

**Symposium of
UNESCO Chairs in Human Rights, Bioethics, Peace, Democracy and
Tolerance
on**

**“Developing together a new partnership for a strengthened
cooperation”**

Bergamo, Italy, 3 to 4 March 2011

organized by
the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Ethics of International Co-operation at
the *Università degli Studi* of Bergamo (Italy)

with the support of
the Division of Human Rights, Human Security and Philosophy and the Division of
Ethics of Science and Technology, Social and Human Sciences Sector of UNESCO

(University of Bergamo, Aula 1 S. Agostino)

Nature and scope of the meeting

The UNESCO Chairs in Human Rights, Bioethics, Peace, Democracy and Tolerance are high profile academic institutions with innovative curricula and renowned research programmes. Established in more than thirty countries in all regions, they have enhanced cooperation among researchers and educators at regional and international levels thereby forming an integrated system of research, training, education, documentation and exchange of experiences in the fields of human rights, ethics of science and technology, particularly bioethics, peace and conflict resolution, democracy and intercultural dialogue. The Chairs build bridges between civil society and the State as well as between the academic community and practitioners.

The 35th General Conference in 2009 (35 C/Resolution 35) invited “the Director-General to reinforce the implementation of the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights”. At the same time, UNESCO has a unique mandate in promoting bioethical norms that safeguard human rights and are closely linked to the rights within the competence of the Organization. Consequently, this meeting is expected to gather some 40 Chairholders and representatives of UNESCO Chairs with a view to shaping a shared vision on strengthened co-operation between the Chairs and UNESCO. In view of the existing collaboration and interaction, UNESCO Chairs can bring a valuable input, by means of research and dissemination of knowledge, to the promotion of the rights within UNESCO’s fields of competence.

An enhanced cooperation between SHS and UNESCO Chairs will be based on the following:

- a) UNESCO’s programmes in the field of human rights and bioethics;

- b) experiences and lessons learned from the work of UNESCO Chairs focusing on the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence and the principles elaborated in UNESCO's standard-setting instruments and teaching material.
- c) current priority issues linked to rights within UNESCO's fields of competence, including on bioethics and human rights.

Drawing upon the above considerations, two broad areas of interaction will be considered at the meeting: teaching and valorization of research results. Regarding teaching, it is proposed that the Chair undertake action with the support of UNESCO in the following: i) promote the teaching of human rights in the fields of competence of UNESCO, and relevant issues, such as bioethics and human rights, in the academic courses and programmes under their supervision; ii) mainstream the teaching of human rights in UNESCO's fields of competence, including on bioethics and human rights, in the curricula of other faculties; iii) promote the inclusion of capacity-building on the human rights-based approach in the teaching programmes of different faculties. With respect to research, the focus will be on identifying ways of taking full benefit of good quality academic or practice-oriented research conducted and/or validated by the Chairs.

Accordingly, the Symposium will have the following expected outcomes with a view to reinforcing UNESCO's human rights and bioethics programmes:

- A) agreement reached on concrete joint initiatives, in the area of teaching and dissemination of knowledge, as well as on actions to better valorize research conducted by the Chairs on issues of common interest
- B) agreement reached on follow-up mechanism(s) and the sharing of tasks and responsibilities

Taking into account the ever reducing financial resources, the new partnerships must rely on increased synergies and coordination coupled with an optimal use of existing programmes and available resources. At the same time, the joint vision may be translated into funding proposals to be prepared and submitted to donors jointly by UNESCO and the Chairs participating in the network.

The Symposium is hosted by the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Ethics of International Cooperation. Created in 2003 at the *Università degli Studi* of Bergamo (Italy), it has established effective cooperation with similar Chairs in other regions of the world, in particular in Africa, Latin America and the Mediterranean. The UNESCO Chair in Bergamo will organize the Forum with financial support from UNESCO.

Working languages

English and French with simultaneous interpretation.

