



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
**HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION**

**BRIDGING  
OUR  
DIVERSITIES**

Declaration and  
recommendations

Montreal, Quebec — Canada  
November 30<sup>th</sup> to December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017



# Declaration

- 1.1** As participants in the **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION — “Bridging our Diversities”**, held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, from 30 November to 3 December 2017, we, the 300 plus representatives of national public authorities, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, educational institutions and international organizations — have come together to share good practices and explore strategies to better position human rights education as an effective response to global challenges.
- 1.2** **We acknowledge and appreciate** that we have gathered on the traditional territory of the Kanien’kehá:ka people on the island called “Montreal” which is known as Tiotia:ke in the language of the Kanien’kehá:ka, and has historically been a meeting place for Indigenous nations.
- 1.3** **We express our appreciation** to Equitas-International Centre for Human Rights Education, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Concordia University, the McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism and the Université de Québec à Montréal — for convening this important gathering. We also express our appreciation to the City of Montréal, the Government of Québec and the Federal Government of Canada for hosting us in such hospitable conditions.
- 1.4** **We draw inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** which almost 70 years ago powerfully proclaimed the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, and we believe in the essential contribution that human rights education makes in realizing the principles of the Universal Declaration worldwide.
- 1.5** **We are concerned** that serious challenges to human rights in all regions of the world are undermining the basic fabric and social cohesion of our societies. We are alarmed by growing inequality, exclusion, discrimination and polarization; the persistence of poverty and escalation of conflict; the increasing use of populist and nationalist discourses; the disillusionment with traditional democratic processes and the erosion of the rule of law, both international and domestic; the rise of terrorism and violent extremism; and the slow progress made in overcoming barriers to the inclusion and participation of the many communities which make up our societies — including youth, migrants and refugees; Indigenous Peoples; minorities; people living with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer and intersex people;
- 1.6** **We deplore** the lack of progress and the alarming backlash in realizing gender equality and protecting the human rights of women and girls, as well as challenges to the very concept of gender equality in several parts of the world. We acknowledge that discriminatory practices and other human rights violations against women and girls happen in every sphere of their life, and are deeply engrained in unequal social structures and patriarchal concepts of women’s roles within the family and society.

- 1.7** In this context, ***we strongly believe*** that human rights education promotes a shared sense of humanity and respect for diversity. We know from experience, that human rights education fosters equality, inclusion, solidarity and engaged participation and reinforces these practices in the day-to-day actions of all people; empowers each and every person to claim their human rights, and equips people from groups that historically faced discrimination and exclusion to become leaders for positive change; prevents violence and conflict by proposing solutions consistent with human rights standards; and represents a critical investment for living together and building a more peaceful and equitable future for all.
- 1.8** ***We recognize*** that human rights education and training concerns all parts of society, at all levels, including preschool, primary, secondary and higher education, taking into account academic freedom where applicable, and all forms of education, training and learning, whether in a public or private, formal, informal or non-formal setting. It includes, inter alia, vocational training, particularly the training of trainers, teachers and State officials, continuing education, popular education, and public information and awareness activities.
- 1.9** ***We acknowledge*** young people, who comprise a growing percentage of the world's population, as a major human resource for development and key agents of social change and encourage that their contributions should be actively supported, solicited and regarded as essential to tackling global challenges and building equitable and inclusive communities.
- 1.10** ***We commit***, as human rights education practitioners and human rights defenders, to pursue our human rights education efforts by working collaboratively within and among our respective communities, institutions and organizations, and in accordance with related global instruments and frameworks for action including the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, the World Programme for Human Rights Education and target 4.7 of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development.

# Recommendations

**2.1** Therefore, as participants in this *INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION – “Bridging our Diversities”*, we call on all relevant stakeholders to renew their commitment to human rights education and to draw on the following recommendations both *global and specific*, that are inspired from existing documents<sup>1</sup> and which support the conference themes below:

- **Reinforcing the contribution of human rights education** in tackling current global challenges
- **Ensuring human rights education becomes a higher priority** for governments and civil society organizations
- **Strengthening the impact of human rights education** on building equitable and inclusive societies

## 2.2 Global recommendations for all stakeholders

**2.2.1** Human Rights Education (HRE)<sup>2</sup> should encourage analysis of chronic and emerging human rights problems, including gender inequality, poverty, violent conflicts and discrimination, in the light of rapidly changing developments in the political, social, economic, technological and environmental fields, which would lead to responses and solutions consistent with human rights standards (WPHRE, PoA 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, para. 9).

**2.2.2** HRE should build on the human rights principles embedded within the culture and practice of differing contexts, including indigenous traditions, and take into account historical and social developments in each country (WPHRE, PoA 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, para. 9). The conception, implementation and evaluation of and follow-up to HRE strategies, action plans, policies and programmes should involve all relevant stakeholders, including governmental agencies, the private sector, civil society and national human rights institutions, by promoting, where appropriate, multi-stakeholder initiatives (UNDHRET, para. 8).

