



To mark the 69th anniversary since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, participants attended a conference (12 December 2017) in Brussels that reviewed and assessed progress made in the field of human rights since its adoption and identified the challenges ahead.

As the UN launches its year-long campaign celebrating the 70th anniversary, the “UN Human Rights System: Achievements and Challenges” conference co-organized by the Association pour les Nations Unies (APNU) and the United Nations Association Flanders Belgium, underlined the huge progress made since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UDHR.

“The UDHR is a timeless document and has been and continues to be a source of inspiration at the global, national and regional level. It brings with it the promise of rights that everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being,” explained Professor Jan Wouters, President of the United Nations Association Flanders Belgium (VVN).

Nevertheless, although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the most translated document in the world available in more than [500 languages](#), human rights are being severely tested with increasing hostilities towards the human rights of many occurring at an alarming rate across the globe.



Professor Marc Bossuyt, Member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and former Chair of UN Commission and the UN Commission on Human Rights, confirmed this trend and shared his fears that “despite making tremendous progress on human rights since 1948, basic human rights are still not being entitled to all and everybody should exert pressure on the states concerned to change their behavior and meet their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

In his speech, Professor Olivier De Schutter, the former Special Rapporteur of the United Nations for the Right to Food and Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provided a candid account of businesses and the take-up of their human rights responsibilities. “For the last 30 years inequalities have grown in almost all countries leading to the demands of the richest and not the needs of the poorest being met. Highly unequal societies continue to grow and wealth accumulation is a major problem as a result. In the context of business, there is now a growing pressure in having the rights of businesses balanced with the

rights of those they affect. Unfortunately, the UN has no binding code of conduct to be able to regulate relations with businesses as the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are weak, ambiguous and voluntary.”

Birgit Van Hout, the Europe Director of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ended the conference with a rallying call to action for all to take part in the UN's year-long campaign celebrating the 70th anniversary, “real development can only be effective if centered on the rights of the people. The three pillars of the campaign are to promote, reflect and engage. Like APNU and VVN who have launched an outreach campaign with their governments and youth throughout the year, think about how each of you can reach out at home, school and within your communities.”

Additional information and links:

A website called Stand Up 4 Human Rights, was launched to mark the year-long campaign celebrating the 70th anniversary of the UDHR.

- <http://www.standup4humanrights.org/en/index.html>

Specific projects designed to promote the relevance of the Universal Declaration include “Add Your Voice” which aims to promote and disseminate the UDHR in over 100 languages. An online application allows people to record themselves reading an article of the UDHR in their own language and share it on social media – encouraging others to do the same. [Record yourself reading the Declaration and share: “Add Your Voice”](#)

To join the thousands of people have already taken the Stand Up pledge: [Take the Stand Up pledge](#)

