

UNESCO's Contribution

SG Report on the Twentieth anniversary and promotion of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms."

Overview

The promotion of human rights is a central principle of UNESCO's mandate and therefore its work is directly connected to many provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. This interconnection is in fact four-fold. First, it derives from the crucial importance of several of the rights for which the Organization has special responsibility for creating an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights in practice. It refers notably to the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information, and the right to education. An integral part of this work is the empowerment and promotion of the rights of individuals whose role is critical for the realization of the said rights, for instance, teachers and educators, journalists, media professionals and judges.

A second link is founded on the Organization's efforts in advocacy on, and teaching of human rights. The celebration of relevant international days (for instance the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination or the world press freedom day.) is a key instrument in UNESCO's advocacy work. Similarly, the different UNESCO prizes, which honour individuals and/or institutions with exceptional contributions to a specific field, are also key tools for the Organization's advocacy efforts. Widely known are the annual *UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize*, - which focuses on defence of press freedom, especially in the face of danger - and the *UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence*, which rewards significant activities in the scientific, artistic, cultural or communication fields. To foster a culture of human rights, equality and respect for diversity, UNESCO invests in the promotion of global citizenship education and human rights education in formal, non-formal and informal education settings.

Another significant aspect of UNESCO's work is both the empowerment of key stakeholders on the side of duty-bearers and that of rights-holders. This involves working with city authorities to promote inclusive urban settings without discrimination and with young women and men to support them as leaders of the global movement towards the creation of a peaceful world.

Finally, UNESCO contributes to the objectives of the Declaration through its examination of individual complaints alleging violations of the rights within the domains of competence of the Organization.

A. Freedom of expression and safety of journalists

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that the "spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human

progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies”. This underpins the central role of communication and media in fostering sustainable development and democracy. UNESCO is contributing to building these inclusive knowledge societies, by addressing current and emerging global challenges in the area of communication and information. In its intersection with the field of human rights, UNESCO defends the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information that are the basis for a free and pluralistic media environment.

UNESCO has a foundational mandate to promote freedom of expression and its corollary, freedom of the press. It is also the leading UN agency dealing with the safety of journalists, as well as the global coordinator of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. The Organization fosters freedom of expression through global norms and standards concerning press freedom and journalists’ safety, monitoring and reporting, conducting awareness-raising activities, supporting capacity-building trainings and workshops, and research.

This is in line with SDG 16 that seeks to ‘Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’. Specifically, it addresses Target 16.10, which aims to ‘Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements’.

In this context, advocacy is one of UNESCO’s strongest approaches to influence change and promote the human rights of freedom of expression and access to information, with a special emphasis on journalists’ safety. This is done through organized actions aimed at influencing policies, social attitudes, and political processes. UNESCO has been able to empower media, as well as the public, particularly women and youth. Through combining advocacy with policy advice, capacity-building and technical expertise, UNESCO has provided support on policy and influenced duty bearers to act in support of these rights.

Public advocacy, on the international, regional and national levels, has been strengthened through World Press Freedom Day, celebrated every year on 3 May. This year, UNESCO’s flagship awareness-raising event –was celebrated in Accra, Ghana. The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDAI) celebrated each 2 November is also part of the public advocacy system.

Major challenges persist regarding the global commitment to freedom of expression, such as threats to independent and pluralistic media; growing censorship of internet; and abuse of rights online.

UNESCO is the custodian agency for indicator 16.10.2 referring to “Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information”. It is also a contributing agency with regards to data on journalist safety for indicator 16.10.1, which is under the custodianship of the OHCHR and reads “Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months”.

UNESCO’s role as a ‘custodian’ and ‘contributing’ agency for indicators 16.10.2 and 16.10.1, respectively, also draw on the Organization’s diagnostic tools, including the Media Development

Indicators (MDIs), the Journalists' Safety Indicators (JSIs) and the Internet Universality Indicators (IUIs). These are coordinated under UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), the only multilateral forum in the UN system designed to mobilize the international community to discuss and promote media development in developing countries.

i. Promoting the safety of journalists

UNESCO supports the global monitoring of attacks against journalists and judicial follow-up to cases of killings through its biennial *Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity*, which is a widely quoted document. The extent of risks faced by journalists is demonstrated by over 800 killings recorded by UNESCO over the course of ten years, 59% of which in conflict areas, and only 8% are resolved. Public statements by the Director-General concerning the killing of journalists are widely distributed within the UN systems, including UN Department of Public Information and various country missions, as well as in civil society, especially in the countries concerned.

