Regional Consultation for the preparation of UNESCO’s global strategy on the follow-up to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban 2001)

(2-3 December 2002, Bangkok, Thailand)

DRAFT REPORT

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1. Background

Within the framework of UNESCO’s follow-up to the WCAR, a regional consultation for the Asia-Pacific region was organized inviting experts coming from the National Human Rights Commissions, NGOs and Universities as well as two representatives of OHCHR (see Annex I). The aim of this meeting was to prepare regional inputs to UNESCO’s global strategy on the follow-up to the WCAR which is currently being prepared by the Organization for its submission to the 32nd General Conference. The rich contributions from the participants are being used also as a basis for an agenda of activities in the Asia-Pacific region.

2. Summary of discussion

The meeting was chaired by Mr Malama Meleisea, Regional Advisor for Social & Human Sciences in Asia-Pacific. After the presentation regarding past and on-going UNESCO’s actions in the fight against racism and discrimination, presented by Mr Serguei Lazarev, Chief of the Section “Fight against Discrimination and Racism” at UNESCO Paris, the discussion was concentrated on the needs of the region in specific relation to the 7 articles of the Durban Programme of Action, directly addressed to UNESCO (§119, 120, 126, 156, 179, 192, 195 and 202).

a) Major Issues to be addressed

The following issues were identified as priority themes for the region:
- Denial in several countries in the region that racism and discrimination exist;
- Struggle and discrimination relating to the land issue;
- Necessity of creating a channel for dialogue among religious groups;
- Emerging “islamophobia” relating to the anti terrorism movement reinforced after 11 September;
- Discrimination against indigenous peoples, migrant workers and women;
- Human trafficking as contemporary case of ‘slavery’.

b) Objectives identified
The following objectives were spelled out during the discussion:

**Objective 1: to raise awareness of the existence of racism and discrimination in the region**

Several participants pointed out that in comparison with other regions such as Europe, people are less aware of the issue of racism and discrimination in Asia-Pacific. Even if many cases of discrimination are being observed against migrant workers, indigenous peoples, women, Muslims, etc, they are not always recognized as a ‘problem’ or are still considered as a taboo. This can be seen as a major obstacle in promoting the fight against discrimination. The first need for the region would be to address both to governmental authorities and to general public a basic articulation of existing problems using the existing international instruments.

UNESCO was requested to strengthen its efforts in preparing comprehensive materials targeting different levels and in increasing the campaign for the respect of human rights and fight against discrimination and racism. To organize such a campaign, one should pay attention both to the public opinion and to the political will as discrimination exists in the sphere of private life as well as in public life. We agreed that the ‘institutionalized’ discrimination in the sphere of public life (access to social services, voting rights, access to nationality, etc) should be firstly addressed.

**Objective 2: to create a better understanding on racism and discrimination in the region**

We all agreed that it is indispensable to improve the understanding both on causes and effects of discrimination by encouraging research and studies in social and human sciences (history, philosophy, sociology, etc) and then to advance reflections on the effective ways to tackle with the phenomena. Much has been done by academics of the region in terms of research but those results have not been sufficiently reflected at the operational level. UNESCO could act as a catalyst in promoting the use of their work by translating them into practical tools such as teaching materials or policy recommendations.

UNESCO is also expected to encourage the Asian-Pacific academic community to advance their reflections on the situation of “statusless” of those who are marginalized, positive contributions of minorities in a society, “intersectionality (how one’s attributions in regard to gender, ethnicity and caste/class affect his/her situation of discrimination?)”, the question of security in the context of the post 11 September (a paradigm shift from “national security” to “human security” is necessary), the empowerment of victims, etc.
Mr. Nicholas Howen, OHCHR’s Regional Representative for Asia-Pacific, expressed his concern in regard to the greater movement of people caused by the globalization, which risks to reinforce discrimination and to generate new forms of discrimination. He thinks it might be useful to put the post-Durban work in this broader context of globalization and proposes to UNESCO and other concerned UN agencies, an inter-agency cooperation to develop a guideline for the globalization based on human rights approach, targeting at the Member States. Within such a framework, the issues of human trafficking, migrants’ rights, dialogue among civilizations and fight against racism and discrimination could be addressed.

**Objective 3: to build/strengthen institutional capacities on advocacy, monitoring, research, education and communication regarding the respect of human rights and fight against racism and discrimination**

Although a number of NGOs were created in the region and many countries have established their respective national HRS commission, the HRS infrastructure is still weak in most of countries. The environment, including political one, is not always favourable for HRS defenders to further strengthen their fight against discrimination. In order to increase their influence on the political will of governmental authorities, there is a vital need of strengthening capacities of civil society actors (NGOs, national HRS commissions, media, teachers, academics, etc) in terms of advocacy, monitoring, research, education and communication. Training for policy-makers, jurists, police is also very important. Furthermore, it was pointed out that some work should be done in regard to the revision of national legislations to reduce and eliminate discrimination in the sphere of public life, which might be undertaken by OHCHR.

