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Sixty-fourth session

61st plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Assembly wishes to adopt the draft resolution as recommended by the Third Committee?

Agenda item 69

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 64/82).

Promotion and protection of human rights

- (b) **Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

The President (spoke in Arabic): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 69.

Report of the Third Committee (A/64/439/Add.2 (Part I))

Agenda item 69 (continued)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, may I take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Third Committee that is before the Assembly today?

Promotion and protection of human rights

Special Meeting at the end of the International Year of Human Rights Learning

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly, under agenda item 69, will now hold a Special Meeting to mark the end of the International Year of Human Rights Learning, in accordance with the decision on allocation of items taken at its 2nd plenary meeting and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/171 of 18 December 2007.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Third Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Third Committee.

In this context, allow me to make a brief statement.

The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Third Committee in paragraph 8 of its report. We will now take action on the draft resolution, entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of Human Rights Learning". May I take it that the

On the occasion of Human Rights Day, let us wholeheartedly reaffirm that promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, is one of the fundamental purposes of the United Nations. Human rights stand, alongside development and peace and security, as one of the pillars upon which the Organization was

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established. We approach this pillar with humility, mindful of the fact that all Member States have human rights challenges. And we embrace it with purpose, knowing that those challenges must be met, both for the cause of human rights itself and for the benefit of peace and development. I will continue to work with Member States to reaffirm our collective commitment to universality, non-selectivity and the indivisible, interdependent and interrelated nature of all human rights: civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development.

The Human Rights Council was established to promote universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. As we move closer to the mandated five-year review, we will build on the positive experience gained by the Council to support the further development of that important organ. I urge Member States to engage in an open, inclusive and transparent process in order to fulfil the promise of the Council and to further strengthen human rights.

On this day in particular, I am eager to add my voice to all those who fight against discrimination in all its forms. Discrimination on the basis of race, gender, language or religion denies the dignity and worth of the human being. Yet millions of human beings continue to fight a daily battle against discrimination that deprives them of access to education, health services and decent work.

During this session, we will be called upon to follow up on the outcome of the Durban Review Conference, at a moment when the scourge of racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance challenges societies around the globe. Today I urge the United Nations family, Governments, civil society, national human rights institutions, the media, educators and individuals to join hands with a view to embracing diversity and ending discrimination.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation is most grateful to you for having convened this Special Meeting at the end of the International Year of Human Rights Learning. Enshrined as one of the three pillars of the United Nations system, human rights is one of the most important matters that the international community faces today. Their essence is expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the sixty-first anniversary of which we are now celebrating. Thus, for

more than six decades the international community has made efforts to enable all citizens of the world to have access to the benefits of the universal principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, we must admit that, despite these efforts, the road that lies ahead as we march towards full enjoyment of human rights for all is a very long one.

The essential condition for the full enjoyment of human rights by all is the awareness of those rights and ownership of them by all individuals. How many of our contemporaries are not aware of their rights? How many submit to treatment that is incompatible with international standards? It goes without saying that something I am unaware has no affect on me one way or the other. Lack of awareness of human rights does not promote their enjoyment.

The truth is that for more than 60 years, or even 65 years, since the adoption of the Charter was considered, the representatives of Governments, with civil society organizations involved, have fought among themselves amid political contradictions of all sorts in devising basic rules of existence, amid suspicions, controversies and, finally, division.

Then, one talks of political and civilian rights, rightly or wrongly, as more important than economic and social and cultural rights. Let us not forget one simple truth: a hungry stomach has no ears, and implanting democracy depends to a large extent on the satisfaction of basic needs.

We talk of universal versus local specificity. Here too there is a truth. There is a complementary relationship between those two concepts; one reinforces the other. Let us understand each other well on that.

Cultural diversity is a source of cultural enrichment if it is not established in spite of our common sense of human dignity and if it is not used as a pretext to justify perpetuation of backward policies that are incompatible with the principles of the equality and integrity of the human person, from which human rights arise.

Finally, human rights are the object of constant controversy between the North and the South, between Islam and Christianity and, most seriously, between peoples, through civil society, and their Governments.

Today, the majority of the peoples of the world still stagnate in poverty, deprived of their most basic

rights. I am speaking here of that majority which has no access to basic health care. Let us think of women in particular, who are victims of discrimination and of all types of violence. Let us think about children deprived of education and, consequently, of any chance of social mobility. That majority of humanity has no access to dignity, to freedom or to responsibility.

