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## Human Rights Council

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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Summary of panel discussion on history teaching and memorialization processes**

### **Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 25/19 of 28 March 2014, in which the Council decided to hold, at its twenty-seventh session, a panel discussion on history teaching and memorialization processes with a view to, inter alia, contributing to the sharing of good practices in this area.



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## **I. Introduction**

1. On 9 September 2014, pursuant to paragraph 14 of its resolution 25/19, the Human Rights Council held at its twenty-seventh session a panel discussion on history teaching and memorialization processes, with a view to, inter alia, contributing to the sharing of good practices in this area.
2. The panel discussion was chaired by Baudelaire Ndong Ella, President of the Human Rights Council, and moderated by Farida Shaheed, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Flavia Pansieri, delivered an opening statement. The panellists were Dubravka Stojanovic, Professor of History at the University of Belgrade; Sami Adwan, Professor of Education and Teacher Training at Hebron University in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Marie Wilson, Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; and Pablo de Greiff, Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.
3. The present summary was prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, pursuant to paragraph 15 of Council resolution 25/19, in which it requested the High Commissioner to prepare a summary report on the panel discussion.

## **II. Opening statement by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**

4. In her opening statement, Ms. Pansieri noted the timeliness of the panel discussion taking place in 2014, which marks 100 years since the start of the First World War. She emphasized that the way the past was viewed, interpreted and sometimes distorted guided people's understanding of the present and shaped relationships between and within communities. In particular, the urge for revenge, the denial of other peoples' narratives, the exclusion of groups from official memories and the negative portrayal of some communities in history textbooks pitted peoples against one another and incited discrimination, hate and persecution. Conversely, providing space for different communities to present their perspectives on history fostered mutual understanding and helped to develop a sense of common humanity.
5. The Deputy High Commissioner noted that most or perhaps all societies faced challenges in addressing the past. That included in particular societies that had suffered conflict, civil wars or authoritarian regimes; post-colonial and post-slavery societies; and societies that were challenged by divisions based on ethnic, national or linguistic backgrounds, or on religion, belief or political ideology.
6. The Deputy High Commissioner stressed the essential part played by justice and remedy, through the pursuit of truth and respect for human rights, in putting an end to what she called the churning cycle of massive human rights violations. Reconciliation processes clearly needed to weave new and inclusive historical narratives. The Deputy High Commissioner noted that official genuine apologies had the vital effect of recognizing victims as rights-holders and granting them respect within the community. She added that commemorations and memorials that were thoughtfully designed with a multi-perspective approach could also offer recognition to various groups and give them space to articulate their experiences and perceptions.

7. The Deputy High Commissioner stated that history teaching should stimulate and promote civic engagement, critical thinking and discussion, in order to help us to understand not only the past but also contemporary challenges, such as discrimination and violence. She concluded that even when it was too soon or too painful to reach a shared narrative of past events, a first achievable step was to acknowledge and understand that a diversity of views existed about why and how the events had occurred. The challenge was to distinguish manipulations of history for political ends from the legitimate continuous reinterpretation of the past.

### **III. Contributions of the panellists**

8. In her introductory remarks as moderator of the panel, Ms. Shaheed recalled that she had devoted two consecutive reports to the issue of historical and memorial narratives in divided societies, relating to history textbooks (A/68/296) and memorials and museums (A/HRC/25/49). In those reports, Ms. Shaheed sought to identify the circumstances under which narratives of the past, promoted either by governmental or non-governmental actors, could be or become problematic from a human rights perspective. She stressed that, too often, stakeholders failed to acknowledge cultural diversity and the multiplicity of historical and memorial narratives between and within communities. Unacknowledged wars also raged in the area of culture and education, in which deep misunderstandings between communities were cultivated, thereby preparing the grounds for discrimination, violence and even future revenge.

9. Ms. Shaheed noted that people constantly strived on the one hand to retrieve, validate, make known and have acknowledged by others their own history, and on the other hand to contest dominant interpretations. She underlined the essential role of historical and memorial narratives, as components of cultural heritage, in shaping collective identities. Noting the lack of common narrative of the past between or within countries, she stressed the importance of ensuring a multi-perspective approach to history teaching and memorialization processes, and of fostering critical thought, analytical learning and debate, so as to allow a better understanding of the contemporary challenges of exclusion and violence.

