AGREE TO DIFFER

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Foreword

IRINA BOKOVA, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO

Dialogue on the basis of respect, tolerance, human rights and dignity has never been so important. This is the spirit of the *International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures* (2013-2022). The International Decade originates in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/104 adopted in December 2012, co-sponsored by Kazakhstan and designating UNESCO as lead agency. This drew on a Resolution of the UNESCO General Conference (36 C/40) and the experience of the 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures which UNESCO led forward with activities across the world.

The objective of the International Decade is to promote mutual understanding and respect for diversity, rights and equal dignity between peoples, through intercultural dialogue and concrete initiatives. This is essential for all societies today, undergoing deep transformation. The surge of conflict, acts of violence, extremism and intolerance pose a threat to peace, undermining the unity of humanity and calling on us all to redouble our efforts to advance a culture of peace, through dialogue, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, and the promotion of global citizenship education.

The International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures embodies a commitment to explore new articulations between cultural diversity and universal values. The rapprochement of cultures calls for a commitment to the principles of human dignity and solidarity as the corner stones of living together within and between societies, making the most of all sources of diversity.

This publication bears testimony to the urgency of addressing contemporary challenges through intercultural and interreligious dialogue in order to deepen understanding and cooperation for peace. Through concrete examples, including experiences at the community level from across the world, the publication showcases why cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and responsive democratic governance are vital for the enhancement of mutual understanding, the growth of tolerance, and the building of bridges of mutual respect and dignity.

Dialogue is key when it comes to effective policies to harness the power of diversity, the design of new educational curricula or the crafting of new forms of cultural literacy and cultural diplomacy, between societies and within them.

I wish to thank our publishing partner, Tudor Rose, and all the contributors to this edition for having identified key challenges ahead of us, while strengthening the message of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures in an enriching and powerful manner.

Image: © UNESCO/Michel Ravassard

Irina Bokova
Director-General of UNESCO

Preface

NURSULTAN NAZARBAYEV, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

At a time of global changes, the notion of strengthening peace and universal human values is getting increasingly vital.

Despite being a young country, our nation has played a significant role in promoting global peace and friendship. Our commitment to the peaceful principles and ideals of a tolerant society makes Kazakhstan an active advocate for global security and a mediator in international dispute settlement and conflict resolution.

The history of contemporary Kazakhstan is woven from many diverse ethnic groups and cultures. The strength of our society is based on a deep mutual understanding that looks beyond social, cultural, religious and ethnic differences. Over 100 ethnic and 17 religious groups live in peace and harmony in our country.

Kazakhstan has launched some internationally recognized initiatives, like the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures declared by the United Nations General Assembly for 2013-2022, designed to implement dialogue based on shared values.

Kazakhstan also aims to make its contribution to the global cause of peace, harmony and mutual understanding in the future.

By sharing the knowledge and experiences of actors working towards that goal across the world, *Agree to Differ* reflects the progress that has been made so far and provides valuable insight to help address the challenges that remain.

Nursultan Nazarbayev
President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

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FARIDA SHAHEED, UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL RIGHTS

Culture is like a prism through which we perceive, understand, respond to, engage with and assign meaning to our human, natural and manufactured environment. The myriad cultural prisms embody the diversity of our collective humanity, and culture is pivotal in promoting or obstructing mutual understanding.

Intercultural dialogue can only promote mutual understanding if we recognize that culture is a dynamic process that reflects our responses to our ever-changing world with hopes but also fears, new ideas and creations. Cultural processes are always sites of contestation over meanings, values and ways of life. The challenge is to guarantee the cultural freedoms and rights of all persons to access, enjoy and refer to cultural works, express their identity and creativity, participate in and contribute to cultural life without discrimination and on a basis of equality. This includes the right to differ, to not participate in any cultural activities that undermine human rights, to join, leave, rejoin and create new communities of shared values without fear; the right of everyone to participate in several communities of shared cultural values simultaneously.

Policies for creating and enhancing intercultural dialogue therefore must be founded on providing everyone with the opportunities and means to engage in critical thinking about themselves and the world they inhabit, to question as well as enjoy received wisdom and cultural heritage; to contribute to interpretation and present new ideas and creative expressions. As it is never abstract 'cultures' or 'civilizations' that meet, but individual people, this demands particular attention to ensuring concrete possibilities for women and other marginalized groups to fully engage in cultural processes in their societies and the world at large. To enable all of us to truly help to build shared values and social cohesion, we must ensure safe and welcoming public spaces for interactions and creative expressions to enrich our world.

Intercultural dialogues can contribute to creating vibrant cultures and healthy democracies by accepting the inevitably diverse interpretations of culture and cultural heritage, and ensuring the visibility of multivoice narratives of the past and the present, in history teaching and memorialization processes for instance, to reflect the rich diversity of our common humanity.

Farida Shaheed
United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

HEINER BIELEFELDT, UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

The potential of interreligious communication for building, restoring and solidifying trust between people across denominational lines usually remains underestimated. Such communication should not be reduced to lofty efforts of theological experts to resolve centuries-old disputes, whose subtleties ordinary people fail to comprehend. Projects of malaria prevention jointly run by Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria have a down-to-earth significance, which everyone immediately understands — while at the same time sending a much-needed message of hope in a country haunted by religious extremism. Recent talks between religious communities in Cyprus have helped the Cypriot population to better come to terms with the bitter legacy of civil war, invasion and expulsion. And the publicly declared commitment of the Lutheran World Federation and Islamic Relief to cooperate on issues of refugee support, apart from all practical advantages of joining hands, holds the promise that sectarian divides can be contained — and will finally be overcome.

We are living in times of confusion, in which common sense seems to be increasingly eroding. Interreligious communication, in conjunction with other forms of cross-boundaries communication, is the most efficient way of restoring common sense. By engaging in communication people will naturally discover — or rediscover — the trivial truth that those 'on the other side', far from being 'aliens' with a totally different mentality, are human beings with needs, problems, interests and yearnings similar to their own. Although disagreements and conflicts will not simply disappear, regular encounters between human beings are the best antidote to conspiracy projections, in which an abstract 'other' can easily become the target of unchecked and thus escalating fears. What is needed against paranoid imagination is realism, which can only develop in real encounters between real human beings across boundaries.

Under freedom of religion or belief, states have a responsibility to create an enabling environment for interreligious communication, based on respect for everyone's self-understanding in issues of faith. Dialogue projects should reflect the existing diversity, not only between but also within various communities, including gender diversity. Broad participation in dialogue facilitates broad ownership, which is needed for interreligious communication to unfold its potential.

Heiner Bielefeldt
United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

TALEB RIFAI, SECRETARY-GENERAL, WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION (UNWTO)

Tourism has grown over recent decades to become one of the cornerstones of globalization. More than 1 billion tourists are now travelling to an international destination each year, and about 6 billion are estimated to travel within their own countries. Never before have so many people travelled to so many destinations, with few places left untouched by tourism.

Yet tourism is so much more than its numbers; tourism is about what happens behind these numbers – the daily exchange of stories, perspectives and beliefs. Tourism is about the millions of unique interactions between visitors and hosts, happening every day and in all corners of the world. Sparking something as simple as a conversation creates connections, helping us broaden our minds in a way that leads us to celebrate our own diversity.

It is through the experience of the other, so different from ourselves and our backgrounds, and yet so similar in aspirations, that we nurture the values of compassion and respect. These values are the foundations of multicultural understanding and peace.

It is little wonder that tourism has been hailed as the first 'global peace industry'. With more than 1 billion tourists leaving their comfort zones to visit an international destination each year, every tourist has the potential to be an ambassador of peace. In this respect, tourism is today a global, transformative force that breaks down cultural barriers and builds bridges between people, between communities and nations.

On behalf of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the United Nations specialized agency for tourism, I would like to commend our sister agency the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its efforts in publishing *Agree to Differ,* in celebration of the United Nations International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures. I trust that this significant publication will contribute towards realizing our shared vision of linking cultures and building peaceful societies across the world.

Taleb Rifai
Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

GUY RYDER, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

With a mandate to promote social justice through the world of work, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is built on the equal participation of governments, and employer and worker organizations. It is also founded on the principle that "universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice," states the ILO Constitution.

The route towards peace is difficult, precarious and challenging. Moreover each path to peace is the outcome of the convergence through dialogue of many separate initiatives, each complementing the other.

The International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures is one element of such a process. It offers an opportunity for citizens, for their organizations, and for the states that represent them, to develop an inclusive dialogue between cultures and religions that can contribute to realizing the goals of peace and development.

Consequently this initiative resonates with the ILO. Social dialogue is both a means and an end for the ILO. Its universal standards are applied in national contexts. Respect for human dignity and solidarity — values that foster social cohesion — guide the ILO's action in promoting decent work in all its aspects: access to full and productive employment, adequate social protection, freedom from discrimination, and respect for fundamental principles and rights at work. Dialogue on these issues across cultures can help to shape a common vision of sustainable development and an understanding of its ethical, social and cultural implications.

Guy Ryder
Director-General of the International Labour Organization

H.E. MR NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER, UNITED NATIONS HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

In order for the international community to effectively meet the challenges ahead — from climate change and water access to human migration flows and an increasingly interdependent global economy — we must recognize that our future rests entirely on mutual cooperation. Mutual cooperation can only grow out of shared trust. To me, as High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, this concept of shared trust is at the heart of what the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures is about. In fact, the 10-year Action Plan of the Decade unambiguously calls for results in four specific areas:

• promoting mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity as well as supporting reconciliation efforts
• building a framework for commonly shared values which fosters social cohesion
• disseminating the principles and tools of intercultural dialogue through quality education and the media
• fostering dialogue for sustainable development and its ethical, social and cultural dimensions.

All four areas connect directly to the mission, vision and successful history of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Since its inception, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations has become a leading United Nations platform for the promotion of intercultural dialogue, mediation processes, and fostering tolerance and understanding to prevent violent conflict and facilitate reconciliation in post-conflict settings. It has connected governments, local authorities, civil society organizations, the media and individuals devoted to promoting understanding across diverse communities. The Alliance boasts a vast network of partners across sectors and successful programmes in the areas of education, youth, migration and media.

From building on the understanding of the need for global consensus around respect for diversity, to enhancing intercultural engagement across sectors and implementing partnership strategies for greater impact, much work remains. We must be prepared to focus on efforts that build on successful real-world experiences which are themselves the results of learning best practices, and we must always remember to be sensitive to context. The Alliance remains ready to continue its efforts in support of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

H.E. Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser
United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations

ABULFAS GARAYEV, MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN
CHAIR OF THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF THE WORLD FORUM ON INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Placing intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity higher on the international agenda is critical for human security and a prime responsibility of our time. Despite unprecedented progress in the most recent history of humankind, there are still many threats placing obstacles in the way of the peaceful coexistence of nations and between people of different culture, religion or ethnicity.

Because of this reality, in today's globalized world we need to know more about what builds better understanding and peaceful togetherness. In this context the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), proclaimed by the United Nations, and the Baku Process for the promotion of intercultural dialogue initiated by Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, provide a useful framework for international and national actors to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace and security. The Baku Process has become a key global platform for dialogue between people, as Azerbaijan is a unique place where different cultures and civilizations meet at the crossroads between East and West, North and South. At the same time, being a member of both Islamic and European organizations, Azerbaijan absorbs the values of both civilizations, thus enabling it to assume the role of a genuine bridge.

With this commitment in the framework of the Baku Process we have organized European (2008) and Islamic (2009) ministerial conferences dedicated to the intercultural issues, and the 1st and 2nd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku in 2011 and 2013 in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the Council of Europe and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. We have realized remarkable achievements, supporting the inscription of intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity at the forefront of the international agenda.

To maintain such momentum, the Government of Azerbaijan will host the 3rd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue on 18-19 May 2015 in Baku. This forum will focus on the theme, 'Sharing culture for shared security' with a view to marking the celebration of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (21 May), while opening discussion on the main projects, programmes and initiatives aimed at building trust and cooperation among peoples, cultures and civilizations.

We will also be very honoured to host the launch of this book, *Agree to Differ* – a landmark publication on the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures in the framework of the 3rd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue.

Abulfas Garayev
Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Chair of the Organizing Committee of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue

The democracy relay: around the world in eight projects

Annika Savill, Executive Head ad interim, United Nations Democracy Fund

I t is said that it takes two to speak the truth: one to talk, and another to hear. My work with the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) has brought home to me that a lively and open discussion among ordinary men and women sitting under a tree can sometimes do more for intercultural understanding than all the government summit meetings in the world.

When grass-roots activists, community organizers, youth and women leaders and labour mobilizers come together on their own initiative, they will persevere to ensure that voices on both sides are heard. It is those constituencies that make up the family of UNDEF, a grant-making entity established by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2005 as a United Nations General Trust Fund to support democratization efforts around the world. UNDEF supports projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote the rule of law and human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes. The large majority of UNDEF funds go to local civil society organizations — both in the transition and consolidation phases of democratization. In this way, UNDEF plays a novel and unique role in complementing the United Nations' other, more traditional work — the work with Governments — to strengthen governance around the world. It strengthens the demand side of the democracy equation rather than the supply side. UNDEF

subsists entirely on voluntary contributions from governments, including many middle- and low-income states in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In eight rounds of funding so far, UNDEF has supported almost 600 two-year projects in more than 150 countries. All the projects are conceived and proposed by the grantees themselves, the vast majority local civil groups.

While each UNDEF-funded project reaches a few thousand direct beneficiaries, these in turn go on to inspire, train and encourage thousands more — creating a mass relay effect sometimes spreading through a whole country. Many of the projects focus on dialogue and exchange between groups that may never have talked to each other before. Each side takes its turn to speak and to hear — sometimes even sitting under a tree. Let me take you on a quick tour around the world to give you just a few examples.

We start in one of the largest and most diverse countries of the Asia-Pacific region: Indonesia, an archipelago comprising thousands of islands and hundreds of distinct native ethnic and linguistic groups. At the end of 30 years of tension and conflict in the province of Aceh, the traditional inter-village institutions for decision-making on lands and resources, known as Mukims, were legally recognized. Yet the Mukims still struggle to exercise their rights, in particular over natural resource management. This is compounded by disputes over commercial use of traditional farm and forest land. UNDEF supports an initiative by local non-governmental organization (NGO) Perkumpulan Prodeelat for grass-roots

In Nepal, UNDEF funds a project by Development Exchange Centre Nepal to empower Chepang women to become change agents in local governance processes

mobilization to give greater voice to individuals and communities affected by the conflict. The project works to improve the capacity of Mukim communities and district Mukim associations in advancing an alternative model of natural resource governance that promotes participation, protects the rights of local communities, fosters environmental sustainability and advances the interests of vulnerable and marginalized populations. It collaborates with a network of civil society organizations to build advocacy skills in the indigenous communities and develop detailed action plans on natural resource management, including territorial and resources mapping to present to the local government.

From one of Asia's largest nations, let us head for one of its smallest and trek up to Nepal, where an armed conflict between government forces and Maoist fighters lasted a decade until 2006. For the Chepang people, one of the indigenous groups of Nepal living in the Himalaya foothills, poverty and marginalization remain a daily reality. Chepang women are further marginalized by lower literacy rates, lack of access to health services, and scarce economic and political influence in a traditionally male-dominated environment. This is why UNDEF funds a project implemented by Development Exchange Centre Nepal, a local NGO, to empower Chepang women to become change agents in local governance processes, promoting pro-poor and gender responsive decision-making. By equipping them with leadership, networking and advocacy skills, they are being encouraged to play a part in local governance. The project is establishing a network of Chepang women resource persons trained in social accountability tools and leadership. These are creating discussion forums in their respective villages and organize awareness-raising events for local government, NGOs and media on the development challenges facing the Chepang communities. Community radio is being used to express the concerns raised during the forum meetings, expand outreach and strengthen government accountability.

Time to cross the Indian Ocean to Tanzania, where the semi-nomadic Maasai face a number of challenges — from social and economic marginalization to drought and displacement. Geographically remote from urban areas and with low literacy levels, the Maasai have little access to information, decision-making structures and social services. Awareness of their rights and responsibilities is low. That is why UNDEF makes possible a project by the local Longido Community Development Organization to strengthen democratic practices through civic education for Maasai women and men. The project started by training a core group of trainers in civic education and democratic practices, who then went on to replicate their knowledge among community members in their respective villages. The project developed local radio programmes and handbooks on good governance and human rights tailored to the specifics of the community. To focus on women's potential in social development and land rights, the project has identified women role models who have been instrumental in advocacy campaigns, sensitization meetings with local authorities and engagement of yet more women.

The ensuing dialogue has helped demonstrate that civic education isn't just about elections; it can help reduce poverty and advance development. The project is also setting up community watchdog groups and spaces for regular community dialogue where traditional leaders, local authorities and the network of role model women and trainers come together to discuss a wide

In Tanzania, an UNDEF-funded project by the local Longido Community Development Organization aims to strengthen democratic practices through civic education for Maasai women and men

range of development issues, while monitoring public policy and service delivery in local government.

Next-door to Tanzania, in Burundi, the challenge is to keep addressing the divisive factors that drove the country's brutal armed conflict for over a decade, while finding ways to nurture the country's fragile democracy. Following disputed elections in 2010, the differences among social, political and religious groups surfaced once again. UNDEF made possible a project to foster democratic dialogue for sustainable reconciliation by addressing the causes and consequences of instability and conflict. By bringing together key leaders from religious groups, civil society and local, provincial and national communities in eight provinces, UNDEF's grantee, the Inter-religious Council of Burundi, provided a forum to discuss political cohabitation, social cohesion and local governance in a post-conflict environment. The project held a training workshop for religious leaders and young people on post-conflict reconstruction and confidence-building mechanisms between communities, which helped build a strong network at the local and national levels. It produced awareness-raising DVDs on democratic dialogue, voter education, women and youth participation, political tolerance and community reconciliation, which were used as key mobilization tools to facilitate discussions in community reconciliation sessions nationwide.

Let's move next-door again to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the country's very identity has been defined by protracted war. After only three pluralistic elections in the nation's history, democracy is still in its infancy, shaky and fragile. Consolidating it calls for voluntary and broad participation of all citizens. Marginalized and vulnerable groups such as the indigenous Pygmy people have little or no involvement in social and political affairs. Many are illiterate and have limited access to social services. That is why UNDEF funded a project conducted by the local Dynamique des Groupes des Peuples Autochtones to make it possible for illiterate voters to participate in provincial and local

Image: UNDEF

UNDEF funds a project by Microjusticia Bolivia in the La Paz and Oruro departments to assist in legally and politically empowering indigenous communities

elections. The project provided an analysis of the electoral law, translated selected provisions into the four national languages, and produced image libraries illustrating selected relevant provisions with captions in each language, cartoons, posters and videos as means of raising awareness and educating the communities.

