

**Presentation by Kirsten Mlačak, Head of the Human Rights Department of the OSCE/ODIHR**

**At the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe 2009 Lisbon Forum  
“Creating a Culture of Human Rights through Education”**

**13-14 November, Lisbon**

**Working Session I: Building global citizenship through human rights – Global strategy for strengthening human rights education**

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I am pleased to be here on behalf of Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) and to be among such distinguished panellists for this Working Session.
- In my presentation, I would like to share with you some of the ways that the OSCE/ODIHR contributes to building global citizenship through human rights education (HRE) and education for mutual respect and understanding (EMRU).
- I would also like to offer a few words about the ODIHR and the OSCE.
  - The OSCE is a regional security organization comprising 56 participating states from Europe, Central Asia and North America; and, the ODIHR, which is based in Warsaw, is its main Institution dealing with human rights.
  - OSCE addresses security in a comprehensive way, linking the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions of security.
  - You may be familiar with ODIHR’s work in election observation, but this is only one of the areas of our activity. We also assist OSCE participating States in the implementation of their human dimension commitments in other areas such as strengthening democratic institutions, rule of law, civil society, human rights protection, tolerance and non-discrimination including efforts to respond to, and combat, hate crimes and incidents of racism, and other forms of intolerance.
- OSCE commitments reflect participating States’ recognition that respect for human rights is a prerequisite for security and the role of HRE in this as a powerful instrument for preventing human rights violations and conflicts; as such, ODIHR has been active for some time in HRE and EMRU.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> HRE and EMRU are powerful tools to combat inequality, prevent human rights violations, preserve peace and build mutual respect and understanding. OSCE commitments in the field of education and awareness-raising go back to the **Helsinki Final Act** in which States committed to publishing and disseminating the text of the Final Act. In the **Moscow Document (1991)**, OSCE participating States agreed on the fundamental role of HRE and recognized as essential that their citizens are educated about human rights and fundamental freedoms. The relevant commitments on HRE and EMRU were further expanded in later OSCE documents: **Istanbul Charter for European Security (1999)**, **OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-first Century**, **MC Decision 4/03 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination**, **MC Decision 11/05 on Promotion of Human Rights Education and Training in the OSCE Area**, and the **Cordoba and Edinburgh Declarations**. HRE was particularly mentioned as an important means to “promote and enhance tolerance, co-existence and harmonious relations between ethnic, religious, linguistic and other groups, [to] provide early warning

- We have recently held our annual OSCE-wide meeting to discuss implementation of Human Dimension commitments (Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, HDIM) which included for the second year running, a day specifically devoted to HRE. One of the recommendations made at this year's HDIM highlighted the need for enhancing opportunities for cooperation in HRE among government agencies, non-governmental organizations, professional groups and other institutions – this Lisbon Forum is just such an opportunity.
- ODIHR works bilaterally with governments which approach us with requests for support and we also develop resources and educational materials.
- I would like to mention a few recent examples:
  - In 2008, ODIHR published the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (TGPs). TGPs offer guidance to participating States that choose to promote the study about religions and beliefs in public education;
  - Together with Yad Vashem, ODIHR developed *Guidelines on How and Why to Address Anti-Semitism*, which provide educators with facts, background information and good practices on how to address anti-Semitism in the classroom. The *Guidelines* are available in nine languages;
  - To complement the *Guidelines*, ODIHR, in close co-operation with the Anne Frank House, has developed teaching materials on anti-Semitism. These materials are adapted to the needs of teachers in participating States that wish to adopt them in the national curriculum. To date, they have been adopted in ten countries;
  - ODIHR's latest project seeks to develop a directory of examples of good educational initiatives and practices across the OSCE region and guidelines for educators to address intolerance against Muslims;
  - In April this year, in Vilnius, we held a regional HRE Forum for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – a first such event for that region, where we looked at achievements and considered challenges in formal and non-formal education in human rights in the target countries.
- With regards to an element of the focus of this Working Session [Global Strategy for strengthening HRE], I would like to underscore that ODIHR's HRE activities take place within the wider context of joint action by international organizations, governments and civil society aimed at the integration of quality HRE into formal and informal education. As such, we promote respect not only for the OSCE commitments but also contribute to efforts to uphold international human rights standards.<sup>2</sup>
- I would like to particularly highlight the World Programme for HRE and its Plan of Action for the First Phase, and to present to you today the product of several

---

of and appropriate responses to violence, intolerance, extremism and discrimination of these groups, [and to] promote respect for the rule of law, democratic values and individual freedoms" which is key to the OSCE's approach to combating and preventing terrorism (**OSCE Bucharest Plan of Action (2001)**).