10. The Special Rapporteur emphasized that academic and artistic freedoms, unfortunately too often restricted, were important in this process. Academics and artists, in particular, could help us to understand that neither written history nor remembrance of the past ever produced final, never-to-be-changed outcomes. The past has always been subject to interpretation, discussion and reinterpretation. The Special Rapporteur noted the need to open space for diverse narratives to be articulated in culturally meaningful ways for all. Furthermore, self-expressions through artistic creativity were indispensable to make victims visible.

11. Ms. Shaheed observed that enabling a plurality of narratives of past events was particularly crucial in post-conflict and deeply divided societies, because it allowed insights into the experience of the other, whoever it may be, and a glimpse of people's common humanity beyond the fractured identities that are especially prominent in conflict. She concluded that such a plurality was crucial for reconciliation processes to be sustainable.

12. Ms. Stojanovic stressed the timeliness of the panel. She indicated that there was most often no common narrative of the past. For example, numerous debates took place shortly after the First World War on how to consider the man who killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Gavrilo Princip, whom some qualified as a criminal and others as a hero or a freedom fighter. Every historical situation has been the subject of diverging interpretations depending on the angle from which events were analysed. Post-conflict societies, whether

after civil wars, dictatorships or decolonization processes, have produced parallel interpretations that have resulted in parallel realities for people, thus preventing reconciliation.

13. Ms. Stojanovic stated that, although it was almost impossible for two States that were once at war with each other to develop a common narrative of past events, the publication of a Franco-German history textbook provided a successful example of an attempt to do just that. She specified, however, that this success was in large part due to fortunate and rare circumstances, namely, the role of the European Union as a political umbrella for the discussion and the highly developed state of historical and social sciences in France and Germany.

14. However, alternatives to developing a common narrative could be recommended, such as adopting a multi-perspective approach that enabled all voices to be heard. Ms. Stojanovic explained that, as a result of this methodology, four books had been published on controversial issues relating to the wars that took place in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, and that Serbia had started a project involving sixty historians with the aim of writing a book on that part of history. Ms. Stojanovic stressed the particularly interesting role that multiple perspectives could play in turning a controversy into a debate in which all sides could express their interpretation. She underlined the importance of changing the way that history as a subject was taught in schools, from hiding controversies to showing them and opening discussion about the various existing narratives. She recognized that, while it was often impossible to reach a consensus on past events, a fundamental first step was for pupils to be informed about other groups' perspectives.

15. Ms. Stojanovic noted that history curricula tended to deal solely with political history, which overstressed conflicts, whereas there would be large scope for learning important historical events within social history, for example, including gender-related history.

16. Mr. Adwan co-authored "*Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine*", a history textbook written by a group of Israeli and Palestinian teachers. He specified that the publication of the book, the result of seven years of rigorous collaboration, followed the failure by both sides to implement certain terms of the 1993 Oslo Accords relating to the review of the education systems to make them peace-oriented, which had directed both sides to develop a history textbook in the spirit of the Accords. Instead, each side continued to teach its own narrative only. The aim of the history textbook elaborated by Mr. Adwan and his counterparts was to introduce both narratives side by side, giving them equal space. This became possible by choosing to present the textbook in the form of columns, one for each narrative, with an empty space between them for students to write their comments. Mr. Adwan stated that it not only created a sense of equality in terms of the space allocated to each narrative, but also brought a certain symmetry between the teachers despite the existing asymmetry of power between the two States.

17. The main effect of the textbook was to provide Israeli and Palestinian pupils with an opportunity to study each other's history as well as their own. Mr. Adwan noted that, in doing so, the project fitted into a democratic framework by, inter alia, integrating the right of children to gain access to information and the academic freedoms of teachers and researchers. He expressed the need to move education from being a means of perpetuating the conflict to a means of building peace and stressed that there was scope to learn from each other's trauma.

