



## Human Rights Office

*International Institute Mary Auxiliatrice - IIMA*

*NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

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**To the attention of  
the Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights  
Ms. Florida Shaheed**

Geneva, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010

**Subject: Questionnaire on access to cultural heritage**

In response to your request to provide information regarding the issue of access to cultural heritage, it is my pleasure to submit the answers provided by IIMA and VIDES International, which you will find in the annex.

First of all, let me clarify that IIMA and VIDES International are two NGOs in Special consultative Status with ECOSOC, especially committed to the protection of the right to education as vehicle to protect all other rights. Consequently, the specific targets of our activities are children and youth, women and indigenous peoples.

In my capacity as Representative of IIMA and VIDES International in Geneva, I would like to express my gratitude to the Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights, Ms Florida Shaheed, for this initiative that will surely bring a rich exchange and reciprocal understanding on the key issue of access to cultural heritage.

On that note, I believe that two clarifications concerning our response to the questionnaire are necessary:

1. With regard to the definition of cultural heritage that you pointed out, IIMA and VIDES are especially committed in the protection and promotion of “intangible heritage”, i.e. traditions, customs and practices, aesthetic and spiritual beliefs, vernacular or other languages, artistic expressions, and folklore. All the information provided by the two organizations, therefore, refer to this specific aspect of the broader notion of cultural heritage.
2. Due to the fact the IIMA is present in 95 countries and VIDES in 38 countries, it was impossible for us to provide the information requested on a national basis. However, we remain available and willing to provide you with more information should you address the situation of one specific country or region of the world.

For any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward for the opportunity to work together.

Best regards,

Ms Maria Grazia Caputo  
Permanent Representative  
IIMA and VIDES

Please find below a brief presentation of IIMA and VIDES International.



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**IIMA** (Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice), or Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, is a religious association **with** 1455 centers in 92 countries, across all continents. Founded in 1872, IIMA dedicates itself to providing education to young people and children, particularly those in poverty or living in difficult situations. Through the Human Rights Office in Geneva, it leads advocacy activities by presenting reports on the situation of children in the countries in which it works to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights both for the Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies reviews. IIMA collaborates with other NGOs and actors of civil society involved in defending the Right to Education.

Founded in 1987, International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education, Development (**VIDES**) is the creation of the Salesian Sisters Institute (IIMA). VIDES is present in 38 Countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, and has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

VIDES has the following objectives: the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of children, women, and youth; the promotion of volunteer service at local and international levels; the distance support of children and their families; and the promotion of youth to be active, responsible citizens. Through international exchanges, VIDES involves young people in carrying out awareness-raising activities and ameliorating local realities.