Let us now cross the Atlantic and the Caribbean and head for Central America. In Guatemala, more than three decades of civil war took a brutal toll on indigenous people and Ladino peasants. Today, the Q'eqchi' Maya make up more than a million of the poor. Based in rural and remote areas of the departments of Alta Verapaz, Izabal and Petén, they have historically been excluded from participation in the nation's democratic political life. They have suffered from repeated violations of their individual and collective rights. Their access to justice is limited, while their hold on land and natural resources is insecure.

Against this background, UNDEF funds an effort by Asociación Estoreña Para el Desarrollo Integral to train community organizers in mediation, reconciliation and peacebuilding; to rebuild traditional forms of organization practiced by ancestors, strengthening social cohesion; and to create a Council of Indigenous Q'eqchi' Peoples and a Centre of Indigenous Rights along with a virtual space for documentation and advice. These receive complaints, disseminate documents, provide online counselling and monitor violations. The trained leaders assume the role of justice promoters, providing legal and policy advice and services for meditation and reconciliation. They use ancient practices as well as modern knowledge including national and international human rights mechanisms and laws, drawing especially on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, an instrument of the International Labour Organization.

Let's move 4,000 kilometres further south, from Alta Verapaz to La Paz. In Bolivia, most indigenous communities have historically been unable to exercise their civil and indigenous rights and have generally remained excluded from political decision-making processes. The current constitution, however, does recognize the rights of indigenous, native and peasant nations and peoples, and the Government has made legal changes to promote indig-

enous people's participation in decision-making. To support this process, UNDEF funds a project by Microjusticia Bolivia in the La Paz and Oruro departments, to assist in legally and politically empowering indigenous communities. It is doing so by providing them with basic legal identity documents, prerequisites for democratic participation which many of them have lacked in the past; strengthening their knowledge and capacity to participate in democratic processes and to exercise their rights; and improving access to basic legal documents and rights for all, through evidence-based advocacy aimed at institutional change. The project is also setting up a network of rural facilitators, to act as focal points for establishing outlets for legal advice and run legal campaigns on how to obtain the necessary documentation. Just as important, the project encourages debate between traditional leaders and government officials in networking meetings and a forum.

Finally, we cross the South and North Pacific to the largest country in the world, covering 11 time zones and almost 200 ethnic groups designated as nationalities: the Russian Federation. Modern Russia is experiencing a massive rise in external and internal migration, changing the country's already diverse ethnic composition. This has led to an increase in xenophobia, tension and extremism targeting migrants, ethnic minorities and, as a backlash, ethnic Russians. This is why UNDEF supported a project in the Russian Federation to empower civil society organizations established by migrants and ethnic minorities so as to strengthen their access to justice and their ability to combat xenophobia and discrimination, and help them interact with national institutions. This involved training and dialogue with migrant organizations and police, social services, media and ombudsman institutions. Police dealing with extremism, police training academies and the Federal Migration Service all took part. The project, implemented by the Perm Centre for Assistance to Victims of Violence and Human Trafficking, also held workshops in two migrant countries of origin — Azerbaijan and Tajikistan — and one Russian region of origin — Dagestan — bringing together representatives of human rights NGOs and trade unions. These were an opportunity to explore the reasons for migrating and ways in which organizations in countries and regions of origin could support migrants through information about labour law, legal requirements and experiences in integration.

Those who took part in the training seminars said they had gained a better understanding of the legal and policy context of the treatment of migrants and ethnic minorities, and were better able to advocate in favour of their beneficiaries. Police cited the project's strength in providing methodical, practical advice and recommendations on dealing with specific situations: how to talk to victims of violence, whom to notify, what questions to ask, and what government services and migrant NGOs to recommend. The project was also able to address negative reporting in the media through training of journalists, which also led to better contacts between local media, migrant communities, police and the Ombudsman's office. This in turn led to a better quality of media reporting on migration issues. A series of round tables in the Perm region led to the first direct dialogue between journalists and senior municipal police officers.

Eight projects, some of them starting with a group talking under a tree, going on to reach thousands of people. Eight relays, each indirectly reaching tens of thousands more. They all spoke — and as important, they were all heard.

Education beyond the classroom: mobilizing against radicalization and recruitment

Edit Schlaffer, Women without Borders, Vienna

There is a global wake-up call surrounding the current counter violent extremism (CVE) efforts; even military strategists are alarmed. The investment in counter insurgencies and direct military intervention has not produced the intended outcomes and, in consequence, has resulted in a backlash. Most worrisome, civil society in countries targeted by violent extremism tends to be increasingly hostile towards the West, losing allies instead of winning hearts and minds. And this is exactly from where we have to pick up the pieces. We have to invest in the communities to gain trust, and strengthen their confidence in making a difference right there where they are in their families and communities. Travelling through regions targeted by violent extremism, it became obvious that families need to come together and build resilience from the ground up. The family, and mothers in particular, have an important role to play in creating the social fabric that is resistant to radical influences. Mothers are the missing building block in a new, effective security architecture. For this they need to be prepared and equipped.

The Mothers School model serves this urgent security need. It provides a pioneering family-centred security platform, aiming to strengthen the existing CVE approach by engaging an underutilized group of civil society actors: mothers. Developed and implemented by Women without Borders/ Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), Mothers Schools provide women with the confidence and competence to combat radicalization within their homes and communities. The approach seeks to include mothers as a grass-roots security ally and arms them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be an effective barrier between their children and extremist ideologies. The curriculum optimizes women's smart power, emphasizing and strengthening their capacity for constructive dialogue, empathy and intuitive safeguarding of their children.

Based on the findings of the Women without Borders 'Mothers for Change!' (MFC) study, which explored the insights of over 1,000 women across Pakistan, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine on the sources and solutions to violent extremism, the Mothers School model

Mothers Schools have been implemented in communities at risk across Tajikistan, India/Kashmir, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria and Zanzibar

aims to fill the gaps in the existing CVE approach. The MFC study collected the voices and perspectives of the individuals within civil society who have unique knowledge about their children's emotional lives and have witnessed first-hand the pre-violence, pre-radicalization phase. The findings yield two significant conclusions: the first is that the sources of extremist ideologies are diverse and widespread and, therefore, building resilience from the ground up is essential for prevention. And second, mothers, located at the heart of the family, are the starting point for establishing this resilience. Most trusted and knowledgeable, they are best placed to guide the healthy development of their children, as well as the first to recognize and react to early warning signs.

Mothers Schools have been implemented in communities at risk across Tajikistan, India/Kashmir, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria and Zanzibar. SAVE, in partnership with local non-governmental organizations, provides training and materials for established local trainers in the target communities, who then run a series of 10 workshops with groups of mothers over a three-month period. The curriculum focuses on self-awareness and applied parenting, emphasizing critical reflection on one's role in the family and in promoting security. It introduces the distinct role women can play in addressing violent extremism, covering topics of psychosocial processes of child development, mediums and methods of radicalization, computer skills and improved family communication. The workshops use dialogue and interactive exercises to facilitate cooperative learning and are centred on the mothers' personal narratives.

The feedback from these initial Mothers Schools has indicated significant strides in grass-roots security. As one mother stated: "We did not know that the peace could be brought by just changing the way we speak to our children." Another mother said: "I think workshops like this should be started in other places as well to give visions to the women who feel too weak to bring any change; this gives us time to think beyond our home routine." These comments provide support that this model is needed and also readily accepted. "Often we took out our frustrations out on them and this was misplaced anger which we vented out on the children. I made a conscious effort to bond with my children. I started talking to them and listening to their grievances. I see a major improvement. There is more peace in the house, bickering has reduced, I am confident that they will respect me more and I am capable of loving them more."

Due to varying cultural barriers, many of these communities lack formal and informal settings for mothers to share experiences, seek advice and exchange mutual support about the safety of their children. This inhibits the spread of information and strengthens the taboo around religious and political violence. Such silence and disconnection makes prevention very difficult. So, in response, the Mothers School model provides the necessary time and space for barriers to be broken down and constructive dialogue to take place. "Here we can share our problems and also look for solutions together and learn from the experiences of other mothers of how they have handled their own worries about their children's activities."

Moreover, mothers express the impact of the workshops on their perspectives of their role in preventing political violence. "We had no idea how a person becomes radicalized. Now I will always check this in my children and even in other children." Another mother supported this: "We always think that such discussions can only be among the educated and elite people from high profile societies. But now we believe, after exploring our skills that were with us always but unfortunately on sleeping mode, that we can also become friends with our children and help them to deal with any kind of support so they don't feel the need to look for any violent alternatives."

Image: Women without Borders/SAVE

Lost sons: a mother in Kashmir considers the cost of radicalization

Image: Women without Borders/SAVE

De-radicalization at the kitchen table: a Mothers School in Tajikistan

SAVE training in Yemen: working with mothers to address the growing problem of extremism

Another notable finding was that many mothers were unaware of how social media poses a risk. For example, one mother shared how she discovered that her son was using Facebook to encourage others to pelt stones, as a form of protest. This alarmed the other mothers and they vowed to be more aware of their children's phone and computer use.

Overall, following the workshops, mothers expressed feeling empowered and better equipped to address the threat of violent extremism. "I think I am a better person today with a better understanding of my role as a mother, as a woman. Earlier I thought we are just born to work for our families: cook food for them, wash their clothes. I was wrong. I had restricted my vision of being a woman. Today I am a person who dreams of bringing peace into society."

In light of these successes, Women without Borders is scaling up the Mothers Schools concept to the global scale. It is bringing the model to Europe to address the rising number of Western youth becoming radicalized. The first European Mothers School is now implemented in Austria and intends to build out the European network.

The Mothers School concept extends beyond the curriculum and the workshops, however. While mothers are placed at the heart of a preventative CVE paradigm, support from broader civil society magnifies the outcomes of the Mothers Schools in building community resilience. Addressing the social, emotional and psychological factors that drive youth to adopt extremist ideologies requires guidance and attention for every child; a task that requires many trusted and willing individuals drawn from various corners of society. Therefore, the Mothers School concept, in addition to building capacity among mothers, seeks to secure the essential supports to pre-empt and respond to disaffected and emotionally vulnerable youth from multiple angles. It works to ensure that children feel seen and heard in many of their social spheres.

The response to preventing radicalization must reflect the way the process evolves: beginning at the individual level and rising to threaten local, national and global society. The step beyond the home sphere is the school, which also serves an important role in instilling the values and life skills necessary for healthy development and successful integration into society. Teachers, like mothers, contribute to security in two key ways. First, they are responsible for actively guiding youth into adolescence and young adulthood and are similarly well placed, in the classroom, to use constructive dialogue to promote moral values and tolerance, while challenging ideas including racism and discrimination. Secondly, they also have close interactions with youth and are thus able to recognize and respond to early warning signs of radicalization. The school, therefore, understood as a microcosm of broader society, serves as an additional space to root out some of the underlying factors that drive youth towards violent extremism, and root in qualities and coping skills that draw them away.

Spreading the word: the author with a journalist supporting SAVE in Palestine

Collaboration between mothers and teachers that is based upon the similarities of their placement within the community has significant implications for establishing a well-functioning and integrated society. However, this relationship is often tenuous, especially in communities already combatting the threat of violent extremism. This is a very difficult topic for both sides to discuss, and therefore these conversations are often avoided. On the one side, teachers feel unable to respond effectively to concerns about their students because parents often don't respond to their outreach. On the other side, mothers fear that responding to the teachers' concerns or raising their own, risks getting their children in trouble. The unfortunate result, if this bridge is not strengthened, is that both sides remain silent and struggling children fall through the cracks, potentially into the hands of recruiters. As a result, in order to effectively embed resilience within communities to radical influences, there needs to be a shared commitment to guiding children safely through their development, as well as confidence and trust on both sides that concerns can be addressed together. Because of the need for an integrated approach, the Mothers Schools model, implemented by local community leaders and designed to be spread and replicated many times, engages not only the mothers, but also other community members who have a stake in protecting youth and building a barrier against violent extremism.

In conclusion, a Mothers School movement will provide a way forward to embed defence mechanisms within civil society. The rising incidence of violence strongly indicates that we cannot eliminate extremist influences; so our strongest response as an international community is to confront this threat from the ground up. In building the capacity of mothers, Mothers Schools start at the centre of the home, targeting the individual level and growing outward, with the support of other key actors who parallel these preventative efforts in other social spheres, with the goal to institutionalize resiliency. Eventually, the aim of this integrated approach is to enable and engage enough individuals to effectively safeguard children throughout their development, so that extremist ideologies eventually lose their lure. The global Mothers School movement works to build a united front against the manipulation and use of our children for violent means that threatens all levels of our social fabric.

"Don't be silent. Talk about it. Express it. Face them. Challenge them. Tell them what they are doing is not Islam. There is no place in Islam for what they are doing. Their only excuse is that they are Muslims, so the Islamic religion says it's right. But no, we are all Islam, and we know what our religion says. So don't be silent. That is the biggest challenge. We have to tell them they are wrong. That there is no place in the family for that and families together is the community. We are all in this together."

— Amina Mussa Wehelie, peace activist from Luton, UK

Intercultural solidarity among people in poverty

Diana Skelton, ATD Fourth World

Overcoming persistent poverty fosters a sense of belonging among people of different cultures, social backgrounds, beliefs and religions. The promise implicit in the Declaration of Human Rights has long been denied for people in poverty, who are frequently treated as less than human. Despite this, they often reach out in solidarity to others who are different from them, demonstrating a tremendous generosity of spirit. One of our approaches to recognizing and increasing this solidarity is the Fourth World People's University, where people in deep poverty and from other backgrounds, of many ethnic origins, cultivate mutual understanding.[1]

While we run this project in many countries, this article will focus on France and Belgium. As these countries become more diverse, native-born participants in the People's University are joined by immigrants from Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Germany, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, the Republic of Cabo Verde, the Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Serbia, Spain, Tunisia and Viet Nam, as well as members of the itinerant Roma population. ATD Fourth World's founder, Joseph Wresinski, spoke in 1980 to people in poverty at a conference he organized about immigration: "Traps are set to prevent us from acting in solidarity. We are crushed by overcrowding in underserved and run-down housing projects. Worn out, we end up distrusting one another — even preventing our children from playing together. We're jealous of

the person who got a flat, the person who took our sanitation job." In this context of rising diversity, tension, and misunderstandings, it can become harder to perform the everyday acts that create fellowship in society. Yet, some people in poverty use their own experience of hardship to reach out to people of different ethnicities. One unemployed Belgian man related during a People's University that because bus riders make fun of his clothes, he prefers to walk. Every day, he passes a North African man whose job is sweeping the street. The Belgian said:

"I decided to greet him. But when I said, 'hello', he didn't answer. I could have done what some people do by blaming foreigners for taking jobs that I wish I had. He didn't even answer me. But then I realized that sometimes I don't feel like answering my own children. Maybe the man is having a bad day. Maybe that very morning, he learned that he would soon be out of work, or was insulted by his boss. Or a passer-by was rude to him, so that's that. It happens to me too. When someone treats me that way, at home I just can't treat my kids well. They're asking for attention, and I don't answer. So I won't judge him for it."

This father tried to connect with a neighbour, and then worked to understand why his greeting remained unanswered. The harshness in his own life has led him to close himself off sometimes too, but also to understand that others do the same. By not judging the neighbour, he chooses to keep open the possibility of connecting in the future.

Many people living in poverty also reach out to others by providing them with material support despite their own daily struggles and tense living conditions. It is striking that on any given night in France, tens of thousands of homeless people are taken in by friends who themselves struggle in overcrowded conditions. By offering informal shelter, people incur risks: sometimes violating their own rental agreements; struggling to stretch meals; and adding stress to their own family relationships. And yet, many people offer this form of solidarity because they know first-hand how hard it is to be homeless.

At the same time, despite frequent acts of solidarity, when life is hard and everything is lacking, it can be particularly difficult to summon up feelings of fellowship. Poverty hammers away at people's physical health. It limits possibilities of living in a safe home, succeeding in school and finding decent work. In addition, poverty erodes people's relationships with their neighbours and relatives, their freedom to express their thoughts and their very sense of self. In the main train station of Brussels, a non-profit organization has separated homeless people by ethnicity for food distributions, giving priority to native-born Belgians while there is no guarantee of enough for everyone.

Image: ATD Fourth World

The Fourth World People's University has been developed with people of all cultural backgrounds living in persistent poverty

People's University discussion sessions are planned by people who "have gotten bashed around by life too much" – participant Nadia Chafi (left)

People put into situations like this may sometimes hold racist views that are rooted in pain, insecurity and fear.

In this context, the Fourth World People's University offers a framework for beginning to overcome both racism and poverty by providing a forum where neighbours can discover what their struggles have in common. Dialogue helps break through the prejudice and resentment that may be fed by public discourse. When people who know how hard it is to struggle with poverty choose to come together in a People's University session, the most valuable thing that they offer one another is a high quality of listening. For people who have experienced humiliation and the denial of their human dignity, it is all the more important to take the time to listen to one another and to engage in respectful dialogue.

What differentiates the People's University from other discussion groups is that sessions are planned by people who "have gotten bashed around by life too much," as participant Nadia Chafi put it. At each session, participants meet to speak freely, exchange ideas with a guest speaker and think together about themes they choose, such as:

- Facing the same difficulties, supporting one another for a world without racism
- How do we live together in our neighbourhoods?
- How do I try to make life fairer for everyone?
- Europe today: All together, all foreigners for someone else.

Participants prepare each session over several weeks by meeting in small groups to explore the theme. Because of the chaos and stress of poverty, each meeting begins with the possibility of venting frustrations freely. All participants agree to refrain from interpreting anyone else's words. Some academic research, which treats people in poverty as objects to be analysed instead of as knowing subjects, can manipulate their words by reframing them according to the researcher's lens — even when the research is well-intentioned and aims to 'give voice' to marginalized people. In the People's University, if a person's words are not understood by others, that same person is asked to restate

them differently. Dialogue is often enriched by other techniques like those used by the Theatre of the Oppressed. Developed in the 1960s by Augusto Boal, this technique empowers the disenfranchised to initiate change. In Belgium, for instance, participants in the People's University acted out a scene where an argument broke out on a bus among passengers, some of whom used racist slurs. The scene was then replayed several times so that other participants could take the place of passengers in order to try to change the outcome of the situation.

Of course, the challenges are many. Because poverty and exclusion erode trust, newcomers may hesitate to join the People's University even after many invitations, sometimes over several years. It takes persistence to reach people. One man explained his reluctance, saying: "When you're out of work, you're nothing. I don't interest anyone. People look right through me." What may seem like indifference or animosity often masks a strong sense of isolation and despair that can be overcome only with mutual respect and hope.

Imane El Mokhtari, who helps organize the Belgian People's University, explains how dialogue counters potential cultural misunderstandings and tensions:

"As they speak out, people gain self-confidence, which makes it possible for them to speak to 'the other', who gradually becomes less of a 'foreigner' on whom we can project fears, and more of a familiar face. When asylum seekers reacted to political-party

"Struggling with poverty matters more than the fact that people are not from the same country."

"When a man from Cameroon explained that he knows no one here [in Belgium] and has nothing to do on weekends, a Belgian woman invited him to spend Saturday with her family."

