

Celebrating the Achievements from the First Year of the Abidjan Principles

(Paris, 13 February 2019) As today marks the first anniversary of the adoption of the [Abidjan Principles on the right to education](#) organisations around the world are celebrating the significant renewed momentum for the right to education that developed in just a year.

Rapid recognition of the Abidjan Principles

International and regional human rights institutions, including the [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Michelle Bachelet, have [welcomed the Abidjan Principles](#) and emphasised that the principle of public education must be upheld. The [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#) was the first human rights body to recognise the Abidjan Principles following its adoption of a landmark resolution on privatisation of education and health. In the Americas, the [Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights](#) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [recognised](#) the Abidjan Principles as a 'valuable specialised source of interpretation' of State obligations with regard to the right to education.

Professor Ann Skelton, the UNESCO Chair for education law in Africa and a professor at the University of Pretoria, who was chairing the drafting committee, said: *'The recognition of the Abidjan Principles by key human rights institutions has added political strength to their technical legitimacy and brought human rights back to the centre of the debates on education policies'*.

The rapid recognition by diverse human rights actors, both at international and regional levels, reflects the quality and rigor of the development and drafting process. The Abidjan Principles are founded on firm legal provisions, researched and revised by the Drafting Committee and global experts on international human rights law and education. The legal reasoning behind each Guiding Principle is being compiled in a commentary document, which is set to be published in 2021.

Commissioner Jamesina Essie L. King, of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and Chairperson of the Working Group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights added: *'From the adoption conference in Abidjan to the first recognition of the principles by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, there has been a strong regional leadership on the Abidjan Principles in Africa.'*

Adding to this dynamic, the Paris Peace Forum [announced](#) in November 2019 the Abidjan Principles as one of the ten 'most promising governance projects' to be awarded support for scale-up in 2020.

Moving from theory to practice

Within a year since adoption, the Abidjan Principles have already started playing an important role in discussions on major global policy decisions and funding allocations. The [Global Partnership for Education's](#) private sector strategy references the Abidjan

Principles, which could influence the allocation of billions of dollars in education. In [Uganda](#), the Abidjan Principles were cited by the High Court in a judgment faulting the government policy on public financing for secondary education, advising the State to 'seek guidance from the Abidjan Principles'.

At the grassroots level, civil society has organised a range of [activities](#) to implement the Abidjan Principles. This includes policy engagement at the local level in [Nepal](#) and the development of an analysis [framework](#) for research on education systems. The Abidjan Principles have proved to be a versatile tool on the implementation of the right to education, in particular in the context of the fast-rising privatisation and commercialisation of education worldwide.

Celebrating today - the movement is growing

This is only the beginning. Translation of the Abidjan Principles into Spanish is underway, ensuring greater access to the text for more communities. Today and tomorrow, a first meeting of a francophone group of civil society organisations and experts is taking place in Paris to explore how the Abidjan Principles apply in francophone contexts and to deepen the dynamic and universalism of the text. The French version of the text is now [available online](#).

Mr Olivier De Schutter, Former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (2008-2014) and Professor, UC Louvain and Sciences Po noted: *'The francophone community has been involved in the Abidjan Principles since drafting started. With the official French text of the Abidjan Principles now available, governments and civil society will be better able to rely on this tool to broaden its impact in francophone regions.'*

In London, United Kingdom, ActionAid International is launching '[Private Education and compliance with the Abidjan Principles](#)', a [report](#) that uses the Abidjan Principles to assess education systems in Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania and Nigeria.

Several other events are planned in 2020, including an event in mid-2020 to mark the Human Rights Council adoption of the [resolution](#) which recognised the Abidjan Principles, to be held in Dakar, Senegal.

To be notified of upcoming details, sign up here: <http://eepurl.com/gMzrST>

Background

The Abidjan Principles were adopted in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire on 13 February 2019 by over [50 eminent experts](#) on the right to education, following a three-year [consultative process](#) with decision-makers, communities and practitioners. This landmark text unpacks existing human rights law regarding the obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education.

The Abidjan Principles were developed through a uniquely open, transparent, and broad consultative process that captured a variety of perspectives and to ensure the text was reflective of different local contexts.

From 2015 to 2018, a series of participatory regional, thematic, community and online consultations were convened with various stakeholders, including policymakers, private sector, civil society, and communities. Summary reports from each consultation are available at <https://www.abidjanprinciples.org/en/resources/consultation-reports>.

The feedback from all consultations were collected by a Secretariat of organisations, and provided to a Drafting Committee, who revised and incorporated inputs in accordance with existing international human rights law and standards.

The Secretariat consisted of [Amnesty International](#), the [Equal Education Law Centre](#), the [Global Initiative for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#), the [Initiative for Social and Economic Rights](#), and the [Right to Education Initiative](#). These organisations facilitated the consultative process.

Learn more at www.abidjanprinciples.org

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