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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION; ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Report of the Secretary-General */

The Development of Public Information Activities in
the Field of Human Rights

1. The development of public information activities in the field of human rights has been considered annually by the Commission on Human Rights for some time. At its forty-first session in 1985, the Commission had before it a report by the Secretary-General on this topic (E/CN.4/1985/16). By resolution 1985/49, which it adopted on 14 March 1985, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution to the Commission at its forty-second session, including a status report on the availability, in the official and other languages, of the principal international instruments in the field of human rights, the numbers of such instruments in stock and a summary of the activities of the United Nations information centres in this field. The present report is submitted pursuant to this request of the Commission. As has been the practice in previous reports, additional information is provided below on public information activities undertaken in 1985 by the Department of Public Information on the question of human rights.

*/ Addendum I contains a draft human rights teaching booklet. Addendum II contains replies from Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. Addendum III contains the status report on availability of principal international instruments.

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I. Requests addressed to Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations

2. In paragraph 1 of its resolution 1985/49 the Commission requested all Governments to take appropriate action to facilitate through all available means, including the mass media, publicity regarding United Nations activities in the field of human rights, with particular reference to the work of the Commission on Human Rights and the expert bodies working in the field, and to accord priority to the dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights. In paragraph 7 of the same resolution the Secretary-General was requested to examine ways in which the potential of the entire United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, might be used to assist in the dissemination of human rights material. In paragraph 8 the Commission requested the regional commissions to assist in the dissemination of human rights material prepared by the United Nations to Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals, in particular in the distribution of copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments in the languages of the regions, and to investigate ways of promoting co-operation within the regions to that end. In paragraph 9 of its resolution, the Commission invited Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to submit further comments and proposals for enhancing the promotional activities of the United Nations in the field of human rights.

3. In pursuance of the above-mentioned requests the Secretary-General, on 25 June 1985, addressed a communication to Governments, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations drawing their attention to the Commission's resolution. In order to facilitate the promotional activities referred to by the Commission, the Secretary-General invited relevant comments from Governments, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

4. The replies received to the above-mentioned communications of the Secretary-General are contained in an addendum to the present document.

II. Personalized version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

5. At its forty-first session the Secretary-General submitted for the consideration of the Commission on Human Rights a proposed personalized version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (E/CN.4/1985/16, annex III). In paragraph 3 of its resolution 1985/49 the Commission requested the Secretary-General to issue as soon as practicable the proposed personalized version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the six official languages of the United Nations, to complete this task by the end of 1986 and to proceed thereafter, in co-operation with regional organizations and Governments, to the production of personalized versions of the Universal Declaration in national and local languages.

6. In response to this request, the Department of Public Information has proposed in the context of the Programme Budget for the biennium 1986-1987 the production during the first quarter of 1986 of a personalized version of the Declaration in the six official languages. During the biennium it is planned to produce it in 10 local languages as existing stocks become depleted.

III. List of basic reference works on human rights for use by the United Nations information centres

7. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 1985/49 the Commission expressed its appreciation for the list of basic reference works on human rights for use by United Nations information centres as well as other interested bodies, requested the Secretary-General to build up the collection of reference works within each United Nations information centre and in particular to dispatch existing United Nations material to each centre immediately, and requested agencies of the United Nations system whose material appears on the list to send copies to the Centre for Human Rights for distribution to each United Nations information centre.

8. Pursuant to this request, an effort is being made to begin to provide the reference works on the above-mentioned list on a gradual basis to United Nations information centres. Accordingly it is intended to provide each centre during 1986 with the following three basic works drawn from the list:

Henkin, Louis (ed.), The International Bill of Human Rights: The Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (New York, Columbia Press, 1981)

Pollis A. and Sonwab, P. (eds.) Human Rights, Cultural and Ideological Perspectives. (New York, etc. Praeger Publications (1979)).

Robertson, A.H., Human Rights in the World (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2nd ed. 1982).

IV. Audio-visual materials

9. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 1985/49 the Commission requested the Secretary-General to make greater use of audio-visual techniques designed for both children and adults and of computer technology in the preparation and distribution of United Nations material in the field of human rights.

10. In response to this request, the Department of Public Information has proposed in the context of the Proposed Programme Budget for the biennium 1986-1987 the production of a 10-minute film on the efforts of the international community to eliminate torture. The film which is intended for the general public world-wide will be produced in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. The Department also intends to produce a set of photo-sheets on the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration, utilizing the graphic renderings of Brazilian artist Octavio Roth for distribution in the six official languages (with blanks for overprinting) to United Nations information centres, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions. In addition, the Department will produce during the next biennium two 60-second television spots in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. The spots are intended for the general public world-wide and are to be distributed by news syndicators, television networks, United Nations information centres and United Nations associations.