"When we get to know each other with our hearts, no one is a foreigner anymore."

— **People's University participants**

Image: ATD Fourth World

Dialogue is often enriched by techniques like those used by the Theatre of the Oppressed, which empowers the disenfranchised to initiate change

Image: ATD Fourth World

Belgian People's University participants at the European Parliament with officials

platforms, other participants said, "Hey, we're facing the same problems as you are." People have prejudice fed by racism in society, but here they begin working on their own prejudice.

"Indirectly, this work is part of overcoming racism with people of very different backgrounds. Each one has a legitimate place in the dialogue… People debate, exchange ideas, put themselves in each other's place, and try to understand the others… In preparation groups, people take strength because they've found a place for talking and making plans. People can speak about their own religion and culture and be questioned by others. That's how we struggle against racism. People were able to talk about [the attack in] Paris without taboos and to hear points of view that are different from those of the media."

Moreover, as participants get to know each other in the People's University, the quality of the connections creates powerful bonds among people of all races and ethnicities. For example, when a Roma woman in Belgium was struggling with homelessness and discrimination, her entire preparation group joined forces to help her find housing.

Long before people come together in a People's University, relationships of trust were developed through our daily presence in low-income communities. Véronique Morzelle, of ATD Fourth World's Volunteer Corps, gives an example of how this developed in Marseille with her neighbour, Lisette Delapeyre, an immigrant from the Comoro Islands off the coast of Africa:

"The Street Library we had organized was already a place of peace for all the children. But parents wanted to form a tenants' association as well. For a long time, however, it never got off the ground. Then there was a very tense time, with a lot of robberies. More and more young people were arrested. For Comoran parents, this was unbearable. One mother collapsed in the street when she heard of her child's arrest.

"Looking for solutions, some adults invited an imam to bring them together as a sign to young people that the adults refused to accept what was happening. This grew into the tenants' association. It began with parents praying for the young people. Sometimes that was misunderstood. Other neighbours wondered if the prayers were meant to help the young people or to banish them. Lisette shook things up, insisting that the young people be invited to join in the prayers. It remained hard for people of different origins to speak to one another in public. Connections were made more often in stairwells or in one another's homes. This led many mothers from Comoro and a few from North Africa to become active for the first time in the Street Library Festival, joining others to plan cultural activities for the children."

Lisette adds: "They ended up creating forms of solidarity that neither Véronique nor I had imagined. The families had been isolated from one another before, but they had the same concerns. When Véronique and I went together to listen to them and to read the Qur'an, they became open to listening to us, too. Véronique is Catholic, and they accepted her. They were ready to be open; it just needed to happen with specific people." Together, Lisette and Véronique created a context where people could live up to their aspirations for themselves and for their neighbourhood.

While the suffering of poverty can cause people to lash out, it can also be a source of compassion. To give a tragic example, people in poverty know how hard it is to grow up in foster care, as did the Kouachi brothers who attacked the Charlie Hebdo offices in January 2015. Following the attacks, a French woman who lives in poverty reacted, saying: "What hurts me the most is that they were French, too. They grew up here, just like us. They're like my son, who was put in foster care, who was also part of a rap group. But they were unlucky; they were led to do wrong." A Belgian People's University participant who grew up in foster care, Michel Brogniez, reflected: "It's hard when you've been badly treated from a young age. We're in the dark, but we want to see the light. Peace will begin the day you realize that the person in front of you is exactly the same as you: a person to be respected." They and many others who express similar sentiments do not

At a Street Library Festival, led by Lisette Delapeyre (centre), Cormoran mothers show children how to apply traditional sandalwood make-up — here to Véronique Morzelle (left)

hesitate to condemn all acts of terrorism. But their fervent wish is that the two brothers had met people who could have prevented these acts by showing them the care and respect that foster a sense of fellowship with all people.

Wresinski's 1980 speech concluded: "We've learned not to be naive, to stop letting others break down our solidarity and manipulate us. The suffering that touches us all, immigrants and people in poverty, has woken the hope that was sleeping in our hearts: the hope that we will all be able to stand, recognized as people in our own right. Beyond bitterness, we have found hope in brotherhood. Because we have lacked friendship and love, we know that no one can live without them, and we can invent a world of solidarity and love."

In the face of terrorist attacks, the world is building more and more walls. Around the world, people suspected of being a danger to others are frisked and harassed, treated with disrespect, indignity and worse. But barbed wire and gated communities make all of us less safe. Every tool designed to protect the security of some at the expense of others ends up eroding the human relationships that are our world's greatest treasure. Yves Doutriaux, a member of France's Council of State and of its Defender of Rights anti-discrimination council, has known ATD Fourth World since 1998. He says:

"Following the media every day leads us to despair because of increasing inequality. Personally, I worry that this insecu-

rity is exploited by extremists on the right and on the left, throughout Europe, for example against immigrant populations or the Roma. Because ATD Fourth World is firmly anchored in poor and extremely poor communities, we need 10 or 100 more ATDs in the field showing the human dignity of the poor countering the extremist ideas that feed on extreme poverty. The message of ATD Fourth World is one of hope. We need that hope amidst the concern spreading across Europe given its current economic, social, and moral crisis today."

Extremism, racism and hate speech remain immense challenges. Social exclusion and poverty-based discrimination are cousins of all forms of intolerance. In looking for ways to overcome prejudice and anger, we remain convinced that the road towards fellowship is a collective one, like that of the People's University, developed with people of all backgrounds living in persistent poverty. Their emotional intelligence and their experience of hardship can be a crucible for forging a new understanding of a single human race whose treasure lies in the many unique threads of our cultural identities. The spaces are fragile where excluded people can feel respected and begin to express their own voice. These spaces need recognition, protection and support in order to thrive. As we join together to create them, we are building a sense of belonging that can set all of us free.

Dialogue between (and within) cultures is essential for the world's food security

Marcela Villarreal, Director, Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Today, some 800 million people are chronically undernourished. The world population is expected to increase significantly, up to 9.1 billion people in 2050 from the current 7.3 billion, and food production would need to increase by 60 per cent to meet their needs. However, under current trends in climate change and increasing pressures on natural resources, it may simply not be possible to address these growing needs with current food production systems and crops.

In order to feed the world in the future it may be essential to use currently underutilized or neglected crops, which can adapt better to extreme weather conditions and can grow in marginal lands. However, a dialogue between (and

Dialogue between (and within) cultures is necessary to retrieve the traditional or local knowledge necessary to reap the benefits of underutilized crops

within) cultures is necessary to retrieve the traditional or local knowledge necessary to use these crops. As local systems that hold the wealth of knowledge associated to the cultivation, conservation and use of these underutilized species are gender-based, a true dialogue within the culture, specifically between men and women, may also be necessary to fully retrieve the knowledge.

What are neglected crops and why are they important? Throughout human history, around 7,000 plant species (out of the approximately 250,000 existing plant species in the world) have been either cultivated or gathered for consumption. However, today the vast majority of food consumed by humans comes from only four species (rice, wheat, maize and potatoes) and only around 120 species are cultivated. The others tend to be neglected or underutilized.

Neglected crops and wild foods are a main source of food during times of stress, crisis or famine. Some are rich in nutrients that are absent from cereal-rich diets and are thus important complements to farmers' food consumption. For example, in rural Ethiopia, wild berries provide vitamins to the vitamin-deficient Ethiopian cereal diet, especially for children.[1] Some are important sources of household income and in some areas they contribute substantially to poverty reduction[2] and to communities' livelihoods. The poor rely more heavily on these foods.[3]

Some of these crops or foodstuffs grow in difficult environments, which are unfit for other crops, are adapted to local agroecological conditions and marginal lands and adapt more easily to extreme weather conditions. They contribute to maintain diversity and thus to more stable agroecosystems.[4] These characteristics of some underutilized species become precious for food security in times of climate change.

Why have neglected crops been neglected? The few crops that dominate the world food supply are supported by formal research institutions and universities, seed supply systems, production and post-harvest technologies and extension systems. In the face of impending food shortages, the international agricultural research system invested massively in increasing productivity and production, in order to feed a very quickly growing population — the so-called demographic explosion — in the 1960s and 1970s. This system strongly favoured increasing yields and promoted monocrops. Underutilized or neglected crops did not get the advantage of international and national research systems,

Intracultural dialogue between men and women has allowed women's voices to be heard

did not have well-established markets and lacked promotional policies. In addition, consumers are not used to them.

Traditional knowledge is so important here because the knowledge component in food and agriculture is very substantial. The useful characteristics of currently utilized as well as some underutilized crops are a product of many years of selection and breeding by farmers, identifying, reproducing and enhancing specific features. This process heavily relies on knowledge while at the same time producing significant amounts of knowledge. This knowledge can be critical, sometimes even determining the difference between life and death. An example is cassava, a tropical plant which originated in the Amazon jungle and today is a major staple food for more than half a billion people, mainly in the Americas, Asia and Africa. Its starchy edible root is the third-largest source of carbohydrates in the tropics. As a plant, it is highly resilient, having the ability to survive long droughts and to grow in soils that are very acidic, low in nutrients and high in toxic aluminum compounds.[5] Cassava plants, however, contain cyanide in concentrations that vary according to the variety and that can be highly toxic and produce serious neurological disorders, such as ataxia, which causes partial paralysis and even death. Varieties of higher toxicity usually have higher yields, are disease- and insect-resistant, and adapt better to more difficult environ-

ments, and so are preferred by many Amazon communities. In sub-Saharan Africa, a study showed that women prefer the toxic variety in order to avoid theft.[6]

Throughout hundreds of years, Amazon tribes developed sophisticated processing techniques that eliminate or significantly reduce the toxicity of the tuber and make it safe for consumption. The techniques, products of locally developed research approaches, involve a combination of soaking, drying, fermentation, grinding and cooking carried out over several days. The development of these techniques involved a long process with careful cause-effect analyses. Modern day science has studied and validated the techniques, explaining the chemistry and the processes by which the cyanide is reduced to non-toxic levels.[7]

Without the precious knowledge on the cassava varieties, their relative toxicity levels and the ways to reduce toxicity to make it safe, millions of people today would lack a major source of food. This is all the more important as cassava is mostly consumed by poor people. It significantly contributes to their food security.

Traditional knowledge is fundamental for the conservation and preservation of biodiversity and agrobiodiversity, and thus for human health and food security. However, it is being lost at a very fast pace. Many local knowledge systems risk extinction, frequently due to exposure to so-called modern

Listening clubs like this one in Tillabéri, Niger, provide a legitimate opportunity for women to talk to each other and to men, constituting a major change to cultural norms

knowledge systems, which dominate research, extension and education systems and tend to be seen by 'Western culture' as the only valid ones. Many traditional practices are disappearing due to the intrusion of foreign technologies with perceived advantages such as high or quick yields.

The rate of this loss has been compared to the loss of language, or to the loss of culture in general. While the US-National Science Foundation funded project ELCat provides evidence to show that 3,054 languages or 43 per cent are endangered and 634 have become extinct,[8] measuring cultural loss is much more difficult. A study of the Tsimane' Amerindians of Bolivia uses knowledge on plants as an indicator of this loss. It revealed a net decrease in the reported plants used, over a decade, from 9 per cent among women to 26 per cent among people living close to towns. The decrease was higher among men than women and in villages closer to market towns. The study concludes that the Tsimane' could be abandoning their traditional knowledge, as it is not seen as valuable within the new socio-economic and cultural conditions they face.[9]

If the world is going to reap the benefits of the underutilized crops and wild plants, it must revalue the systems of knowledge that make their utilization possible and must understand their intrinsic value, which means that it must accept that the dominant science-based system of plant and crop knowledge is not the only one. Furthermore, it must accept that it needs to engage in an intercultural dialogue in which both systems can exchange knowledge, while fully respecting each other, and value the exchange as a possibility for mutual enrichment.

One way of going about this is the creation of a true dialogue between cultures, in which the results of different systems of research are shared. While based on mutual respect, each culture must be willing to learn from the other. It also requires the recognition that the knowledge has rights and that those who developed it must keep the rights as well as any ensuing economic or other benefit.

This kind of true dialogue requires a profound revision of the way in which development work is usually done, in which values, practices and knowledge are imposed from the dominant culture on the other, assuming that the transfer of knowledge is in one direction only, and assuming that the receiving culture has no valuable knowledge processes of its own. This is the basis of many existing agricultural extension systems. It needs an understanding and a revision of the rapport de force that is usually generated between the dominant culture and the 'receiving' culture. The acknowledgment — implicit or explicit — that there is only

Image: Christiane Monsieur

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, after discussions based on content from radio programmes, women are now allowed to eat eggs and fish

one legitimate or valid system of knowledge may be danger-ous for the future of food security.

Dialogue between genders

Traditional knowledge is usually developed, shared and transmitted along gender, age, socioeconomic status, occu-pational and other culturally-defined groups. Typically, men and women have different sets of knowledge regarding specific plants or varieties which, in some cultures, are seen as men's plants or women's plants. Development literature refers to food crops as women's, while cash crops would be men's. Reality is much more complex than this, and there is great variation between cultures and regions, but differentiated gender-based plant knowledge systems are very common.

The fact that women in many contexts have the primary responsibility for the provision of food, fodder and medicine, means that they use a much wider diversity of species than men and that they play a fundamental role in the conserva-tion of agrobiodiversity.[10]

Among the Tanimuka and Yukuna from the north-west Amazon, for example, resources are managed through gender-based knowledge, practices, innovations and skills. "Women manage swidden fields and house gardens and conserve the bulk of agrobiodiversity, while the men manage and conserve the rainforests and procure wild animal species and wild and semi-domesticated plant species. There is thus a complementary, but differentiated, gender-based traditional ecological knowledge held between men and women."[11]

If humanity is to benefit from neglected crops and wild plants for current and future food security, it is fundamen-tal to listen to women's voices within the different cultures. In the same way as listening only to the dominant urban science-based system of knowledge carries the threat of losing traditional knowledge, listening only to men's voices carries the threat not only of losing precious knowledge, but whole systems of knowledge, as men's and women's knowledge is frequently complementary and necessary to each other.

An intracultural dialogue, between men and women, is thus as important as the dialogue between cultures.

One very successful example of bringing out and valorising women's voices is the Food and Agriculture Organization's Dimitra project.[12] Since 1988, the project has set up some 1,000 listeners' clubs in six countries in Africa.[13] Gathered around a solar-powered radio, more recently paired up with a mobile phone, groups of women, men, youth or mixed groups meet to discuss their own

Women's specialized traditional knowledge can make an important contribution to world food security, today and in the future

priorities and network with other Dimitra clubs through community radio broadcasts. The self-managed, action-oriented agenda has resulted in strong improvement of members' — especially women's — self-confidence and has contributed to the economic and political empowerment of women and men. Organizational capacities have been strengthened as well as farmers' organizations.

As an example, in Tillabéri, Niger, a community where women were not allowed to leave their homes, after participating in the *Club d'écoute* among themselves and subsequently with men and finally with village authorities, village chiefs have started action against girl-child marriage, a taboo subject until that time. The clubs provide a legitimate opportunity for women to talk to each other and to men. This constitutes a major change, as cultural norms allowed women only to respond to their husbands' requests, and not to address them directly.

Through dialogues between men and women, the project has helped to dismantle gender-based taboos such as the prohibition for women to eat eggs and fish. In the Orientale Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, after discussing the issue in the clubs based on content from

radio programmes, women are freely eating these highly nutritious foods.

Women from different villages in Niger were able to obtain secure land access. In Dantiandou, rural councils decided to grant women the right to inherit land. At Albarkayze, discussions broadcast by the listeners' clubs prompted the recognition of an inheritance of a plot of land to a woman 20 years after the death of her father.

Intracultural dialogue between men and women has allowed women's voices to be heard, bringing considerable benefits not only to the women themselves, but to entire communities. Through the clubs, women have been able to break out of seclusion and to assume active roles as fully entitled participants in community life. This has enhanced their self-esteem and their credibility both at the household and at the village levels.

Initiatives such as the Dimitra project can play a fundamental role in the conservation of agrobiodiversity. By ensuring that women's voices, as well as their specialized traditional knowledge, are listened to, this knowledge can be valorised, preserved and continue making an important contribution to world food security, today and in the future.

Building a framework for commonly shared values to foster social cohesion

Iyad Ameen Madani, Secretary General, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

I want to express my appreciation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for undertaking the commendable initiative to publish this book, 'Agree to Differ'. However, since agreeing to differ might imply to 'differ' under any circumstance and to maintain differences of opinion, I would have preferred to name this publication 'Agree to Respect Differences'.

It is evident that the world community, or humanity as a whole, with its multiple cultures, diverse social norms, rich and varied ethical standards and different institutional structures and judicial systems, cannot and should not be based on a single and centric perspective that seeks to remake the world in its own image and conform all according to its convictions, references, historical background and philosophical, social and political roots. In this connection, I must stress that relations between countries and communities should be maintained on the basis of respect, parity and appreciation; and should be centred on the values of justice, equality, tolerance and human dignity. Furthermore, I also hope that all countries and peoples will always be true to the age-old maxim not to claim moral authority to pass one-sided judgments and moral categorization of others.

Much to my regret, during the last decade we have observed that:
- darkness could overpower enlightenment
- polarization, conflicts and human suffering are constantly gaining the upper hand and carry the risk of entrenchment
- a kind of clash of civilizations and different manifestations of phobias have acquired global dimensions
- some political forces have become hegemonic, and consequently attempts to create new conservative blocs have become more pronounced
- searches for meaningful 'change' are mistakenly connected to crises within the globalization process
- cultural and ethnic identity relationships, modernity and sense of cohesion have tended to enter an irreversible and negative transformation process.

In other words, it seems to be true even today that "I look for roses, but all I find are thorns," as the fifteenth-century Turkish poet Ahmet Pasha wrote. It therefore falls on our shoulders not only to look for roses, but to find them.

Shared values

Having noted these points, the first thing I want to do is to try to define what I understand by 'shared values'. As I see it, shared values are the fundamental beliefs, concepts and principles that underlie a culture. These concepts and principles guide the decisions and behaviour of that culture.

Now, let me pose a rhetorical question, which is somewhat related to the title and objective of the current book. We are speaking about formulating a set of shared values. But whose values are we to share? Are there universally accepted shared values?

We all remember the debate leading to the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union, when some wanted to insert Christian values as the basis. On the other hand, while debating the mandate of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (OIC IPHRC), some wanted to base it on Islamic values.

I recognize that these may be uncommon examples. However, the fact remains that we have to first of all agree on the values that we shall share. If the answer to my question is that we shall share those values that we all agree on, like for example the universal human rights standards, the n I will have to withdraw my question.