We must admit this. In our approach to human rights matters we have often neglected the real stakes. We must give the peoples of the entire world the means and the tools necessary to their daily lives by making them aware of their role in the generation of wealth and in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

And yet the world does agree on the catalytic role of human rights in all development efforts. From that point of view, the full realization of the universal principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms is the most solid foundation for economic, social, cultural and development programmes and policies. Without that foundation, those programmes and policies cannot be carried out in a lasting way. The same is true for the Millennium Development Goals.

Following the Secretary-General's report entitled "In Larger Freedom" (A/59/2005), the international community decided to enhance human rights so as to raise them to their rightful place as the third pillar of the Organization. It was time to restore the proper meaning of the concepts of dignity and liberty, of the founding idea of "We, the people" set out in the Charter of the United Nations. In that vein we established the Human Rights Council with a universal periodic review mechanism.

Behind that institutional reform agreed by the international community, there was the idea of the need to de-politicize the human rights machinery. But when what is natural is driven off, it returns at a gallop. Politics re-established itself, to the detriment of the genuine enjoyment of human rights by all.

Benin, for its part, would like to reiterate its full support for the efforts of the Human Rights Council to make the sovereign equality of States inseparable from the promotion and genuine protection of all human rights around the world. The review of the Human Rights Council scheduled for 2010 will, we hope, be an exceptional opportunity for the international community to fine-tune the Council's rules and procedures, its mandate, its governance and its working

methods with the goal of pursuing the de-politicization effort necessary for the promotion and the full enjoyment of all human rights by all.

During the Assembly's sixty-second session, my delegation took the initiative, on behalf of the African Group and other sponsors, in the resolution adopted as 62/171, which proclaimed the year beginning 10 December 2008 International Year of Human Rights Learning. That initiative did not come by chance, out of nowhere. Rather, it came from a deep conviction that the sustainability of all economic, social, cultural and development policies is largely dependant on the conscious and responsible participation of all citizens.

It is true that the international community observed the Decade for Human Rights Education, beginning in 1995, at the centre of which was the Global Learning Programme on Human Rights in Development to accelerate human rights education. However, as we look at the results, one crucial question remains: to what degree do the populations concerned participate in the creation, development and implementation of those education programmes? How is that education useful in their daily lives?

Today, the pressing challenge is how to ensure that the universal principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms can constitute a group of values that determine the social behaviour of individuals in all corners of the earth. That is why my country, Benin, took this initiative, which was quickly supported by all the African countries and other countries, to move ahead with the process of human rights learning in all grassroots communities, seeing human rights as the common heritage of humanity.

Our declared objective — perhaps only one worth pursuing in this area — is to create a popular, participatory momentum in the dissemination of the universal principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms as a tool for a daily life with dignity and responsibility for all. There is a functional complementarity between human rights learning and human rights education. However, educational systems based on notably utilitarian models are likely to create marginalization and discrimination.

To correct that shortcoming and accelerate the process of the appropriation of human rights by the greatest number of people, every person educated in human rights is called to become, and should become, a promoter of human rights learning, an agent of

human rights diffusion to a wider population. Education can thus give momentum to learning in the broader sense. From that point of view, human rights learning is a process of acquisition, of accumulation of knowledge and experience, of a generalized and continuous ownership of human rights through activities that train and shape the attitudes and behaviours of individuals in our grassroots communities.

Integrated into the process of the socialization of the individual, human rights learning has certain advantages. My delegation wishes to focus on three of those.

First, given that human rights learning is guided by the holistic framework of human rights, it addresses civil and political rights and economic and sociocultural rights as equals. Then, as it concerns activities derived from the profound values and desires of the community, human rights learning can make use of cultural and religious traits to attain universal principles. Lastly, human rights learning is likely to create a certain harmony between the individual and the community.

Within this framework we must place resolutions 62/171, 63/173 and now resolution 64/82, just adopted by the Assembly on the recommendation of the Third Committee. My delegation was pleased to see this last resolution adopted during such a solemn meeting, marking the sixty-first anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a meeting marking the end of the International Year of Human Rights Learning. The symbolism in that is a balm to the heart. The Assembly's adoption of the resolution under these circumstances has placed a special stamp on the manifest will of the international community to make all preparations necessary for the people of the world to take charge of their own destiny.