In terms of research, UNESCO produces the "World Trends on Freedom of Expression and Media Development" study every four years with funding from Sweden. In December 2017, the new global issue was released covering four key areas: freedom, pluralism, independence and safety in six regions. As for its contribution to reporting on the safety of journalists and impunity, UNESCO reports to various mechanisms within the UN System, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. Significant progress has been achieved in reinforcing collaboration between actors, and promoting journalists' safety to the forefront of the international agenda. To catalyse further the implementation of the UN Plan, UNESCO, together with the OHCHR, organized in 2017 a multi-stakeholder consultation to assess impact and identify gaps and challenges.

At its 202nd session in November 2017, UNESCO's Executive Board adopted a decision on the safety of journalists. UNESCO plans to scale up its support to Member States in setting up national safety mechanisms to bolster journalists' security, which was a main recommendation of the outcome document of the 2017 multi-stakeholder consultation on implementation of the UN Plan. The upcoming challenge is to translate the important progress made at the international level - as reflected by the adoption within the UN system of 10 resolutions on the safety of journalists since 2012 - into national policies and practices. The outcome document of the multi-stakeholder consultation also suggested the re-creation of an UN-wide network of focal points on the safety of journalists. UN Secretary-General António Guterres responded to this suggestion by asking 14 UN Organizations to nominate focal points. This has sustained revision of the network, which is developing its role concerning the protection of journalists.

ii. Fostering public access to information

UNESCO has been designated as the custodian agency for SDG Indicator 16.10.2, which calls on countries to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements. In this role, UNESCO assesses progress towards the adoption and implementation of constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information. In expanding its effort on the implementation aspect of the guarantees for public access to information, UNESCO, at the advocacy level, seeks more buy-in by stakeholders at national level, as well as increased use by them of the findings related to the

monitoring. This is done in part through partnerships and technical cooperation with international NGOs under the “data partnership network” which includes FoIANet, Centre for Law and Democracy, Access Info, Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), Article19. In September 2016, UNESCO led an expert meeting with the GFMD, which resulted in a first positive step towards improved data collection/validation/verification. UNESCO will also collaborate with the Open Government Partnership (OGP) to advocate for the establishment of a global reporting and monitoring mechanism, with a possibility to designate pilot countries from OGP’s members. Meanwhile, within the UN system, UNESCO seeks to strengthen its work with other custodian and contributing agencies to Goal 16, such as UNDP, UNODC, UNICEF, OHCHR, and World Bank.

In January 2018, UNESCO’s support led to the adoption of the Right to Information Law (RTI) in Morocco, while in 2017 an Information Law was drafted in Myanmar. UNESCO’s support to the review process of the 2016 Somali Media Law led to the approval of the Media Bill in July 2017; and in Tunisia, the RTI, formally entered into force in March 2017.

UNESCO, through the IPDC, has raised the banner for international debates on public access to information by organizing the annual *IPDCtalks*, which mark the International Day for Universal Access to Information - celebrated each 28 September. The *IPDCtalks* serve as a high profile, innovative and impactful event, demonstrating that public access to high quality information, along with strengthened media institutions and civil societies, is key to achieving the SDGs. The event entailed presentations by philosophers, journalists, intellectuals, entrepreneurs, as well as community and national leaders. In addition to the main event at UNESCO Headquarters, the *IPDCtalks* took place in various countries, fostering online engagement from local and global stakeholders.

Through IPDC, funding support has also been mobilized since 2008 for 90 projects related to the safety of journalists in more than 35 countries, to the tune of nearly US\$1.7 million. This enables journalists and other media actors to make independent contributions to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including in the field of human rights.

Contributing towards a more scholarly reflection on, and research into the role of media and communication in the achievement of the SDGs, UNESCO, through the IPDC, has developed the Global Initiative for Excellence in Journalism Education. Conceived as a set of critical-thinking skills and practices, journalism education has the potential to raise awareness of contemporary development challenges and the role of journalism schools in it. Through independent and internationally informed journalism graduates, quality knowledge for peace, development and democracy are further disseminated.

iii. Freedom of expression, access to information and other rights:

In support of the right to peace, UNESCO has strengthened the media’s role as a platform for democratic discourse, through countering hate speech and incitement to violence. This was done through multi-level actions promoting ethical journalism in many countries, including Somalia, Syria and Libya, including capacity building, monitoring and advocacy.