Annotated Agenda

Wednesday 2/03 : arrival of participants

Thursday 4/03 : **Conference Room of Sant'Agostino**

Session 1: 9.00 -09.30

Opening

Welcome address by Mr Stefano Paleari, Rector of the University of Bergamo
Welcome address by Ms Pilar Alvarez Laso, Assistant Director General for Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO

Designation of the Chairs and Rapporteurs of the Sessions

Session 2: 9.30-10.30

Presentation of the objectives of the meeting

Chaired by ADG/SHS

This session will start with a presentation of the expected outcome of the meeting, from the viewpoint of the organizers. The goal is to reach an agreement thereon with all participants.

10.30-11.00 Coffee Break

Session 3: 11.00-13.00

Promoting the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence: the experience of UNESCO Chairs

This session shall bring to the forefront experiences, lessons learnt, developments and challenges stemming from the work of UNESCO Chairs. To that end, discussions will be preceded by a short presentation on key findings from a questionnaire that will be circulated among Chairs prior to the meeting and 4 short targeted interventions by selected Chairs in different regions. The purpose of this session is to highlight issues that will guide the discussions on the elaboration of a joint plan of action for the network of UNESCO Chairs.

13.00-14.30 Lunch Break

Session 4: 14.30-16.00

Research on the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence: priorities and valorization of findings

Producing relevant policy-oriented research on the rights within the competence of the Organization and taking full profit of research findings are two main challenges to be addressed. This session will attempt to identify the main thematic priorities in this field, as well as the key attributes of a practice-oriented research programme thereon. Subsequently, discussions will bear on ways to better valorize quality research outcomes validated by the Chairs. At the same time, discussions may give

rise to joint research initiatives to be implemented by UNESCO Chairs within the framework of available resources and current programmes.

16.00-16.30 *Coffee Break*

Session 5: 16.30-18.30

Developing a plan of action concerning teaching on the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence

Creating the conditions for an improved enjoyment of these rights requires first of all that knowledge on their content, main challenges to their implementation and relevant issues, such as bioethics and human rights, be included in the university curricula for both undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. A starting point is the integration of these subjects into existing academic programmes under the responsibility of the Chairs (i.e. masters' programmes, capacity-building seminars, summer schools, various competitions, etc.) to be followed by the mainstreaming of these rights in the programmes of other faculties and schools. This session will identify any lacunae in this regard and how these can be addressed, looking also into the type of contributions to be expected by the Chairs and UNESCO.

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Friday 04/03: Conference Room of Sant'Agostino

Session 6: 9.00-11.00

Developing a plan of action on integrating a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to programming in university curricula

Linking human rights principles and standards to major development objectives has become a central tenet of the United Nations system. An effective way of mainstreaming this programming approach is to include it in university curricula, starting from those followed by key professional groups. This session will serve to reach an agreement on actions to be undertaken by the Chairs in order to promote teaching on this approach in their host universities. Discussions could also touch upon teaching opportunities created through the use of ICTs. This task is greatly facilitated by the increasing number of manuals, guides and various tools produced by the UN or other concerned institutions. The outcomes of the United Nations Development Group Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism will certainly feed into this venture.

11.00-11.30 *Coffee Break*

Session 7: 11.30-13.00

Mechanisms of coordination: tasks and responsibilities

Better coordination is a prerequisite for successfully strengthening the network of Human Rights Chairs. Previous experience has shown the limits of a top-down approach thereto. Particularly in the current context, where UNESCO cannot act as the sole coordinator, effective coordination can only happen if the Chairs accept to play a greater role therein. A stronger ownership on their behalf could result in the

development of a much more sustainable network. This session should therefore examine ways to ensure such coordination, including through the setting up of a steering committee, and the identification of tasks and responsibilities for individual members.

13.00-14.30 Lunch Break

Session 8: 14.30-16.30

Implementing the joint plan of action: commitments of the UNESCO Chairs

This session, conducted in three parallel working groups, shall provide the space for a rich exchange among UNESCO Chairs on the elements of the joint plan of action that will have been put forward as a result of the previous sessions. Its purpose will therefore be to consolidate the consensus around the plan's main lines of action and foster concrete commitments on behalf of the Chairs for its implementation.

16.00-16.30 Coffee Break

Session 9: 16.30-18.00

Presentation of the principal outcomes of the Symposium and adoption of the Final Document

Chaired by ADG/SHS

Session 10: 18.00-18.30

Closing

The meeting will be closed by the Chairholder of the Chair in Bergamo and the UNESCO representative.