Furthermore, human rights learning should enable each individual — each man, woman, child, disabled person, elderly person, each human being independent of race, gender and religion — to be aware of the role that is his in his community with regard to the production of wealth and wealth-sharing and in the attainment and enjoyment of human rights and the human rights of others, including future generations.

Our dearest hope is to constantly broaden the consensus on the strong potential of this concept, that powerful catalyst for renewed invigoration of our

societies on the road to progressive improvement of humanity and access to more widely shared prosperity.

Here we pay homage to all Member States, to all international organizations, to all those driving non-governmental organizations and to civil society actors who during this International Year have been committed to the promotion and dissemination of human rights at the grassroots level — in short, to promote human rights learning. May their actions bear fruit to the benefit of international peace and security and sustainable human development in bringing to the podium of human dignity the greatest numbers of people, including — why not? — all those now living as well as future generations? That is the calling of human rights learning.

We invite all of those committed to this to persevere in their faith in the future of humanity. It is a part of the universality of human rights and the diversity of the cultural heritage of our peoples worldwide. We have everything to win in seeking together the roads to follow and the methods to use to achieve the goal in international cooperation and solidarity.

Mr. Webb (United States of America): I am delighted to have the opportunity to address the Assembly on this, the last day of the International Year of Human Rights Learning, which coincides with the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was conceived as a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations. It sought to articulate a universal definition of human dignity and values which, 61 years later, still form the bedrock of our collective commitment to human rights. It is an extraordinary document forged in the ashes of war that continues to inspire efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world.

While we ought, rightly, to pause on this day to celebrate and commemorate the remarkable achievements of the past, we must also recall that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is best honoured through action, not rhetoric. Our commitment today must extend beyond the words of the Declaration itself to the measure of our efforts to live up to its principles. Kofi Annan recognized that

when he described the Universal Declaration as the yardstick by which we measure human progress.

The United States believes as strongly today in the fundamental importance of the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as it did 61 years ago, when Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the committee of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights that drafted the Declaration.

President Obama, in his address to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session (see A/64/PV.3), recalled the words of the United Nations Charter committing us to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women. He pledged that America will always stand with those who stand up for their dignity and their rights: for the student who seeks to learn, the voter who demands to be heard, the innocent who longs to be free, the oppressed who yearns to be equal.

Secretary Clinton, in accepting the Roosevelt Institute's Four Freedoms Award, remarked that today, despite facing different adversaries and battles, those rights are no less relevant and those freedoms no less precious. The principles put forward by President Roosevelt are no less deserving of our defence. It was Eleanor Roosevelt who reminded us that human rights begins in small places close to home: in the world of the individual person, the neighbourhood that he lives in, the school or college that he attends and the factory, farm or office where he works. Such places are where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity and equal dignity without discrimination.

Unless those rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world. It is knowledge of one's rights first and foremost that informs and motivates individual action. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the central importance of teaching and education in order to promote respect for those rights and freedoms and to secure their universal and effective recognition on observance. Article 26 of the Declaration speaks of the role of education in promoting the full development of the human personality and in strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Today, we mark the end of the International Year of Human Rights Learning. The 2007 General

Assembly resolution proclaiming this Year (resolution 62/171) recognizes that such learning should contribute to the fulfilment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a way of life for people everywhere, and expresses the conviction that every woman, man and child must be aware of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to recognize their full human potential.

The United States fully supports efforts to promote human rights education and learning and recognizes the critical value of such education in fostering those rights. The human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration are the birthright of every man, woman and child. Instilling knowledge and understanding of those are the first essential steps on the path to realizing that birthright.

On Human Rights Day 2008, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that for many people the Declaration remained an unfulfilled promise, as the political will of States to meet their commitments lagged lamentably behind their pledges. In that context, she noted that tens of millions of people around the world were still unaware of their right and the fact that their Governments were accountable to them.

At its core, human rights education and learning is about empowering the next generation to claim their rights. We laud the progress that many countries have made in promoting human rights education, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/293), from adopting national laws, strategies or plans of action through developing and instituting training programmes for public officials, to developing human rights curricula, incorporating human rights education in learning and in school programmes and extra-curricular activities, raising public awareness through campaigns and conferences, and supporting human rights education through various regional and international conferences.