18. Mr. Adwan elaborated on some of the difficulties that he and other teachers had encountered during the development and implementation of the project and the challenges that lay ahead. In the developing phases of the project, the ongoing nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict made the collaborative process harder than expected, including in terms

of willingness to set each other's differences aside. Mr. Adwan stressed that it was, however, important that such textbooks be drafted by teachers and not by historians, because the drafting process would itself re-educate the teachers to some extent and train them in a way that they could then pass on to their pupils the new parallel narratives and multi-perspectives of teaching history. Today's main challenge was to ensure that teachers felt comfortable and enjoyed in practice the freedom to teach both narratives. This should be seen not as a frightening experience but as an empowering one. Such freedom should be guaranteed by the State.

19. Mr. Adwan insisted on the strong role played by families in educating younger generations about past events. However, the teaching that children received from their family relations was often biased and contributed to fuelling ongoing tensions and misunderstandings. While teachers should be in charge of delivering a more inclusive, multi-perspective and impartial account of historical events, they must feel secure in doing so and be convinced of the advantages of the multi-perspective approach. Mr. Adwan emphasized the need to give children access to a variety of materials and resources in addition to a multiplicity of textbooks and to train teachers accordingly. Also on the issue of curriculum content, he stated that agreed criteria based on human rights should be abided by, and that historical research should continue on the reasons that led to certain historical events.

20. Despite the arduous experience, Mr. Adwan stated that he would recommend such a project to other nations that were experiencing conflicting relations, political or otherwise, with regards to historical narratives.

21. Ms. Wilson contributed as a Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. That Commission had published as mandated a history book on the Indian residential schools system, which had affected many generations of indigenous children of Canada and had created a legacy of societal and personal harms. She said that the aim of the book had been to capture part of Canada's history that had been not only unknown to many but also denied by others, including victims of these painful events. These past events had had the effect of creating distorted or non-existent relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Canada, amplified by the teaching of different narratives, generation after generation, and by the fact that history textbooks themselves had included negative stereotypes. That is why the history book had been published as part of a wider educational challenge, which, once overcome, would eventually result in a better informed adult population capable in turn of teaching a more honest narrative of Canada to their own children. Ms. Wilson underlined the need for citizens to be informed by actions taken by the State, but also the media, to reshape societies beyond given narratives.

22. Commissioner Wilson added that the impact of the history book would begin to be felt when its contents became part of the history of Canada that all children would learn. She underlined that provinces and territories in Canada could use it as a starting point in view of developing more tailored narratives of the events that had taken place in their respective jurisdictions. Two provinces and territories had already made the book part of a compulsory new course of study for all students. Ms. Wilson emphasized, however, that one crucial element was political will, and expressed her appreciation for the leadership that some ministers of education had demonstrated in prioritizing the drafting of a new curriculum in just a year and a half. The production of the curriculum was also the fruit of hard and collaborative work between education experts and survivors of the residential school system, including the use of artistic expressions. Further steps had included the training of teachers themselves, who needed to learn a historical narrative that they had not been taught at university, as well as health supports to ensure that teaching painful history did not have a counterproductive effect by creating further harm.

23. Ms. Wilson stressed that, in memorialization processes, priority should focus on creating the conditions necessary for a constant ongoing dialogue, with lesser importance accorded to the nature of the memorialization activity itself. Part of this dialogue has taken place within the family context, where the impacts of injustice have often been carried forward to the next generation of children. Ms. Wilson concluded that these questions must be considered as urgent, not only as a tool to prevent recurrence but also as a means to stop the continuation of similar injustices. It was also urgent to learn from elders while they were still available to teach some of the most valued things that had been endangered by the residential schools, especially language, cultural knowledge and spiritual ceremonies. Such things helped to heal past harms, restore indigenous pride and enrich Canadian identity.