Under the framework of fighting radicalization and extremism, a number of multi-stakeholder partnerships and commitments to support effective international collaboration have also been mobilized. One of the results is the collaboration between UNESCO and the UN Center for Counter-Terrorism (UNCCT) on a project on the prevention of violent extremism through youth empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Supported by the UNCCT and the Canadian Counter-Terrorism Capacity Building Programme, this project trains young journalists and media trainers on conflict-sensitive reporting and cross-cultural/cross-religious dialogue, and the production of online and offline training materials for media professionals to counter hate speech.

In promotion of the right to equality, and with particular support for women's right to gender equality, UNESCO has empowered women and youth through improved representation in media production and content. In this period, two countries signed standard-setting documents related to fair gender portrayal, and 21 universities cooperated on gender equality in media matters, while 13 international/regional associations, 15 media institutions, and 15 journalism schools promoted *UNESCO's Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media*.

Considerable breakthroughs have been realized in protecting rights in the digital age – particularly freedom of expression and privacy over the past years, through the agreement and adoption by all 195 Member States of comprehensive norms and goals under the umbrella of Internet Universality. The notion of Internet Universality can holistically highlight the continued conditions for progress towards Knowledge Societies. The word “Universality” points to four fundamental principles that have been embodied in the broad norms of evolution of the universal dimensions of the Internet. These principles are: (i) that the Internet is human rights-based (ii) open, (iii) accessible to all, and (iv) nurtured by multi-stakeholder participation.

To protect the right to information within freedom of expression and the right to education, UNESCO fosters Media and Information Literacy (MIL). Media outlets often fall prey to banning, persecution, bribery or co-option, which, combined with low MIL levels, hinder citizens from accessing relevant information and voicing their concerns. As a multitude of new digital channels and large-scale diffusion of online information come into play, new opportunities emerge, but so too do new inequalities and injustices. Not everyone has the competencies to understand, evaluate and utilize ICTs. UNESCO therefore assists Member States in supporting structural reforms with national MIL plans, and builds the capacity of civil society for more informed and active citizens. During the period under consideration, seven Member States took steps to develop MIL policies, 37 youth associations engaged in MIL, 13 training institutions integrated UNESCO's MIL curricula and two countries hosted the international MIL Week (Brazil and Jamaica).

An example of good practice in the area of technical assistance and capacity building is the provision of support to States for the implementation of human right 21, related to equal access to public service. In the past two years, UNESCO assisted 59 radio stations in 10 Sub-Saharan countries in the provision of social services on matters of local concerns through the “Empowering local radio with ICTs” project, supported by Sweden.

B. Promoting global citizenship and the right to education

UNESCO'S efforts on technical cooperation and capacity-building regarding human rights in education are framed by work on: (i) global citizenship education (GCED); (ii) the right to

education; (iii) and right to education and teaching profession. Below are examples of the support provided to Member States in this regard.

i. Global Citizenship Education

UNESCO empowers learners of all ages to participate in the transformation of society by building the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners need to contribute to a more inclusive, just and peaceful world. In this context, the Education Sector's work includes:

- Monitoring progress on target SDG 4.7 through the **1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms**. Every four years, Member States report on the measures they have taken to implement this Recommendation. The [Sixth Consultation](#) of Member States was launched in 2016, covering the period 2012 – 2016.
- **Preventing Violent Extremism through Education (PVE-E)**: UNESCO is helping countries deliver education programmes that build learners' resilience to violent extremism and mitigate the drivers of the phenomena. It has developed two normative tools on PVE-E – a [guide for teachers](#) and a [guide for policy-makers](#) – and also organizes capacity-building seminars for education stakeholders, with a focus on Africa, Southeast Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.
- **Educating about the Holocaust**: UNESCO initiates educational research in the field, provides [guidance to policy-makers](#) and supports capacity-building to develop sustainable local initiatives on Holocaust and genocide education. Such capacity-building initiatives include the [UNESCO Latin American Network on Education and the Holocaust](#) and the [International Conference on Education and the Holocaust](#), involving bi-annually 10 countries from all regions.

ii. Right to Education

UNESCO sets, develops and monitors education norms and standards in order to foster the right to education at country level. It provides technical assistance and policy advice to Member States that seek to develop or reform their legal frameworks in light of SDG4-Education 2030.