The mindset of all citizens needs to be tolerant and respectful to their fellow citizens, regardless of their identities

The challenge before us is not simply to dispel misconceptions and discredit myths, but to reshape the way in which we think about 'the other'

Clearly, the very idea of 'value' cannot be monolithic or objective. People will always value different things and place different relative and subjective weights on their valuations; but such differences are not necessarily impediments to social cohesion and to a positive sense of community. What is striking in the findings of many recent studies is that the subjectivity of cultural differences can be transcended by higher, objective principles derived from our shared humanity — trust, neighbourliness and community spirit. It is surely such higher principles that enable unity within diversity and the coexistence of different perspectives within an overarching respect for what it means to be fully 'human'.

In this discussion, we might therefore begin by deciding whether we want to make a clear distinction between 'values' and 'principles'. Do we conceive of an 'alliance of communities' as being based on the convergence of higher values or on the convergence of higher principles? How do 'ideals' differ from value and principles? Words and phrases like 'shared values' are repeated so often in public discourse that they can become formulas that carry little meaning. Vigilance about the meaning of words is of course vital. The title of this book, 'Agree to Differ', as noted at the beginning, is therefore only offered as a provisional one to catalyse a discussion.

In recent times there has been a noticeable shift in emphasis in public discourse on the themes of pluralism and national identity. Concerns about loyalty, citizenship and social cohesion have generated an ongoing critique of the long-standing model of multiculturalism ideally based on coexistence and tolerance between separate communities. This model is perhaps most strongly associated with the situation in Europe. Many influential scholars, religious leaders, policymakers and commentators are increasingly questioning whether such a model successfully reduces friction between communities, arguing instead that, at its worst, it produces a society of divisive and conflicting ghettoes, isolated encampments and defensive fortresses, adversarial and self-interested pressure groups, and non-intersecting lives of mutually exclusive and incomprehensible perspectives and belief systems.

On the other hand, the Islamic concept of 'adab' (correct behaviour and deep courtesy) has obvious resonance with the 'civility' which many people would associate with traditional Europeanness, even though civility is, to my knowledge, never referred to in official lists of core values. The same convergence of values might be found in that famously European stoicism and level-headedness which, combined with those other archetypal values of application and endurance, seem to have much in common with the Islamic virtue of 'sabr', that patient endurance which is constant in both easy and hard times.

Clash of civilizations

Over the last two decades, historians, social workers and political scientists helped debunk many misperceptions about Islam and Muslim societies. Research highlighting profound historical, cultural and scientific interchange between Muslims and non-Muslims helped discredit the widely-held view that the 'Muslim world' and the 'West' are distinct, monolithic cultural blocs fatally set on a collision course.

Despite advances in scholarly writings, however, the 'clash of civilizations' narrative remains prevalent in public debate and in the media, shaping many people's understanding of relations with Muslim peoples and societies. The challenge before us is not simply to dispel misconceptions and discredit myths, but to reshape the way in which we think about 'the other'.

We must follow a path towards a sustainable and just civilization based on human solidarity and cultural pluralism

In that respect, the first thing we have to do to deconstruct the 'clash of civilizations' myth is to reflect carefully and without bias on relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Our aim must be to move beyond the 'clash of civilizations' narrative in order to identify and outline the basic components of a new paradigm that would help us understand the common values that bind us together and the complex interplay of cultural influences which contributes to create our shared cultural framework.

How do we create a new paradigm, one in which there is no 'us and them' but only a 'we' — a complex, multilayered, multi-faceted 'we' made up of multiple, diverse and mutually enriching identities? What kind of language is needed to describe this new 'we'? What new ways must be devised to teach our children history? What new awareness must we create among journalists, opinion leaders and policymakers? What are the responsibilities of academics, scholars and opinion makers in that respect?

Indeed, much of today's discussion about relations between Muslims and non-Muslims is polemical and polarizing — and this is as true of the ideologically-driven right wing as it is of Muslim extremists. What is needed is a more balanced approach, a reflective evidence-based argument that can inform a conversation looking not for victory but for mutual understanding and respect.

One of the key risks we face is that a binary 'clash of civilizations' worldview increasingly shapes a world in which the views of political and religious extremists on both sides engage in fear mongering that disproportionately affects popular culture and influences mainstream majority opinion.

Towards a new paradigm

We face a set of extremely serious challenges in society — on welfare, on the economy, on our international relations — and a handful of organizations are busy creating a quiet revolution by bringing together fresh faces and ideas to forge new relationships and come up with new solutions.

This is why many organizations, including the OIC, aim to shine a searchlight on the cultural underpinnings of political and economic dynamics, while curating wide-ranging discussions with people from different sections of society. There are other groups forming this wave of change. While some of these organizations are young and new and others are well-known bodies with a long heritage, what they share is a pluralistic, inclusive approach to debate and network building.

Creating social cohesion

Nations and communities are becoming more diverse. Managing increasingly diverse societies is a challenge for most countries and their leaders. In that respect, how to develop and implement policies that encourage dialogue, recognition, participation and interaction becomes even more important.

How community leaders can constructively manage ethnic, cultural and religious differences, while protecting and preserving human rights and human dignity and to build shared societies, is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Identity-based divisions and conflicts must be reduced and eventually eliminated. For that, constructing shared futures where diversity is not a source of tension, but is celebrated, comes at the forefront.

When, as a consequence of discrimination on any ground, people are excluded from society, the overall quality of life is also severely affected. For that reason, it is important that the legal framework should protect the rights of all individuals. However, this is not enough. Also, the mindset of all citizens needs to be tolerant and respectful to their fellow citizens, regardless of their identities. Furthermore, it is highly important that education systems demonstrate commitment for a shared society.

On the other hand, fear of radicalization is on the increase, and in many instances rightly so. Consequently, steps must be taken to reduce tensions and hostility between different segments of society.

There are different ways to define group cohesion, depending on how one conceptualizes this concept. Cohesion can be more specifically defined as the tendency for a group to be in unity

while working towards a goal or to satisfy the emotional needs of its members. This definition includes important aspects of cohesiveness, including its multidimensionality, dynamic nature, instrumental basis and emotional aspects.

The Islamic world and the West

An important denominator for world peace, stability and security is improved and mutually respectful relations between the Islamic world and the West. In that respect, it is worth noting that a significant portion of the Muslim world is going through difficult times: a period of momentous change and transformation. For that reason also, I attach importance to initiatives for the engagement and development of relations between the Islamic world and the West.

It would not be out of place to mention here that most of the crises going on at present are seen in different parts of the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the effects of these crises do not limit themselves within the physical boundary of any state or nationhood. They pose risks to global security and stability as a whole. Therefore, a relationship between the Islamic world and the West towards building a more secure world on the basis of peace and friendship concerns everybody and is in the interest of all.

Many eminent statesmen have underscored on different occasions the areas that need to be addressed in order to improve these relations. They also underlined the common concerns about the negative trends in the relations between the West and the Islamic world and the challenges in reversing those trends.

Some improvements have taken place recently. But more needs to be done to introduce a paradigm shift, as well as a new dimension in Islamic world-West relations. In that respect, we have to discuss in an intellectually charged discourse on where things stand today.

Let me now refer to the role the OIC can play in engaging the Islamic world with the West in a constructive and meaningful partnership. The OIC is an intergovernmental political organization and is not a religious body. It has grown into the second-largest international organization outside the United Nations system. The important exercise of reform and restructuring at the OIC is essentially centred on strengthening the resolve to accord primacy to multilateralism in seeking solutions to contemporary issues.

Propelled by the vision of 'moderation and modernization', the OIC today is engaged in implementing a diverse agenda including human rights, good governance and cultural diplomacy emanating from its Ten Year Programme of Action. It has established an OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (OIC IPHRC) to deal with human rights issues in its Member States.

Furthermore, the OIC believes that there exists no religious fault line between the West and the Islamic world: neither between Islam and Judaism nor between Islam and Christianity. In most of the contentious cases, religion is being used by quarters with vested interest for their narrow political and economic gains.

On the other hand, negative stereotyping and profiling people on the basis of religion, as well as combating intolerance and discrimination, has been a priority for the OIC for quite a long time. In this field, it exerted its best efforts to tackle the issues faced through a broad-based partnership. As such, it was the OIC's constructive role that helped to bring about the consen-

Group cohesion can be multidimensional, dynamic, and instrumental to achieving a goal or satisfying the emotional needs of the group's members

sual adoption by the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 and the United Nations General Assembly of the Resolution 67/47 on incitement to violence, stigmatization and stereotyping on religious grounds, based on the eight points that the OIC had proposed.

In this connection, I wish to express the hope that concrete recommendations for even closer relations between the West and the Islamic world will be found. In that respect, a deeper appreciation by the leadership in Europe and the USA that the Islamic world constitutes a constructive partner in international relations comes at the forefront. Additionally, greater sensitivity needs to be shown to the concerns of Muslims by avoiding double standards and discriminatory practices. Finally, recognition and involvement of the OIC as a bridge and a credible partner in the conduct of wide-ranging political, economic, social and cultural relations with the Muslim world would definitely be of great utility.

In conclusion, I am convinced that a hand of cooperation should be extended by all concerned in order to overcome the misunderstandings, biases, prejudices and manifestations of intolerance and hate that divide the Muslim and Christian societies. We must have not only the wisdom, but also the courage to shape the future for a better life where our children can live in harmony. To put it differently, we must be able to visualize the future, we must be able to grasp the future and we must also be able to direct the future. We must work towards a civilization founded on positive reciprocity; on the balance of rights and responsibilities; and on duties and obligations. We must follow a path that will take us towards a sustainable and just civilization that is based on human solidarity and on cultural pluralism built on the conviction that multiple identities and beliefs are not only a reality, but are also beneficial for human interaction. One does not need uniformity to seek a common ground. Under the present international circumstances, there is a need to exert greater efforts to create new opportunities for real rapprochement, mutual recognition and understanding.

The Baku Process — the power of intercultural dialogue in a diverse world

Professor Sevda Mammadaliyeva and Vasif Eyvazzade, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Azerbaijan and World Forum Organizing Committee

The ultimate goal for each nation state is to build a safer, more secure and prosperous environment where its people will live in peace and harmony with each other and with other nation states. This has not always been a happy story; throughout history, progress towards this goal has been challenged by clashes, conflicts and sometimes wars, ignited by negative ideologies, intolerance and even hatred.

Often this is made the more difficult because of a lack of mutual understanding of each other's cultures, histories and traditions; a lack of understanding that weakens all attempts to accommodate ideological differences and avert animosity and intolerance. Despite the unprecedented progress achieved in the most recent history of humankind, the same threats are still presenting obstacles to the peaceful coexistence of nations and between people of different cultures, religion or ethnicity.

This is why we need to know more about what builds better understanding in the world and the role of intercultural dialogue. In this context Azerbaijan is an example of a country very much committed to the promotion of intercultural dialogue, both at home and around the world. It has already proved by concrete acts its intention to play an active role in building bridges and trust among civilizations and cultures using its multicultural experience and historical heritage.

Azerbaijan is a special and unique place where different cultures and civilizations meet at a crossroad between east and west, north and south. With a foot in both Asia and Europe, and concurrent membership of both Islamic and European international organizations, Azerbaijan absorbs the values of the different civilizations, thus enabling it to assume a role as a genuine bridge. The peculiarities of Azerbaijan's historical development, its geographical position and the national composition of the population have created favourable conditions for the spread of different religions and cultures in the country. Islam, Judaism, Christianity and other religious beliefs have spread over the country over different periods, interacted with one another and established the specific religious and cultural life in the country. Through this experience, Azerbaijan has built a culture of acceptance, tolerance, trust and confidence where people of

Azerbaijan is a country committed to the promotion of intercultural dialogue, both at home and around the world

The World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku in 2011 established a fully-functioning international forum in Azerbaijan

different faiths enjoy peaceful coexistence and live with mutual respect for each other; and they have done so for centuries.

Azerbaijan was home to one of the world's earliest Christian communities. This community helped to shape the country's history through the ages and remains an important and vibrant part of Azerbaijani culture and society today.

Living alongside the Christian and Muslim communities is a thriving Jewish community of about 30,000 which also has a long heritage in Azerbaijan, dating back over 2,000 years. When, over the centuries, Jews in the surrounding regions were persecuted, they found Azerbaijan to be a haven. The Jewish community, though small, has been an integral part of Azerbaijan's economic, cultural and political life, and today synagogues and Jewish schools flourish in the country.

The three major religions have prospered because of the age-old respect and tolerance of the Azerbaijani people, who pride themselves on peaceful coexistence. But as experience in different parts of the world shows, social tolerance is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Communities can achieve even more with the active support of state actors; of government that promotes tolerance and resists sectarianism. In this way we can begin to see a vision of shared security in which all sections of society — state and non-state actors — commit themselves to create positive relations within and between communities. Traditionally the notion of security has been dominated by the discourse of peace and war — where the military overshadows personal security. Here, one nation's security is often at the expense of another. But we are interested in more than that: our work has been focused on promoting dialogue, and as a result a stronger understanding of our common insecurities and vulnerabilities.

The Government of Azerbaijan has promoted this approach to shared security by creating an environment that nurtures and promotes the ancient traditions of tolerance and rejects radicalism, extremism and hatred. Azerbaijan sees diversity as one of the country's great strengths and virtues, and has worked to ensure that this diversity continues to blossom. The Government has built and rebuilt synagogues, mosques and churches; created new cultural centres for different faiths; and financially supported all three religions without discrimination.

Over the last decade, the Government has repeatedly and proactively brought together political, cultural and religious leaders from the region and around the world to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue — an example which is sorely needed in today's world.

With this commitment and with Azerbaijan at the crossroads of different cultures and civilizations, Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan initiated the Baku Process for the promotion of intercultural dialogue in 2008. The Baku Process comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage living on different continents, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.

The Baku Process was launched at the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Culture in Baku, 2008 on the theme of 'Intercultural dialogue as a basis for peace and sustainable development in Europe and its neighbouring regions'. The conference was organized in partnership with the Council of Europe and placed emphasis on the importance of dialogue among cultures and civilizations as an essential reality of today's world. This event was the first of its kind, bringing together ministers of culture from the Council of Europe and a number of Muslim countries to enable another major step in the development of dialogue and mutual understanding in the globalized world.

The conference highlighted the vital role of cultural policy and action in promoting understanding among different regions and cultures. It provided a great opportunity to launch the Baku Process as a sustainable platform that will sponsor future high-level and practice-oriented meetings between key policymakers and practitioners in Europe and its neighbouring regions on initiatives related to intercultural dialogue.

Representatives of the 49 member states of the European Cultural Convention, the Council of Europe bodies, selected

Image: Min. of Culture & Tourism, Azerbaijan

The 2nd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku drew 600 participants, representing 115 countries on all continents

(mainly Mediterranean) Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization and Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) member states, and senior officials from the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), GUAM, TURKSOY, the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property and other international organizations, foundations and European non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took part in the events in Baku. They were joined by leading international experts in the area of cultural policy, intercultural dialogue and heritage, and prominent figures from the arts/cultural community. As the result of the conference, the Baku Declaration for the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue has been adopted and the Artists for Dialogue project was launched.

As a continuation of the Baku Process, the Government of Azerbaijan invited more than 10 states from Europe to participate at the Sixth Conference of Ministers of Culture of Islamic countries held in Baku in 2009. According to the initiative of the Government of Azerbaijan, a Ministerial Roundtable on 'Fostering dialogue and cultural diversity — Baku Process: New challenge for dialogue between civilizations' was organized among the member states of ISESCO and invited states from Europe on the first day of this conference. Speakers in this roundtable stressed the vital need to continue holding such meetings between the Islamic community and the European Community, to involve governments, peoples, states and cultures in this dialogue, to make the youth the main target group of cooperation projects of the two blocs, and to focus international efforts in this regard. At the end of this ministerial roundtable, a communiqué was adopted in which the participants reiterated their support for joint efforts aimed at spreading the culture of cooperation, fair dialogue and mutual respect.

After the Islamic and European conferences, the Government of Azerbaijan decided to organize a World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku in 2011, under the patronage of Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, who declared the initiative at the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2010. The forum, supported by prestigious international organizations including UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Council of Europe, the North-South Center of the Council of Europe and ISESCO, was to advance the initiatives, realized by Azerbaijan in the sphere of intercultural dialogue, from the regional context to the global level, and to establish a fully-functioning international forum in the country.

Building on previous events held in the Azerbaijani capital on this theme and on the work developed by the stakeholder organizations in recent years, the forum marked a strong recognition that intercultural dialogue is one of the most pressing challenges of our world and one that increasingly manifests itself on a global scale. Baku, as a crossroads of religions, histories, civilizations and traditions where intercultural dialogue is an existing aspect of everyday life, and where a relationship between Islam and modernity is in evidence, seemed a particularly appropriate place to ask difficult questions and look for promising answers. Some 500 representatives from 102 countries on all continents — including global public figures, heads of international organizations, local authority figures, representatives of NGOs, enterprises and the media, intellectuals and activists — participated in the forum. This synergy between political leaders and officials, experts and practitioners was encouraged by informal networking around the event. Euronews, as a media partner, promoted the forum through its broadcasting networks.

The forum examined the barriers to dialogue and tackled, as concretely as possible, the issue of how dialogue can best be pursued in diverse contexts under the motto: 'United through common values, enriched by cultural diversity'. Plenary sessions and workshops on the role of culture and cultural diversity, education, faith and religion, journalism and social media, science, women, youth, heritage and cities were held in the framework of the forum.

The now-named 5A Intercultural Cooperation Platform was established at the forum, which attracted widespread attention for its scope of discussion items. Bearing in mind the Azerbaijani language acronym of the first letters of the five continents represented by large delegations at the event — Avropa, Asiya, Amerika, Afrika and Avstraliya — the new platform was symbolically named the '5 As'. After this successful first forum, the Government of Azerbaijan decided to organize the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue once every two years according to the decree signed by President Ilham Aliyev in 2011.

From 29 May to 1 June 2013, the Government of Azerbaijan, in cooperation with UNESCO, UNAOC, UNWTO, the Council of Europe, ISESCO and the North-South Center of the Council of Europe organized the 2nd World Forum on Intercultural

Dialogue in Baku, which drew widespread participation from 600 representatives of 115 countries on all continents.

The 2nd World Forum has used its convening power to create space for effective and meaningful dialogue on cultural diversity and intercultural cooperation. By working within the existing global context, the forum has positioned itself alongside its partners, each of whom is responding to the challenges and opportunities that cultural diversity brings to communities and for social cohesion.

The forum brought together significant local, national and global stakeholders. It combined plenary discussions on the overarching theme of the Forum — Living together peacefully in a diverse world — with sector-specific workshops promoting agendas of the partner organizations[1] and side events prepared and led by partner organizations.[2] Side events at the forum included the first summit of the Alumni Network of the UNAOC Fellowship; the UNAOC 'Do one thing for diversity and inclusion' campaign and the UNESCO 'Writing Peace' exhibition among others.

The 'Living together peacefully in a diverse world' competition prizes, as a joint project of Azerbaijan and UNAOC, were also awarded during the forum, to outstanding projects run by not-for-profit organizations in Arab and Central Asian countries that have proven positive results and are protecting and enhancing cultural diversity.

For the first time the Conference of Ministers responsible for both fields — culture and tourism — was held in the framework of the 2nd World Forum.

