

**Awarding of Diplomas  
to the European Masters in Human Rights and Democratisation 2006/2007  
and Inauguration of the Academic Year 2007/2008  
Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice, 23 September 2007**

**Message from Mary Robinson, EIUC Honorary President**

Ministers, Excellencies, Rectors, Deans, Students, Invited guests,  
I had very much hoped to be with you in person on this special 10th anniversary day. When your President, Horst Fischer, discussed it with me, he explained the importance of the event, and I had been wanting in any case to have a personal opportunity to meet with all of you.

The European University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation is truly a unique institution in the world, offering the EMA programme. It has developed, as you know, into a globally recognised institution with an immense potential, which has now really started to flourish, with innovative and successful activities such as the Film Summer School on the Lido, the EU-UN Fellowship Programme, and the fruitful cooperation with the GTZ.

Everybody involved needs to be commended for the achievements over the last 10 years and for the tremendous success to ensure a new 7-year funding from the European Union. I understand that EIUC is the only mentioned European institution receiving the support in the new EU Democracy and Human Rights Instrument, and I think this is a great tribute to all concerned. I believe that the EU took the right decision to continue the support for EIUC in this way, and both the region of Veneto and the City of Venice have been proven and devoted supporters of this human rights education.

The universities have been firm in sustaining the Centre and knowing its importance. This is the 60th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, starting on 10 December, International Human Rights Day. The 39 universities that are involved in the EIUC can give a particular impetus to marking this anniversary year. Since I became an Elder, with other Elders - invited by Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel - we have been focusing on ways to revitalise human rights. What better way than to have 39 universities sharing research, exchanging and building the programme that has been developed over the past 10 years.

So, I would particularly ask all of you to reflect on how, starting 10 December this year, we can revisit the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; make it a living document; knowing that it is directed to “every individual and every organ of society”.

In a way the EIUC is an organ of 39 universities, as an institute that brings them together, and has the potential to give great leadership in inviting all of us to link the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the climate change issue, with other problems in our world today – such as tackling the ideological divides that have opened up.

We remember Article 1: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Putting dignity before rights is very appropriate as it includes the individual’s sense of identity and self-respect. Article 29: “Everyone has duties to the community”, without which we do not reach the full development of our personality is an invitation to action. The duties to community are embodied in the idea that we have a birthright of human rights, and I know when I meet graduates of this programme in different parts of the world, they are engaged in thinking about the rights of others

So, finally, I would like to wish this year’s students every success in their future life, and I hope they go forward with a real sense of vision and purpose. I would like to particularly commend the 39 universities who are taking part, and I join with President Horst Fischer, and all his colleagues in appreciating that this 10th anniversary has brought together the strengths of this programme, and it will be reinforced now as it continues.

The year 2008 will engage us in activities for the special anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is my firm intention to try to be with you in person next year in Venice during that special academic year. So enjoy the 10th anniversary and every good wish to all of you.

---