<sup>2</sup> OSCE commitments in the field of human rights often contain identical or similar standards as those in international human rights treaties.

years effort which is also a contribution to the World Programme – the educational resource *Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A Compendium of Good Practice* – we feel that this tool, launched at the recent HDIM, is a tangible reflection of our understanding of the role of inter-governmental organizations in the global strategy for strengthening HRE.

- The Compendium was developed together with the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and one of the leading HRE NGOs, Human Rights Education Associates (HREA). I want to pay tribute to all of our partners organizations, many of which are represented here, for their dedication and expertise which has resulted in this educational resource which we very much hope will facilitate access to breadth and depth of at least some of the many existing good HRE practices in the region. We are particularly proud of the partnership that has been the basis for and resulted in the Compendium.
- We received some 237 submissions from governments, NGOs, professional bodies and associations, as well as from individual educators, and selected 101 practices on the basis of their innovative approaches, effectiveness, adaptability and diversity. The resources included in the publication touch upon the key elements for successful education and reflect the objectives of the First Phase of the Plan of Action of the World Programme for Human Rights Education: 1) laws, guidelines and standards; 2) learning environment; 3) teaching and learning tools; 4) professional development for educators; and, 5) evaluation.
- I will mention only a few examples from the Compendium:
  - *Standards of Human Rights Education in Schools* by Forum Menschenrechte (Working Group on Human Rights Education, Forum on Human Rights, **GERMANY**).  
Aiming to further the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Germany’s schools, the Standards define “what and why” students should learn about human rights in elementary, secondary and vocational schools. They are an output-oriented educational framework – benchmarks for specific human rights competencies provided for children and youth of various grades.
  - *School, A Path to Equality: A Multi-Year, Non-Formal Education Approach by Action for Justice and Peace from PORTUGAL*.  
With a special emphasis on equal opportunities between women and men, and the prevention of violence against girls and women, School, A Path to Equality is intended to deepen and strengthen the relationship between formal and non-formal education approaches.
  - *Human Rights. YES! A Manual for Action and Advocacy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* by the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center from the **UNITED STATES**  
The Manual is intended to promote awareness of the human rights of people with disabilities and of the specific contents of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This understanding is intended to lead to action and advocacy to promote these rights.

– *Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting: 11 Scenarios for Extra-Curricular Training* by the Youth Centre of Human Rights and Legal Culture from the **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

The practice consists of 11 scenario packages that present situations of human rights violations in 11 invented countries. These countries differ socially, economically, politically and culturally, but human rights violations occur in each. Scenario packages include a country description, cases of human rights violations, roles to assign to students, articles from the media and other supporting documents.

- You can find the Compendium online on all of the partner organizations' web sites, and by the end of this year, the full version with the examples of the actual practices on CD will also be available. We also plan to publish the tool also in Russian and French versions. We have already received many requests for copies including from Africa, ME and South America
- The work on the Compendium resulted in a stronger partnership and more dynamic involvement of all major intergovernmental organizations working in the area of HRE. And most importantly, we speak here as one voice and this is itself a good practice of cooperation to promote HRE.
- It is Governments however, that have the main responsibility to ensure respect for human rights. And as the Compendium illustrates, civil society actors are also key to building global citizenship through human rights.
- As we look ahead to the World Programme for HRE second phase (beginning in January), a possible UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training and Council of Europe Charter on HRE and democratic citizenship, I hope that we can continue our efforts in support of a culture of human rights through our productive collaboration across governments, civil society and international organisations in HRE.
- For it is only when individuals have the knowledge, skills and commitment; when learning involves not only information, informed reflection and action; then education for human rights will bring about the positive change in all our communities towards a culture of human rights.

Thank you.