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## **Building Just and Peaceful Societies: UNESCO's contribution to a Culture of Prevention**

*An interactive roundtable inspired by the recently published book "Long Walk of Peace"*

**21 September 2018 – UNESCO Headquarters, Room IV, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon**

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

#### **Background and Rationale**

UNESCO plays a unique role in strengthening the foundations of peace and sustainable development through its work to promote cooperation in education, culture, the social, human and natural sciences, and communication and information. The Organization's commitment to peace is enshrined in the preamble to its constitution, which states that 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'.

The promotion and protection of human rights occupies a central place in the history and mandate of UNESCO. Seventy years ago, its founders sought to define the conditions of lasting peace - not only in agreements between States, but also in the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind, grounded on human dignity. This quest remains just as relevant today, with continuing economic hardship, armed conflicts and tension between communities leading to renewed manifestations of intolerance and exclusion. Building peaceful, just and inclusive societies based on respect for human rights, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal 16, is today a key element of UNESCO's work to support countries in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This vision is in line UNESCO's work on prevention by serving as a laboratory of ideas to foster more peaceful behaviours and mindsets, as well as by implementing concrete and pioneering operational activities that are shaping thinking and policy.

UNESCO's inclusive and human rights-based understanding of peace is illustrated in the original and groundbreaking research study on the UN's work for peace since 1945: "[A Long Walk of Peace: Towards a Culture of Prevention](#)", published by UNESCO in May 2018. This book includes an analysis and overview of the conceptual and strategic development of the UN's peace work, written by leading peace researchers from India and Norway. The study is also based on accounts by 32 different UN entities on their contributions to the UN's work for peace, accomplishments, challenges, lessons learnt and perspectives for the future.

The research study is a major contribution to the implementation of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) for which UNESCO has been designated as the coordinating lead agency by the United Nations General Assembly.

The lessons of the book “Long Walk of Peace” as well as the celebration of the International Day of Peace in 2018, under the theme ‘The Right to Peace - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70’, offer an opportunity to reassess UNESCO’s efforts to build peaceful and sustainable societies based on the principles of human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, embodies the values that lie at the heart of UNESCO’s mandate to promote peace and sustainable societies. The Declaration is the first universal instrument recognizing the inherent dignity of every individual as well as a call for a concerted action to raise awareness and enforce fundamental freedoms.

The celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR bears special significance as UNESCO is reviewing its Strategy on Human Rights and an Integrated Strategy to Combat Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, adopted by the General Conference in 2003. With the aim to better respond to the recent developments in standard-setting and in order to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO aims to elaborate a holistic vision on its role in the realization of human rights.

## **The roundtable**

On the occasion of the celebration of the International Day of Peace on 21 September UNESCO will organise a roundtable discussion on the complex but intrinsic relationship between human rights and sustainable peace. Through intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, participants will assess efforts undertaken and opportunities to strengthen UNESCO’s work to prevent conflict and assist in the consolidation of just and peaceful societies.

The event will bring together leading experts from academia, civil society and international organizations and present UNESCO’s newly released book -- “Long Walk of Peace: Towards a Culture of Prevention”.

## **Moderators**

**Mr Jens Boel**, member of the Steering Committee of the book “Long Walk of Peace” and former chief archivist of UNESCO

**Ms Maha Al-Salehi**, young advocate (Youth4Peace/Shughel Shabab)

## **Keynote speech**

**Mr Lakhdar Brahimi**, former Algerian Foreign Minister and Ambassador and chair of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations which produced the influential Brahimi Report (2000). He has done extensive work in the field of conflict resolution, peacemaking and peacekeeping and has served the United Nations as a special advisor to the Secretary-General and as the UNs representative in all regions of the world, including Haiti, South Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. He is currently a Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics and a governing board member of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

## **Panellists**

**Professor Priyanka Upadhyaya**, UNESCO Chair, Malaviya Centre for Peace Research, Banaras Hindu University will present and analyse the interaction between peace and human rights on the background of the above-mentioned new UN study: "Long Walk of Peace. Towards a Culture of Prevention".

**Professor Mark Goodale**, anthropologist, professor at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, author of the just published: "*Letters to the Contrary: A Curated History of the UNESCO Human Rights Survey*", will present his study of UNESCO's post-War survey on the philosophical bases of human rights and discuss the ongoing life of human rights in the XXI century.

**Mr Doudou Diene**, former United Nations Special rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, will debate - as a seasoned voice for human rights in the United Nations system - the challenges for consolidating a culture of prevention and sustainable peace.

**Ms Cécile Coudriou**, President of Amnesty International France and a professor in information and communication sciences at Université Paris 13. Ms Coudriou will discuss civil society perspectives on the importance of human rights for the construction of peaceful societies, in particular with regard to the fight against impunity.