V. Human rights teaching booklet

11. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 1985/49 the Commission requested the Secretary-General to collect, within existing resources during the current budget period, relevant material in the field of human rights already prepared by specialized agencies, regional bodies, groups, non-governmental organizations

and individuals with a view to preparing a basic human rights teaching booklet in the six official languages of the United Nations and to include this project item in a future biennial budget.

12. Pursuant to this request the Secretary-General, on 26 June 1985, sent a specific communication to Governments, specialized agencies, regional bodies and non-governmental organizations requesting that they bring to his attention any existing material which could be of use in the preparation of basic human rights teaching booklet. The replies received to this communication are reproduced in an addendum to the present document. The materials referred to in the replies which were received in the Secretariat, are available, upon request, for consultation in the Centre for Human Rights.

13. In the light of the material which he received, the Secretary-General solicited the services of an expert-consultant in this field in order to assist in the preparation of a draft text of a basic human rights teaching booklet. The services of the expert-consultant were provided without charge by the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Secretary-General records his appreciation for this co-operation. Based on the material received and the input of the expert-consultant, the Secretary-General is submitting in an addendum to the present report the draft text of a proposed basic human rights teaching booklet.

VI. Status report on availability of principal international instruments

14. In paragraph 10 of its resolution 1985/49 the Commission requested the Secretary-General to include in his report a status report on the availability, in the official and other languages, of the principal international instruments in the field of human rights, the numbers of such instruments in stock and a summary of the activities of the United Nations information centres in this field.

15. In response to this request, the Department of Public Information sent a questionnaire to all information centres and services requesting data on their current stock of nine basic human rights instruments, as well as on their needs for those materials on a quarterly basis. A summary of the information on current stocks for each of the nine basic instruments, together with a chart containing the current stock balance at headquarters, is contained in an addendum to the present report. The Department is taking follow-up action based on this information.

VII. Other public information activities in the field of human rights carried out by the Department of Public Information in 1985

A. Activities carried out at Headquarters and UNICs

1. Coverage

16. Press releases covering the debates and decisions on human rights in the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations were issued in English and French. In that connection, as of 11 December, a total of 245 press releases in English and 191 in French were produced at Headquarters. Resolutions and other documents on the subject were made available to information media and attention was drawn to developments in the human rights field at press briefings conducted by the Department of Public Information.

17. Radio, television, film and photo coverage of the debate in the General Assembly and other organs was provided. In addition, 36 TV news packages were prepared and made available to broadcasting organizations.

18. Human Rights topics were also covered in the Yearbook of the United Nations, Basic Facts, the UN Chronicle, Everyone's United Nations and the UN Today (Suggestions for Speakers). Objective: Justice carried material on racial discrimination in southern Africa.

2. Publications

19. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (DPI/15) was reprinted in Bengali, Bulgarian and Hungarian.

20. A pamphlet on the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (DPI/832) was produced in all official languages of the United Nations.

21. A pamphlet entitled Outlawing an Ancient Evil: Torture (DPI/847), containing the "Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment" and the "Declaration on the Protection of All Persons Against Torture", as well as information on the "Voluntary Fund for the Victims of Torture", was produced in English, French and Spanish.

22. A pamphlet entitled Combating Racial Discrimination: The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (DPI/858) was produced in English, French and Spanish.

23. The pamphlet entitled The International Bill of Human Rights (DPI/797) was revised and produced in all official languages of the United Nations and in Dutch.

24. A pamphlet on the Principles of Medical Ethics was produced in Arabic and Chinese and was reprinted in English and French (DPI/801).

25. The book The United Nations and Human Rights (DPI/808) is being produced in French and will also be produced in Spanish.

26. The pamphlet on the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (DPI/513) was reprinted in English, French, Spanish and Russian.

27. A pamphlet on the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials (DPI/665) is being reprinted in Arabic, Russian and Spanish.

3. Audio-Visual Activities

28. Human Rights issues were accorded extensive coverage in both radio newscasts and radio feature programmes in 26 languages.

29. The Convention Against Torture was the topic of the Perspective radio programme of 16 January 1985 and of radio feature programmes in other official and non-official languages.

30. Human Rights Day 1985 was highlighted in all United Nations radio newscasts, and feature radio programmes were produced.

31. In connection with Human Rights Day 1985, the annual essay contest using shortwave radio broadcast was organized on the theme "The Right of Everyone to Education and Employment".

32. The TV programme World Chronicle devoted a programme to an interview with the Chairman of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

33. A television spot in Arabic, English, French and Spanish was produced to mark Human Rights Day, 1985.

34. A TV spot was produced in connection with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

35. Previously released films dealing with human rights continued to be actively promoted and distributed to TV organizations and other users.

