



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

Forty-fourth session

15 June–3 July 2020

Agenda items 2 and 3

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

**Joint written statement\* submitted by World Federation of  
United Nations Associations, World Organization of the  
Scout Movement, non-governmental organizations in general  
consultative status, Afro-European Medical and Research  
Network, Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center,  
Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, Equitas centre  
international d'education aux droits humains, Instituto de  
Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos - IDDH, Inter-African  
Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of  
Women and Children, International Disability Alliance,  
International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination  
and Racism (IMADR), International Organization for the  
Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,  
International Organization for the Right to Education and  
Freedom of Education (OIDEL), Mothers Legacy Project,  
Teresian Association, non-governmental organizations in  
special consultative status, Soka Gakkai International, a  
non-governmental organization on the roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is  
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 May 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## COVID-19 and Human Rights Education

During the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council in September 2019, States unanimously adopted the Plan of Action for the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which provides specific objectives for human rights education at the national level. In January 2020 the fourth phase of the World Programme focusing on Human Rights Education with youth began.

Within a few weeks, COVID-19 swept around the world, severely impacting everyone, and especially marginalized groups including children, women, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, many of whose basic requirements are not being met. The response to the pandemic has starkly exposed the deep inequalities and structural discrimination in our societies. This could be the greatest challenge to human rights in a generation.

The Plan of Action lists specific objectives such as:

- To encourage the development, adoption and implementation of sustainable national strategies for human rights education for all youth, without discrimination;
- To expand human rights education for, with and by youth in formal and nonformal education and, indirectly, informal learning, prioritizing young people in situations of exclusion or vulnerability;
- To encourage and support young people's participation and leadership in human rights education programming for youth;
- To promote human rights education for young people as complementary to other actions for protecting and promoting the human rights of youth;
- To highlight the contribution of human rights education for youth in achieving sustainable development in the context of the 2030 Agenda and in preventing and tackling current global challenges.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, we would like to highlight four key points that need prompt action by States and civil society.

Firstly, the rise of manifestations of racism, xenophobia, and discrimination such as hate speech and hate crime, highlights the urgent need to accelerate the process of integrating human rights education for all young people, including those with disabilities, into all public and private educational systems and curricula, to foster a future generation that can uphold and defend their own rights as well as the rights of others, standing up against injustice and develop a sense of common humanity.

Second, as we look to build a new future in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the participation and voices of all youth is essential, particularly those who are most marginalized. This is crucial, to ensure that their firsthand experiences can contribute towards building truly inclusive, equal and just societies, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Third, access to funds and resources for organizations working on human rights education with youth should be guaranteed, especially in these crucial times, ensuring that existing and future programmes are prioritized and funding ring-fenced.

Fourth, States must ensure that all people, without exception of any kind, and based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, have access to accurate, reliable, and timely information about COVID-19 and to education about their human rights, including health, in a variety of accessible languages and formats.

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Plan of Action for the fourth phase (2020-2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education – Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/42/23](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/42/23)

Human Rights Education Youth Network (HREYN), Centre de Conseils et d'appui pour le jeunes en matieres de droits de l'homme (CODAP) and Association pour la promotion des Droits Humains (APDH), NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.