On this Day, the United States takes pride in pledging, alongside other countries and as a part of the United Nations-led effort, to continue working to promote human rights education and learning as an integral part of its long-standing commitment to advance the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people everywhere.

Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand): My delegation is pleased to participate in this special meeting to mark the end of the International Year of Human Rights Learning. We welcome and fully support the resolution on the follow-up to the International Year of Human Rights Learning, adopted by the plenary earlier this morning (resolution 64/82).

Thailand is firmly committed to the cause of human rights both at home and abroad. Our commitment derives from our long tradition of tolerance, diversity and caring with regard to people of different backgrounds, as well as our belief in the dignity of all human beings. Within that context, we attach great importance to promoting, both in word and in deed, an enabling environment for a human rights culture to thrive at the national, regional and international levels.

Thailand believes that human rights learning is a lifelong process that extends beyond conventional classrooms. It is a process that requires leadership and commitment at all levels. It also needs constant nurturing and should be based on a deep appreciation of the values of each society. In the case of Thailand, for example, the Thai people primarily learn about their rights, duties and responsibilities, as well as respect towards each other, through religious and moral teachings. Because those values are part of the way of life of the people, they have provided a strong foundation for human rights learning.

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights on this date 61 years ago, human rights norms and standards have been developed and cultivated through various global, regional and national legal instruments. Thailand has consistently and actively engaged in many of those exercises. We have placed particular importance and emphasis on reaching out to specific audiences. We have already translated the Universal Declaration for particularly vulnerable groups, including into Braille and a child-friendly version. We have also published a human rights manual for the military, as well as soldier cards, to promote sensitivity to human rights considerations within the military.

During the past few years, Thailand has also been seeking to strengthen partnerships and cooperation from the international level down to the grass roots. A human rights caravan was launched by the Prime Minister in March this year with the collaboration of

the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand and the United Nations country team. The caravan will travel around Thailand to raise public awareness of basic human rights, especially in primary schools, with extra-curricular activities in which students and schoolteachers can participate equally. Interfaith and intercultural dialogue is also being promoted among Thai youth in order to enhance mutual understanding among the different cultures and religions in the country and to promote solidarity.

Thailand welcomes the decision of the Human Rights Council in October of this year to focus the second phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education on promoting human rights education for higher education. We also welcome the fact that the Programme will attach importance, too, to human rights training programmes for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel at all levels.

At the regional level, Thailand, as the current Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), is working closely with our fellow ASEAN member States to advance human rights in the region. During the last ASEAN summit, in Thailand in October of this year, ASEAN took the historic step of establishing the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, the first human rights mechanism in the region. This new Commission would work to enhance public awareness of human rights among the peoples of ASEAN through education, research and dissemination of information, among other things. Thailand and ASEAN are fully committed to ensuring the effective functioning of this Commission for the benefit of all peoples in the ASEAN member States.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate Thailand's conviction that human rights learning is much more than lessons at school, a theme for a day or simply a catchphrase. Rather, it is a process that enables each and every human being to live a secure and dignified life. Whatever methodology we use to teach people about human rights, we believe that it is vital that the process of education go hand in hand with concrete action, in order to develop not only an intellectual but also a visceral and practical appreciation of human rights.

Thailand stands ready to continue to work with all partners and the United Nations to promote a

lifelong human rights learning process as a means to fostering an environment where a culture of human rights can take firm root, grow and blossom in societies around the world. We are confident that by working together, we can fulfil the noble aspirations of the United Nations Charter to promote social progress and better standards of life in greater freedom.

Mr. Zhumabayev (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): First, allow me to note the importance of this event marking the end of the International Year of Human Rights Learning, which has sought to promote the expansion of efforts to teach and advocate for human rights.

Sixty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the issue of respect for those rights remains a very immediate one on the United Nations agenda. Recognizing the importance of such principles as the universality, interdependence and indivisible nature of human rights, Kazakhstan views the Universal Declaration as a key component of international law and a basis for the current constitution of Kazakhstan. We support the goals of a comprehensive human rights programme, as recommended by the General Assembly, and we note that human rights education contributes in a major way to promoting human rights.

