Section IV: Glossary

Abuse: Treatment that is unkind, cruel or unfair.

Advocate: A person who supports or speaks in favor of someone or something.

Article: A section of a document that deals with a particular point, such as the 30 UDHR articles**.**

Assembly: The gathering together of people to discuss or work on a common purpose.

Asylum: Protection or safety from danger or harm, usually found or provided by a safe place to be, such as another country.

Censor: To examine different forms of communication such as books, speeches or movies and remove or change them because someone thinks they are harmful.

Citizen: A person who has a right to live in a country because he was born there or because he/she has been accepted with full rights in that country.

Court: A meeting of all persons who are involved in a situation that needs a legal judgment or decision. This might be to determine if someone has committed a crime, to settle a disagreement; to reach a decision about how the law will be carried out in a particular situation or case. A court usually consists of a judge or judges, a jury, lawyers and the people who assist them.

Convention: Binding agreement between nation states to comply with an agreed action; used synonymously with treaty and covenant. A convention and a covenant mean the same thing. They are both legally binding for governments that have ratified them. In that sense, covenants and conventions are stronger than declarations.

Convention on the Rights of the Child **(CRC):** Adopted by the General Assembly November 20, 1989. The primary UN document recognizing civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. It is the most ratified document of the UN, with the United States as the only member state to abstain.

Culture: Art, music, literature, ideas, scientific progress and other creations of a people or people in general.

Debate: An organized discussion of something in public; usually two people or two teams who each take an opposite view about an idea and take turns discussing their opinions.

Declaration: Document stating agreed upon principles and standards but which is not legally binding. UN conferences usually produce two sets of declarations: one written by government representatives and one by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Dignity: A proper sense of pride and respect. Treating others with kindness and courtesy or respect.

Discrimination: An unfair difference in treatment; to deny equal rights to certain persons or groups of people.

Education

- **Formal education:** The structured education system (usually by government) that runs from preschool and primary school to university.
- **Informal education:** The lifelong process whereby a person acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the influences and resources in his or her own environment and daily experience.
- **Non-formal education:** Any planned program of personal and social education outside the formal education curriculum that is designed to improve a range of knowledge, skills and competencies (e.g., youth groups, church groups, after-school clubs, Boy Scouts).

Equal: Having the same status, rights or opportunities as another or others.

Evolving Capacities: The enhanced competencies that children acquire as they grow older. Children in different environments and cultures will acquire competencies at different ages. As they grow in experience and ability, children have a greater capacity to take responsibility for their own decisions.

Free: Able to do, act or think as one pleases; not under the unwanted control of another. Example: We are free when we can make choices about our jobs, our education, care of our bodies and which religion we believe in or choose not to believe in.

Humanitarian law: The body of law that protects certain persons in times of armed conflict, helps victims and limits the methods and means of combat in order to minimize destruction, loss of life and unnecessary human suffering.

Human rights: According to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* human rights are certain fundamental things or principles that every person everywhere is entitled to from birth until death, as part of his or her experience simply because she or he is a human being. They apply no matter where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life. They can never be taken away, but can be restricted, for example, if a person breaks the law, or in the interests of national security.

Immigrant: A person who has left their native country to live in another country. Immigrants usually decide to change countries in order to improve living conditions.

Inalienable: Refers to rights that belong to every person and cannot be taken from a person under any circumstances.

Indivisible: Refers to the equal importance of each human rights law. It means that the rights in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* cannot be separated from each other. A person cannot be denied a human right on the grounds that it is "less important" or "non-essential."

Interdependent: Refers to the complementary framework of human rights law. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Member States: Countries or nations that are members of intergovernmental organizations.

Ratification, Ratify: Process by which the legislative body of a state (usually a parliament) confirms a government's action in signing a treaty; formal procedure by which a state becomes bound to a treaty after acceptance.

Refugee: A person who has been forced to leave their native country in order to escape from war, persecution or natural disaster. Refugees usually cannot return home safely.

Religion: A set of beliefs, practices and social organizations that add meaning to a person's life. Religion usually involves belief and devotion to a higher power, especially a personal God or gods. Major religions include groups such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Some would include Humanism (Atheism) in this group.

Responsibility: A duty or obligation. Example: John has a duty or responsibility to help his parents.

Rights: Claims or freedoms to do or to be or to have something. There are legal rights which are conferred by laws. There are other rights, such as human rights, that are ethical principles of freedom or entitlement. Rights are the fundamental rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people.

Stereotype: An oversimplified, generalized idea about what something or someone is like, especially an idea that is wrong and may lead to prejudice and discrimination.

United Nations: An organization composed of many countries who have agreed to work toward peace and human rights for all people. It was created in 1945 after World War II in hope of preventing another such conflict. When it was founded, the UN had 51 member states. Today there are 193.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights **(UDHR):** Adopted by the United Nations general assembly on December 10, 1948. It is the primary UN document establishing human rights standards and norms. All member states have agreed to uphold the UDHR. Although the declaration was intended to be non-binding, through time its various provisions have become so widely recognized that it can now be said to be customary international law.

Xenophobia: Dislike of, or prejudice against, people from countries other than your own. Dislike of anything that is strange or foreign. Xenophobia can also include discrimination, racism, violence and even armed conflicts against foreigners.