International cultural events were held, including a presentation of films about world nations' ethnic and traditional music in the National Seaside Park, a multicultural music exchange composition, the 'Colors of life' exhibition by German artist Inga Smith and a performance of 'Dance in Yanardagh, by Japan Butoh artists Ko Murobushi.

A ballet, 'Gobustan shadows', was developed on the occasion of the 2nd World Forum as a special open-air show against the backdrop of the Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape, which was inscribed in the UNESCO List of World Cultural Heritage in 2007. This piece of art reflects the building-up of a human collective able not only to learn about nature and make better living conditions, but also to transcend the utilitarian needs for warmth and food through creativity and memory.

Under the patronage of President Ilham Aliyev in cooperation with UNESCO, UNAOC, UNWTO, the Council of Europe (including the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe) and ISESCO, the 3rd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue will be held in Baku on 18-19 May 2015.

The 3rd World Forum will have a major theme of culture and sustainable development in the post-2015 development agenda, and will focus primarily on projects and programmes dedicated to the World Day for Cultural Diversity, Dialogue and Development (21 May) declared by the United Nations General Assembly, as well as the role of faith, religions, migration, sport, education and business in building trust and cooperation among cultures and civilizations.

The theme of the 3rd World Forum reflects the significance of global security in 2015 and the global attention placed on the security of vulnerable people at a time of significant human insecurity.

Azerbaijan is a special and unique place where different cultures and civilizations meet

Several other international events have also been organized in Azerbaijan in line with the Baku Process, such as the conference on the role of women in cross-cultural dialogue in 2008, the World Religious Leaders Summit in 2010 and the Annual Baku International Humanitarian Forum. The Baku International Multiculturalism Centre was recently established in the country.

Even with these many initiatives we have not yet fully achieved this goal in the world. Religious and ethnic conflicts, wars and growing trends of misunderstanding, racism and intolerance in different parts of the world prevail. Terrorism, separatism and conflicts further deepen these trends. For that reason, the advancement of intercultural and interreligious dialogue has become one of the key foreign policy areas in recent years and an important aspect of our cooperation with international organizations and governments. Such dialogue goes hand-in-hand with other strategies to resolve difficulties without recourse to war and violence

Azerbaijan has joined the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and actively participates in all UNESCO projects and programmes dedicated to intercultural dialogue and cultural exchanges, particularly the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022), and the work of the Organization around the Great Silk Road.

The Baku Process has made a noteworthy contribution to contemporary challenges of living together peacefully by stressing the importance of intercultural dialogue. The Baku Process creates opportunity for global conversations between state and non-state actors and stresses the importance, above all, of practical actions and collaborations. The theme of the 2015 Forum, 'Sharing culture for shared security', highlights the essence of Azerbaijan's contribution — understanding difference so that global security can become achievable.[3]

Kazakhstan and the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures

Olzhas Suleimenov, Ambassador, President of the 'Culture' Foundation, Kazakhstan

In many countries, there are associated schools of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), such as the UNESCO Chairs in universities. They perform important work, especially now that the United Nations has proclaimed the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022).

In order to participate in this work it is necessary to actively involve young people, so that they will inherit a world that is not overloaded with problems that can complicate the lives of future generations.

For many years I was the Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Kazakhstan to UNESCO and helped organize the corresponding Chairs in the universities of our country and others. Recently I met with students of the Eurasian University in Astana city. The lecture — or rather, the conversation — was held in the format of a 'question and answer' session. Here are some excerpts from that conversation.

Question: Will the states also come together for the rapprochement of cultures? Since January 2015 the Eurasian Economic Union officially began operating, bringing together five states each with different sized territories, different level economies and different psychologies. The first three states — Russia,

Dialogue for peace and harmony

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Chairman, Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Head, Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions

Despite the hopes of humankind, the world of the twenty-first century has not become safer. A matter of particular concern is increased violence motivated by religious and ethnic intolerance which threatens to turn into a full-scale clash of civilizations.

The current situation has significantly increased the need for a global dialogue to find efficient solutions to contemporary problems, including through intercultural, interethnic and interreligious cooperation. Kazakhstan, the initiator of the global interactive forum G-Global, believes that every state, regardless of the size of its territory, population or type of economic and political system, can make a tangible contribution to such a dialogue.

Our country actively promotes the values of peace, harmony and cooperation at the international level, participating in the work of major international organizations, developing constructive cooperation on a bilateral basis, promoting the initiative to convene the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia and the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. Using the potential of our chairmanship in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010, Kazakhstan put the promotion of tolerance and intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space at the heart of the OSCE agenda. The course towards the expansion of inter-civilizational dialogue between Muslim and Western countries was continued within the framework of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2011-2012.

Kazakhstan regards the initiative of President Nazarbayev to hold the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana as an important item on the international agenda. Since 2003, four congresses have taken place in the capital of our country and the fifth congress will be held 10-11 June 2015. This time, the spiritual forum will be dedicated to the dialogue of religious leaders and politicians in the name of peace and development. Kazakhstan believes religious leaders can make a valuable contribution to the solution of complex political problems in close cooperation with leading politicians.

Kazakhstan's peace-loving efforts in the international arena are, in a sense, the extension of its internal policies directed at ensuring unity, peace and harmony in our society. Our head of state rightly believes that internal political stability is a prerequisite for the successful continuation of reforms.

The state pays great attention to the preservation and development of all ethnic groups. There are 800 national cultural centres and ethno-cultural associations, as well as 3,500 religious associations active in Kazakhstan. In addition to Kazakh and Russian theatres, there are four other ethnic theatres. The country now has 75 schools teaching in the Uzbek, Uighur and Tajik languages. The languages of 22 ethnic groups are also being taught. There are more than 300 news media outlets publishing in 11 languages. The state bodies, along with Kazakh which is the state language, officially use Russian which completely eliminates the problems of interlingual communication.

Kazakhstan's experience has an international dimension, as it has proven its effectiveness as a factor of ensuring security. Indeed, we have been able to show that polyethnicity and different religious affiliations are not a risk factor, but rather an advantage, contributing to the mutual enrichment of cultures, useful exchange of knowledge, and the increase of our country's competitiveness at the global level.

Former Secretary General of the United Nations and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kofi Annan said: "Kazakhstan can serve as a perfect example of different ethnic groups coexisting peacefully in a country. Ethnic diversity is regarded as a blessing instead of a calamity here."

Kazakhstan and Belarus — have been members of that union in its various guises for more than 20 years, while Armenia and Kyrgyzstan have joined only in recent months. Was it too early to take these resource-poor republics into the union? Why Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, and not Transcaucasian republics, for example?

Answer: Russia soured relations with Georgia because of the support of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. And in the Azerbaijani-Karabakh at the time the Russian military contractors marked their presence. Therefore, Armenia is the unique outpost of Russia in the Transcaucasia, housing the Russian military base.

Kyrgyzstan can play the same role in Central Asia. It is obvious that the organizational motivation of the union is not only economic, but also defensive in nature. What kind of convergence of such diverse economies can we talk about? It is clear that political reasons play the leading role.

When it became clear in 2014 that Ukraine has chosen the European Union instead of the Eurasian one, candidates like Armenia and Kyrgyzstan appeared immediately. Unfortunately the adjustment period of the global political architecture, which began in the late twentieth century, is still ongoing. Under these conditions it is more important to create clear alliances, which include the states without any kind of intractable problems. Otherwise, the 'private' problems become common to all states of the union.

Great attention is paid to the preservation and development of the culture of the people of Kazakhstan

The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held in Astana since 2003, is an important item on the international agenda

President Nazarbayev is successfully pursuing a policy of strengthening peace and harmony inside the country and developing constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation with all interested states. This balanced policy based on a fair assessment of the legitimate interests of all nations has already brought many advantages. Kazakhstan has been recognised by the international community as a respected partner that is treating its international obligations with utmost responsibility. Not accidentally, the OSCE summit, which adopted the Declaration Towards a Security Community, was held in Astana in 2010 after an 11-year break.

The upcoming fifth Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions will no doubt make a significant contribution to the development of a global dialogue for the sake of peace and harmony. Kazakhstan hopes for collaboration, mutual understanding and cooperation with all religious leaders and politicians to fulfil these noble missions.

Perhaps this is the way out? An insoluble problem becomes tractable, and then the solution is found by joint efforts?

The President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, made a proposal to support the request of "the state of Armenia" but said "the country of Armenia" should join the union according to internationally recognized borders, without including the territories attached during the 'Karabakh conflict' of the early 1990s. Nazarbayev's position was supported by all those involved.

The peoples of the new union have much in common, generated by a long-standing history of relations, and especially in the Soviet past. The allied relationship will help us to remember, develop and strengthen those good values that have been acquired over the decades. The purpose of the new association is not the restoration of the USSR, but the keeping of something valuable that was born in the cultures during a century rich in great tragedies and creative accomplishments.

Question: How was the United Nations resolution on the proclamation of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures born?

Answer: First of all, we need to agree on the meaning of the term 'culture'. It is not only visual arts. Yes, I see it as art, but the art of life in nature, in society; the art of living of an ethnic group in the neighbourhood of other ethnic groups.

Therefore, the 'rapprochement of cultures' is, of course, not an exchange of concerts — 'song and dance', as some national administrators understand the United Nations appeal. It is, finally, the art of bringing people closer together based on the perception of values, common to all cultures and religions. I do not know any religion with the commandments 'kill', 'steal', 'lie', 'slander'. Therefore, not only can we call for cultures and nations to draw closer together, make friends

Kazakhstan's way

Arystanbek Muhamediuly, Minister of Culture and Sports

Kazakhstan's experience is a unique example of building an effective state policy to enable a sustainable model of interethnic harmony and dialogue of cultures. Peace and tranquility, civil harmony, religious tolerance — these principles provide a framework for the development of Kazakhstani society. The ideological inspirator and architect of Kazakhstan's way of peace and harmony is Nursultan Nazarbayev. "One nation - one country - one destiny" — these words of the head of our state became the leitmotif of Kazakhstan's success.

Today the most important centre of intercultural dialogue in Kazakhstan is the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK), established in 1995 on the initiative of President Nazarbayev. The APK is a unique sociopolitical institution that unites all ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan and ensures the representation of ethnic groups in the Kazakh Parliament, where it has an independent electoral quota of nine members. Its activities are aimed at implementing the state ethnic policy and increasing the efficiency of interaction of state and civil institutions in the sphere of interethnic relations.

There are 1,035 Councils of Public Accord under the APK that act as advisory bodies in local state bodies and the workforces of large enterprises. Departments of the assembly have been opened at 11 universities of the country to educate the younger generation in the spirit of ethnic and religious tolerance.

The APK consists of regional assemblies acting in all regions of the country. Houses of friendship work in the regions with multiethnic composition of the population. Thanks to these, each ethnic group living in the country has the right to form ethno-cultural centres and Sunday schools, which contribute to the revival and development of the languages, culture, traditions and customs of ethnic groups. Today there are 820 ethno-cultural associations across the country, with 190 Sunday schools.

Among the most important projects implemented through the active participation of the APK is the doctrine of national unity, which was elaborated in 2010. Today, the doctrine is the basis for a holistic system of legal, socioeconomic, political, governmental and administrative measures aimed at strengthening the unity of the people, democracy, cultural dialogue and civilizations.

Harmony in interethnic relations can be achieved only with mutual understanding and mutual enrichment of ethnic groups. In this sense, cultural dialogue is one of the main factors in the development of tolerance; indeed, in the diversity and uniqueness of our culture. This principle is clearly reflected on the cultural policy adopted in 2014, which defines as the most important goal the formation of a competitive cultural mentality and high spirituality of the people of Kazakhstan, including spiritual continuity and self-identity among generations on the basis of a common national idea.

In this regard, one of the most important tasks of the cultural policy is the preservation of diversity and harmonious development of the culture of the people of Kazakhstan. The desire of all living ethnic groups to preserve their language, culture, traditions and customs is supported in Kazakhstan with the creation of all conditions for realization of the full cultural life.

For the people of Kazakhstan tolerance, interethnic peace and harmony are not just words — they are a lifestyle.

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and collaborate; we can also explore the reasons that forced them at one time — decades or centuries ago — to disperse, confront and sometimes hate each other.

Science should help us to discover and denounce these reasons. Education will help to spread this knowledge in

Image: APK

National cultural centres, ethno-cultural associations, religious associations and theatres help preserve language, culture, traditions and customs

schools and universities. And the new generations of belligerent tribes and nations will realize that there is no reason to preserve the walls between peoples.

That's our goal. But its formal beginning looked like this: in 2008 at the General Conference of UNESCO, the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to UNESCO proposed to proclaim 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. The conference voted for the proposal. Subsequently it was supported by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The results of the 2010 celebrations have demonstrated that one year was not enough to achieve the goal. So, during the UNESCO General Conference in 2011, we broadened our proposal and the United Nations proclaimed the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

The launch of the Decade took place in September 2013 in Astana — the capital of Kazakhstan.

Question: What do you expect once the International Decade has passed? How can the results be expressed?

Answer: If, during this period, the expected conflicts do not explode, the 'unsolvable problems' are solved peacefully and new ones do not emerge, then we will assume that some of the main objectives of the decade have been achieved. But since the major problems in the world are many, 10 years is not enough to manage them. So, the whole century must be devoted to this cause. The Age of the Rapprochement of Cultures — this is a project worthy of UNESCO's stature!

When all the people on Earth call good, good and evil, evil — then we will not worry about the future of humanity.

The Year of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan

Bashmakov Anatoliy Afanasievich, Deputy Chairman, Assembly of People of Kazakhstan and Deputy Chairman, Association of Russian, Slavic and Cossack organizations

The Year of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK) has started. It is a fusion of the most important historical events: the 550th anniversary of Kazakh Khanate, the seventieth anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War and the twentieth anniversary of the Constitution and Assembly. Those events are all very different, but they are all organically woven into one ideological, historical and spiritual texture. The 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate is intended not only to attract, but also to teach people to think and to understand themselves, to realize a deeper involvement in the country's history. The Year of the APK is a powerful fusion of jubilee events and their historical energy.

A work plan of events was approved for the year. This is not a plan of entertainment events or political shows accompanied with invitations to foreign celebrities. It is a deeply thought out, logically formed set of practical actions to address the social, organizational, legal, spiritual and economic problems in the country.

The most important task of the Year of APK is the formation of moral qualities among the youth, and a respectful attitude to our history and national traditions. In other words, the Year of APK has to be a year of spiritual reproduction.

Any polyethnic society is capable of development only when two basic substances exist: an ethnic core and a cultural shell. The roots of the ethnic core in Kazakhstan go back a long time, before the creation of the Kazakh Khanate and the period of its organization.

Naturally, the formation of the ethnic core is a historically long process, and it continues today. The cultural shell is more mobile and its formation is continuous.

The APK is the only institution in the world presented as a spiritual and methodological centre in the system of ethnic policy and the formation of ethnic tolerance and culture of international relations. It is not only a social glue, but also a powerful spiritual brace for Kazakhstani society. Today regional assemblies and houses of friendship are established in all regions of the country. Under the APK a scientific expert council of assembly has been created, and universities have created APK chairs intended to provide a scientific process of interethnic relations. In 2014 an organizational conference was held, and a republican association of APK chairs was created. This is a public body, intended to provide unified methodological academic and educational policy.

Society cannot exist without a value basis. There is a system of values — and there is a nation. Destruction of one is inevitably accompanied by the loss of another. Our President very subtly understands and feels it. For him, the domestic economy was and remains the alpha and omega. His position and definition, which has become a classic formula — "first of all economy, then politics" — are in all textbooks of political science and economic theory. This is an applied slice, but from the position of metaphysics, the President has another view and belief. For the Head of State economy is just a method and instrument. His aim is human: man with his soul and problems.

Kazakhstan believes religious leaders can make a valuable contribution to the solution of complex political problems in close cooperation with leading politicians

The 'rapprochement of cultures' is the art of bringing people closer together based on the perception of values common to all cultures and religions

Image: APK

The Youth Volunteering and Dialogue International Conference

H.E. Dr Ziad Aldrees, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Jointly organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education and the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND), the Youth Volunteering and Dialogue conference, (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 3-5 December 2013), focused on the scope and direction of youth volunteering in a diverse global world.

The initiative built on UNESCO's vast experience in this domain as well as on the active promotion of volunteering by the Saudi Arabian Government, both within the country as a social, ethical and humanitarian engagement, and as part of a wider strategy to strengthen dialogue and understanding among young people from different countries and cultural backgrounds.

The conference was part of the cooperation agreement signed in 2010 with Prince Faisal bin Abdullah Al Saud, the Minister of Education of Saudi Arabia, in support of the Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue.

During the three-day event, over 300 young people from 39 different countries explored different approaches to volunteering in the region and beyond. The young volunteers, practitioners and experts were provided with a variety of platforms (exhibition and workshops) for displaying and comparing the diversity of volunteering with a view to releasing its transformative power.

The conference consisted of a high-level segment with representatives of stakeholder organizations, and several youth workshops exploring the potential of fostering dialogue through volunteering — showcasing of best practices, displays at an exhibition and other concrete experiences with a wide variety of young volunteers, youth policymakers and youth empowerment organizations. In addition, the host country authorities organized cultural events and participatory visits.

Image: Min. of Edu., KSA

Speakers at the second session of the conference, where the focus was on humanitarian aid, one of the most visible faces of youth volunteering

A declaration was adopted at the end of the conference capturing the key features of an agenda in this area for future implementation by the involved partner organizations, networks and associations.

Aims and challenges

In a world of globalization and inequality, which is simultaneously bringing people closer together and widening the divisions between them, listening to the voices of youth and engaging them in development processes has become a necessity. Today, youth everywhere demand inclusiveness, empowerment, prosperity and sustainability with a hitherto unknown intensity.

Geographic and cultural borders have become more porous, leading to unprecedented encounters, exchanges and 'togetherness', and making instant connectivity a reality in many parts of the world through information and communication technology (ICT). Indeed, the advances in technology and innovation have radically changed the ways of communicating, networking, learning and participating as national and global citizens, and young people are at the centre of these new trends and developments.

Volunteering is one of the most basic expressions of human behaviour and arises out of long-established ancient traditions of sharing and reciprocal exchanges. At its core are relationships and their potential to enhance the well-being of individuals and communities. There is evidence that volunteering promotes social cohesion and trust. Volunteering is not only the backbone of civil society organizations and social and political movements, but also of many health, education, housing and environmental programmes, and a range of other civil society, public and private sector programmes worldwide. It is an integral part of every society.

The following objectives were defined for the conference:

• explore the channels of youth volunteering and the related creative potential of young people as a constructive force leading to social inclusivity, tolerance and new forms of youth leadership

• chart future avenues that satisfy the aspirations and needs of young people enabling them to grow with opportunities that foster hope, success and feelings of belonging/citizenship

• define new pathways for youth volunteering to foster dialogue among cultures including through the use of the Internet and social media

• expand the multi-stakeholder partnerships to include foundations, non-governmental organizations, existing volunteer associations and networks, and the private sector — thus giving further impetus to the process.

