



8th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 19 November 2018
11:00 - 13:00, Conference Room 4

***Plenary Session 1: “Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue:
A Tool for Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding”***

Concept Note

THEME AND POINTS OF DISCUSSION

The theme of Plenary Session 1 is “*Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue: A Tool for Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding*”. One of the main focus areas of work for UNAOC is the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue (IRD and ICD) as a tool to diffuse tensions and facilitate understanding among people and identity groups based on religion, culture, and ethnicity.

Date & Venue: 19 November 2018 from 11:00 to 13:00. Conference Room 4, UNHQ

Format: keynote speaker followed by an interactive discussion with short presentations from the speakers highlighting good practices. The last 20 minutes will be dedicated to interventions from the floor.

Points of discussion:

1. ***Challenges and opportunities:*** what are the challenges, gaps, and opportunities you identify as obstacles to IRD and ICD? The context under consideration includes collaboration between policy makers and faith-based, cultural, and non-governmental organizations, youth, academia, and media in the promotion of IRD and ICD
2. ***Good practices:*** what are the experiences and good practices you can share that best contribute to the prevention of violence and conflict, as well as building and sustaining peace? In this context, how has “The Alliance of Civilizations” as an initiative of the UNSG contributed to promoting a culture of peace?
3. ***Next steps:*** what are the concrete recommendations and next steps to move forward building on the successes and avoiding the pitfalls?

BACKGROUND

The majority of today’s conflicts are identity-based clashes of religions, cultures, and/or ethnicities. In this respect, engaging in and strengthening interreligious and intercultural dialogue has never been more relevant in achieving mutual understanding and social cohesion. Promoting religious and cultural diversity is an ongoing and adaptive process unique to each national and local context. This Plenary Session will provide an opportunity to share lessons-learned and good practices in the area of interreligious and intercultural dialogue as tools for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue was outlined in the report of the High-level Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations in 2006 as an essential tool in achieving peace and greater understanding and respect among civilizations, cultures, religions and beliefs. UNGA Res 69/312 of 6 July 2015 United Nations Alliance of Civilizations reaffirmed the support of the UN Member States to the valuable role UNAOC is playing towards that end.

UNAOC promotes dialogue as a soft-power tool to prevent violence and conflict, as well as build and sustain peace by creating bridges among diverse communities and people from different identity groups. It has developed solid expertise, collecting lessons learned and good practices, in the area of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. UNAOC programming targets state actors and non-state actors such as civil society representatives, faith-based organizations, and relevant non-governmental organizations who are committed to advancing mutual understanding, cooperation, and peace at local, national, and global levels.

Strengthening interreligious and intercultural dialogue also serves SDG 16 outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which lays emphasis on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. In this respect, UNGA Res 71/249 of December 2016 welcomed the Baku Declaration, adopted at the 7th Global Forum of UNAOC themed “*Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal*” which encouraged relevant stakeholders to continue their efforts to promote mutual understanding among different civilizations, cultures, religions and beliefs.

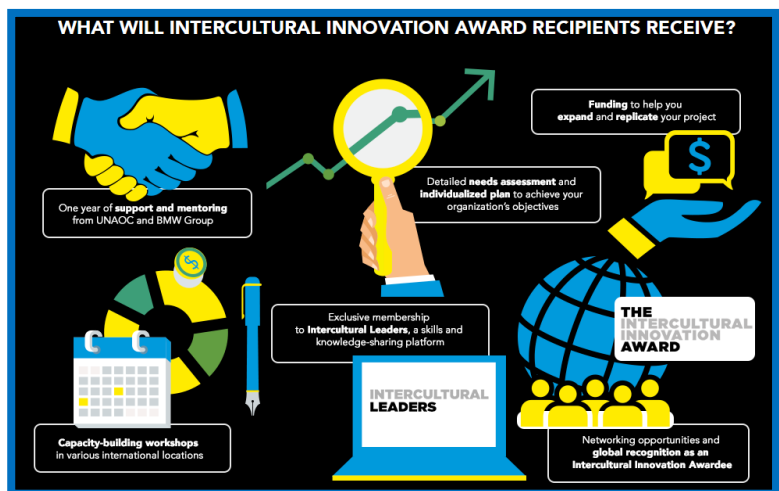
During the forum, **UNAOC, while building on its mandate as a soft power tool of diplomacy, will present few examples of good practices and invite speakers to share their knowledge and experiences in the area of interreligious and intercultural dialogue** as instruments for preventing conflicts and identity-based violence.

Good Practice 1 – Interreligious Dialogue) **The Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace**, which took place in Alicante on 15 November 2016 as an initiative of the Government of Spain sponsored by UNAOC, is an example of such good practice. It brought together more than 20 religious leaders from the Holy Land. For 2 days, they engaged in a meaningful dialogue in support of mutual respect and understanding, and voiced their rejection of violent extremist ideologies.

The outcome of the Summit was a Declaration in which the religious leaders, representing the three Abrahamic faiths, emphasized their responsibility in promoting mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among people of different religions. They called on the cessation of incitement to violence and misrepresentation and distortion of various cultures and their people.

Good Practice 2 – Intercultural Dialogue)

The **Intercultural Innovation Award** (www.interculturalinnovation.org) is a successful partnership between UNAOC and the BMW Group that aims to select and support the most innovative grassroots initiatives that alleviate identity-based tensions in local settings around the world. These projects promote intercultural dialogue and understanding, thereby making vital contributions to community peacebuilding. The award is given to 10 not-for-profit organizations active in the fields of migration and integration, intercultural awareness, and education for intercultural citizenship.



At present, the outcomes are:

- 5 editions supported
- 51 organizations awarded
- 105 countries impacted
- 2 million individuals benefitted.

Speakers:

- H.E. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Former Prime Minister of Spain - Keynote Speaker
- H.E. Danilo Türk, Former President of the Republic of Slovenia
- H.E. Kevin Rudd, Former Prime Minister of Australia
- H.E. Amr Moussa, Former Secretary General of the League of Arab States
- H.E. Ana Maria Menéndez, Under Secretary General, UN Secretary General's Senior Advisor on Policy

Moderator: Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet & Spokesperson for the High Representative for UNAOC.