24. Mr. de Greiff stressed that issues relating to history teaching and memorialization processes were central to his mandate. In his view, “cultural interventions” could significantly contribute to the cause of transitional justice. Such interventions included activities that take place outside of institutions formally responsible for policymaking, such as memorials, cultural expressions and opinion articles, in various media and in museums, for example. The Special Rapporteur underlined that there was a basic distinction to be made between three spheres of intervention: at the cultural level, through social institutions and by individuals. Overcoming racism, discrimination, cultures of deep fear and underlying causes of massive human rights violations required interventions in those three spheres. He added that oppressive and authoritarian regimes were very successful at controlling cultural productions and that conflicts could be stopped by “cultural entrepreneurs” who were deeply aware of the importance of cultural interventions.

25. Mr. de Greiff added that, while in many conflicts victims were considered as a threat to the national economy and the basic interests of the ruling elites, cultural interventions greatly contributed to making victims visible and remembering the debt owed to them. Cultural interventions played an important part in understanding, including from an intergenerational point of view, how violations were perpetuated in space and time.

26. Mr. de Greiff stressed that States should keep in mind that their options were not either to forget or to remember the past but rather to discuss what kind of public space should be made available for remembering the past and for allowing the expression of a plurality of views. He noted that one way to open such a space was to support civil society, financially but also by enabling the conditions for it to operate effectively. The Special Rapporteur emphasized that transitional justice instruments, including truth commissions, could be much more effective when they explicitly integrate cultural elements and citizen participation. He illustrated his argument by giving examples, such as photograph or art exhibitions set up in Peru, Timor-Leste or Sierra Leone, and the educational reforms proposed by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission of Morocco.

27. Mr. de Greiff urged States to not only refrain from interfering with the work of civil society for memorialization, but also to take positive steps, for example, by supporting more strongly cultural interventions; guaranteeing effectively the freedom and independence of actors involved in this process, including by liberalizing the establishment of civil society organizations; facilitating access to archives; and supporting an education regime that was sympathetic to history teaching on the basis of a multi-perspective approach. He added that, while States should also take the reports of truth and reconciliation commissions more fully into account, the reports themselves could perhaps be more explicit in directing States towards the right steps to be taken. Mr. de Greiff reminded civil society organizations of their role as participants in debates to promote rights for all and not just a few.

28. Mr. De Greiff pointed out the gap between theory and practice in the area of history teaching and memorialization processes. He stressed that this gap was still widely visible through the denial, on the part of various States, of violations, including massacres and

genocide; common manipulation of history for narrow political purposes; obstacles to the work of artists, academics and historians, including for gaining access to archives; limitations of freedoms of expression and association; limited financial investment in education in comparison with other sectors, such as the military; constraints on access to the media; memorialization and education policies designed without adequate consultation of stakeholders; and selective attention to certain topics to the detriment of others. He stressed that these malpractices were regrettably more common than the expressions of support for memorialization and history teaching.

#### **IV. Video projection on the role of theatre artists in building peace**

29. At the end of the first round of the interactive discussion, a ten-minute video<sup>1</sup> was projected, containing excerpts from a documentary film by Cynthia Cohen and Allison Lund entitled “Acting together on the world stage: performance and the creative transformation of conflict”. The documentary was the result of a collaboration between the programme on peacebuilding and the arts at Brandeis University, United States of America, and the organization Theatre Without Borders, and was screened by courtesy of the authors.

30. The video included stories about and scenes from performances that had changed communities in conflict, and presented diverse views about the role of theatre artists in building peace. It contained interviews with a number of theatre artists, professionals and academics across the world on the capacity of theatre to open spaces for voicing stories, bridging differences, dignifying memories and forging new paths to peace, providing a context for conversation and dialogue. The video underscored the power of theatre to put to the stage issues and questions that were taboo and to create a thought-provoking process in the spectator’s mind, encouraging critical analysis of a certain situation. Not only did theatre provide for an alternative means of expressing narratives in imaginative ways, it also had proved to be a manner in which survivors of human rights violations could exteriorize the pain that they had perhaps failed to express in an official, political context. Theatre therefore had the potential to influence social transformation by providing grounds for victims to reconstruct their lives. One of the theatre groups stressed the role of theatre as a non-violent form of opposition to violence itself.