The conference

"In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, young people represent the largest percentage of the population and we are firmly convinced that it is they who will make the future. We shall grant them further opportunities to highlight their talents and capabilities." With these words, HRH Prince Faisal bin Abdullah Al Saud, Minister of Education, greeted the many participants in the Jeddah Conference in his welcome statement.

The Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, also welcomed the many youth volunteers and stated that: "You

The Jeddah Youth Declaration

We, the youth gathered at the International Youth Conference on Volunteering and Dialogue in Jeddah, organized by the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the KACND and UNESCO, within the framework of the Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue, adopt the following declaration on this International Volunteer Day (5 December):

We sincerely appreciate the efforts of the hosts and organizers of this conference to make the voices of the world's youth heard in global forums, to bring our messages across and to allow us to take part in platforms in which we can connect and exchange our views.

We are concerned by the current multiple crises which compromise our chances as future leaders to make the world better than we found it.

We recognize that volunteering and dialogue, which are guided by our shared aspiration to unite people around common causes, generate mutual benefits and transform the lives of all those involved in this process.

We firmly believe that dialogue is the catalyst for enabling lasting cooperation, promoting the sharing of experiences, and fostering solidarity within and among communities, cultures, faiths, generations and nations.

We pledge to integrate dialogue at all levels of volunteering, as fuel for creative change.

We applaud young volunteers for their ongoing contributions to efforts benefiting communities worldwide, in areas such as humanitarian or peacebuilding initiatives, heritage conservation, post-conflict/disaster assistance, environmental protection, health-related programmes, the full inclusion of persons with disabilities, entrepreneurship; and therefore call upon all relevant stakeholders to support and promote these efforts.

We endeavour to work with the world's leading organizations for youth with the aim of establishing sustainable partnerships benefitting young volunteers, and promoting a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding.

We affirm the need to cultivate an ethos for volunteering and dialogue rooted in solidarity, empathy, self-confidence, critical thinking, respect and appreciation for diversity (especially to break prejudices and cultural stereotypes), the spirit of initiative and teamwork, disinterested action, patience, perseverance, the art of listening, and meaningful participation and recognition.

We express our concern about the gap between ideas and their implementation, and believe that this gap can be bridged by a joint, networked, upstream and community-based sustainable effort of all involved.

We reaffirm our commitment to creating open, welcoming spaces to improve the exchange of experiences, and to establish new forms for sharing mutual learning, youth civic engagement and intercultural dialogue — all the while avoiding the risk of systematic framing and standardization.

We urge governments, local authorities, the private sector as well as global and regional organizations such as United Nations entities, ISESCO and ALECSO, to integrate volunteering and dialogue as critical components of youth development, both personal and professional, and to create an enabling environment and platforms in which youth volunteering can flourish.

We commit to building on the experiences shared by all the organizations present in this conference, including the United Nations Volunteers programme, the World Organization of the Scout Movement and the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service, and the messages contained in this declaration to increase the number of young men and women engaged in volunteering globally.

We commit to sharing the contents of this declaration with our current and extended networks, and to harness social media in our efforts to foster global, active and responsible citizenship.

We call upon the youth of the world to join us in our endeavour.[1]

High-level guests attended the conference panel on volunteerism, the culture of peace and sustainable development

are not the subjects of change — you are its greatest leaders, with the greatest ideas. You are not the beneficiaries of support — you are our full partners in making change happen for the benefit of all."

Eminent personalities and high-level experts subsequently took the floor and addressed volunteering and dialogue from many different perspectives. Among the personalities were Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO); Abdullah Hamed Mohareb, Director-General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO); Hans d'Orville, Assistant Director-General, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO; Ahmad Alhendawi, United Nations Envoy for youth; John Geoghegan, Secretary-General of the World Scout Foundation; and Kazumi Ikeda-Larhed, Chief of Partnerships and Communications Division, United Nations Volunteers.

The first workshop conducted by the youth participants, 'Youth Volunteering and the Promotion of a Culture of Dialogue', brought different approaches to volunteering to the forefront in an open dialogue between its practitioners. Dialogue begins within the family, community and country. Dialogue among governments, corporate leaders, civil society organizations and the public, with the active participation of youth, can help promote good governance and accountability, and it can foster transformative approaches and processes.

The guiding questions were: In an era of instant connectivity, how can communication provide ideas and support for youth volunteer work all over the world? What would be the features of an inclusive 'culture of dialogue' in the domain of volunteering?

The second workshop, 'Youth Volunteering, Peace-Building and Humanitarian Assistance', focused on one of the most well-known and visible faces of youth volunteering: humanitarian aid. Volunteers all over the world have a potentially important role to play in disaster risk management as well as in post-conflict situations, but there are special challenges for young volunteers. The participants in this workshop discussed, among other things, how local communities can play a role in the adaptation and mitigation of natural disasters, when assisted and guided by well-informed, trained volunteers.

Guiding questions were: What are the most important obstacles to effective volunteering in the area of humanitarian assistance? What tools, skills and training are needed?

In the third workshop, 'Volunteering, the Culture of Peace and Sustainable Development', the young participants looked at the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, which is at the core of UNESCO's mission. Because of the link between violence, poverty and low achievement of development objectives, sustainable development must be both inclusive and people-centred, at once benefiting and involving everyone. Devising an intergenerational pact, supporting gender equality and women's

Dialogue among governments, corporate leaders, civil society organizations and the public, with the active participation of youth, can help promote good governance and accountability

empowerment, and reaching out to marginalized and excluded groups, are hence key factors in any future peace-building scenarios.

Guiding questions were: What kind of relationship could be established between volunteering and youth employment in the future? What could the concrete elements of a new, intergenerational pact be in this regard? How could we ensure that it contributes to peace?

The fourth workshop was entitled 'Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue in Inclusive Societies'. Its point of departure was that social transformations are giving rise to new challenges of deepening inequality, exclusion and even tensions within societies, as globalization brings people with different cultures ever closer together. From this perspective, volunteering and especially youth volunteering can be a way to forge a connection between a rapidly developing world on the one hand, and enhanced mutual understanding and cooperation on the other.

Guiding questions were: How can we ensure that dialogue leads to inclusiveness? What would be the core principles underlying such an endeavour? What are the linkages between cultural diversity and inclusivity; are they always mutually reinforcing?

The theme of the fifth and last workshop was: 'The Role of Information and Communications Technologies in Promoting Volunteering and Responsible Citizenship'. Focus was on the rapid expansion of digital communication and virtual social platforms and their strong influence on volunteering actions in the past years. ICTs have encouraged unprecedented connection and given strength to the voices of youth seeking to articulate their desire for participatory democratic processes and civic engagement, both at the national and global level.

Guiding questions were: What is the impact of ICTs in the different areas of volunteering? In which ways can/do they encourage responsible, local and global citizenship?

The way forward

The Jeddah Conference built on the experience gained from previous international conferences such as 'Fostering Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations through Concrete and Sustainable Initiatives' (Rabat, Morocco 2005), and 'The Copenhagen Agenda on Education for Intercultural Understanding and Dialogue' (Copenhagen, Denmark 2008). It further drew directly upon the Saudi Arabian experience with youth volunteering and dialogue, as experienced in four international conferences held in China (2010), Brazil (2011), Germany (2011) and India (2012).

In Jeddah, these positive developments were pursued and explored through the enthusiasm and willingness of the youth participants to initiate and/or reinforce their international volunteer networks. The youth expressed a strong wish to maintain the momentum created during the conference. Many of them also applauded the initiative to gather young participants from different countries, and cultural and social backgrounds, with a view to sharing their experiences about their practical, daily involvement in volunteering.

Since then, the participants have initiated new, or expanded existing, networks, while also highlighting the importance of receiving support from international organizations such as UNESCO, in particular with regard to the creation of meaningful spaces for youth encounters.

Volunteering should be recognized as a powerful and universal resource and as a vital component of the social capital of every country. It has a potential to make a difference in responding to many of today's complex global challenges with the active participation of young women and men contributing to peace and sustainable development.

This was one of the key messages that the youth participants set out in the Jeddah Youth Declaration adopted at the conclusion of the conference.

Agree to differ in matters of ultimate concern: religious diversity and interreligious dialogue

Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar, the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue

The International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) states that "international security and social inclusion cannot be attained sustainably without a commitment to such principles as compassion, conviviality, hospitality, solidarity and brotherhood which are the cornerstones of human coexistence inherent in all faiths and secular ideologies." These values are indeed imbedded in all cultures and religions, even though they are not always practiced consistently. To discover these values across worldviews so as to practice them more universally, we need dialogue.

Dialogue, whether intercultural, inter- or intrareligious or intercivilizational, is a form of verbal interaction between two or more persons of different identities that emphasizes self-expression and reciprocal listening without passing judgement. Dialogue requires an intellectual and compassionate spirit of openness to mutual learning. One's understanding of a given issue can be significantly transformed through dialogue. It creates new relationships where there were few or none before. Because dialogue fosters greater trust, it leads to new, creative possibilities for sustainable collaboration. Indeed, dialogue is to collaboration what debate is to competition. Unlike debate, dialogue can lead to cooperation on both individual and institutional levels. While dialogue is not historically new, its increasingly intensive practice in the past half a century, especially its practice in intercultural and interreligious forums, has led to significant intergroup transformations in both theological perceptions and interreligious collaboration for justice and peace.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the *Encyclical Nostra Aetate,* a Roman Catholic document that has substantially changed the nature of relations between the largest Christian denomination and other Christian churches, as well as with other religions. This change in the official theology of the Roman Catholic church was influenced by three concurrent social transformations, the first two of which are the fruit of intense dialogue. The first is the ecumenical dialogue led by

Dialogue fosters mutual understanding and helps build peace

Dialogue practitioners in a Nairobi KAICIID social media workshop to support their goal of expanding the active community engaged in peace outreach and rejecting extremist violence

the World Council of Churches (created in 1948). The second is the post-Shoah Jewish-Christian dialogue. The third is the loss of power of Western European churches regarding the political institutions of post-Second World War nation states, increasingly secularized. These three concomitant transformations led most mainline churches to start to take the 'dialogue turn' from the middle of the twentieth century onwards.

The third social transformation, the (initially European/Western) political secularization process, came to dominate the culture of the new international community, as reflected in the growth of the United Nations. The language of the founding documents of many United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, reflect a secular discourse rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Intercultural dialogue, including inter-ideological, has since been the goal to achieve in international circles. So two, often parallel, dialogues developed in the last half century: intercultural and interreligious, the latter being promoted mostly by Western or westernized churches and other Western minority religious communities, such as Judaism. In the latter half of the twentieth century, interreligious dialogue broadened its scope in response to both increased religious diversity in the West (due to immigration) and to growing awareness of dialogue in countries with centuries of religious diversity. This has led to the emergence of several kinds of interreligious dialogue organisations, a trend that continues to this day.

In all other regions of the world, especially sub-Saharan Africa and many regions in Asia, religious plurality has been a defining characteristic of local and transnational history for millennia. However, its management from a political perspective has encountered modernization challenges similar to those initially faced in the West, arising initially, under both the post-colonial dynamics of independent nation-state building and, more recently, post-Cold War openness to address the challenges of cultural and religious plurality, in addition to ideological differences. Many initiatives have emerged, such as: the leadership role of the Japanese Buddhist lay religious organization Rissho Kosei-kai in the hosting of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (1970) that has led to the establishment of Religions for Peace/International (based in New York City); the World Fellowship of Interreligious Councils (India, 1988); the Royal Al-Al-Bayt Institute for Interfaith Studies (Jordan, 1988); the United Religions Initiative (2000); the Alexandria Process (2002); the Doha International Center for Interreligious Dialogue (2003); the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (2005); United Nations Resolution A/61/221 entitled 'Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding, and cooperation for peace' (2006); A Common Word (2007); the Mecca Appeal for Interfaith Dialogue (2008) and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), to name only a few.

In order to avoid falling into often reductive binary debates (such as East-West, Liberal-Communist or Secular-Religious), dialogue has emerged as a more flexible tool to address the many facets and at times conflicting interests at the heart of modernization challenges. |In this context, and more or less worldwide, dialogue has become a social and political means (soft power) to foster greater mutual understanding between a variety of different identity groups and communities, as well as to enhance effective collaboration towards common citizenship, whether at the national or global levels.

Both interreligious and intercultural dialogue are contributing to a paradigm shift away from debates that aim to win arguments for greater subsequent control of

KAICIID board members Father Miguel Ayuso and Swami Agnivesh share their experiences of interreligious and intercultural dialogue and education

KAICIID board members Metropolitan Emmanuel and Dr Hamad Al-Majed discuss the role of dialogue and interaction in interreligious education

decision-making processes, towards collective and inclusive decision-making that aims to foster a more sustainable common good. Various forms of dialogue are at the heart of positive peacebuilding in all of its three phases, from prevention of conflicts, to peacemaking and post-conflict reconstruction. They are also essential in constructive, peace-oriented international relations, as captured in the following statement:

> No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.
> No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.
> No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions.

— Hans Küng, *Christianity: Essence, History, Future* (1996)

The three parts of this statement reflect three orders of dialogue. Taking each one in reverse order, it is possible to say that the third element, "investigation of the foundation of the religions," requires that each human being develop an internal dialogue about the meaning of life, through a search for meaning that investigates the foundations of religious, cultural, and ideological worldviews, as well as their constant interactions. This internal dialogue can take place within one's own self-consciousness, stimulated by interactions with both written and oral sources of knowledge. It is a dialogue that is often invisible and inaudible because it takes place inside one's head and heart.

The second element, "dialogue between the religions," is in fact a dialogue between followers of different religions.

This dialogue is called 'interreligious dialogue'. Because there are also many differences within each religion, there is also a dialogue between followers of various branches within each of the religions. This dialogue is called 'intrareligious dialogue'. In the case of Christianity, there is a special term for this intrareligious dialogue: ecumenical dialogue. Both interreligious and intrareligious dialogue can be conducted between followers that are engaged in dialogue for personal reasons and/or institutional ones. The personally motivated form is often found at grassroots level, while the institutional dialogue has a more official character. Both are equally important in promoting dialogue between the religions. They are the two sides of what is often known as 'theological dialogue', although other kinds of dialogue (often more action-oriented) can also result from improved mutual understanding of religious, cultural and ideological worldviews. Greater understanding helps correct misperceptions and fosters trust. It results in a respectful attitude that offers a balance between two conclusions: "we have more in common than we initially thought" and "we agree to disagree (or differ) on a few points (matters) of ultimate concern."

Finally, the first element, "peace among the religions," needs more than understanding about what is shared (commonalities) and what is not (differences). It requires active social engagement with one another, at both personal and institutional levels, both locally and globally, to address areas of conflict whether they are within, between or beyond religious communities. If a problem is within a religious community, it may be that other religious communities have gone through or are still confronted with a similar problem. By sharing solutions, capacity can be increased that will later improve the situation. If a problem is between two or more religious communities, then engagement with each other is necessary to find sustainable solutions through inclusive and dialogical processes of decision-making and implementation. If a problem is beyond the religious communities, they may collaborate on the basis of shared moral commitment to finding solutions that can alleviate or resolve it.

All three forms of dialogue (internal, theological and socially engaged) are equally important. If a person wants peace, then they need to practice dialogue. It is the best way to strengthen traditional practices that have sustained harmony for centuries, as well as to prevent and counter radicalization. The practice of dialogue contributes directly to building resilient communities by transforming the vicious cycle of individual and systemic violence into a virtuous cycle of self-reinforcing harmonious relations. All human beings can practice any or all three forms of dialogue. Dialogue begins through personal encounters with others that challenge and then change our preconceptions about them as well as ourselves. This first step of dialogue remains at the level of individual perception and understanding. Continued encounters, especially linked to common action, lead to deeper behavioural change in the dialogue participants. Finally, dialogue can become a way of life.

In order to promote the culture of dialogue, an international intergovernmental institution was established in Vienna, Austria: the KAICIID Dialogue Centre. It is the first

In Nairobi, religious leaders in intercommunity dialogue participate in KAICIID media training to strengthen their 'share of voice' in the media to advocate tolerance and support diversity

and only international organization governed by religious representatives and the only intergovernmental organization dedicated to facilitating dialogue between different cultures and faiths. The multireligious Board of Directors, representing five world religions, steers the centre's course by determining and overseeing its strategy and work programme. The member governments (Austria, Saudi Arabia, Spain and the Holy See as Founding Observer) approve the centre's budget, government membership and the leading officials of its secretariat. This innovative hybrid governance structure fosters international intergovernmental (a mix of secular and religious allegiances) and transnational interreligious (a transnational mix of representatives of transnational religions) collaboration. An advisory board currently being developed will also make it possible to collaborate more widely with a variety of internationally active non-governmental organizations (NGOs) interested in increasing their knowledge about dialogue, as well as its various forms of practice, to increase the impact of their respective work.

Dialogue is at the heart of KAICIID's very being and becoming. Dialogue is the central concept that guides all KAICIID strategies and actions, in both process and content. Dialogue is thus both a means and an end, from conception of strategy and delivery of programmes, to impact assessment. When KAICIID facilitates dialogues on difficult topics and in sensitive situations, it plays a third-party mediating role somewhere between track one and track two diplomacy. In KAICIID's theory of change, dialogue is a method for deeper social transformation that advocacy cannot achieve. Therefore, KAICIID remains

impartial as a convener of dialogue, while supporting value-based transformative results.

KAICIID promotes the use and institutionalization of dialogue to support peacebuilding, reconciliation, common citizenship and social cohesion, as well as to conduct activities on the relation of interreligious dialogue to human rights and freedom of religion. KACIID's programmes incorporate women and youth in dialogue, evaluate text books on the accurate and respectful depiction image of the other, teach interreligious dialogue and train both policymakers and religious leaders in dialogue skills to be applied in a variety of contexts, including social media. In addition, KAICIID's research maps the extent of interreligious dialogue worldwide through a peace mapping project, demonstrating how different types of dialogue contribute to various aspects of peacebuilding.

One planet; one experiment. There is no survival of humanity on Earth without dialogue. One of today's urgent challenges is to increase significantly the practice of dialogue, in its various forms, to reach a tipping point beyond which the culture of dialogue becomes the norm 'glocally'. In collaboration with as many United Nations agencies, governments, international NGOs, religious communities and other value-based groups as possible, KAICIID is committed to find ways to produce widely available opportunities to practice dialogue in order to decrease discourse manufacturing fear and contribute to a world that can eschew weapons in exchange for trust in others. The KAICIID Dialogue Centre joins many partners worldwide contributing through dialogue to a global peace movement whose success is our single best guarantee of attaining a sustainable future for humanity on Earth.