**Objective 4: to create a regional platform for sharing information and increasing cooperation**

Many participants expressed their interest in creating a regional platform bringing various actors which could facilitate exchange of information and foster solidarity among nations.

c) Actions proposed:

**Objective 1: to raise awareness of the existence of racism and discrimination in the region**

1.1 Campaign targeting policy makers (governmental authorities, police, parliamentarians, judges, etc.);
1.2 Campaign targeting general public through formal and non-formal education;
1.3 Organizing an Award for media working for the elimination of discrimination and racism;
1.4 Compilation and dissemination of existing resource materials (stories, mythology, etc) teaching traditional Asian-Pacific values and universal ones such as respect, tolerance and human rights.
1.5 Compilation and dissemination of key documents in regard to the major international instruments (ex. the Durban Declaration & Programme of Action). They should be translated into local languages.
**Objective 2:** to create a better understanding on racism and discrimination in the region

2.1 Development of index and statistics regarding discrimination and racism;
2.2 Creation of a regional database containing quantitative and qualitative data on the subject;
2.3 Promotion of comparative research and case studies.

**Objective 3:** to build/strengthen institutional capacities on advocacy, monitoring, research, education and communication regarding the respect of human rights and fight against racism and discrimination

3.1 Collection and dissemination of good practices on the fight against discrimination and racism (already initiated by OHCHR in collaboration with specialized UN agencies including UNESCO);
3.2 Training workshops and follow-up activities for governmental agents, parliamentarians, police, judges and media;
3.3 Campaign for the ratification of major international instruments;
3.4 Systematized publication of periodical reports on the most important normative instruments such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in collaboration with the States Parties¹;
3.5 Development of teaching materials;
3.6 Training on data collection and statistical analysis;
3.7 Training of school teachers;
3.8 Revision of historical textbooks;
3.9 Curriculum development: incorporation into the education curriculum the issue of racism and discrimination;
3.10 Campaign for the protection of Human Rights defenders.

**Objective 4:** to create a regional platform for sharing information and increasing cooperation

4.1 Creation of a web-site acting as a clearing house;
4.2 Networking amongst NGOs, communities, GOs, IGOs, and media;
4.3 Organization of a series of meeting for the dialogue among religious leaders;
4.4 South-Eastern community programme bringing different ethnic groups;
4.5 Organizing an intercultural youth programme;
4.6 Encouraging the Regional policy-making bodies such as ASEAN to make statements on the issue which could influence on national policies.

**d) Other recommendations:**

- **Partners:** National Human Rights Commissions, NGOs, universities, schools, municipalities, National Commissions for UNESCO, regional intergovernmental institutions, media, communities and other UN agencies. People suffering from discrimination and racism should be directly involved in the project planning and implementation.

¹ 21 countries out of 40 ratified the Convention in the Asia-Pacific region (21 August 2002).
- **Time frame**: UNESCO’s strategy should be continued at least for 10 years. There is a need to prioritize the proposed actions and divide them up to several phases.

- UNESCO should have a proactive role, as ethical organization, in the existing intergovernmental follow-up mechanism to Durban.

3. **Conclusion**

The consultation allowed UNESCO to be aware of difficulties and needs particular to the region which should be taken into account in the global strategy as spelled out in the proposed objectives and actions; and the participation of OHCHR colleagues helped the discussion better focus on UNESCO’s own niche. OHCHR reaffirmed that the contribution of UNESCO is indispensable in assuring the effective follow-up to the WCAR and it was agreed that the bilateral discussion between OHCHR and UNESCO will be continued to strengthen the cooperation. It was agreed by all the participants to maintain the network created during the meeting. The results of the discussion will contribute to elaborating a UNESCO integrated strategy to combat against racism and discrimination.
AGENDA

Sunday, 1 December 2002

Participants arrive in Bangkok and transferred to Imperial Tara Hotel.

Monday, 2 December 2002

8.30 - 9.00 Registration
9.00 - 9.20 Introductions
9.20 - 10.00 Presentation of UNESCO’s action regarding the Durban conference and follow-up mechanism, Mr. Serguei Lazarev and Ms. Jun Morohashi (UNESCO Paris)
10.00 - 10.30 Coffee Break
10.30 - 12.00 Discussion and reactions from participants (perhaps South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Pacific)
12.00 - 13.30 Lunch
13.30 - 15.00 Identification of priorities to be addressed at sub-regional levels (priority themes and needs)
15.00 - 15.30 Coffee Break
15.30 - 17.00 Discussion continued
19.00 - 21.00 Dinner hosted by RUSHSAP

Tuesday, 3 December 2002

8.30 – 9.00 Review of previous day
9.00 - 10.30 Discussions based on the regional strategy
10.30 - 11.00 Coffee Break
11.00 -12.00 How to translate identified priorities into actions target group, modalities of action (education, research, etc.), resources, etc.
12.00 - 13.30 Lunch
13.30 - 16.30 Discussions continued till afternoon
16.30 - 17.00 Summary and wrap up
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