#### **V. Summary of the interactive discussion**

31. During the interactive discussion, representatives of the following States and organizations took the floor: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Morocco, Pakistan, Romania, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Turkey, the United States, Uruguay, Viet Nam, the African Group (represented by Ethiopia) and the European Union. Statements by the following delegations were not delivered owing to lack of time: the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

32. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations also spoke: Amnesty International, Baha’i International Community, Hope International, Human Rights Now, International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations and Verein Südwind Entwicklungspolitik.

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<sup>1</sup> Available from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHI156AmfCo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHI156AmfCo).



33. Delegates expressed their appreciation for the organization of the panel discussion, which represented a favourable context for sharing experiences and good practices in the area of history teaching and memorialization processes.

#### **A. General remarks**

34. Most delegations stressed that it was essential for States to acknowledge and learn from past wrongs in order to prevent the recurrence of human rights violations, and to set the foundations for trust between formerly opposed groups. Some States spoke of memorialization processes as an absolute precondition for justice and as an indispensable element for achieving peace, noting that reconciliation could not occur when the memories and pains of victims were despised.

35. It was noted that remembrance was part of human nature and that memories shaped identities. As part of the array of transitional justice instruments, symbolic measures of reparation could take the form of commemorative events and monuments in symbolic places, with the objective of honouring the memory of the victims of a troubled past and demonstrating recognition on the part of the authorities. Many participants underlined that victims had to be at the centre of memorialization processes, with a focus on their plight for protection and reparation. Indeed, victims would be unable to participate in the reconstruction of the social fabric of a country unless they were granted minimal recognition, including through moral or symbolic redress.

#### **B. Multi-perspective approach to history teaching and memorialization processes**

36. Many States emphasized the importance of understanding and analysing elements that contributed to terrible historical events, so as to provide useful grounds for reconciliation and work towards building a better future. Some States warned that biased historical narratives coupled with a lack of shared memories of past events could result in further atrocities.

37. It was noted that the diversity of historical narratives had often resulted in tensions within societies composed of groups that each held and perpetuated their own version of historical events. Consequently, social divides between communities hindered efforts by Governments or civil society organizations to bridge gaps.

38. Most States mentioned how crucial it was to recognize the legitimacy of diverging narratives. This was to be considered as a first step towards opening up a dialogue in which all sides could express their perspective and experience of past events and have the opportunity, conversely, to listen to alternative interpretations. In this respect, of particular note was the role of the State to make public spaces available for such discussions, on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination, mutual tolerance and respect, thus allowing views of all social categories to be voiced. Several delegations recognized the necessity of cooperation between all stakeholders, including politicians, historians and other academics, artists and communities, for the success of these public multi-perspective discussions.

39. Many States agreed that this multi-perspective approach had to be carried out through all spheres of society, especially in the sector of education, and had to be at the core of history teaching. Some delegations insisted on the role of history teaching as a vector for long-term peace and stability: by acting on the younger generations and by creating an adequate environment to foster tolerance and mutual understanding, history teaching using a multi-perspective approach could provoke changes in attitudes and behaviours that were currently too often grounded on stereotypes and prejudice towards

certain groups of people. It was also noted that commemorations could serve as useful tools to unite people in the face of future challenges.

40. Furthermore, many States agreed that history teaching should not focus solely on facts but should aim, through a multi-perspective approach, at developing critical and analytical thinking and a democratic, tolerant and responsible civic attitude in relation to social diversity. For this, classrooms should be a space for open discussion and debate on different historical narratives, which should be drawn up following rigorous scientific research that strived for accuracy, objectivity, inclusiveness and impartiality.

41. It was noted that it was the role of States to support academia and civil society in their efforts to reach a collective but diverse historical narrative.

42. Several States supported the view that multi-perspective history teaching not only was a central element to democratization processes, but also contributed to the right of people to have access to their own heritage as well as to the heritage of others.

### **C. Challenges and related recommendations**

43. Many States pointed out some existing malpractices in history teaching and memorialization processes, identified as potential threats to efforts for the prevention of recurring violations of human rights.