Sense of belonging and social cohesion in fragmented societies: a normative approach from Latin America

Ana Sojo, Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Chile

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has defined social cohesion as the dialectic between instituted mechanisms of social inclusion or exclusion and the ways in which people perceive them and behave and dispose themselves towards them, thus determining the extent of a sense of belonging. This notion undoubtedly goes beyond mere material satisfaction. In these terms, increasing social cohesion implies strengthening the social ties that build trust and reciprocity, and moving towards social inclusion grounded in citizens' enjoyment of decent levels of social well-being in a context of respect and mutual appreciation of diversity and of effort to forge a community of shared norms and values.

The erosion, weakening or rapid transformation of the ties that bind individuals to society — a phenomenon noted by Émile Durkheim as early as 1893 — have been crucial

problems of human coexistence, and are still contemporary concerns. Moreover, the current spectre of fundamentalism, related to what Amartya Sen[1] calls the 'miniaturization' of social identities, raises questions about the causes of its vigorous resurgence and the transformation of social bonds. This leads to the further question of how the globalization-era 'world-society' — as Giacomo Marramao termed it — can build its own order in the face of rising religious, ethnic or other fundamentalisms. If identity and a sense of belonging are central themes of our age, how are they constructed, how is this belonging reproduced, how are the multiple actors and sectors making up society affected differently, and in what ways does today's pace of modernization and globalization affect the references of belonging? As Marramao has pointed out, the current form of globalization, by sidestepping new needs and demands for social ties, goes hand in hand with expanding diasporas of identities. Given that identity

All people should be able to express their belonging and personal choices through the various social identities they adopt

Civic equality is a right that must be exercised collectively, rather than individually, because it equates to being treated as a citizen who is equal to others

It is crucial to implement policies to combat discrimination and promote women's socioeconomic autonomy

is also linked to the need for community, this is genuinely a phenomenon of our times, even in the case of the most extreme manifestations of fundamentalism. As a result of the feeling of rootlessness, or rather the failure of insolent secularism, as Jürgen Habermas calls unconcern about questions on meaning, the very paradox of globalization is that the locus of difference is reconstructed, traditions are invented and communities are imagined. 'Local' thus becomes a social experience of imagination, and imagined communities that have lost a sense of place invent what is primordial, insofar as society — by nature a complex structure — has always involved a specific combination of difference and identity, of differentiation and of reconstitution of unity.[2]

Social cohesion must be analysed in the light of the values on which it is built and the coexistence it enables. As it includes a sense of belonging, the perspective inevitably homes in on aspects concerning identity.

The more extreme the exclusion engendered by divided societies, the more they will be a breeding ground for fundamentalism of various kinds. Identity can lead to processes of social polarization, with strong cohesion, solidarity and trust within groups at the micro level, contrasting, however, with

dissonance regarding society as a whole, leading to conflict and feelings of remoteness and disaffection. Such dynamics express social fractures associated with the dialectic between difference and identity, and a strong sense of belonging at the micro level can coexist with a situation that is critical in terms of macro social cohesion; in such cases strong group cohesion may coexist with destructuring of society as a whole. A certain amount of current literature has addressed this phenomenon in terms of social polarization, describing a country's population as 'polarized' if sizeable groups within society identify strongly with members of their own group, but feel alienated from others.

In respect of the link between difference and identity, ECLAC has stated that diversity should not be a factor of inequality, and that differences should be respected and valued in accordance with the rules of democratic coexistence. Moreover, in the spirit of Amartya Sen, people's individual freedoms and sense of belonging should be based on their multiple choices, priorities and scopes of action. In other words, all people should be able to express their belonging and personal choices through the various social identities they adopt. This principle contrasts with the 'illu-

Social cohesion must be analysed in the light of the values on which it is built and the coexistence it enables

sion of singularity', Sen's concept for the belief in social identities that have totalitarian pretentions. That belief is reductionist in that it rejects the possibility of multiple social identities and, ultimately, may lead to the violent settlement of conflicts or differences. Therefore, people should not be submitted to the exclusionary power of any all-encompassing identity — be it religious or gender- or community-specific — as this diminishes social identity and overshadows the many and varied affiliations and associations of individuals and their integration into society in multiple ways.

What is required is a development imaginary incorporating the differences within societies as part of an open process in which individual identities link with processes of modernization and production transformation. Social cohesion mechanisms need to be strengthened in Latin America and the Caribbean, both objectively and subjectively. Moving towards cohesive societies requires taking meaningful steps to reduce the concentration of wealth, remedy the unequal distribution of the fruits of economic growth and substantially improve protection against vulnerabilities and risks. In a world in which technology and workplace skills are changing rapidly and inequality is growing, work must take on a more powerful inclusionary potential. This entails embedding more technical advances and value added into production, improving the skills of the labour force and boosting their ability to adapt to an ever-changing world of work, which is imperative for economic development, social inclusion and a sense of belonging. This would most likely benefit economic performance and lead to a fairer distribution of the fruits of development, with a decisive impact on people's well-being.

It is vital to act quickly on the most entrenched and disproportionate aspects of exclusion. Only then will the excluded perceive change, mobility and solutions and be able to over-

come the sense of unfairness, frustration and insecurity that is undermining their hopes, their sense of belonging and their attachment to a meaningful 'we' and 'our'. There can be no covenant for social cohesion without participation, dialogue and social consensus to establish public policy priorities, design policies and evaluate their implementation and follow-up, and this is especially true with respect to those who have traditionally had no say in society. Several recent political processes in Latin America have reflected disputes over how to organize societies — with implications for civil law — with some giving rise to constitutional reforms.

Politically speaking, inclusion involves a wide variety of multifaceted social actors. This is the case of indigenous peoples, who have become protagonists in ongoing struggles for recognition and the full exercise of human rights in a dynamic context of identity construction within a world of strong interactions and geographical displacements. Indigenous peoples can also contribute to development in a broader sense, through some interpretations of well-being, harmony with nature, quality of life and spiritual dimensions of shared lives. Measures to remedy discrimination and exclusion as regards Afro-descendent populations include policies to combat discrimination, safeguard forms of cultural expression, promote equal opportunities and foster coexistence in diversity.

The ideological construct of difference — which has varied throughout history — can have a decisive impact on policies that bring together the dynamics of difference and recognition, particularism versus universalism, and symbolic belonging as it relates to material inclusion. This is valid not only in the case of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples as mentioned above; gender identities and differences are particularly significant. Gender tensions run the length and breadth of societies; it is thus crucial to implement policies to combat discrimi-

It is important to consider how the tension between equality and difference affects the quality of democracy in a globalized world

nation and promote women's socioeconomic autonomy and societal acknowledgement of tasks that should be shared, such as care-giving for example. The social and political dynamics of gender determine the degree to which women feel part of society or in tension with the existing order. In the words of Nelly Richard, belonging thus oscillates between 'being part of' and being 'in tension with'.

The link between identity and sense of belonging is constructed by complex interactions between the individual, society and politics: belonging and identity are not natural phenomena, but are built upon narratives, discourse and politics and are subject to dynamic processes of differentiation. Self-referential identities cannot exist for either individuals or societies, since all identities draw on political and social 'material'. Moreover, when identities are expressed across society, the fact of identifying with a group in no way exhausts the individual identity of its members; individual identities coexist virtually within groups and in their many points of reference. The diversity of and social interdependence between the identities and senses of belonging of each member of society can be related to the likelihood of altruism and involvement with the law, and to the capacity for mutual identification and respect. In contrast, fundamentalist expressions of identity militate against such plurality and are generally the product of a homogeneous and mythified vision of one's self. Such a view is generally accompanied by an equally reductionist corollary, the negative representation of the identity of 'the other'.

This is why it is so important to make plurality of life forms a political foundation of the sense of belonging. Respect for individuals within a democracy is based on treating them as abstract holders of fundamental rights, such as civic equality; and providing them with an inclusionary matrix for their

choices represents a challenge for democracy as a political system. A sense of belonging is part of subjectivity, and identity has to do with ethical choices. Plurality of lifestyles can be a fundamental principle of truthfulness in discussions on values, as it is a cornerstone of reciprocal recognition and therefore alludes to the rules governing interaction.

In view of these challenges and current tensions, thought should be given to the foundations of democracy, because "civic equality, liberty, and opportunity are core principles of any morally defensible democracy", as Amy Gutmann points out.[3] In this regard, individuals are the ultimate subjects of morality and, as such, the incarnation of these three democratic principles. The principle of civic equality constitutes an obligation to treat all individuals as equal agents of democracy and to create the necessary conditions for the equal treatment of citizens. This is consistent with the principle whereby civic equality is a right that may be exercised only collectively, rather than individually; this is because it equates to being treated as a citizen who is equal to others. Although this presupposes the possibility of individuals joining together to form groups, the desired beneficiary and the claimant of the right is the individual, not the group. Secondly, the right to equal freedoms obliges the democratic order to respect the freedom that all individuals have to live their lives as they see fit, provided that this does not impinge on the same measure of freedom for others. Lastly, there is the principle of basic opportunities: the capacity of individuals to lead a dignified life, with the possibility of choosing whatever lifestyle they wish. The political expression of belonging to a given group must be compatible with the exercise of human rights for those 'inside' and 'outside' it, namely in the relationships its members cultivate with one another and with society as a whole. Within this framework, fundamental human rights ensure respect for individuals in conditions of civic equality and in their capacity as agents of purpose with equal freedom to live their lives as they see fit. Group rights, far from threatening human rights, are derived from two of them: the rights to equal freedoms and civic equality. When people exercise their freedoms of expression, association and transit and enjoy the benefits of a free press, their choices extend beyond their immediate surroundings.

Identities emerge and are demarcated in an inherently conflictual political process that entails mutual recognition and delimitation, and requires the formal definition of the range of permitted behaviours. It is therefore crucial that the democratic organization take account of social diversity and confer formal legitimacy upon it. If democracy is understood to be the institutional sphere encompassing, and the institutional rules governing, egalitarian processes of identity construction, no one can claim to exclusively represent any given identity or any subordinate groups that have been excluded throughout history. It is therefore important to consider how the tension between equality and difference affects the quality of democracy in a globalized world, in which people continue to need communities, bonds and meaning for their lives. It is here that life as a whole poses a further major challenge: openness to pluralism, the political expression of respect for others, the quest for fundamental bonds and inquiries into the unity of the self — all engender in return a yearning for identification with other human beings.[4]

The role of youth in promoting cultural diversity

Ediola Pashollari, Secretary General, World Assembly of Youth

Humankind has occupied every corner of the world for centuries, as groups of individuals worked and lived together and developed distinctive cultures. Together the cultures of the world create a rich and various tapestry. This results in cultural diversity which expands choices, encourages a variety of skills and human values, and provides knowledge from the past to enlighten the future.

Culture is the totality of the ways in which a society conserves, identifies, classifies, sustains and expresses itself.[1] The World Assembly of Youth (WAY) is endowed with diverse cultural heritage, comprising different young people from different countries and cultures, each with their own exceptional characteristics. Culture has the influence to change whole societies, support local communities and create a sense of personality and belonging for all age groups. As a path for youth growth and civic engagement, culture plays a vital role in promoting viable social issues for future generations.

Bridging the gap between cultures is urgent and necessary in promoting peace, stability and intercultural understanding.[2] Cultural diversity is a dynamic force of progress, not only with respect to economic growth, but also as a way of leading a more satisfying intellectual, emotional and moral life. 'Minorities of Europe the Branch for Baltic and Scandinavian states' organized a training called Youth in Action, which is one of the main elements of its training programme.[3] This course aimed to promote youth interactions as a tool to enable young people to act as multipliers in their communities, and to use the programme as an effective tool for their future activities in the field of cultural diversity. The objectives for the training were to familiarize the youth with the commonly used terminology and language of cultural diversity; to help young people reflect on the competence needed for using different approaches to address cultural diversity in their environment and countries; to help them in understanding the interrelation between cultural diversity and youth participation; and to provide youth with a platform for exchange on best practices in relation to youth work and cultural diversity.

Principles and views on how the world functions among young people who are born and raised in different periods can be somewhat diverse. Moreover, this could lead to challenging relations among the youth. There are several ways to counter this but the most vital one is giving a helping hand to young people in order to promote cultural diversity. Research shows that cultural diversity addresses all challenges by embracing

strategies to enhance the integration of culture into development, and these strategies include the promotion of culture.

WAY is an international organization that contributes actively towards the determination of youth-related concerns and the coordination of national youth councils. WAY is famous for its concern towards the well-being of youth. It is an organization that closely engages with young people, and it has focused on conducting research on the issues or problems that arise and other relevant matters involving young people around the world.

WAY holds international events each year that bring young people together, to address major youth-related issues. The focus of these events is to yield culturally inclusive results for young people so as to have culturally sensitive behaviour and activities, where differences are valued, respected and explored. This enables youth to effect change in the development of policies and strategies on issues that concern them.

The Melaka International Youth Dialogue (MIYD) is an annual programme of WAY that brings together youth and youth leaders with different cultures from around the world to deliberate on youth issues. Since 2001, MIYD has convened on a wide range of topical issues and it has witnessed an escalating number of young participants who are willing to participate in the decision-making process. With the outlook of building a stronger partnership between the youth and society, MIYD creates a declaration which works as a guideline for youth to tackle the selected issues.

WAY integrates culture into all development principles, especially those related to youth issues as well as promoting cultural diversity and mutual respect among different age groups from all over the world.

The target of WAY is to enable participants to more successfully address issues of cultural diversity in a multicultural youth work context. As the way forward in delivering these activities, WAY has developed a strategic plan that acts as a roadmap for its activities. The Millennium Plan of Action is developed every year during the General Assembly.

The way forward

Let us pause and ask ourselves, how are we going to live together? How do we promote tolerance and cultural diversity? What is the role of the youth in promoting cultural diversity in our globalized societies?[4] The world has become a global community with the benefit of advanced technology; hence it is inevitable that people of different nationalities, races or religions cannot escape living and

Youth participants during the 14th MIYD on the theme 'Youth and education, taking action: getting results'

working together. The spate of riots, killings and wanton destruction of properties across the world is a result of lack of tolerance. It has become the norm for certain persons in the world to capitalize on ethnic, religious or other disagreements to initiate and execute the slaughter of innocent people and destruction of properties.

The Earth has never discriminated between nations, in that all potentials of greatness are granted to all races. If we must live together in our diversified societies, we should learn how to teach peaceful coexistence, tolerance, humanity, love, caring and sharing as well as respect for constituted authorities. Peace and harmony continue to elude the world because humankind has refused to acknowledge that we are indispensable to each other; if a calamity besets one nation, others cannot escape sharing the consequences.

Some of the ways people of diverse cultures and backgrounds can live together peacefully are:

- Focus and work on the common values and teachings of different religions and cultures of the world instead of emphasizing the differences that tear us apart.[5] For those with no religion, keen observation of nature is recommended because nature is always at peace with itself.
- Behave like friends to each other with a pure heart, sympathy and good intentions.
- Let decent behaviours, sincerity and kindness be our second nature in life.
- Desist from abusing and insulting other people's holy personages, cultures and races.
- Nations should avoid policies that are only beneficial to themselves — for example, immigration policies that hinder the coming together of people of different beliefs.
- Show respect, love, understanding and tolerance to all humans irrespective of race and religion.

But what is the role of the youth in promoting cultural diversity in our globalized societies? Youth can contribute to the creation of dynamic and harmonious multicultural societies in the following ways.

Youth can promote cultural integration among themselves, for example by learning at least two foreign languages or, when they are old enough, by not hesitating to marry outside their nationalities. In 2013, WAY organized an MIYD titled 'Youth migration: A step from heaven'. Participants between the ages of 18 and 35, in gender-balanced groups, gathered to discuss the topic. At the end of the event there was a declaration that contains recommendations from the youth to non-governmental organizations, the media, public and private sectors and so on. The recommendations outline how youth rights on migration can nationally and regionally be improved and strengthened more fully and actively towards a sustainable global development effort. This is just one of the ways that WAY is helping the youth to promote cultural diversity.

Youth can also promote cultural diversity by forming themselves into groups that will focus on a particular global issue such as advocacy on HIV/AIDS, child-trafficking or labour. WAY gathers about 200 youth participants from around the world every year to discuss these global issues. For example, in 2001 the topic discussed was 'youth and globalization', which resulted to declarations and recommendation by the participants.

Another way that youth can promote cultural diversity is by not viewing issues through the eyes of the fixed prejudices, misconceptions and biased stories of their parents and guardians. They can also adopt compassion and sympathy by not considering others as weak and themselves as strong. They can appreciate and understand other people's points of strength and

Cultural Night: 14th MIYD youth participants and volunteers

weakness and accommodate them accordingly. They can also imbibe the spirit of forgiveness and unconditional love.

In addition, the youth can have friends from different parts of the world to enable the exchange of issues and events in their different environments. Furthermore, they can take their studies seriously in order to get good grades so that in future they will be highly placed individuals, among the decision makers in their different countries. Youth participation in decision-making processes was the topic of a WAY MIYD in 2004. Participants discussed how the youth can be more involved in decision-making processes in their societies and the dialogue resulted in a declaration and recommendation to public and private sectors and others.

There are also some projects that youth can start in other areas to achieve dynamic and harmonious multicultural societies.[6] WAY always encourages the national youth councils to set up projects that will help to achieve cultural diversity. This includes setting up volunteer programmes that will help the youth to serve their society.

Some projects that can help to achieve cultural diversity include:

• Setting up a library for young people where they will have interesting literature, biographies and educational materials to read so as to be acquainted with other people's cultures, beliefs and histories.
• Organizing a strong children's parliament that can monitor the signing of treaties of peace and enforce heavy fines and sanctions against troublemakers.
• Starting a monthly magazine that would have prominent citizens of the world as columnists so as to share their wealth of experiences with the youth. Articles for publication would be accepted from youth across the globe.
• Forming a network of young people to encourage solidarity and promote social interaction and peaceful coexistence.

The diversity of cultures, races and religions of the world is so rich and attractive that if it is appropriately harnessed and appreciated, the world will be a peaceful place to be. I will end with some quotes from great people about cultural diversity. The youth need to learn from them.

"We may have different religions, different languages, different coloured skin, but we all belong to one human race."
— Kofi Annan

"We live now in a global village and we are in one single family. It's our responsibility to bring friendship and love from all different places around the world and to live together in peace."
— Jackie Chan

"No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive."
— Mahatma Gandhi

"Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty."
— Albert Einstein

"We must learn to live together as brothers, or we are going to perish together as fools."
— Martin Luther King, Jr

"There is not a liberal America and a conservative America — there is the United States of America. There is not a black America and a white America and Latino America and Asian America — there's the United States of America."
— Barack Obama

Shared values — the state we are in

Dr Abdallah Bin Bayyah, Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies

The study of values comes under the broader field of ethics, the field of enquiry that looks into what is good and correct with respect to standards that may be personal or cultural, and can be used as a normative standard for behaviour. Values can be defined as ethical principles that determine honourable and praiseworthy conduct, where acting contrarily is shameful and worthy of condemnation. Philosophers have debated since time immemorial about whether there are such things as universal values. There is agreement that shared values exist on a cultural level. Specific societies all have norms and values that are derived from custom, tradition, or religious belief. The dispute is whether there are any values that transcend the confines of a particular society or culture and are shared by all of humanity.

