

Report on the launching of the Fribourg Declaration 7th and 8th May 2007



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1. The launching of the Declaration

The launching of the Fribourg Declaration of cultural rights in cooperation with the International Organization of the Francophony, UNESCO and a platform of numerous NGO's wishing to promote the protection of diversity and cultural rights, occurred within two days thus on :

- May 7th at the University of Fribourg: *to declare cultural rights. Discussions and adoption of the Fribourg Declaration. The matter in hand was to present perspectives of the Declaration in its updated, completely reworked project version, which was drafted in 1998.* Members of the « Fribourg Group » for the most part, United Nations committee experts, NGO's and International Organizations' representatives have introduced the entire text as well as its provisions, one by one, in front of a 180 participant's audience approximately. The Declaration has been translated and broadcasted into several languages, such as English, French, German, Italian, Arabic and Spanish¹.
- May 8th at the Palais des Nations in Geneva: *Cultural rights. Perspectives of the Fribourg Declaration in the UN system.* At the end of a brief synthesis introduction of the Declaration, the point was to imagine and to measure possible partnerships in order to increase the value of a mutual protection of diversity and cultural rights, by the mean of a text which emanate from the civil society. The main objective was to associate different actors such as the treaty supervisory system, states, international organization, NGO's, and academic networks. In addition to the participants who came the day before, debates assembled national delegations, numerous experts from several committees, in particular

¹ Additional versions of the Declaration, synthesis documents, working documents and research programmes can be found on the website of the Observatory, see www.unifr.ch/iiedh

all the members from the Committee on Economic, social and cultural rights.

These two official meetings have both been held in concert with the leading figures, who accepted to support the Fribourg Declaration. All information about these persons are mentioned in the enclosed list, which testifies of the level of expertise, the cultural and institutional diversity of their support. This list can thus be seen as a token of the potential scope of the Declaration.

2. Future Prospects

The general objective for public, civil or private sectors is to use immediately the present Declaration and implement it through their own means in order to provide for results, such as observation, action and analysis. It is on the basis of such headway in clarifying the content of cultural rights that discussions can gradually be held about the need to adopt compulsory normative instruments, for their promotion and their protection at both international and national level, and also at different levels of the civil society.

2.1. Current activities at the Observatory

- Researches are pursuing, particularly regarding the Contrasted Observation which is meant to be used as a basic tool for analysing practical issues of cultural rights in different countries, particularly by:
 - o The ARADESC network in the framework of the UNESCO regional office in Rabat. Their observation programme covers countries like Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania. In this regard, the Observatory is organising a symposium in Nouakchott during November 2007.
 - o The Human Right's national institutions network of the Francophony, one of the numerous institutional networks of the Francophony, has decided, following their second Congress in Rabat, to integrate cultural rights in their activities on the basis of the Declaration.
- The second research group called « Grenier à mots »(literally : granary for words) is currently focusing on a transversal analysis through meanings of words from Human Rights into several languages
- Online accession to the Declaration will soon be possible. It will be linked to a database.
- Translations of the Declaration are now being reworked, whereas other new translations are in progress.
- The internal communication is pursuing through the Swiss academic network. A more effective partnership is expected from the University of Geneva, and the University of Neuchâtel, particularly with the Ethnology Institute and the Home for analysis of social processes in Neuchâtel.

2.2. International communication

- *Council of Europe (COE). The Fribourg Declaration has been introduced to the Directorate of Culture of the COE two days after the launching, on May 11th 2007. It shall also be presented and discussed in front of the Directorate-general for human rights. The insured cooperation with these Directorates-general of the COE on cultural rights is auspicious. A connection between culture and human rights – therefore the mutual protection of diversity and cultural rights in human rights – appears to be an important point in the COE's strategy.*
- *United Nations. Cooperation with the UN is meanwhile pursuing, particularly with several rapporteurs as well as with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) within the framework of general comments on article 15 of the international covenant. An open day for debates will take place in autumn and organised by that committee*
- *Francophony. The observatory will provide its results pertaining to its current researches until the end of 2007 to the Human Rights' delegation of the Francophony. In addition to the cooperation of the Human Rights' institutional network of the Francophony, the Observatory wishes to involve more members of the Francophone Institutes' network.*
- *UNESCO. Discussions are now in progress.*
- *In different countries. The Declaration has been set forth on:*
 - o *May 17th and 18th : in Athena, within the framework of a the Greek speaking symposium on « Cultural diversity and human rights » (Greek)*
 - o *May 25th and 26th : in Luxembourg, within the framework of two reflection days, which were organised by the cultural centre, in partnership with ATD Fourth World in particular.*
 - o *June 15th and 16th ; in Spain at the University of Logrono, within the framework of a symposium organises by both the observatory and a new UNESCO Chair, concerning the cultural content of public liberties.*
 - o *October 30th : in Monterrey (Mexico), in the framework of the 2007 Forum of Monterrey in concert the Mexican UNESCO Chair.*

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