

News Release Communiqué



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CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO'S CALL FOR A COALITION OF CITIES AGAINST RACISM RECEIVES SUPPORT FROM ONTARIO'S HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Toronto – The Canadian Commission for UNESCO and Ontario's Human Rights Commission announced today that they and other partners are setting up a working group of government and non-government organizations to develop and promote a proposal to *Call for a Canadian Coalition of Cities Against Racism*. Other partners include the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and the Metropolis Project.

"The objective is to establish a network of cities, interested in exchanging experiences and expertise, and committed to adopting a Plan of Action to address racism", stated David Walden, Secretary-General of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. "We are encouraged by the city governments and civil society organizations that have already expressed some interest", remarked Secretary-General Walden. Other key organizations will also be invited to play a role including: the Canada Council for the Arts; the Department of Canadian Heritage; the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada; as well as educational institutions at all levels.

The initiative is based on UNESCO's call for an International Coalition of Cities Against Racism launched in 2004 to establish a network of cities in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Asia-Pacific and Europe. Each world region would form its own regional coalition and develop its own plan of action. A European Coalition of Cities Against Racism has already been established by 15 cities in December 2004, with Nuremberg playing the lead role.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission and other partners across Canada will lend their expertise and support to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO for the development, promotion and distribution of a draft proposal to interested parties in Canada.

In Saskatoon this June, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO will present the working group's draft proposal to the annual conference of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA) that could lead to the involvement of federal, provincial and territorial human rights commissions from across Canada playing a role to promote the initiative in their regions.

Keith Norton, Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, stated, “Our society must look for new ways to renew its pledge to address racism. UNESCO’s framework for a coalition of cities would broaden and strengthen the fight against racism, bringing it to a new level through coordination and shared responsibility among local city governments, civil society organizations, and other democratic institutions. I am pleased the Ontario Human Rights Commission is involved with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO on this important initiative.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO serves as a forum for governments and civil society in Canada, and works to mobilize participation in UNESCO initiatives, including promoting respect for human rights through education and information.

In addition to enforcing Ontario’s *Human Rights Code*, the Ontario Human Rights Commission is active in promoting and advancing understanding of human rights. Following its public inquiry into racial profiling and the recent publication of papers presented at its race policy dialogue, the Ontario Human Rights Commission is currently developing a policy against racial discrimination and racism, planned for release later this year.

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Aussi disponible en français

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