Kazakhstan is committed to supporting a common understanding of the fundamental principles and methods of human rights awareness efforts. In line with the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the Plan of Action for the first stage of the World Programme (see resolutions 59/113 A & B), Kazakhstan has designed and carried out a number of measures aimed at disseminating understanding of national and international mechanisms for the protection of human rights.

In the context of implementing the World Programme for Human Rights Education for the period 2005-2015, Kazakhstan established a national plan of action on human rights education in the Republic, an extremely significant event for our country in the field of formal human rights education. Achieving the measures set out in the national plan is intended to create a culture of respect for human rights capable of enabling all people to enjoy their rights actively and competently and raising awareness levels among young people.

We should note that this is not the first programme in the long-standing process of human rights education. To support initiatives concerning awareness of human rights issues, we adopted specific international frameworks for action, such as the 1995-2004 United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (see General Assembly resolution 49/184), which allowed us to develop and establish comprehensive, effective and sustainable strategies for human rights education at the national level. The efforts made in recent years by State bodies and non-governmental organizations concerned with human rights have become increasingly high-profile and effective, aimed at consistently disseminating information and knowledge about human rights.

Kazakhstan has now adopted a framework document on the human rights dimension, a national plan of action for human rights in Kazakhstan from 2009-2012. Within the context of the national plan Government authorities will regularly use the media to provide information on the protection of human rights, including the publication of human rights guidelines, to the broader public. The mass media will be used for informal education on human rights. In this regard, the President's Human Rights Commission, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has set up a digital library providing free access to normative legal documents on human rights guarantees in Kazakhstan.

We attach particular importance to human rights learning among officials and those working in Kazakhstan's law-enforcement entities. Civil service standards in Kazakhstan are based on the principles of the protection of human rights. In this way, those ideas, enshrined in human rights conventions, will permit the establishment of specific mechanisms for protecting human rights at the national level.

Our delegation feels it is essential to increase children and young people's direct involvement in this process. In this regard, the results of a survey showed that there is considerable interest among students in more thorough study of human rights in schools. It should be pointed out that the percentage of children who know who to turn to if their rights are violated is higher in the upper than in the lower grades. This is improving with the inclusion of subjects relating to the law in the curriculum for countrywide science project and other competitions, as well as by establishing a regional project on researching humanitarian law, one

of whose main goal is spread knowledge of international humanitarian law. This month, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Human Rights Commission, together with UNDP in Kazakhstan, held a meeting with students of the Kazakhstan Humanitarian Law University on human rights, with the theme of "International and national rights protection mechanisms", in which members of the Commission, academics, international and non-governmental organization representatives and students all participated.

Kazakhstan is a sponsor of the draft resolution entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of Human Rights Learning" (A/C.3/64/L.33/Rev.1), and we also took part in the drafting of the Secretary-General's report on the International Year of Human Rights Learning (A/64/293). In this context, we express our full support for the draft Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. We count on the active participation of all interested parties in the development of the Declaration, as well as in the implementation of its provisions.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): In many ways, today is an important milestone in the history of the world and human rights, and for this Assembly, it should be — and I repeat, it should be — a very important day. Looking at the sort of participation and lack of Permanent Representatives here today, I must say it does not seem to be quite the message we should be sending to the world. And I specifically mention, with regret, those who, for so long, have been the arbiters of human rights but who could today be called the pallbearers and are not here even for the last rites. Let me remind them what we are doing here today.

Today we are commemorating the sixty-first anniversary of the adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The adoption of the Declaration in 1948, after the conclusion and tragic experiences of the Great Wars, reflected a strong desire by the world community to live by the common ideals of peace, harmony, equity, freedom and the right to self-determination. Today, the United Nations remains the uppermost — the most important — body of morality in the world, and we should have sent a message of hope to those corners of the world where people would have anxiously awaited to see a strong, positive, participatory assertion on the part of this Assembly for the rest of the world to note about what we believe about human rights. Instead, we have a

shortage of speakers. This is not the sort of message we should be sending to the world at large. This implied absence of hope is not what we should be preaching to the world.

Pakistan — members are entitled to ask — is observing this day with a one-week-long celebration or observance. We are trying to promote what the Universal Declaration means and how to implement it. We are trying to promote universal respect for human rights — something we may not have been easily associated with many years ago.