36. All information centres and services were kept abreast of events and activities relating to human rights. In this connection, Information Centre Directors were instructed to undertake special programmes to draw the attention of national communities to the following special observances: The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the Week of Solidarity with the Colonial Peoples of South Africa; the International Day of Solidarity with the Colonial Peoples of South Africa; the Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women of South Africa and Namibia; Namibia Day; the Day of Solidarity with the People of Namibia and its Liberation Movement; and the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Special guidelines were also sent to UNICs to obtain international community participation on United Nations Day and Human Rights Day.

37. The various declarations and other documents relating to Human Rights, including all statements by the Secretary-General and other United Nations officials were extensively distributed through the United Nations information centres during the above-mentioned events.

38. A total of 283 cables were sent to United Nations information centres concerning human rights issues.

39. Feedback reports and responses from the information centres following each of these observances, have been heavy and positive, indicating increasing public awareness of human rights issues before the United Nations and also a good degree of interest and support on the part of most national communities. These reports have been analysed and summary reports about the observances around the world have been prepared and distributed to all UNICs and the relevant units of the Secretariat as well as to some NGOs.

40. UNISs organized seminars, exhibits and workshops and distributed the international instruments and other human rights material locally. In that connection, a total of 35,064 publications dealing with human rights, 805 wallsheets and 918 posters were distributed by UNICs in their regions.

4. Special briefings and programmes

41. The Chairman of the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and members of the Board of the Fund briefed 135 NGOs at Headquarters on the Fund.

42. On 5 December 1985 a briefing was held at United Nations Headquarters for 125 representatives of non-governmental organizations on "Human Rights Issues Before the Fortieth General Assembly". The speaker was Dr. Kurt Herndl, Assistant Secretary-General of the Centre for Human Rights.

43. On the occasion of Human Rights Day 1985, an exhibit produced by the International Auschwitz Committee and sponsored by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights was displayed at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 10 December 1985 to 31 January 1986.

44. The annual DPI Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists from Developing Countries in 1985 included in the agenda of briefings and discussions various items on human rights, the questions of Palestine, Namibia and apartheid.

45. The annual DPI Graduate Student Intern Programme included several lectures and presentations on human rights issues.

46. Queries on various human rights were answered from Headquarters. In all, 1,132 queries were answered and 12 group briefings for over 500 visitors were conducted. On request from educators, students, libraries, etc., kits containing information on human rights, including copies of the Universal Declaration, were distributed.

B. Activities carried out by UNIS Geneva

1. Coverage

47. Press releases covering discussions at the Commission on Human Rights, the Human Rights Committee, the Sub-Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities and other organs, were issued in English and French. Publicity was also provided to the activities of working groups dealing with questions such as Israeli practices affecting human rights in the occupied territories, traditional practices which affect the health of women and children, indigenous peoples, rights of the child, and flagrant violations of human rights. A total of 178 press releases in English and 172 in French were produced at Geneva.

48. During the forty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights, regular briefings were organized for the Chairman of the Commission. Arrangements were also made for the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee to meet with the press.

49. Attention was drawn to developments in the human rights field at the twice-weekly press briefings. During the session of the Commission on Human Rights, the press was briefed daily.

50. Radio, TV and photo coverage of the debates in the Commission and other bodies was organized.

51. TV coverage of the discussions during the sessions of the Commission and of the Sub-Commission, together with interviews and press coverage was extensively distributed, with 18 distributions through VISNEWS, 89 station requests and 7 satellite transmissions. Archival coverage was also requested directly by several TV stations. "Feature" coverage was equally requested by VISNEWS.

2. Audio-Visual Activities

52. Human rights issues were featured in the radio programme "Tour d'Horizon" and in French, Arabic and Serbo-Croat newscasts.

53. The United Nations films "What Right has a Child" and "Doctor in the Sky" were shown in the course of 20 screenings to non-governmental organizations and visitors. Five prints were loaned to schools and two special screenings were organized on Human Rights Day.

54. DPIs "TV Spot" to commemorate Human Rights Day was distributed to all television organizations in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

3. Special Briefings and Programmes

55. Special NGO briefings were organized in connection with the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights and of the Human Rights Committee.

56. A roundtable on the theme "Youth and Human Rights" was organized on the occasion of Human Rights Day, 1985.

57. Thirty-eight briefings were organized for diplomats, journalists, students and NGO representatives on different activities of the Centre for Human Rights.

58. The three-week 23rd Geneva Graduate Study Programme included on its agenda several lectures on human rights issues.

59. Some 5,000 public inquiries were answered and over 17,000 brochures and pamphlets distributed.

60. Within the framework of guided tours at the Palais, the United Nations activities for the production and protection of human rights were stressed via briefings, posters and films.