44. Several delegates condemned the imposition of unjustified restrictions on academic freedom and the promotion of a single, State-drafted, history textbook, which were seen as worrying obstacles to peace and human rights. It was pointed out that some populations were negatively portrayed in history textbooks and often presented in relation to what they did not have as opposed to what they did have. Textbooks were often used for pupils to learn by heart, which regrettably caused the internalization of false information. Many history textbooks also continued to vehicle racial and gender stereotypes, which should be eradicated as soon as possible. In this last respect, many delegations expressed the essential role that memorialization played as a means of combating injustice and racist tragedies and of promoting reconciliation, in line with the third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in 2001, and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

45. Many States expressed their concern at the use of history teaching to stir hatred, reinforce prejudices, spread propaganda or create hierarchies among victims. It was also noted that, given the humanitarian catastrophe of the First World War, States should be urged to adopt a human rights-based approach to history teaching and memorialization processes in order to facilitate mutual understanding and ensure the non-recurrence of serious human rights violations.

46. Concern was expressed by some States at historical distortions, such as denials of the Holocaust. Also of concern were certain historical labels that were used by some government officials to designate unrelated persons or groups, such as the flagrant and unwarranted use of the term "Nazi" in an attempt to disparage a person or group. Some also observed a noticeable rise in neo-Nazism, recalled that the promotion of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial should not benefit from claims for absolute protection of freedom of expression and information and asked States to intensify their efforts against such cases, including through the prosecution of persons involved in the destruction of memorials and cemeteries.

47. Some delegations mentioned that memorialization processes could result in deeper social problems if not carried out adequately. Delegations also noted with concern the glorification of atrocities and their perpetrators that was still commonly practiced in some

States. They stressed that the international community should explicitly condemn such glorification and that States should instead ensure the accountability of perpetrators. Furthermore, it was stressed that cultural diversity could not be used as a means to justify human rights violations.

48. With regards to the conditions and recommendations for successful memorialization processes and history teaching activities, it was observed that freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, were regrettably not guaranteed in some countries. Many delegations insisted on States' obligations to respect the rights to have access to information, to freedom of opinion and expression and to freedom of association and assembly. States should ensure access to archives and libraries, and all social sectors should be given the opportunity to participate freely in historical debate, including academia, whose role was of paramount importance in leading the debate by carrying out independent research. In this regard, some participants stressed that Governments should guarantee the autonomy of universities and research institutes, collaborate with and promote the participation of civil society in debates and ensure access to library funds and archival materials of public interest, including to researchers from other States. States were encouraged to undertake an inclusive collaborative approach with regards to history teaching and memorialization processes, respectfully taking into consideration the contributions of all ethnic, national, religious, linguistic and cultural identities.

49. Some delegations recommended that human rights and peace education be incorporated into history teaching, in accordance with the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparations for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, and emphasized how important it was for history curricula to encompass not only the history of the country in question but also international history. Various other delegations stressed the responsibility of States to ensure that memorialization processes, as a form of history teaching, were implemented in the long term. One delegation in particular encouraged all States to publicize commemorations so as to raise awareness of historical events and their significance. Finally, delegations underlined on several occasions that democracy and the rule of law were the best guarantors for reconciliation.

#### **D. National experiences in the area of history teaching and memorialization processes**

50. During the interactive dialogue, most delegations highlighted the importance of convening a panel discussion to serve as a platform for sharing examples of good practices in the area of history teaching and memorialization and processes. Statements of the delegations that provided examples to illustrate their respective national experience are summarized below.

51. Ireland stated that for the decade of commemorations 2012-2022, which was important for the country, the Government had adopted an approach to memorialization that was based on the principles of full acknowledgement of the totality of history of the island, the legitimacy of all traditions, mutual respect and historical accuracy. The delegation explained that, through a reconciliation fund, Ireland was providing support to a number of commemorative projects, some of which might challenge the notion of separate histories and explore how shared experiences could affect contemporary societal relationships.