As is evident throughout the world, there are gaps between rhetoric and the implementation of international human rights, and often sincerity of purpose seems to be lacking. Article 26 of this great Universal Declaration ordains that every one should have "the right to education". Today we give it many different names — we try to justify this under the Millennium Development Goals and many other pursuits — but the origins should not be lost to this Assembly. I believe that we must reintegrate the full development of the human personality and strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which was the basic language of this Declaration.

One of the means of filling this gap between rhetoric and implementation is to recognize the role of education. In Pakistan we recognize the importance of this, because, unless we acknowledge the importance of education through different initiatives — it is not supposed to be iconic or just one-sided — I do not think we can really promote human rights, because, unless you fully understand what your rights are, you cannot be empowered to protect them. Human rights education has therefore been integrated into our curricula at different levels. We believe that all human rights are universal and interrelated and should be indivisible. Realization of and respect for human rights — be they economic rights, social rights, cultural rights, civil rights or political rights — come from an individual's immediate surrounding and can only be correctly promoted through education, and preferably formal education.

In the context of this International Human Rights Day and beyond our school curricula, in Pakistan we are organizing a series of activities that corresponds to the various rights I have just spoken of, and we are promoting this programme among all segments of

society. The theme for commemorating International Human Rights Day in Pakistan for this year is “Human Rights and Peace”. We are adding “peace” to it, as that has played such a very important part in our national imagination and needs to be promoted. Different commemorative events, in all parts of the country, from 10 to 17 December, are going to take place. The Ministry of Human Rights is organizing these events, which have been arranged in consultation and coordination with all stakeholders, including our now vibrant civil society and more vibrant media organizations.

Pakistan’s constitution is built on the principle of equal rights and the equal treatment of all citizens and persons without any distinction. It guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, including social, economic and political justice, freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship and association. Whereas the constitutions of many countries in the world do not mention aspects of this subject in their respective primary texts — there are many countries of the world that have introduced into their constitutions bills of rights or documents of that nature to enhance and enforce these rights — we have it written in the main corpus of the constitution. It directs the State to take appropriate measures to enable women’s participation in all spheres of life and community activities and to safeguard the rights and interests of minorities.

The democratic Government of Pakistan is firmly committed to protecting those fundamental rights and to promoting tolerance, understanding and harmony among all its citizens, religions and sections of the society. Besides those constitutional guarantees, a system of separate electorates ensures adequate representation of minorities in the national and provincial legislatures as well. Like many of our neighbouring countries, we have set quotas in Government jobs, which ensures representation of minorities in the national fabric and in decision-making. The National Commission for Minorities and a special fund for the welfare and uplifting of minorities reviews their well-being and addresses any needs directly. The Government has declared 12 August as Minorities Day in Pakistan in order to emphasize the importance of interreligious dialogue, cooperation and understanding. Similarly, interfaith harmony committees have been established at various levels to

ensure that dialogue and cooperation reach down to the grass roots.

Pakistan is a State party to several human rights instruments. The Ministry of Human Rights monitors and addresses human rights violations and trends, with special reference to women, minorities and vulnerable segments of society. Elaborate groundwork has been done for the establishment of a national commission for human rights. This body will act in accordance with the Paris Principles and would help in combating human rights violations and in fulfilling our international obligations.

Our media is in the forefront as one of the freest and most vibrant media in South Asia and the world. A growing number of private and independent channels are operating in the country and there has been a perceptible increase in the number and influence of civil society in providing alternate views and safeguarding human rights with one voice. The media and civil society are now playing a crucial role in fostering a culture of accountability and transparency. The independent judiciary in Pakistan has taken wide-ranging steps to guarantee protection of constitutional rights for all citizens. It has even taken *suo moto* actions in many cases.

The Declaration adopted by this Assembly on the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration last year provided an opportunity for introspection, and we all agreed — and I would like to remind delegates, as there does not seem to be the same vibrancy here this year — that “[i]n no country or territory can it be claimed that all human rights have been fully realized at all times for all” (*resolution 63/116*). That is a tacit acknowledgment of our failure, our joint failure. And we also declared that “[w]e all have the duty to step up our efforts to promote and protect all human rights ...”.

Today again, we all need to reaffirm our commitment — even to this rather empty Hall — that we, the States Members of the United Nations, reiterate — and this should be a message to the world — that we will not shy away from the magnitude of this challenge. We reaffirm our commitment to the full realization of all human rights, which are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The Government in Pakistan has and will do all it can to promote and protect human rights for its people within the framework of this Charter and its international human rights obligations within this

community. We urge the international community to do so as well.

