

Exhibition Launch: Transforming Lives: The Power of Human Rights Education

06 March 2017, 12:00-13:00

Palais des Nations, E building, first floor (communal space near Rooms XVII and XVIII)

Craig Mokhiber, OHCHR

Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, outside these marble halls and teak-panelled meeting rooms, there is an audible rumble rolling across our world.

You can hear it growing on every continent, in countries developed and developing, in homes, places of work and worship, and on the streets of towns and cities from New York to Johannesburg.

It is the rumble of people everywhere, rising up to say that the growing discrimination and abuse, joblessness and deprivation, inequality and elite capture, political corruption and injustice, can no longer be tolerated. *Will* no longer be tolerated.

And here's the thing: they have a choice.

They can choose autocratic demagogues and bigotry and chauvinism and scapegoating and militarism.

Or—if they *know* they have another option – they can choose human rights.

Human rights education, once viewed as the smallest and most marginal tool in the human rights toolkit, has now risen to essential—even *existential* importance.

Because knowledge is power. And human rights knowledge is the power to live a free and dignified life.

And that's why we have been so pleased to support the development of this exhibition, which is a concrete example of the kind of partnership and synergy that should characterize every human rights education activity.

This project is a cooperative effort of the *HRC Governmental Platform for Human Rights Education and Training*, of civil society through the *HRE 2020-Global Coalition for Human Rights Education* and the *NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning of the CoNGO*, and of the United Nations.

Let me thank Soka Gakkai International in particular, for having taken the initiative to develop this project, and for having led its development in such a cooperative manner.

Ladies and gentlemen, have before us a lively and compelling display of *why* human rights education is so fundamental today, if we are to empower individuals and groups to choose human rights-based solutions to the many pressing challenges of our age.

And we see here again how successful human rights education must employ participatory methodologies that are practical and relevant to the experience of learners, and how human rights education must engage learners in a dialogue on how human rights norms can translate into action in daily life.

But most of all, this exhibition illustrates the **power** of human rights education.

The power to equip a victim of domestic violence in Turkey with the strength and confidence to start a new life as a human rights defender;

Or the power to change the practices and perceptions of law enforcement agencies in Australia, so that their essential function of protecting *all* members of the community is both recognized and practiced.

These two stories, featured in today's exhibition, are further documented in the movie *A Path to Dignity – The Power of Human Rights Education*, co-produced in 2012 by HREA, SGI, and OHCHR— and we encourage you to check it out on the screens behind you.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are powerful images.

They offer hope.

And they offer a choice to the millions of people around the world demanding change.

The choice of human rights.

I thank you.