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1 Recommendations are inspired from the following documents: United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UNDHRET), 2011; World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE), Plans of Action (PoA), 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> phases; UN World Programme for Action for Youth, 2010; UN Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security 2015; Graz Declaration 2003; Geneva Seminar on HRE, 2017, Report; International Conference on Human Rights Education and Training for the Civil and Public Sector, 2013, post-conference report; Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 5, General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6), 2003; UN Declaration on human rights defenders, 1998.

2 Recommendations are numbered for ease of reference and are not meant to suggest an order of priority.

- 2.2.3** HRE should be accessible and available to all persons and should take into account the particular challenges and barriers faced by, and the needs and expectations of, persons in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations and groups, including persons living with disabilities, in order to promote empowerment and human development and to contribute to the elimination of the causes of exclusion or marginalization, as well as enabling everyone to exercise all their rights (UNDHRET, para. 5.2).
- 2.2.4** Opportunities for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities should be developed and strengthened, promoting their social, political, developmental and environmental participation, removing obstacles that affect their full contribution to society and respecting, inter alia, freedom of association. (UN World Programme for Action for Youth 2010, pg. 43). Moreover, human rights education should promote youth leadership and include measures to ensure youth are engaged as equal partners in society. It should aim to support youth-led and youth serving organizations as partners in the design, implementation, evaluation and ongoing improvement of programmes as those organizations are uniquely placed to engage marginalized young people and build upon young people's diversity of experiences.
- 2.2.5** Training methodologies should include participatory, learner-centered, experiential, and action-oriented approaches and should address motivation, self-esteem, empathy and emotional development leading to human rights sensitization and action (WPHRE, PoA 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, para. 22).
- 2.2.6** HRE should encourage peer-to-peer learning, recognizing the experiences of others who have experienced similar challenges and the expertise of those being trained. Peer-to-peer learning increases legitimacy and buy-in from the perspective of participants (Dublin, Post-Conference Report, 3.2.2, p. 30).

- 2.2.7** Evaluation should be infused throughout the training process, and the evaluation capacity of human rights education practitioners should be developed for them to be able to demonstrate the contribution of their HRE work to social change in their societies (WPHRE PoA 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, para.22). Evaluation should promote critical reflection and learning for all stakeholders about the aims of and good practice in HRE programming.
- 2.2.8** Research on existing resources and materials, programmes and methodologies and evaluation of related results should be undertaken, and lessons learned and examples of good practice should be shared with a view to improving and inspiring further programming, (WPHRE, PoA 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, paras. 23-24).
- 2.2.9** HRE practitioners and human rights defenders should pursue HRE efforts by working collaboratively within and among their respective communities, institutions, and organizations and in accordance with related global instruments and frameworks for action including the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, the World Programme for Human Rights Education and target 4.7 of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 2.2.10** Human rights, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be part of the professional training and licensing requirements for all persons who work with and provide services for children, especially teachers, social workers, and personnel of the juvenile justice system, (Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment N° 5, General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6) paragraph 53).

## 3.0 Specific recommendations<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1 National/provincial/local government authorities

**3.1.1** States, and other relevant governmental authorities, should **ensure that HRE and training, is developed and implemented in a spirit of participation, inclusion and responsibility** (UN DHRET, Art. 7.1).

**3.1.2** States and other relevant government authorities should **promote the inclusion and practice of human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems** ensuring a holistic approach addressing education policies and related implementation measures, teaching and learning processes and tools, the learning environment and training and professional development of teachers and other education personnel (WPHRE, PoA 1<sup>st</sup> phase, Appendix).

**3.1.3** States and other relevant government authorities should **create a safe and enabling environment** for the engagement of civil society, youth, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders in HRE and training, in which the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, including of those engaged in the process, are fully protected (UNDHRET, Art. 7.2; Resolution 2250 (2015): The UN Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security, Art. 10).

**3.1.4** States should **report on progress** made in efforts to implement HRE to the UN human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies, special procedures and the universal periodic review, and to other international or regional intergovernmental bodies (WPHRE, PoA 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, para. 61).

### 3.2 Higher education institutions<sup>4</sup>

**3.2.1** Higher education institutions, through their core functions (research, teaching and service to the community), **should ensure the education of ethical citizens committed to the construction of peace, the defence of human rights and the values of democracy**, as well as **generate global knowledge to meet current human rights challenges**, such as eradication of poverty and discrimination, post-conflict rebuilding, sustainable development and multicultural understanding (WPHRE, PoA 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, para. 21).

**3.2.2** In order to **effectively integrate HRE**, higher education institutions should undertake action in the following five areas:

#### a) Policies and related implementation measures

Higher educational policies—legislation, plans of action, curricula, training policies and so on—should explicitly promote HRE and infuse human rights throughout the higher education system.