Mr. Vigny (Switzerland): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the members of the cross-regional Platform for Human Rights Education and Training, namely, the delegations of Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia and Switzerland. Our Platform is an informal cross-regional grouping of States created in September 2007 within the framework of the Human Rights Council. We support international initiatives that promote human rights education and training at all levels of society.

The Platform for Human Rights Education and Training stresses the complementarities between human rights learning and human rights education and considers human rights learning to be an indispensable part of human rights education. We understand human rights education to be a broad concept that comprises a lifelong process of becoming aware of one's own human rights and those of others, within formal and informal settings and within family, society, school, educational institutions, training, and so on. The ultimate common goal is to enable each person to know better and claim more effectively his or her human rights.

The Platform at present supports two main initiatives, namely the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the draft United Nations declaration on human rights education and training. Those two initiatives are promoted through regular Human Rights Council resolutions sponsored by members of the Platform.

First, the World Programme provides a set of collective goals and actions that help States to strengthen their national efforts to promote human rights education and training. It is an open-ended programme implemented in continuing phases. Its first phase, from 2005 to 2009, focused on human rights education for primary and secondary education. Its second phase, starting on 1 January 2010, will focus on human rights education for higher education and training for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement and military officials, as defined by Human Rights Council resolution 12/4. Building on the foundation laid during the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), this initiative reflects the international community's increasing

recognition that human rights education produces far-reaching results.

Secondly, the adoption of a United Nations declaration on human rights education and training would send a clear message from the international community affirming the importance of human rights education and training. It would provide a definition of the various principles and responsibilities related to human rights education and clarify the relationship between human rights education, learning and training, as well as the role of human rights education in formal, informal and non-formal education.

A general understanding of the need for such a declaration was also reached at the international seminar on the draft declaration on human rights education and training held in Marrakech and hosted by the Government of Morocco in July 2009. The seminar proved to be a very successful exercise and provided useful input to the whole process.

Through Human Rights Council resolutions 6/10 and 10/28, the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee — composed of 18 independent experts — was given the mandate to prepare an initial draft of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. The General Assembly has, in its resolution of this year on the follow-up to the International Year of Human Rights Learning (resolution 64/82), recommended to the Human Rights Council that it integrate human rights learning into the preparation of the draft United Nations Declaration, bearing in mind the complementarities of this initiative with the World Programme for Human Rights Education and human rights learning. The Human Rights Council will consider the draft prepared by the Advisory Committee at its thirteenth session in March 2010, when the Council will convene a high-level discussion on the matter, as requested by decision 12/118.

In other words, the United Nations Declaration will deliver to the international community a clear message that human rights education needs to be further strengthened, that human rights education is not only “nice to have” but that it is also needed to help prevent human rights violations and to fight in a sustainable way for the improvement of the human rights records in our countries. Furthermore, the Declaration will rouse the necessary political will to enhance collective efforts on human rights education

by promoting international dialogue and cooperation, raising awareness and addressing gaps in the international framework on human rights education in a non-binding, consensual and inclusive manner.

In conclusion, I have the honour to say that the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training has been active in the past year and, through its efforts, has also marked the International Year of Human Rights Learning. The members of the Platform will continue to strongly support the promotion of human rights education, including human rights learning. Today's discussion is an important opportunity to enhance the synergy of all these efforts here in the General Assembly in New York and in the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. I am really sorry that the attendance was not what we wish it would be. As the Ambassador of Pakistan said, especially on this very important occasion, we have to send a signal to the world about the importance of human rights education.

I would especially like to thank those countries that have spoken on this occasion. I would wish that by next year the importance of this occasion will be realized, with more speakers and more attention given.

I now declare concluded the Special Meeting to mark the end of the International Year of Human Rights Learning.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 69.

Programme of work

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Members will recall that at its 57th plenary meeting, held on 4 December 2009, the General Assembly agreed to extend the work of the Second Committee until Wednesday, 9 December 2009. However, I have been informed by the Chairperson of the Second Committee that, owing to ongoing negotiations, the Chairperson would like to request an additional extension of the Committee's work until Friday, 11 December 2009.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Second Committee until Friday, 11 December 2009?

There being no objection, it was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.