



Council of Europe

Slovenian Chairmanship
May to November 2009



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Warsaw, 2 October 2009

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Mr/Ms Moderator, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia is one of the seven members of the cross-regional Platform for Human Rights Education and Training, which also includes Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal and Switzerland, established in 2008 within the Human Rights Council. The Resolution tabled by the Platform at the tenth session of the Council, in March 2009, was co-sponsored by a large number of delegations and adopted by consensus. In the resolution the Council tasked its Advisory Committee to elaborate a draft UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training that will be presented to the Council in March 2010.

An important contribution to this process came from a seminar that was held in Marrakech in July 2009, with the participation of delegates from nearly 30 States, international experts, academicians and NGO's. We note with satisfaction that the debate on the UN Declaration raised a lot of interest among different stakeholders. Further informal meetings and discussions on the draft Declaration are envisaged in the months to come. We look forward the formal adoption of the Declaration by the Human Rights Council in the course of 2010.

Human rights education and training is a lifelong process. Effective human rights education and training can prevent human rights violations by promoting a culture of peace, non-discrimination and tolerance anchored in respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. These principles are embodied in the preliminary report prepared by the Advisory Committee. We believe a UN declaration will provide a significant added-value to the cause of human rights in a number of significant ways.

On the political level, it will deliver to the international community a clear message that human rights education needs to be further strengthened. Notable international initiatives such as the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004) and the ongoing World Programme for Human Rights Education have laid down a solid base, but more can be done. The Declaration will incite the necessary political will for further action on human rights education by promoting international dialogue and cooperation, raising awareness and addressing gaps in the international framework on human rights education in a non-binding, consensual and inclusive manner.

On the practical level, the Declaration will offer a unifying concept of human rights education and training. It will also provide a clarification as to its relationship with the right to education and its role in formal, informal and non-formal education. The Declaration will help to illuminate the engagement of States in this field. In addition, it will promote an exchange of best practices in human rights training in such areas as law enforcement and armed forces, as well as human rights education and training for vulnerable groups. The Declaration would



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thus guide, complement and promote the existing national and international policies, programmes and initiatives on human rights education and training.

In the following minutes, please allow me to present an example of good practice in human rights education. During the Slovenian Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2005¹, Slovenia initiated a Pilot Project on Human Rights Education called 'OUR RIGHTS'² based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Slovenian experts designed, initiated and led the implementation of this human rights education pilot project involving a number of governments of the OSCE participating states, NGOs, individual experts, ombudsman's offices, field offices of international organizations and other stakeholders. The participating states showed great interest, so the teaching tool was translated into 17 languages and used with some 66,000 children in Albania, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Ireland, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey, and Ukraine. Children from minorities were also involved, including Roma children in several countries in South-Eastern Europe. The evaluation³ of the OSCE pilot project clearly shows that it contributed significantly to raising awareness on teaching and learning about human and children's rights in all the participating countries.

As a teaching aid, the user-friendly set of OUR RIGHTS teaching cards (which you can see on the screen as I speak) had a considerable impact on stimulating pupils to learn about children's rights. In addition, the great importance of human and children's rights to teachers does not seem to have been affected by variability in teachers' knowledge of human and children's rights instruments.

In some environments, local partners continued using the OUR RIGHTS material even after the pilot project had ended, and without our further support. Teachers, NGOs and education authorities in those areas have built their own capacities for teaching children's rights. We were pleased to note this, and that the motivation to continue promoting human and children's rights is very strong.

¹ **The authors** of OUR RIGHTS are: Blanka Jamnišek, Andreja Barle-Lakota, Liana Kalčina, Zoran Pavlović and Mitja Sardoč. The illustrator for the teaching cards is Matjaž Schmidt.

² **The OUR RIGHTS teaching material:** a set of teaching cards and information for teachers in the different languages used in the pilot project is available from the following websites:

- www.osce.org/activities/13042.html
- http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=104&language_id=1&erc_doc_id=5036&category_id=&category_type=&group=
- <http://www.osce.si/drugi-dokumenti-2005-04-07-hre-uvodni-tekst.htm>

The pilot project was financed by extra-budgetary funding in 2005 provided by Slovenia, the United States and Finland.

³ **The Evaluation Report** is available at:

- http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/zunanja_politika/organizacija_za_varnost_in_sodelovanje_v_evropi_ovse/izo_brazevanje_o_nasih_pravicah/
- http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zunanja_politika/Evaluation_Report_Final_15.3.2006.pdf



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After a few years of implementing the OUR RIGHTS project on their own, partners from post-conflict societies previously affected by war and terrorist attacks requested further support, especially in the form of teaching materials. The successfully implemented pilot project was incorporated into Kosovo's⁴ school curricula, which is a big strategic step forward in the education of the young.

In preparation for the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2009 – during the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Council of Europe, whose core objectives remain promoting human rights, the rule of law and democracy – Slovenia chose to support partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Ossetia–Alanya in the Russian Federation in continuing the OUR RIGHTS project in the 2009/2010 school year. Implementation began in all three regions in September 2009 for a total of about 50,000 pupils, the entire generation of 12-year old pupils in Kosovo, children of all three main national communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the entire generation of 11–12-year olds in North Ossetia–Alanya in the Russian Federation.

We believe that young people should be the first target for education on universal human rights, which enhances understanding of the diversity of human societies, including religious, ethnic, cultural and national minority aspects. Inter-cultural and inter-religious respect should also be promoted at the same time. The process of learning about human rights and respect for others should enhance our ability to build societies that will value tolerance and respect.

Our experience with OUR RIGHTS shows that there are both great opportunities and needs in the field. We believe that such projects and many other efforts need to be undertaken by international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and government institutions. With additional engagement in our own environments, no effort should be spared to reach out to children and involve them in the process of their empowerment.

Empowering children – both by educating them on their rights and ensuring their access to justice – remains a key priority of Slovenian foreign policy. We must never forget that human and children's rights are universal. Countries are committed to informing about, teaching, implementing, and respecting them. The role of international organizations is to encourage countries to fulfil their commitments.

Coinciding with the UN International Year of Human Rights Learning in 2009 and the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is a unique opportunity to show synergy of action between international organizations seeking to promote the same values, especially in the field of promoting the Rights of the Child. There is a gap between commitments and the real world of children in all parts of the world. More should be done to ensure respect for their rights and involve them in the process of their empowerment through education, including education on their own rights.

Thank you.

⁴ All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, are to be understood in full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.