52. Morocco presented some of the components of its transitional justice experience, mentioning in particular the work undertaken by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission. Initiatives undertaken by Morocco included the launch of the Archives Institute of Morocco and the inventory of Moroccan public and private archives. Morocco

also created the Royal Institute for Moroccan History and Research and established a research study centre on modern history, along with a specific master's degree in that area. Finally, Morocco had established three museums of regional history aimed at the promotion of the country's regional and linguistic diversity. Various memory-related projects had also been set up, and certain detention centres, known for being former places of torture and execution, had been converted into memorial sites.

53. Algeria stated that it was commemorating, through a multi-dimensional process, its resistance to colonization and the war of national liberation. Museums had been built, monuments had been erected and streets, towns and buildings had been named after martyrs and national heroes. Gatherings also continued to be organized to commemorate major events from that period of Algerian history. A similar approach had been adopted and was being concretized to honour the victims of terrorism and the courageous choice of the Algerian people for national reconciliation.

54. Estonia stressed that the multi-perspective approach was a leading philosophy in history education and stressed the highly valued role played by associations in that regard, such as the Estonian History and Civic Teachers Association, the European Association of History Educators and the History Network for Young Europeans. It mentioned some international initiatives, such as the Memory of the World Register of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to which in 2009 was inscribed the Baltic Way, or Chain, a landmark protest that took place for the first time in 1989 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. The delegation also referred to the establishment of the Museum of Occupations in Estonia, the aim of which was to organize exhibitions and carry out studies on Estonia's recent and complex history. In addition, Estonian students were made aware of various memorial sites, including those geographically close to their schools, throughout the history curriculum.

55. China indicated that it had introduced a memorial day to remember the victims of the Nanjing massacre and added that the historical archives in relation to the massacre had been sent to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

56. Colombia reported that its Law on Victims and Land Restitution of 2011 established a duty for the State to undertake memory reconstruction with the participation of a wide range of actors, as a means to fulfilling the right to truth. Colombia's National Centre for Historical Memory was created to reconstruct past events and establish the truth by carrying out studies and issuing publications. The Centre was also in charge of public policy regarding archives on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, of carrying out symbolic reparation actions and of running the National Memory Museum.

57. Lithuania referred to the network of tolerance education centres, which was created at the initiative of the International Historical Commission and engaged students, teachers, non-governmental organizations and others to discuss and reflect upon political and social reasons for historical events and on the consequences of human rights violations. The Lithuanian delegation added that such initiatives could contribute to the multi-voice narrative of history teaching, and thereby promote tolerance in society.

58. Sierra Leone explained that there was a societal culture of silence in the country about the civil war, but that the Government was committed to promoting measures to ensure a full and lasting peace. Of particular note, the delegation stressed that the premises of the Special Court for Sierra Leone had been converted into a peace museum in 2012, with exhibition rooms containing historical documentation and objects as well as archives and a memorial garden that had yet to be developed.

59. Armenia referred to the Armenian Genocide Museum and Monument. It stated that the aim of the Museum, which opened in 1995, was to document all materials related to the Armenian genocide.

60. France spoke of activities undertaken in the context of the seventieth anniversary of the Normandy and Provence landings and of the liberation of Paris, and of the start of a four-year cycle to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War. It was also stressed that France, in 2007, had inaugurated the Museum of the History of Migration to recognize the important role that migration had played in the development of the country.

61. In Italy, activities commemorating the 100th anniversary of the First World War took the form of a census of all monuments that had been erected between 1917 and 1940, the number of which stood at approximately 6,000 so far, with the objective of maintaining and restoring them so as to perpetuate collective memory.

62. South Africa highlighted the positive effect that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and truth seeking activities had had on the country's understanding of the past and especially on lessening the burden for an easier future. The delegation also mentioned that a monument had been built next to the remnants of Old Fort prison.

63. Turkey referred to events that had occurred in 1915 and indicated that it had offered in 2005 the establishment of a joint historic commission.

64. Brazil referred to its National Commission on Victims of Enforced Disappearances, created in 1995, the National Commission on Amnesty, created in 2002, and the National Truth Commission of 2012, which was soon to publish its report.

