhancing participation and democratic processes.

We would be grateful if you could indicate to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights which relevant department or unit in your Ministry would be assigned to coordinate initiatives related to the implementation of the Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme. Our Offices will compile a list of such focal points and will be in contact with them on any follow-up activity. We also look forward to learning about your overall initiatives to implement the Plan of Action.

We are aware of the technical and financial difficulties that some Member States may encounter in implementing the Plan of Action. In this regard, we wish to draw your attention to the fact that both of our institutions offer advisory services and technical assistance in this area. We invite Member States to contact our offices in order to obtain detailed information on the activities conducted by our institutions to support and strengthen national capacities for human rights education.

Accept, Sir / Madam, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Louise Arbour
United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights

Koïchiro Matsuura
Director-General
United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Annex:

Plan of Action for the First Phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education

Copy to:

1. Permanent Delegations to UNESCO

2. National Commissions for UNESCO
3. National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
4. United Nations Resident Coordinators
5. OHCHR and UNESCO field presences

SAMPLE