

**MEETING ON PRIORITIES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH TO  
ADVANCE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS IN AFRICA**

Addis Ababa, 9-11 March 2005

**FINAL STATEMENT**

**We, the participants of the *Meeting on Priorities for Human Rights Research to Advance Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Africa*, organized by Addis Ababa University at the initiative of and in cooperation with UNESCO, held in Addis Ababa from 9 to 11 March 2005,**

*Recalling* the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other universal human rights instruments,

*Recalling* also the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which affirms that '... the satisfaction of economic, social and cultural rights is a guarantee for the enjoyment of civil and political rights',

*Acknowledging* the need to mobilize efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals,

*Convinced* of the equal importance of all human rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social – which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated,

*Acknowledging* the necessity to promote universal acceptance and implementation of all human rights for all,

*Persuaded* that the principle of non-discrimination is the very basis to ensure respect for human dignity and human rights, and that this principle should be reaffirmed through the creation of equal opportunities for all, women and men, in all spheres of life, with special emphasis on persons belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups,

*Noting* with appreciation the adoption in 2003 of the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights, which places special emphasis on human rights research, in particular research on economic, social and cultural rights,

*Expressing* serious concern that most economic, social and cultural rights have not yet become a reality for many people in Africa,

*Deploring* that a large part of the budgets of many African States is still spent for military purposes, at the expense of allocations on education, health care and social needs, and noting tendencies towards the reduction of public expenditures in the social sector, notwithstanding the demand for the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights,

*Deeply preoccupied* with the outflow of qualified specialists from African countries, which seriously hampers potential for sustainable development,

*Expressing* deep concern that the unequal share of the benefits of the globalization process, particularly noticeable in Africa, where it has unfortunately led to an increase of poverty and to the deprivation of large segments of the population of fundamental human rights,

*Noting* with deep preoccupation that pandemic diseases, including HIV/AIDS, from which African countries and peoples are suffering the most, are undermining capacity building for sustainable development,

*Underlining* that good governance, democracy and accountability of governments are necessary conditions to empower people and to advance human rights,

*Persuaded* that research on the normative content and justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights, on legislative and other measures required to implement those rights in national law and administration, as well as on the obstacles to their implementation is an important means for the adoption of more consistent human rights-based policies,

*Convinced* of the necessity to increase the interaction among researchers within Africa, including those working in the networks of UNESCO Chairs, and to strengthen cooperation with their counterparts in other continents,

*Noting* the important potential and role of academic institutions in the advancement of human rights and the many and severe challenges that confront them, especially in terms of resources,

*Recognizing* the crucial role of National Human Rights Institutions in Africa in the promotion and protection of human rights, the promotion of social justice, the rule of law and the fight against all forms of discrimination and exclusion,

**I. Declare our strong commitment to contribute, by means of research and dissemination of its results, as well as through the sensitization of decision-makers and civil society as a whole, to**

- The promotion and protection of all human rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social – in accordance with the principles of their universality, indivisibility, interrelatedness and interdependence, the respect for the rule of law, the consolidation of democracy and the strengthening of international peace and security, mutual understanding, respect and solidarity;
- The universal ratification and implementation of international and regional human rights standards and reinforcement of relevant mechanisms;
- The further elaboration and clarification of the content of human rights, especially of economic, social and cultural rights, their further codification and justiciability, with a view to improve living conditions of the people in Africa.

We further declare our resolve to engage with African governments to address the issues of bad governance, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, corruption, wasteful and fruitless expenditure and the phenomenon of poverty,

## II. Decide

1. To establish an African Research Network on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ARNESCR) bringing together the academic community, including UNESCO Chairs, research and training centers, National Human Rights Institutions, non-governmental organizations and other interested partners in the region and world-wide. The main aims of the ARNESCR will be the development of human rights research with the purpose
  - to identify main obstacles to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, problems impeding sustainable development such as the brain drain and unequal sharing of the benefits of globalization, the negative impact of privatization and commercialization on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the most flagrant and systematic violations of human rights;
  - to elaborate recommendations which can help governments, parliaments and other decision-makers at international, regional, national and local levels to adopt policies aimed at the improvement of the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in Africa for the whole population without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Special attention will be paid to the protection of the rights of women and children, in particular orphans and other vulnerable children, and of persons with disabilities. At the initial stage, the ARNESCR will focus on the right to education, on the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, the right to take part in cultural life, the right to food and the right to health. Attention will also be given to the promotion of understanding, appreciation and recognition of indigenous knowledge systems. Emphasis will also be put on capacity-building at national and regional levels, in particular through training of professionals, such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, government officials, with a view to ensure the application and realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

2. To request the UNESCO Chairs in Human Rights at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa, the University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and l'Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Benin, to serve as coordinators of the Network, with a view to determine the institutions which will play a leading role in the creation, consolidation and coordination of the ARNESCR. To request the South Africa Human Rights Commission, the UNESCO Chair in Comparative Human Rights at the University of Connecticut, USA, the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, UNESCO and all other interested partners to assist the coordinators in implementing their tasks.
  
3. To elaborate a Plan of Action for the ARNESCR, the initial priorities of which will be:
  - a. The establishment of a roster of specialists on economic, social and cultural rights in Africa;
  - b. The elaboration of a list of Universities, UNESCO Chairs, governmental institutions, National Human Rights Institutions, research centres and non-governmental organizations in Africa, and the establishment of contacts with them in order to have them participate in the ARNESCR;
  - c. The preparation of a list of partner institutions, organizations and foundations in other parts of the world, which could assist ARNESCR in the achievement of its goals;
  - d. To strengthen cooperation with the United Nations system, in particular with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO and other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional, in particular with the African Union and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.
  - e. The creation, with the assistance of UNESCO, of a web page – in English and in French – containing basic information on the ARNESCR and its goals and activities, as well as information needed for the development of its work.