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UNESCO'S ROLE IN PROMOTING EDUCATION AS A TOOL TO PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM

SUMMARY

The Director-General reports on the progress made on the implementation of 197 EX/Decision 46 on "UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism". This report presents the activities that have been implemented as well as those that are underway to take forward the Decision.

Action expected of the Executive Board: Proposed decision in paragraph 15.



I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present document reports on the progress made in the implementation of 197 EX/Decision 46 on “UNESCO’s role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism”. It presents the activities that have been implemented as well as those that are underway to take forward the Decision.

2. UNESCO is implementing this decision through intersectoral cooperation with all programme sectors contributing. Furthermore, as requested, a Focal Point on education to prevent violent extremism (PVE) was appointed within the Education Sector. The Focal Point is convening an “Inter-sectoral Team”, composed of representatives of all programme sectors, which meets on a monthly basis to facilitate coordination and collaborations around joint activities and plans, including joint project proposals submitted for extrabudgetary funding. The Inter-Sectoral Team developed a joint webpage¹ centralizing all information pertaining to UNESCO’s work on the PVE.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDANCE MATERIALS AND FRAMEWORKS

3. A Teacher’s Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism² was developed to provide guidance and practical tips to teachers on how to manage classroom discussions on radicalisation and PVE. Another guide is being developed to assist education policy-makers in designing, planning and implementing actions that can be taken at all levels of education systems (i.e. at the policy, pedagogy and practice levels). The existing UNESCO Global Citizenship Education Clearinghouse³ hosted by Asia Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), a UNESCO Category II Centre, was expanded to include resources on PVE.

4. Work is in progress to tackle the importance of social media in PVE. The Communication and Information Sector launched global research studies to examine the role of social media in processes of radicalization with due respect for freedom of expression, international information ethics and human rights frameworks. The Sector is also developing policy guidelines on digital citizenship in order to identify, advocate and promote values, which can guide responsible online behaviour.

5. To help curb the spread of intolerance and violent extremism and promote holistic and humanistic visions of learning, which convey values that foster just and inclusive societies, the UNESCO International Bureau of Education launched an initiative to identify values that are “universal” and that, if appropriately integrated into curricula, could promote peace, dialogue and mutual understanding. The UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) is developing the Libre Curricula – a set of multimodal online modules on the PVE that are promoting critical thinking and enquiry-based learning from the perspective of global citizenship.

III. ADVOCACY AND CAPACITY BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONCERNED STAKEHOLDERS

6. The Education Sector, including MGIEP will organize a major international conference on the PVE through education (New Delhi, India, September 2016). Targeting education policy-makers, the conference will gather over 200 participants from all over the world and raise awareness about the magnitude of the threat of violent extremism and the core role that education can play in preventing the phenomenon. The participants will constitute a global network for future dissemination of UNESCO’s work and information on PVE.

¹ <http://en.unesco.org/preventing-violent-extremism>

² <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002446/244676e.pdf>

³ <https://gcedclearinghouse.org/>

7. The Education Sector and APCEIU are developing a series of capacity building programmes focusing on Global Citizenship Education and PVE. The first workshop in the series was delivered in June 2016, in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

8. Specific actions are also being undertaken at national level. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Morocco, UNESCO Rabat organised in March 2016 a national consultation meeting on schools and their role in PVE, followed by a workshop for the United Nations agencies and national stakeholders to define the priorities and areas of intervention that UN Agencies could consider to prevent and counter violent extremism among youth. In June 2016, the Education Sector signed an agreement with the National Commission of Morocco for UNESCO to provide technical support for the development of a national strategy on the PVE through education.

IV. PROMOTING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION AS A MEANS TO PVE

9. The Social and Human Sciences, the Communication and Information and the Education Sectors are implementing the Network of Mediterranean Youth Project (NET-MED), funded by the European Union, which focuses on ten countries along the eastern and western basins of the Mediterranean Sea. Its main objective is to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for young women and men to meaningfully engage as active citizens. It seeks to strengthen youth networks, improve their media and ICT skills, facilitate their access to policy makers and enhance young people's economic inclusion, thus significantly contributing to peacebuilding in the region.

10. MGIEP organized in February 2016 a town-hall discussion "Talking Across Generations on Education (TAGe)" on the theme "Preventing Violent Extremism through Education". Over 450 young people participated in the event, which included a dialogue with education decision-makers, policy-makers, academics, and teachers. The event produced a Youth Statement with recommendations for positive changes to education systems.