In 2011, UNESCO launched a **legal review** exercise at regional level to sensitize countries about the importance of having rights-based, inclusive, gender-sensitive education laws and to offer evidence-based advice and recommendations in an effort to generate demand for law reform. In 2015, UNESCO developed [guidelines](#) to assist Member States in reviewing their legal and policy frameworks in view of strengthening the right to education. These have been used in the review of several national systems, and were comprehensively implemented in Nepal and Haiti.

In 2016, a pilot project was launched in 11¹ Least-Developed Countries under UNESCO's **Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Programme**, with the aim to operationalize

¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal and Senegal.

SDG 4 commitments at the national level. A [review](#) of national legal frameworks relating to the right to education was undertaken as part of the project, focusing on SDG4 targets 4.1, 4.2 and 4.5, and suggesting lessons for policy-making and normative work.

UNESCO monitors the right to education presented in the **1960 Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education** through consultations of Member States every four years. The [Ninth Consultation](#) was launched in 2016, covering the period 2012 – 2016. The **Observatory on the Right to Education** is another valuable resource for informing capacity development and technical support in this field.

iii. Right to education and teaching profession

The 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education is the first legally binding instrument extensively covering the right to education. It aims at eliminating discrimination in education and promotes equality of opportunities and treatment. Concerning teachers, the Convention engages State Parties to provide training to the teaching profession without discrimination. Moreover, both the ILO-UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997) further protect the working conditions, qualifications, rights and duties of the teaching personnel.

The ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers sets forth the rights and responsibilities of teachers, and international standards for their initial preparation and further education, recruitment, employment, and teaching and learning conditions. The Recommendation is highly significant as regards UNESCO's work in the right to education, as it reaffirms education as a fundamental human right. The normative importance of the Recommendation is indicated by the fact that it expresses the need for the application of a set of common standards and measures. This normative framework covers all school-level teachers, from pre-primary through to secondary levels, in all institutions, whether public or private. The Recommendation contains detailed provisions regarding the preparation of teaching profession, for further teacher education, their employment and career advancement and promotion; security of tenure; salaries and social security. It is significant in that it enumerates the rights and responsibilities of teachers, along with professional freedom, and conditions for effective teaching and learning. The Recommendation also contains special provisions for teachers in rural and remote areas. It recognizes the importance of a normative framework for financing education and makes clear that investment in education should be a high priority.

To complement the 1966 Recommendation, UNESCO's General Conference adopted the Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel in 1997. This Recommendation suggests good practices covering all teaching personnel in higher education. It contains provisions on the duties and responsibilities of institutions regarding institutional autonomy and institutional accountability, and on the rights and freedoms of teaching personnel, including individual rights and freedoms, civil rights, academic freedom, publication rights and international exchange of information, self-governance and collegiality.

According to the above duties and responsibilities, higher education teaching personnel have the obligation to respect the rights of other members of the academic community and to base work on

an honest search for truth. The Recommendation states that higher education shall be directed to human development and to the progress of society, whose financing is a public investment. Higher education teaching personnel should have access to libraries, which have up-to-date collections, to international computer systems, without censorship. Throughout the world, it is vital and should be encouraged the interplay of ideas and information among higher education teaching personnel. . Concerning the follow-up of this Recommendation, Member States and higher education institutions should take all feasible steps to improve the conditions of higher education teaching personnel, and to apply its provisions to give effect, within their respective territories, to the principles set forth in it.

The Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) is a committee of independent experts in charge of promoting and monitoring the implementation of the 1966 and 1997 Recommendations. The CEART examines reports on the application of the Recommendations that are submitted by governments, national organizations representing teachers and their employers, and by relevant intergovernmental or NGOs. The Joint Committee then communicates its findings to the ILO Governing Body, the International Labour Conference and the UNESCO Executive Board, so that they may take appropriate action and authorize transmission to Member States of both organizations.

