



OHCHR REGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH EAST ASIA
Regional Expert Meeting on the Human Right to Peace
24 April 2009, UNESCO Bangkok

OHCHR Opening Remarks

Distinguished participants,

On behalf of Mr. Homayoun Alizadeh, Regional Representative for South East Asia of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this Regional Expert Meeting on the Human Right to Peace organized by the Spanish Society for International Human Rights Law (SSIHRL), the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC).

This meeting is part of a global process of consultation on the “Luarca Declaration on the Right to Peace” that the Spanish Society for International Human Right Law is conducting in order to incorporate in the declaration the inputs of civil society from different regions of the world.

It is of particular significance that this consultation takes place just a year after the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The adoption of the Universal Declaration in 1948 was largely in reaction to two world wars which bore witness to terrible atrocities committed by human beings against their fellow human beings on a scale never previously seen. The right to peace is rooted in the rights set forth in the Universal Declaration and reflects its vision that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”.

As the Luarca Declaration states in its preamble, peace is “*a prerequisite and consequence of the enjoyment of human rights by all*”. Without peace, the realization of other human rights cannot be achieved. The devastation of wars, genocide, environmental degradation, hunger, and displacement all make human living deplorable for a great number of people around the world.

At the same time, the concept of peace “*goes beyond the strict absence of armed conflict and is linked to the economic, social and cultural development of peoples as a condition for satisfying the basic needs of human beings, to the elimination of all kind of violence and to the effective respect for human rights*”. Within this context, the Declaration mentions a number of human rights, such as freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to education, the right to live in a healthy environment, and the right to development, whose realization is instrumental to that of the right to peace. The right to peace reflects the interdependent nature of all human rights and is an expression

of our desire to resolve all disputes by pacific means, our hope to save the future generations from the scourge of war; and our wish to give our children a better and brighter tomorrow.

Distinguished participants,

The right to peace cannot be realized without replacing a culture of violence and war by a culture of peace, mutual understanding and respect for human rights. Within this context, human rights education is a powerful tool to promote peace and respect for diversity. As Member States of the United Nations highlighted in adopting the World Programme on Human Rights Education in December 2004, *“human rights education is essential to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributes to promoting equality, preventing conflict and human rights violations and enhancing participation and democratic processes”*.

Finally, let me conclude by stressing that in a globalized world, the realization of the right to peace can be achieved only through concerted effort of States, other actors, such as international organizations, and civil society. As pointed out by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and International Solidarity, international cooperation is crucial to guaranteeing equal access to the benefits of globalization and to the full enjoyment of human rights by everyone. Within this context, the realization of the right to peace is an opportunity to consider how to strengthen not only our system of collective security, but also the global partnership for development.

Thank you for your attention.