65. In Argentina, a number of initiatives by the Government included the conversion of former detention centres into memorial sites and museums, as well as the creation, in 2006, of the Federal Network of Memorial Sites, which carried out national, provincial and local memorialization and investigation policies with the National Memory Archives.

66. Romania stated that it was currently re-evaluating its own history, 25 years after the fall of the dictatorial regime. It added that, although controversies had arisen, the re-evaluation had made it possible to discuss freely facts that had been previously unknown to generations of citizens. Monuments had been erected to honour the memory of the victims of totalitarian regimes. Finally, the history of the Holocaust and that of national minorities were now taught in public schools.

67. Israel recalled that major conferences in the 1990s and 2000s on the Holocaust had contributed to firmly establishing reparation as an integral part of the international agenda. The Israeli delegation further stressed that Holocaust denial had been made illegal in some countries and that Holocaust education had been instituted in many schools in order to ensure that, despite the efforts of deniers, people would learn lessons of the past and have a better understanding of contemporary challenges.

68. In Rwanda, new history textbooks and a new curriculum had been developed based on scientific research. Politically motivated distortions had been eliminated. The Rwandan delegation also referred to the creation of a national commission to preserve and protect the memory of genocide; broad and regular education programmes on history and memory, adapted for all categories of the population; and regular commemorations of the genocide and preservation of genocide memorial sites across the country.

69. Japan delivered a statement in response to a presentation made by another delegation, in which it stated that, since the war, it had been consistent in its efforts to build a free, democratic nation that respects human rights and the rule of law.

## VI. Concluding observations

70. In their concluding remarks, the panellists reaffirmed that a lack of attention to past wrongs and historical events inevitably resulted in a recurrence of violations. They welcomed the fact that so many delegations supported the recommendations made in the reports of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights relating to the multi-perspective approach in teaching history and memorialization processes, and encouraged States to effectively implement such an approach on the ground.

71. Despite the expressed widespread support from delegations, there remained much to be done in practice with regards to education and memorialization for the sake of non-recurrence, on both the national and international levels, but also to put an end to the continuation of injustice. In particular, it was stressed that these issues required urgent attention and that it was never too soon to adopt a multi-perspective approach in history teaching and memorialization processes, as without facing the past, people could not reconcile. Furthermore, narratives of the past were in any case carried out within families and communities, most often in a partial way. It was therefore recommended that States open spaces and opportunities for the expression of a diversity of historical narratives and interpretations. Of particular note was the recommendation to ensure that a diversity of history textbooks and additional materials and resources be made available to teachers and students. Panellists further underlined that history was neither a religion nor a single truth to believe, but something to discuss.

72. It was stressed that truth commissions should foster a more inclusive account of history and increasingly take into account the role and the plight of women in conflict. More generally, it was underlined that other aspects of history than political history could be usefully introduced, such as history of sciences, economy and culture, leading to a change of attitude towards the past. A good approach was to teach social history, reflecting on the diversity of societies and including the contributions of women to history.

73. Panellists stressed that more attention had to be paid to victims of human rights violations. Their participation in policies relating to history teaching and memorialization processes had to be promoted. In order to eradicate the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, history teaching should encourage analytical learning, critical thinking and debate. The panellists also noted that such an approach was a way to counter cultural relativism and denial: while there might be various interpretations for the causes and consequences of events, there was also a need to recognize, at the very least, that facts were facts. This is why it was important to approach history as a science and academic discipline with a methodology, and to respect and protect academic freedom.

74. It was noted that where there was no public acknowledgement of past events on the part of the State, artistic events and manifestations could allow people, in particular victims, to express their narrative. For this, artistic freedom had to be fully respected and protected. Panellists stressed that States had to ensure that no reprisals would be conducted against those who expressed alternative narratives, including teachers who adopted a multi-perspective approach to history teaching. In this regard, it was important that teachers be trained adequately to feel confident and safe in teaching history from a multi-perspective angle.

75. Finally, the panellists encouraged the Human Rights Council to continue to address the issue of history teaching and memorialization processes in its future work.