#### b) Teaching and learning processes and tools

Human rights should be infused as a cross-cutting issue into all disciplines, and specific human rights courses and programmes—in particular, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary human rights programmes should be introduced. Practices and methodologies should be democratic and participatory. Materials and textbooks should promote human rights values. Relevant support and resources should be in place.

#### c) Research

Higher education institutions should develop new knowledge and advance critical reflection in the area of human rights, which in turn inform policies and practices in human rights and in human rights education.

3. The four groups of HRE stakeholders listed herein are specifically targeted as they are main actors and also facilitators in moving the HRE agenda forward worldwide.

4. Higher education” is defined as “all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities”. (WPHRE, PoA 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, para. 16). Included in the higher education sector can be institutions for the training and certification of teachers at all levels, social workers as well as medical and legal professionals.



## for different stakeholders

### 3.3 Civil society organizations<sup>5</sup>

**3.3.1** CSOs should **advocate for HRE** with relevant authorities and **monitor national implementation of HRE commitments** made by national authorities at the UN or in other intergovernmental fora.

**3.3.2** CSOs should **engage with relevant authorities to assist the development of duty-bearers' capacity to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of those under their jurisdiction.**

**3.3.3** CSOs focusing on HRE should **explore systemic strategies (beyond HRE)** and encourage long-term investments designed to reinforce the practice of human rights principles and values in society.

**3.3.4** CSOs **social justice programmes should always embed a HRE component** to ensure learner's empowerment to seek and find solutions consistent with human rights standards.

**3.3.5** CSOs should **strengthen collaborative efforts among themselves**, in particular in the creation of innovative HRE programming involving vulnerable populations in specific contexts.

### 3.4 International and regional organizations (IGOs)

**3.4.1** IGOs (UN, UNESCO, regional organizations) should **increase cooperation among their programmes related to HRE** (global citizenship, education for justice, etc.) and promote synergies, also in the context of global monitoring of implementation of SDG Target 4.7 (Report, Geneva Seminar on HRE, 30 May 2017).

**3.4.2** IGOs should **support HRE also by monitoring and ensuring that human rights educators and learners are protected** from persecution or oppression resulting from HRE activities (Graz, 2003, Art. 20, p. 5).

**3.4.3** United Nations human rights mechanisms, within their specific mandates, **should support national HRE efforts.** UN treaty bodies, when examining State party reports, should **review and advise on implementation of treaty provisions relating to HRE.** Thematic and country special procedures of the Human Rights Council **should review and advise on HRE progress** within their specific mandates. **National HRE efforts** should also be regularly **reviewed in the context of the universal periodic review** mechanism (WPHRE, PoA 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, para. 64).

#### 3.4.4 IGOs should:

##### a) Support governments

In the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of national HRE strategies;

<sup>5</sup> The recommendations for the CSOs are inspired by the UN Declaration on human rights defenders, 1998.

## 3.0 Specific recommendations<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1 National/provincial/local government authorities

**3.1.5** States and other relevant government authorities should ensure the inclusion of HRE in national/provincial/local human rights plans of action, national action plans against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as homophobia; in national poverty reduction strategies; in strategies to promote gender equality, youth empowerment and reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples and also ensure coherence, links and synergies between the different plans and their respective sections on HRE. It should also link human rights education policies and other sectoral policies (e.g., judicial, social, youth, health) (WPHRE, PoA 1<sup>st</sup> phase, Appendix, para. 5d).

### 3.2 Higher education institutions<sup>4</sup>

#### d) The learning environment.

Academic freedom should inform the environment of higher education institutions, where HRE promotes the daily practice of human rights by fostering mutual understanding, respect and responsibility. Explicit and shared policy statements should protect the human rights of all actors. Teaching personnel should have a mandate to pursue HRE, and students should be free to express their views, participate in academic life and have extensive opportunities for interacting with the wider community.

#### e) Education and professional development of higher education teaching personnel.

All teaching personnel and other staff should be able to both transmit and model human rights values. Education and professional development must foster educators' knowledge about, commitment to and motivation for human rights. Furthermore, as rights-holders themselves, teaching personnel need to work and learn in a context of respect for their dignity and rights (WPHRE, PoA 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, paras. 21-33).

**3.2.3** Education, professional development and licensing of all persons who work with and provide services for children, especially teachers, social workers, and personnel of the juvenile justice system, should require knowledge of human rights, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 5, General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6) paragraph 53).

## for different stakeholders

### 3.3 Civil society organizations

### 3.4 International and regional organizations (IGOs)

#### **b) Provide support to other national actors**

involved, in particular national and local non-governmental organizations, professional associations, higher education institutions, national human rights institutions, and other civil society organizations;

#### **c) Facilitate information sharing**

at all levels by identifying, collecting and disseminating information on good practice, for example through databases and the awarding of prizes, as well as on available materials, and relevant institutions and programmes;

#### **d) Support existing networks of HRE and training actors**

and promote the creation of new ones at all levels;

#### **e) Support effective human rights training,**

in particular for educators and trainers, and the development of related materials based on good practice (WPHRE, PoA, 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, para. 67).

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