

## 8th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 November 2018 15:00 - 17:00, Conference Room 11

Plenary Session 2: "Words Matter: The Role & Responsibility of the Media in Shaping Public Perceptions about Migrants and in Promoting Inclusive Societies"

# **Concept Note**

### THEME AND POINTS OF DISCUSSION

The theme of Plenary Session 2 is "Words Matter: The Role & Responsibility of the Media in Shaping Public Perceptions about Migrants and in Promoting Inclusive Societies".

Media coverage has a tremendous power in shaping public opinion regarding migrants and members of minority ethnic and religious groups, and in turn influencing the opportunities and outcomes that these individuals experience. In this context, we have seen a rise in xenophobic rhetoric and hate speech and incitement to violence against migrants and refugees online and in traditional media platforms. While we stand behind freedom of expression inherent in the Universal Human Rights, we also support the view that professional journalism involves treating subjects of reporting with the humanity and respect that they deserve.

Plenary Session 2 will provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and good practices to address this phenomenon. Discussions will also focus on approaches to support the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, particularly objectives 16 and 17 on empowering migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion.

Date & Venue: 20 November 2018 from 15:00 to 17:00. Conference Room 11, UNHQ

**Format**: interactive discussion with short presentations from the speakers highlighting good practices on the theme. The last 20 minutes will be dedicated to interventions from the floor.

### Points of discussion:

- 1. *Media as a tool*: in an age of "fast news", how can media practitioners balance freedom of expression and the responsibility of reporting accurately and objectively so as to avoid stereotyping and the dichotomy of "us" and "them"?
- 2. *Dialogue and partnerships*: how can multi-stakeholder partnerships with media be created to support objectives 16 and 17 of the Global Compact for Migration on social inclusion and cohesion?
- 3. *Good practices*: what are good practices regarding media as a tool for prevention and peacebuilding? What are lessons learned, weaknesses and strengths of projects and initiatives, and possible replication and upscale?
- 4. **Next steps**: what are concrete recommendations and next steps to move forward?

#### **BACKGROUND**

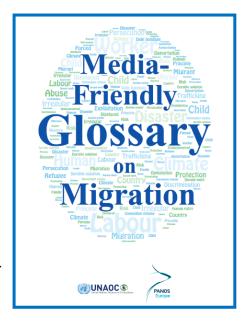
The United Nations Member States are gearing up for the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration in Marrakesh, Morocco, this December. Objective 17, in that non-binding document, stipulates to eliminate all forms of discrimination, condemn and counter expressions, acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against all migrants in conformity with international human rights law. It promotes independent, objective and quality reporting of media outlets, including internet based information, by sensitizing and educating media professionals on migration-related issues and terminology, investing in ethical reporting standards and advertising, and stopping allocation of public funding or material support to media outlets that systematically promote intolerance, xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination towards migrants, in full respect for the freedom of the media.

According to article 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." At the same time, it is a qualified right and as such it may be limited under specific circumstances such as in cases of any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. In many cases we have witnessed how political parties and groups consciously aim to spread hate as a way of promoting their political and financial interests. It is, therefore, essential to encourage quality reporting, attention to the impact that editorial decisions and opinions implicitly convey, and the production of media content that facilitates understanding and debate.

In addition, digital communications and the evolving nature of media platforms provide a window for expanded global media coverage but can also be used and abused to disseminate stereotypes and intolerance that can inspire hate and violence conducive to terrorism and conflict. To help prevent and counter this phenomenon, UNAOC, building on its mandate to present a diversity of perspectives while at the same time prevent stereotypes and misrepresentations, seizes the opportunity to showcase good practices and invite speakers to share their knowledge and experiences in an interactive Plenary Session.

Good Practice 1) The first tool that UNAOC presents is the Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration that provides non-rigid, but precise and media-friendly, definitions of evolving concepts on migration. It was developed in 2014 in collaboration with the Panos Europe Institute and with the support of the Open Society Foundations. The Glossary provides journalists covering migration with the different terminology used to describe or define migration-related issues.

Towards the end of 2017, the International Labour Organization and UNAOC developed and published an updated version of the Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration, entitled "Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration: Middle East Edition". The new Glossary depicts technical terminology related to refugees and labour migration, and proposes neutral alternatives to inflammatory and discriminatory terms commonly used. It was produced in English and Arabic and includes guides on photojournalism, gender-sensitive reporting and working with victims of trauma.



Good Practice 2) The #SpreadNoHate initiative, which aims to counter hate speech and the negative portrayal of immigrants and minority groups in traditional and new media. Since the launch of the platform in 2015, UNAOC has promoted constructive dialogue that responds to hate speech by sharing good practices and convening media

professionals, academia, and relevant NGOs. To date, UNAOC has organized a series of international #SpreadNoHate symposia at UNHQ in New York, as well as in Baku, Azerbaijan; Brussels, Belgium, in partnership with the European Union; and in Cairo, Egypt. Nearly 90 experts have spoken at #SpreadNoHate symposia, and over 600 people have attended the series, representing more than 15 countries. The #SpreadNoHate initiative also includes a targeted social media campaign that has generated vast engagement, reaching millions of people online and consistently topping Twitter trends across the globe. Moreover, each #SpreadNoHate symposium is followed by a comprehensive report with recommendations to be used by media organizations and experts, government officials, Member States, and institutions of higher education worldwide.

### Speakers:

- H.E. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Stefanie Bolzen, UK and Ireland Correspondent, WELT and WELT Am Sonntag
- Chaker Khazaal, Author, Reporter
- Annie Correal, Reporter, The New York Times

Moderator: Erol Avdovic, Senior UN Correspondent, Worldpublicapress.