Another aspect of the CEART's work is the examination of allegations from national and international teachers' organizations on the non-observance of the Recommendations' provisions in ILO and UNESCO Member States. After consideration of the allegation, the CEART issues its findings and recommendations to the governing bodies of ILO and UNESCO for the resolution of the problems or conflicts.

Teachers play a vital role in determining the quality of education provided in schools, as stated in the *Incheon Declaration*. Minimum standards and qualifications for teachers are key to providing quality education. To monitor the implementation of the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, UNESCO conducts regular consultations with Member States, which are required to submit a report on the measures they adopted. The ninth Consultation was conducted in 2016-2017 and its results were submitted to the governing bodies of UNESCO at the end of 2017. The [analysis of the reports](#) received highlighted some major trends and covered a wide-range of issues related to the working conditions and rights and duties of teaching personnel. As a follow-up to the previous consultation, a thematic [Report on Right to Education and Teaching Personnel](#) was published in 2015 based on the findings of the eighth Consultation on the implementation of the 1960 Convention.

C. Empowering key stakeholders

With SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda as reference points, UNESCO is leveraging its International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) to foster the sharing of experiences, systematic dialogue on common challenges and joint action through both policies and advocacy against different forms of discrimination.²

² More information on ICCAR is available on: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/fight-against-discrimination/coalition-of-cities/>

A key priority has been to enhance ICCAR's legitimacy as a global platform for urban inclusion and diversity, particularly through a robust contribution throughout the Habitat III process. At the preparatory phase, ICCAR member cities provided input to related events, including Regional Meetings (Abuja-February 2016; Prague-March 2016); a Thematic Meeting (Montréal-October 2015); and an International Conference (Hangzhou-December 2015, in cooperation with CLT). In parallel, UNESCO provided technical input to interagency discussions on the draft New Urban Agenda and the Issue Paper on "Inclusive Cities", including through a gender lens. At the Habitat III Conference itself, UNESCO had a strong participation, notably through: i) an ICCAR panel with the Canadian Commission (CCUNESCO); the presentation of seven ICCAR regional perspective papers; ii) the screening of an ICCAR mayors' clip; iii) the production of a CCUNESCO policy paper; iv) and the contribution of ICCAR cities to two high-level panels.

One example of responsiveness to new priority setting by the international community is the work on migrants' inclusion at the local level. Drawing on the relevant commitment of the ICCAR Global Steering Committee in its Bologna Declaration (April 2016)³, UNESCO launched, with the M. V. Vardinoyannis Foundation and the European Coalition of Cities against Racism, the "Welcoming Cities for Refugees and Migrants" initiative. Its aim is to empower city administrations and other concerned stakeholders to apply, through policies and programmes, a welcoming urban governance agenda. One main output so far has been the publication of the *Cities Welcoming Refugees and Migrants* study. This presents and analyses main trends, issues and approaches with a focus on Europe, based notably on the feedback of ECCAR member cities to a dedicated survey, and puts forward actionable recommendations to foster the inclusion and improve the enjoyment of human rights by refugees and migrants.⁴

In 2017, the partners focused on two tracks. First the finalization of an operational handbook for city administrations and practitioners (to appear in early 2018). The second one is advocacy and awareness-raising, notably through the organization of a roundtable at the 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue (Baku, Azerbaijan, May 2017)⁵ and a policy brief to the 4th Global Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development (Berlin, Germany, June 2017).⁶ Further to this work, in Latin America, UNESCO, the Latin American branch of ICCAR and the International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights in Buenos Aires, Argentina, presented a Guide on Human Mobility for Local Policies at a Seminar of *Mercociudades* (November 2017). In 2018, the tools developed will be pilot-tested and the collection of good practices will continue with a focus on Latin America.

Another important work stream pertains to the empowerment of young women and men aiming to unleash their creativity, potential and capacity to make change happen – for themselves, for their societies and for the rest of the world. UNESCO's efforts with and for youth fosters collaborative work to drive social innovation and change, participate fully in the development of their societies, eradicate poverty and inequality, and foster a culture of peace. Youths are not just

³ The full text of the Bologna Declaration of the first ICCAR Global Steering Committee Meeting is available on: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002461/246194e.pdf>

⁴ The full text of the publication and an introductory video clip on the initiative are available on: (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002465/246558e.pdf> and <https://youtu.be/sfLoZEKqdbA>).