11. The Communication and Information Sector addressed the issue of youth radicalization and the PVE on the Internet during the UNESCO High-Level Forum organized with the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum (Geneva, May 2016). The Forum aimed to accelerate efforts to achieve SDG Goal 16 through the creation of conditions for peaceful and inclusive Knowledge Societies. Since July 2015, the Sector is implementing the South Sudan Youth PeaceApp project within the framework of the YouthMobile Initiative in order to empower young women and men to create games and applications that provide constructive, problem-solving responses to challenges facing their communities. The Sector is also organizing, with the Government of Quebec, an international conference "Internet and the Radicalization of Youth: Preventing, Acting & Living Together" (Quebec City, Canada, 31 October-1 November 2016).

12. Within the framework of the World Heritage Education Programme, the Culture Sector organized the World Heritage Youth Forum (June-July 2016) in Istanbul, Turkey, to raise awareness among youth about the importance of the protection of heritage and the need to respond to the continuing threats facing world heritage. The Sector also organized the World Heritage Volunteers Action Camps in 27 countries, involving 500 young men and women, which sought to strengthen a shared sense of belonging with regard to cultural heritage and develop the respect for cultural diversity.

13. UNESCO field offices have been active in supporting youth as active and engaged champions of PVE. UNESCO Dakar is promoting sustainable peace through socio-economic inclusion of young people in the Sahel region, in particular through the development of life-skills and the use of Open Educational Resources. UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education is developing a project titled "Youth Leading Change for Peace in Asia and Pacific", to build the capacity of young people as agents of peace, to promote mutual understanding and identify pathways for addressing inequality, poverty and violence including violent extremism and radicalization. UNESCO Nairobi organized a training session on youth, peace and security, at the

tenth anniversary celebration of the African Youth Charter (Banjul +10) and UNESCO in Central America is engaged in initiatives to support vulnerable youth and train officials on preventing violence.

V. PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

14. In order to advance debates and actions on PVE, UNESCO developed critical partnerships with various actors, including:

- as an integral member of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), UNESCO is co-chairing the CTITF's Working Group on "Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism", which has been tasked with the implementation of the UNSG's Plan of Action on PVE; UNESCO is also an active member of four other CTITF Working Groups, namely those working on: "Countering the Financing of Terrorism", "National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies", "Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF)", as well as the Working Group on "adopting a Gender Sensitive Approach to Preventing and Countering Terrorism", created in June 2016;
- the Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative, with which UNESCO organised a roundtable on PVE targeting the New York and the United Nations-based foreign missions and delegations (June 2016);
- the Office of the United Nations Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect;
- the inter-agency Group on Youth and Peace building which is coordinating the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security;
- the European Commission, to whose Working Group on Citizenship Education in follow-up to the Paris Declaration of Education Ministers UNESCO contributes;
- the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, where UNESCO addressed the PVE as part of the Ministers' discussion of securing democracy through education (April 2016);
- the "Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism – The Way Forward" in April 2016, where the Director-General of UNESCO presented its Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism; and
- the joint "Debate to Action" initiative of the Anna Lindh Foundation and the British Council, which UNESCO contributes through NET-MED Youth, focuses on research, capacity-building on media and advocacy, and joint communication actions.

Proposed decision

15. In the light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to take the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined 200 EX/9,
2. Recalling 197 EX/Decision 46 on UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism,
3. Taking note of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/254 (February 2016), in which it welcomed the initiative by the Secretary-General and took

note of his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism; and also takes note of UNGA resolution A/RES/70/291 (July 2016) which recommended that Member States consider the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Plan of Action, as applicable to the national context,

4. Expresses its appreciation to the Director-General for having launched and implemented activities to guide and build capacity of Member States to prevent violent extremism through education as well as through supporting media, cultural diversity and youth;
5. Welcomes the strong intersectoral cooperation established to ensure a comprehensive approach as well as the development of close partnerships with relevant actors and stakeholders;
6. Urges Member States to support through extrabudgetary resources the UNESCO activities on the prevention of violent extremism;
7. Encourages the Director-General to further enhance UNESCO activities to prevent violent extremism, in coordination with United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders;
8. Requests the Director-General to report at the 202nd session of the Executive Board on UNESCO's contribution to the prevention of violent extremism in a report reflecting the contribution of all the programme sectors and taking into account intersectoral collaboration.