THE GLOBAL PEACE OFFENSIVE (GPO) DECLARATION

On the Protection of Cultural, Academic, and Scientific Heritage

Skopje Declaration: Universities, Academies, and Schools as a Sanctuary of Peace

PREAMBLE

Recognizing that cultural sites, academic institutions, and research centers constitute the collective memory, intellectual sovereignty, and foundation of humanity;

Concerned by the increasing frequency of indiscriminate attacks that threaten our shared human heritage and the physical safety of the global scholarly community;

Affirming that universities, academies, and schools are not merely physical structures, but vital sanctuaries where the values of cooperation, free learning, and mutual respect are cultivated in harmony with human dignity, independence, and our cultural legacy;

We, the **Global Peace Offensive** adhering institutions, alongside representatives of the global scientific and humanist communities, hereby issue this declaration to serve as a shield against barbarism and a testament to our shared humanity and the universal right to knowledge.

I. THE PROHIBITION OF ATTACKS We call for an immediate and absolute ban on indiscriminate attacks against all cultural sites, academic institutions, and research facilities. Such locations must be recognized as sanctuaries of knowledge, protected from conflict to ensure the continuity of human progress. Universities, academies, and schools are protected civilian objects according to International Humanitarian Law; they are designated as safe zones that must not be targeted or used for military purposes during armed conflicts. In accordance with the Geneva Convention (Additional Protocol I, Article 52), the military use of universities, academies, and schools is strictly prohibited to prevent their loss of civilian protection.

Furthermore, consistent with ILO Recommendation R205 (2017), we emphasize that the provision of education must not be disrupted by crisis, and that curricula and teacher training should be specifically adapted to promote peaceful coexistence and reconciliation for peacebuilding and resilience. Teachers, researchers, and students should never become a target in conflict. Free, unbiased, and unimpeded education should serve as a catalyst for peace as a civilization choice.

II. TRANSNATIONAL MOBILIZATION The Global Peace Offensive commits to mobilizing scientists and humanists across all borders to form a global network of intellectual solidarity. We believe that this solidarity is a prerequisite for peace, and we must leverage our collective voice to advocate for the safety of our peers and the preservation of our global intellectual legacy within our universities, academies, and schools.

III. THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE CENTERS We shall work to increase global awareness regarding the essential role of knowledge centers. These institutions—comprising universities, academies, and schools—are the primary venues for fostering dialogue across cultures and are indispensable for the advancement of a civilized society rooted in mutual respect and the prevention of future conflict.

IV. GLOBAL COOPERATION AND DISSEMINATION This Declaration shall be circulated through the Global Peace Offensive Center (GPOC), the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS), the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA), and the World University Consortium (WUC). In cooperation with UNESCO offices, we aim to ensure these principles are integrated into international policy and public consciousness to safeguard universities, academies, and schools globally as centers of cultural resilience.

V. COMMITMENT TO DIALOGUE We reaffirm the necessity of dialogue as the primary tool for conflict resolution. By protecting the spaces where such dialogue is taught and practiced, we preserve our very sense of humanity and establish a permanent defense against the ideologies of violence.

VI. ADOPTION We invite all academic and cultural institutions to join the Global Peace Offensive in this pledge to safeguard the sanctuaries of human thought for future generations.

VII. FOLLOW-UP This Declaration is agreed upon and adopted in Skopje, North Macedonia, on the occasion of the University of Skopje's 20th Anniversary (10–11 October 2026). It remains open for further signatories and may serve as a framework for future initiatives.

Skopje • 10 October 2026

SIGNATURES

WORLD ACADEMY OF ART AND SCIENCE (WAAS)

Prof. Donato Kiniger-Passigli, PhD
Vice-President, World Academy of Art and Science

ALMA MATER EUROPAEA UNIVERSITY

Prof. Ludvik Toplak, PhD
Rector, Alma Mater Europaea University

UNIVERSITY OF SKOPJE

Prof. Ace Milenkovski, PhD
Rector, University of Skopje

WORLD UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM (WUC)

Alberto Zucconi
President, World University Consortium (WUC)

INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Orhan Hikmet Azizoğlu
Founder and President, International University Council

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