

Concept Note

“The Power of Education for Countering Racism and Discrimination: The case of anti-Semitism”

26 September, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Context and background

- In circumstances of rising diversity, rapid change and deep transformation, we see the rise of the challenges of racism and discrimination in societies across the world. This takes the shape of harassment and violence, and wider forms of intolerance, against populations and individuals that are perceived as ‘other.’ This includes also various forms of violent extremism.
- This context includes the challenge of anti-Semitism. At its most serious, violent attacks in recent years have targeted and killed Jewish people, and have had clear anti-Semitic motivations, such as in Mumbai, Toulouse, Brussels, Paris, or Copenhagen. A changing geopolitical climate and new media environment have led to a situation where open anti-Semitism is no longer confined to extremist circles and has become increasingly mainstreamed. The impact of contemporary anti-Semitism is not limited to the Jewish population, but has a profound impact on the whole of society in which it strives.
- While education cannot prevent an individual from committing a violent act in the name of a violent extremist ideology, governments need to ensure that places of learning do not become breeding grounds for violent extremism. The role of education is, therefore to create the conditions that build the defenses, within learners, against violent extremism and strengthen their commitment to tolerance, non-violence and peace.
- In light of this, to tackle the specific challenge of anti-Semitism, UNESCO has developed jointly with the OSCE a publication entitled “**Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education - Guidelines for Policymakers.**” The publication is part of a series that also include resources for teacher training institutions. This work is conducted in the context of UNESCO’s activities to prevent violent extremism through education within the framework of its efforts to promote Global Citizenship Education. This work builds upon UNESCO’s longstanding engagement in peace and human rights education and is guided by the UN Secretary General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and the UN GA Resolution on the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review (July 2016). These documents demonstrate an increasing global attention to prevention of violent extremism, beyond an exclusive focus on security. They also highlight the recognition of education in prevention.

Issues and objectives

Racism and discrimination are global issues, as is anti-Semitism: wherever it expresses itself, it is a symptom of broader social and political problems. It is accompanied by gender-based violence and other forms of intolerance. Anti-Semitism feeds conspiracy theories and violent extremist ideologies that represent trans-national threats. As with all forms of discrimination and intolerance, antisemitism must be countered through education, to build the resilience of young people to extremist ideologies. Addressing anti-Semitism through education is therefore both an immediate security imperative and a long-term educational investment to promote human rights and global citizenship.

The high-level panel will highlight the importance of combating racism and discrimination on a global scale, with a focus on anti-Semitism, as part of the overall effort to prevent and counter violent extremism and will seek to promote existing materials for policy-makers published by UNESCO jointly with the OSCE to governments, human rights organizations and other education stakeholders.

The main objectives of the event is to mobilize national governments and education stakeholders to address racism and discrimination, including anti-Semitism, through education and to further international collaboration with UNESCO and the United Nations on relevant initiatives.

Draft Programme
**The Power of Education for Countering Racism and Discrimination:
the case of anti-Semitism
Wednesday, 26 September 2018**

Venue: Conference Room II, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

5:00 p.m.	Introduction Video testimonies on anti-Semitism (3') USC Shoah Foundation UNESCO Chair
5:04 p.m.	Welcome address (3') Audrey Azoulay , Director-General of UNESCO
5:08 p.m.	Opening speech (3') António Guterres , United Nations Secretary General (<i>confirmed</i>)
5:12 p.m.	Key-note speech (5')
5:20 p.m.	Statements by Heads of State and Government (30')
6:00 p.m.	Young change-makers (6')
6:06 p.m.	Ministerial statements (15')
6:25 p.m.	Closing Remarks (2') Audrey Azoulay , Director-General of UNESCO

Any Other Details

Expected participants: Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Education, Permanent Missions to the United Nations, representatives of civil society organizations.