

Report of the Debate held on 10 December 2009 Re-drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

As each year, to mark the international day of Human Rights, the Earth Focus Foundation organised a youth debate on Human Rights. This debate comes in the frame of the Project 2048, initiated by the University of Berkeley, U.S. , a partner of the foundation.

Thus, the day took place in two different aspects: the morning, presentations from different experts and speakers who formed and presented the frame and context of this debate.

Mrs. Nicola Spafford Furey, Mr. Terence Gale and Ms Mishana Hosseinioun introduced the day presenting briefly the context and Project 2048.

Then, the **International School of Frankfurt** made a presentation of their recent visit to the Camp of Buchenwald, this was very emotional and moving. They recalled through this exposure all the articles that make up the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Following was the testimony of the sisters, **Miss Nadine and Miss Emily Christenson**, half Palestinian, on this unending conflict and which breaks several human rights. This report raised reports of certain reactions in the audience.

Mr. Karl Grunberg recalled the beginning of this universal declaration and the reasons for its creation. He also gave a committed presentation on the respect of Human Rights all over the world and the role, in fact the responsibility, of developed countries in the present situation of many of the developing countries



Mr. Christophe Barbey, as a promoter of Peace, made the link between Human Rights and Peace, insisting on the fact that we live Human Rights daily and by living them we give them sense. Mr. Barbey explained that for him one of the fundamental rights is the right to Peace.

After a pause, all the participants returned to the hall to listen to the first student presentation: that of the **Haut Lac Bilingual School**. These students did a very good introduction to the subject in questioning Human Rights as they had been created during the century of 'Lumières' (Lights) in France and on their evolution since. The question if it was necessary to re-write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or, above all to apply them correctly all over the world was posed.

Following was the presentation of the students of the **Collège Voltaire**. They proposed new articles to be integrated for the protection of the environment in the Universal Declaration thus to create a right to live in a clean, healthy and preserved environment. They also proposed to bring a correction to the Article 2.

The students of the **International School of Geneva, la Grande Boissière**, positioned themselves in opposition to all re-writing or modification of the Universal Declaration. They explained that this Declaration was not actually (or not correctly) applied in many countries in the world, it must, above all, be assured that the human rights decrees in this Declaration would be first correctly followed before being able to later envisage and reflect on re-writing.





The Collège du Léman focused their presentation on the culture and the respect of traditions, religions and all elements constituting to the culture of a people. These students proposed that 3 levels of articles going from the presentation of the Culture and the respect of tradition. These students proposed, therefore, that 3 new articles going in this same sense should be added to the Universal Declaration.

Introducing the afternoon, a round table made up of Pr. Bruna Moliina, Pr. Alfred de Zayas and Ms Mishana Hosseinioun presented **Project 2048** and explained the importance of this project and of contributing to it. They also spoke of the meeting held recently at Berkeley, which they all attended, on the subject of establishing a World Court of Human Rights (*this was actually resolved to be done in Geneva by the High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR – on 10 December 2009*).

The **SOS-Hermann Gemeiner International College of Ghana** took part in this roundtable by communicating through Skype and asking their questions.

The **International School of Frankfort** took up the student presentations by reading a poem entitled “Lost Generation” by Jonathan Reed, a poem that is to read forwards and then backwards when it turns to a positive position.

Pr. Ilise Fietshans of the Geneva School of Diplomacy intervened between to say a few words and make a short presentation on the importance of health as a basic function of all societies and thus as a fundamental human right.



After the afternoon pause, the class of the **Cycle de la Golette** presented their reflections on the necessity of modifying the Universal Declaration and insisted on the fact that articles 5, 14 and 25 in particular were not respected.

The second class from **Collège Voltaire** proposed the revision of two articles (article 18 on religion and article 26 on education) and introduced a new article on the right to live in a healthy environment (article 31).

The last presentation came from the students of the **Aga Khan Academy of Mombasa, Kenya**. They presented their propositions of modification to the Article 26 concerning education and explained how this was important for the understanding of the plurality of our world, tolerance, respect of human rights and their application.

To conclude this day so rich in ideas, debate and reflection but also with propositions, the students voted on the essential and determining point to follow: **“must the Universal Declaration of Human Rights be rewritten?”** The majority of the students voted **yes**. This is, therefore, the beginning of a reflection on which articles should be revised and in which sense, fitting in to the Project 2048 proposed by the University of Berkeley.



We present below the group of articles reviewed or added by the different student classes:

ARTICLE 2

- Every one can take advantage of all the rights and liberties proclaimed in the present Declaration, without any distinction, notably of colour, sex, language religion, political opinion and all other opinion, national or social origin, fortune, birth or all other situation [...]

College Voltaire, Genève

ARTICLE 18:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in community with others and in public or private to manifest in religion or in teaching, practice worship or observance. Everyone has the right to express and manifest their religion in both the private and public spheres.

Proposed new clause:

- Governments must not promote a particular religion but they must prevent the limitation of religion to the private sphere; they must impede one religion from dominating others. Everyone has to understand and respect others. The principal thing is: the liberty of one begins where the liberty of the other stops; there must be no encroaching upon the freedom of others.

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ARTICLE 26

- Everyone has the right to Education. Education shall be free, at least in the **primary and secondary** stages. Primary and secondary education shall be compulsory. **Tertiary** education shall be made generally available and accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall **encompass** understanding, tolerance, friendship and **pluralism** among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United nations for the maintenance of peace
- Parents have the prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. **Governments shall embrace a curriculum which is culturally relevant while maintaining the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' ideology as a measure to appeal to, and involve a full spectrum of students.**

Aga Khan Academy, Mombassa

- Access to school should be free. Families must be encouraged and helped with **enabling mechanisms** to send their children to school. The education of children must not be a sacrifice for the family.

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NEW ARTICLES:

- Everyone has a right to a their own cultural identity and to engage in their own traditions, provided that they don't compromise the culture of other citizens
- All cultures and religions should be protected, respected and not discriminated against
- No one can be forced to adopt different cultures or religions against their own will, but schools may require the study of host languages, religions and cultures

College du Lemman, Genève

- Everyone has the right to live in a healthy, clean and safe environment

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- Everyone has the right to work for the respect and the protection of the environment within the limit of their capacities.
- No person, nation, private or public organisation can make excessive use of natural resources. These must be consumed in an economic manner so they are not used up. They must be shared equally between human beings in order to guarantee the conditions for a decent life.
- Nevertheless, it is up to the States to find a fair equilibrium between the protection of the environment and economic development so as to avoid that they cause harm to the other one, this must be respected from both sides.

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