⁵ More information can be found on: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/harare/about-this-office/single-view/news/unesco_supports_4th_world_forum_on_intercultural_dialogue/

⁶ The policy brief is available on: http://www.migration4development.org/sites/default/files/unesco_policy_brief_mayoral_forum2017.pdf

beneficiaries of this work – they are **essential actors in finding solutions** to the issues faced by young people in the world today. This is achieved through encouraging:

- The **participation** of young women and men in UNESCO and its various networks and partner organizations, to open up opportunities for all to listen to and engage in dialogue.
- **Partnerships** between UNESCO and young people’s networks and organizations, to solicit and integrate their views and priorities and collaborate with them in setting up projects and programmes in the areas of the Organization’s competence.
- The **integration of youth concerns and issues** into the policy agendas of Member States in education, the sciences, culture and communication, in order to create spaces and opportunities for empowering young people and giving recognition, visibility and credibility to their contributions.

A growing dimension of the programme focuses on the prevention of violent extremism by putting youth at front and centre of the Organization’s response. This involves, *inter alia*, supporting youth organizations, building the global citizenship skills of young people, informing the development of national youth policies and promoting youth public participation.

The type of work promoted by UNESCO in this field is best illustrated by two examples, specifically a project just completed and one just starting. First, the Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth) is a three-year interdisciplinary project (2014-2017) implemented by UNESCO and funded by the European Union. Its main objective is to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for young women and men to develop their competencies, exercise their rights and duties, and meaningfully engage as active citizens, particularly in decision-making and policy planning. NET-MED Youth focused on countries along the eastern and western basins of the Mediterranean Sea.

As mentioned previously, UNESCO launched in February 2018 a new two-year project on “Prevention of Violent Extremism through Youth Empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia”. Funded by the United Nations Counter-terrorism Centre (UNCCT) and Canada, this US\$2 million project is a vital move towards engaging youth in the prevention of violent extremism, an issue that disproportionately affects young people throughout the region.

D. Communications relating to the exercise of human rights in UNESCO’s fields of competence

In conformity with the commitment to human rights in Article I, paragraph 1 of the UNESCO Constitution, its Executive Board laid down in 1978 a confidential procedure for the examination of complaints (called communications) received by the Organization concerning alleged violations of human rights in its fields of competence, namely education, science, culture and communication and information. This procedure is set out in [104 EX/Decision 3.3](#) of the Executive Board. A subsidiary organ of the Executive Board, the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations implements it.

The purpose of the procedure is to seek an amicable solution to cases brought to UNESCO’s attention by:

- establishing a dialogue with the governments concerned to examine with them in complete confidentiality what could be done to promote human rights falling within the Organization's competence;
- acting "in a spirit of international cooperation, conciliation and mutual understanding ... and recalling that UNESCO should not play the role of an international judicial body" (paragraph 7 of [104 EX/Decision 3.3](#)).

This procedure has certain specific features in comparison with similar procedures of other agencies of the United Nations system:

- the mechanism is not treaty-based; it is a decision of the Executive Board which defines the procedure;
- a complaint may be made against any Member State precisely because it is a Member of UNESCO;
- the complaint will be examined following a procedure that retains its individual nature from start to finish, unlike procedures that consider individual communications as sources of information relating to a given situation that reveal a set of flagrant and systematic human rights violations;
- every effort is made under this procedure to avoid a conflictual and accusatory context. The aim is to improve the lot of the alleged victims, not to condemn the governments concerned, and certainly not to penalize them.

From 1978 to 2017, the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations considered 602 communications. The results concerning alleged victims (or groups of alleged victims) for this period may be broken down as follows:

- released/acquitted: 231
 - released after completion of sentence: 27
 - authorized to leave the State in question: 21
 - authorized to return to the State in question: 35
 - able to resume their employment or activity: 30
 - able to resume a banned publication or broadcast programme: 14
 - able to resume normal life following a cessation of threats: 5
 - able to benefit from changes in certain education laws which were discriminatory towards ethnic or minority groups: 16
 - religious minorities able to obtain passports and/or grants, or receive diplomas: 12
 - able to resume studies: 9
 - Total number of communications settled: 400
- (The 202 remaining cases concern communications that are inadmissible or whose examination has been suspended or is under way).