



**Expert Meeting
Atrocity Prevention through Education
in South and Southeast Asia**

18 May 2021
8:00-10:30am EST

CONCEPT NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

The world continues to experience tragedies triggered by gross violence against human dignity and rights. Atrocity crimes which include genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity have destroyed harmonious societies, denied the beauty of diversity and created division and hatred among people in many places around the world. Considering the huge damage brought by these crimes at all levels of human existence, early prevention is the most needed and effective course of action to tackle atrocity crimes.

The United Nations together with its intergovernmental bodies have on numerous occasions reaffirmed its commitment to the promise of “never again” to ensure that we learn from the past and prevent future atrocity crimes. The UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG) is mandated to alert and mobilize for the prevention of atrocity crimes. This includes raising awareness on the causes and dynamics of these crimes, building capacity of Member States, regional organizations, civil society and other actors to prevent, and building resilience in our societies against the indicators of risks of atrocity crimes.

History has taught us that the most effective prevention is early action. By understanding and addressing the risk factors of atrocity crimes, we build societies that are inclusive, peaceful and resilient to the risk of these crimes. Education plays an important role in this regard, as it helps instil values of tolerance, inclusion, respect for human rights and the promotion of non-discrimination. It is also an important tool for prevention when raising awareness of past instances of atrocity crimes and the risk factors associated with them.

The role of education in the prevention of atrocity crimes has been highlighted in various UN policy documents. In his report on the Prevention of Genocide to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/41/24), the Secretary-General emphasized how education plays the most important role to build the resilience of societies against violence, which include fostering a culture of prevention, reducing prejudices, promoting peaceful coexistence and diversity and cultivating

respect for all peoples. He further emphasized in his reports on the Responsibility to Protect (A/67/929–S/2013/399) that education can lead to behavioral change and perceptions of young people, and therefore education systems should reflect the ethnic, national and cultural diversity of societies. The Human Rights Council and the General Assembly encouraged Member States to promote educational programmes and projects that contribute to the prevention of genocide (A/HRC/RES/37/26) and urged Member States to develop educational programmes that will inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust to help prevent future genocides (A/RES/60/7). The Security Council has emphasized the importance of all forms of education to prevent future atrocity crimes (S/RES/2150 (2014)).

The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence highlighted, in their joint report to the HRC, the importance of inclusion of objective, multifaceted accounts of past atrocities into national curricula history education (A/HRC/37/65). The Special Rapporteur on the right to education highlighted how the right to education contributes to the prevention of atrocity crimes and mass or grave violations of human rights (A/74/243). Furthermore, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has published policy guidance¹, aiming to help educational actors to teach about the Holocaust and genocide prevention.

Although the important role of education in atrocity prevention has been emphasized repeatedly, its implementations remains limited, in South and Southeast Asia region. OSAPG is conducting a project focused on the existing initiatives, good practices and opportunities to enhance atrocity prevention through education in the Asia-Pacific region. This includes experiences on human rights education, global citizenship education, peace education, teaching about past atrocities and similar initiatives. Through the engagement with various stakeholders in the region, the project also aims at identifying some countries to work with in introducing atrocity prevention in their education programmes.

II. OBJECTIVES

This meeting aims to facilitate a space for discussion and reflection among experts in the area of education and atrocity prevention to: a) have an overview of current educational programmes and initiatives on integrating atrocity prevention in the educational field in countries in the South and Southeast Asia region, and b) through sharing participants' experiences in this area, identify the main challenges and good practices, including possible opportunities for engagement with countries in the region.

Contributions received during the discussion will form part of a report which would map out the current status of the atrocity prevention through education in the region. The report would be a basis for identifying potential countries to enhance policy initiatives, curricula and/or education

¹ "Education about the holocaust and preventing genocide", 2017.

material on atrocity prevention. Developing methodologies on atrocity prevention through education could be considered at later phase of the project.

III. METHODOLOGY

The expert meeting will be held virtually with a duration of two and a half hours. The platform for interaction between the experts will aim to promote discussion and exchange of experiences, and identifying challenges, good practices, lessons learned and recommendations. In order to get the conversation going, participants will be asked to prepare a short presentation of three (3) minutes with their views and experiences related to the topic and based on the guiding questions. The presentations will be accompanied by unstructured reflections and conversations on the topics raised, facilitated by the moderator of the session.

Proposed guiding questions:

- ✓ What are the main entry points for promoting atrocity prevention in the field of formal and non-formal education in the South and Southeast Asia region? What are the main challenges and opportunities?
- ✓ How can prevention of atrocity crimes be integrated into formal learning, including in the curricula, and what could other non-formal tools and programs be? How could non-formal learning compliment formal education in atrocity prevention?
- ✓ Who are the main stakeholders to engage with education on prevention of atrocity crimes in the region?
- ✓ What education tools have been most useful for education on or related to atrocity prevention in the region?
- ✓ How integrating atrocity prevention into education can be linked and complement existing initiatives related to human rights education, global citizenship education, peace education, and teaching about past atrocities?

IV. PROGRAMME

8:00 - 8:05 am	Welcome remarks by Ms. Nderitu, Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide
8:05 - 8:10 am	Presentation of the objectives and methodology of the meeting (OSAPG)
8.10 - 8:40 am	Section I: Presentation and <i>Tour de table</i> for participants to present their experiences and contributions, facilitated by the moderator
8.40 - 9.20 am	Discussions facilitated by the moderator
9.20 - 9.50 am	Section II: Presentation and <i>Tour de table</i> for participants to present their experiences and contributions, facilitated by the moderator
9.50 – 10.20 am	Discussions facilitated by the moderator
10:20-10:30 am	Concluding observations and the way forward (OSAPG)