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UN experts link World Day for Cultural Diversity with human rights



20 May 2010 – Defending cultural diversity goes hand in hand with respect for the individual, a group of United Nations independent human rights experts said today as they also warned that cultural diversity should not be used to infringe on human rights.

“Cultural diversity can only thrive in an environment that safeguards fundamental freedoms and human rights,” the group said in a joint statement to mark World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, highlighting the importance of freedom from discrimination and freedom of expression, information and communications.

The group, which reports to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council, reminded Member States of their responsibility under international law to create an environment conducive to cultural diversity and the enjoyment of cultural rights.

“All persons, including national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and those based on other attributes, as well as indigenous peoples, have the right to express themselves,” according to the statement.

That includes that creation and dissemination of their work in the language of their choice; access to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity; and to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The group added, however, that cultural diversity should not be used to support segregation and harmful traditional practices which run counter to the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights.

“Universal values of human rights should serve as a bridge among all cultures and should not be subservient to social, cultural or religious norms.”

The World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development will be officially commemorated tomorrow.

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