



10 December 2007

Sir/Madam,

In adopting the Plan of Action for the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, in July 2005, all Member States of the United Nations expressed their unanimous commitment to further integrating human rights education into their primary and secondary school systems. This initiative reflected the international community's recognition that human rights education can be instrumental in improving the overall effectiveness of the education system, which in turn plays a key role in economic, social and political development. Human rights education improves indeed the quality of learning achievements, supports access to and participation in schooling, and contributes to social cohesion and conflict prevention. Its important role has been reaffirmed by the United Nations Human Rights Council which, on 28 September 2007, decided to extend until the end of 2009 the first phase of the World Programme dedicated to the school system (resolution A/HRC/6/24).

As you may be aware, in September 2006 a United Nations Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Human Rights Education in the School System was established as envisaged by the Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly on 14 July 2005 (resolution 59/113B). The Committee is composed of 12 United Nations entities and affiliated organizations (ILO, UNESCO/IBE, World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNRWA, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNDG and UNDP) and its Terms of Reference are attached. The Secretariat is provided by my Office. The primary role of the Committee is to promote coordinated United Nations support to the national implementation of the Plan of Action, including through technical assistance and advisory services upon request. The Committee will also submit a final evaluation report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Plan of Action at the national level, based on contributions received from Member States.

Your commitment can mobilize national capacities and concerted efforts. We therefore count on your leadership to effectively integrate human rights education into your country's school system. In a letter dated 9 January 2006, UNESCO, the Council of Europe (for Council of Europe Member States) and my Office invited all Ministers of Education to engage their interest and support in this area. We are currently taking stock of the national initiatives carried out so far to implement the Plan of Action of the World Programme.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION
ADDRESS
COUNTRY

Accordingly, we would respectfully suggest that your Ministry take appropriate measures with a view to reinforcing implementation of human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems. We would welcome receiving information by 31 March 2008 at the latest, concerning the department within your Ministry assigned to coordinate related initiatives, as well as regarding any activity initiated or carried out in your country, so that we can facilitate networking and information-sharing within and among countries. We are also planning to include this information in the above-mentioned report to the General Assembly. You may convey your replies to us through our field offices or directly to the Committee at the following address: HRESecretariatUN@ohchr.org.

We remain available to support your national efforts towards the comprehensive integration of human rights education into the primary and secondary school systems.

Accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of our highest consideration.

On behalf of the UNIACC,

Louise Arbour
United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights

Annex:

- UNIACC Terms of Reference
- Booklet: Plan of Action for the First Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education

Copy to:

1. United Nations Resident Coordinators
2. Country Offices of all Committee's members