The dispute hinges on the question of the true nature of values. Is there an absolute and objective standard of what is good? Is 'good' something universal? Or is it always relative and subjective, dependent on the interests of an individual or group? This is a point of fierce philosophical debate that has engendered numerous schools of ethical thought, including utilitarianism, pragmatism and idealism, as well as a host of applications for economics, politics and political science. I will not dwell on each of these schools of thought on its own. Rather, I will discuss two general philosophical tendencies, that of moral relativism and that of universalism. Then I will discuss what Islam teaches about this matter.

Moral relativists believe that there are no universal values and that moral or ethical propositions do not reflect absolute and universal moral truths; relativists instead make claims relative to social and cultural circumstances that vary according to time and place. Conditions for people living in the Arabian desert are different than those for people living in a valley in the Himalayas, or on the Chinese coast, or the Indian coast, or along a great river delta. Then — the relativists argue — there is the obscurity and capriciousness of how moral standards are conceptually understood. There are various concepts of property, family, marriage, reason and of God. Norms of conduct that prevail over one environment in a given historical era could very well be destructive if transplanted to another. Each society faces specific challenges at various times in its history. The ideal solutions to these challenges will necessarily differ. Consequently — the relativists argue — the idea that there are

At the Religions for Peace conference in Abu Dhabi, 2014, spiritual leaders gathered to set out an action plan to combat violent extremism

Spiritual leaders unite against extremism: convincing others of the ways of goodness is the most important humanitarian issue

Image: Forum for promoting Peace in Muslim Societies

universal normative truths that are suitable for guiding the lives of all people at all times is simply absurd.

Moral universalists hold the opposite view, that there is a single and timeless ethical standard. Some system of ethics applies universally to all people regardless of culture, environment or historical era. The same standards hold true for someone in China, Spain or Paraguay. They were the same for the people of Ancient Greece and Medieval Europe as they are for us living today and as they will continue to be for all times. What was evil in the past will remain evil in the future. Moral laws do not change with the times. Ethical standards are neither 'Eastern' nor 'Western'.

The idea of moral universalism can be traced back to the revealed religions, especially those religions which claim to have a universal message. The philosopher Hunter Mead expresses this idea in the context of Western Christianity, explaining that the idea that there is a single deity who governs the affairs of the world which He created is the basis for Western religious thinking. This idea has also been defended on the basis of logic. This approach was taken by Kant, who may well be the most famous of all philosophers of ethics. He believed that analysis can consistently demonstrate that the violation of moral law is simultaneously the violation of logic. Anti-ethical behaviour is always contradictory.

One of the examples that Kant gives to illustrate this point is making a promise. When a person makes a promise that he has no intention of fulfilling, his behaviour is morally wrong. This is because his behaviour is based simultaneously upon two contradictory principles. The first of these principles is that people should believe promises. The fact that I have broken my promise expresses another principle — that an individual has the right to break his promise. This is the case as long as we accept that moral law applies to everyone. However, if every person who makes a promise breaks it, then no one would believe a promise. This results in a principle that no one should believe promises, which is directly contradictory to our first principle.

The Islamic perspective

As Muslims, our intellectual outlook supports the existence of shared values. The basis for this belief is as follows:

First, Islam establishes the idea of absolute equality between all human beings and that they are descended from a common ancestor. They have one Lord and they share one father. Allah says: "O humankind! We have indeed created you from a man and a woman and made you into nations and tribes to know one another" (Qur'an 49:13). The Prophet Muhammad said: "O humankind! Your Lord is one Lord, and you have one father. All of you are from Adam, and Adam is from dust. The noblest of you is the most God-fearing. No Arab has and superiority over a non-Arab, no non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab, no black person has any superiority over a white person, and no white person has any superiority over a black person — superiority is only through piety."

Second, Islam asserts that all human beings are created with a natural inclination towards goodness, towards truth and towards faith in Allah. Allah says: "So set thy purpose [O Muhammad] for religion as a man by nature upright — the nature [framed] of Allah, in which He hath created the human being. There is no altering [the laws of] Allah's creation" (Qur'an 30:30).

No matter how protracted and never-ending the debate might be among philosophers about whether moral values are universal or relative, common sense tells us that shared values do exist. The best proofs for this are the human faculties of reason (which Descartes considered the greatest thing

We need to incorporate shared values into our understanding of human relations, so that we will embrace the 'other' with warmth, love and a true sense of brotherhood

distributed among humanity) and of language. Every rational mind recognizes justice and every language has a word for it — a word which is recognized as having a positive and noble meaning.[1] The same can be said for 'truth', 'liberty', 'tolerance', 'integrity' and many other concepts. These are praised by all cultures and expressed positively in all languages.

The opposites of these concepts are regarded with derision and rejected, like 'tyranny' and 'oppression'. If we were to address the most despotic person as a 'tyrant', he would take offence. He would prefer to be described as just. Likewise, even a liar dislikes to be named as such.[2]

'Deception' and 'bigotry' are likewise words that people have an aversion to, regardless of what cultural background they have. Is this not evidence for the existence of shared values? These shared values need to be actively promoted in the world today, and not just the essential human rights that are indispensable for human beings to be able to live with each other.

Rather, these shared values are much more embracing, like mercy, kindness and the generosity to help those who are in need regardless of their race, religion or country of origin. We need to incorporate these values into our understanding of human relations, so that we will not only uphold the principle of human equality in a neutral way, but embrace the 'other' with warmth, love and a true sense of brotherhood. An old Arab saying — which is found in one form or another in all languages — goes: "Treat others the way that you wish to be treated." The Prophet Muhammad once said: "No one truly believes until he wants for his brother what he wants for himself." The value of 'human brotherhood' is being joined with that of 'love' in these words of our Prophet. Before somebody accuses me of reinterpreting this hadith for my own

purposes, they should know that this is the understanding of the scholars from centuries back. For instance, the leading Hanbali jurist, Ibn Rajab[3] said: "The brotherhood referred to in this hadiths is the brotherhood of humanity." The same is asserted by al-Shabrakhiti[4] and many others.

Love is an essential value, since all people desire to be loved. It is extremely rare to find a person who desires to be despised by others. When love is realized by both parties, hostilities come to an end. Love is an emotional state as well as a mode of conduct. The Prophet Muhammad encouraged us to proclaim our love, saying: "If one of you loves his brother, he should let him know it." Love is a shared value, since all people are pleased with it, even those who do not act according to its dictates. This is the true test of a shared value — that everyone wishes to be regarded as possessing it. No one wants to be described as 'unjust' or 'intolerant'. Such values, in spite of their universality, can wilt and become dormant if they are not nurtured and encouraged. An Arab poet once wrote: "These noble values grow like flowering plants / When they are watered from a noble spring."

One of the most important values that can solve the world's problems is that of respecting diversity, indeed loving it — regarding it as a source of enrichment and beauty, as an essential element of the human experience. When we navigate our differences successfully and aspire to conduct ourselves in a most noble manner above and beyond the legislation of human rights, then we establish a basis for applying our shared values to bring harmony from our differences and to bring love in place of enmity.

Allah tells us in the Qur'an: "Repel evil with what is best, and then the one between whom and you had been enmity

Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah receiving the 2014 Spiritual Solidarity award by the Adyan Foundation from Father Fadi Daou

will become as your dearest friend" (41: 34). The message of this verse is that goodness brings about goodness and love engenders love. Can we not then hope to foster these shared human values by making our own conduct exemplary — by being tolerant, generous, honest and trustworthy and thereby convincing the 'other' who is just as human and who shares the same love for these values? Good conduct results in reciprocal good conduct.[5]

Generosity cultivates generosity. Convincing others of the ways of goodness is the most important humanitarian issue. We wish to take from Plato his words when he said: "The morality of the world is an expression of the victory of the power to convince over the power of force."

The values of humanity lie in their ability to have conviction — to convince and to be convinced by various means of substituting one thing for another. There are things which are better and others which are worse. Civilization is essentially the preservation of a mode of life by means of the inherent conviction to respond by choosing what is best. The use of force, under any circumstances, is a failure of civilization, regardless of whether we are talking about society in general or the individual.

The harmony that we must aspire to is not just between various cultures and societies. We must bring about such harmony within the individual as well. People have a varied cultural heritage, which sometimes develops into a crisis of values within the individual, and which needs to be transformed into inner harmony and a source of personal enrichment.

A person can be of Asian origin, Muslim by faith and British by nationality and upbringing — all at the same time. By cultivating the value of tolerance over violence and hate, we channel people's energies into productive activity that contributes to the general welfare. No one should ever resort to warfare or to violence to further their goals.

Religious leaders need to do their part to promote these universal values. They should be part of the solution and not part of the problem, as we have unfortunately found to be the case for certain representatives of all faiths.

Religious leaders should not stir up tensions in the hope of gaining the approval of their followers at the expense of human solidarity and mutual understanding. Likewise, the media, the universities and civic organizations have their roles to play in fostering these shared human values. Political leaders also should do their part. They should find ways to alleviate poverty and oppression whenever they are found. They should look for solutions to the issues of our time, even if they can only achieve partial solutions and partial justice.

Military means to solve these problems are unethical and they do not work. To conclude, I wish to draw attention to three objectives that we, as Muslim scholars, need to focus on. We need to:

• Present convincing lessons on these values to the people of the West, specifically to the Muslims living there, that will prevent them from ever committing acts of violence or terror
• Address the responsible agencies in the West to assure the Muslims their cultural rights, so that they can be a positive element in society whose particular identity does not contradict European society in any essential way
• Invite the people of the West to take another look at their relations with the Muslim world in light of these values so that together we establish a world in which we all coexist to the benefit of us all. This is the way that is most ethical, most intelligent and most rewarding.

Cultural diversity through transformative action research: translating ideas into real world impact

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According to the World Bank, in 2013 more than 215 million people were living outside their countries of birth, and the United Nations Population Fund outlined that if all international migrants lived in the same place they would constitute the world's fifth most populous country. In other words, the world's migrant population is greater than at any other time in history and is expected to grow further. As a result of this ever-increasing human mobility, cultural diversity is a *fait accompli*. For this reason the mission of the Alfred Deakin Research Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation (ADRI-CG), since its inception in 2001, has been to work towards fostering intercultural understanding, human rights and social inclusion through transformative action research and within multidisciplinary approaches. Further, the Institute is mindful that academic work alone is not enough to effect lasting change in both policy and practice, and as such continually seeks strategic partnerships and effective dissemination strategies to influence public policy, and reach communities both locally and globally.

Transformative action is fundamentally about research that involves ideas, discoveries and tools that seek to radically shift our understanding of practices and leads to a paradigmatic shift in the field in question. Further, and in the context of social sciences research focused on cultural rights and intercultural relations, transformative action research exhibits three key characteristics.

The first key feature of transformative research around cultural diversity and social justice is a *transdisciplinary* orientation; that is to include scholars from across the humanities, the social sciences and at times health, and environmental studies to examine complex phenomena associated with rights and equality. Within such an approach, ADRI-CG conducts cutting-edge interdisciplinary projects that bring together scholars from diverse fields to develop innovative conceptual frameworks capable of accounting for complex and often delicate social, cultural and intercultural phenomena. A good illustrative example of this multidimensional approach is a current project that explores the impact of the mapping of the indigenous genome on identity formation, which brings together expertise from medicine, public health, and anthropology.

The second key component of transformative action research is that it needs to be *trans-sectoral,* wherein one collaborates with multiple societal actors such as civil society organizations (CSOs), philanthropic foundations, industry groups, decision makers and practitioners. This kind of multilayered partnership is critical not only for generating external resources and networks often vital for the successful completion of the project, but more importantly it ensures an optimal level of research uptake and scalability. In other words, for transformative research on cultural rights to achieve positive change it needs to engage the key stakeholders from the early stages of the research design and not at a post-completion dissemination stage. This is especially relevant for research on intercultural relations, racism, social justice and minority rights where a genuine ownership of the research agenda is all the more important.

The third element of transformative action research is its increasingly *transnational* orientation. This is linked to the nature of globalization and the emergence of shared problems that transcend the nation state borders, most notably the rise of global terrorism and its consequent notions of human insecurity. Thus, research in this space must not only engage with communities around the world, but must also incorporate their different epistemic frameworks to reach a common understanding and possibly a shared solution. This is also important in research projects pertaining to cultural claims and human rights, as methodological rigidity can amount to a form of exclusion from the knowledge construction process itself.

Strategic partnerships

Recognizing the need to be both transdisciplinary and globally oriented, ADRI-CG actively works with local councils, government agencies, peak bodies and philanthropic organizations to tackle issues around cultural diversity and social inclusion. For example, during the 2009-2014 period, in partnership with a local consortium of CSOs and with funding from the Australian Research Council and local agencies, institute researchers undertook an extensive research project that mapped the networking activities of migrant youth in Australia at the level of accessing formal (for example, government agencies, non-government support services) and informal (for example, family) networks. A key driver behind this collaborative project is to examine the extent to which certain networking

An interactive touch panel at the IYMO exhibition

practices are linked to particular outcomes such as the subjective sense of connectedness and belonging in a multicultural society. Along similar lines, the institute currently undertakes a number of significant projects that, in collaboration with national and international universities, international agencies and philanthropic organizations, explore the complex problem of minority rights across the globe focusing on issues such as Islamic religiosity in Australia, France and the United States, intercultural understanding in educational institutions, local governance of cultural diversity, and sectarianism in the Middle East among others.

However, while the institute recognizes the need to engage with both local and international societal actors, it is also aware that this represents only one part of the challenge of effective uptake and optimal outreach of its research findings. Two additional essential ingredients relate to how best to effect the research-policy nexus and how to utilize non-traditional and innovative dissemination methods. Such strategies can raise public awareness of these critical issues and in the process lead to sustainable positive change in public policy and practice.

The research-policy nexus is the critical intersection between the scholarly endeavour of identifying, interrogating and exposing social ills and injustices, and academic outreach which entails effecting positive change through awakening and capturing the public imagination. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to knowledge translation, one of the more effective means is to take a non-adversarial approach and work with government agencies,

rather than simply and strictly lobby against them. Yet, partnerships with government departments present their own unique challenges in that there is often a dissonance between actionable priorities of researchers and policy makers.

Nevertheless, as the aim is to promote tangible social transformations, cultural rights (the right to participate in cultural life, enjoy one's own culture and so on, in accordance with international law) and intercultural/interfaith dialogue, the institute firmly believes that this can only be achieved by overcoming these difficulties and bridging the existing gap between research, policy and practice. A key is to work within the different strictures under which the public sector operates. With the advent of a world that is increasingly dominated by global forces and transnational issues that feed into a 24-hour news cycle, the salience of issues is often transitory, which makes it essential to communicate research findings and recommendations more efficiently. Indeed, the institute strives in every project to produce two streams of outputs. Naturally, there is the academic output in the form of refereed papers and authored monographs. But institute researchers also seek to consistently produce ancillary outputs in the form of reports and briefs that provide succinct analysis and recommendations in accessible language. Importantly, these reports and briefs, in line with element two of transformative action, are not done in isolation. Rather, they are co-produced with external stakeholders and partners such as government agencies and CSOs.

Working in close partnerships with agencies and CSOs has two distinct advantages. The first is that the outcome is co-owned, and speaks on behalf of the community rather than to the community. Further, in co-producing reports with local stakeholders it gives a voice to those that are on the margins. In other words, by working with stakeholders one is more effectively able to recentre the voices of those communities in question and highlight cultural diversity and the right to have dual or multiple identities. A good example of this is a number of reports that the institute has produced with both established and more recent diasporas such as the Arabic, Italian, Vietnamese, Tongan and Macedonian communities in Australia, in conjunction with both state agencies and local community organizations, which highlight the continued attachment to one's heritage culture, without precluding a strong identification as Australian. Effectively such reports illustrate that national identity should not preclude cultural rights, thus allowing notions of multiple fluid attachment. Indeed, due to increasing human mobility and transnational relationships, such a rethink regarding multiple belongings is vital for a functional national identity going forward.

Innovative outreach

In line with this ethos, the institute also looks to pursue other non-traditional dissemination formats which can have a profound impact in the wider community. For example, institute researchers have been experimenting with the use of digital technologies and other visual media in an attempt to combat social ills, most notably racism. Despite the fact that Australia has come a long way and has a vibrant multicultural society, racism is still a very real problem. In order to help people understand what it feels like to be the butt of a racist joke or comment, institute researchers (in partnership with other universities and CSOs) sought out an innovative way to try and provide people with a safe yet immersive experience. This led to the development of the Everyday Racism App, which dares people to take the seven-day racism challenge. Alongside this, they also helped to design an interactive museum exhibition to engage people on issues of race and identity.

Drawing on the real-life experiences of people who have been a target of racist behaviours, the app allows you to choose between being an Aboriginal man, Muslim woman, Indian student, or yourself, and to live in their shoes for a week. The researchers have identified that 30-40 per cent of the Australian population is ambivalent towards cultural diversity. It is hoped that the app "will help users become more familiar with racist scenarios, so they can safely intervene when they do encounter racism." Since its launch in early 2014 the app has been downloaded more than 6,000 times. The innovative design and approach has recently been recognized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Intercultural Innovation Awards.

Running from 2012 to 2015, the 'Using Museums to Combat Racism' project explores the appropriateness, feasibility and acceptability of the exhibition entitled *Identity, Yours, Mine, Ours* (IYMO) with regard to fostering reflection on identity and increasing acceptance of cultural diversity among secondary school students in the years 10-12 and teachers. The exhibition, developed in consultation with the research team,

Promotional material used to advertise the Everyday Racism App

was launched in 2011 and focuses on how cultural heritage, beliefs, language and family connections can affect people's sense of self and how they view others, and how this can lead to self-awareness, confusion or prejudice. This is achieved through immersive video narratives and interactive multimedia experiences that were designed to challenge people's preconceived notions about race, identity and belonging.

Towards a new approach to social cohesion

As noted earlier, the existence of multicultural societies has become an indisputable social and demographic fact. Yet, increased diversity is still viewed as a problem rather than a resource. Relations between groups and people within multicultural contexts are subject to change and development which in turn leads to more difference and diversity. The composition of societies will continue to become more diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion, lifestyles and language. These changes will challenge historical notions of national identity. It is thus of crucial importance to examine the ways in which intercultural relations are changing within globalized settings, and the ways in which new manifestations of diversity are perceived and governed.

In this context, and in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCOs) commitment to approaching 'cultural rights' as human rights, the institute's various activities aim to contribute to a more inclusive public sphere that benefits all through active participation in both social and political processes. The establishment of strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, the adoption of innovative methods, the immediate dissemination and application of research findings through diverse channels and the underlying commitment to participation and empowerment of the more vulnerable among us, constitute the driving forces of the institute's operations.

Such a holistic ethical approach has the potential to minimize — even neutralize — the risk of intercultural and interreligious tensions within increasingly multicultural societies. How to benefit from increased levels of diversity without compromising the possibility of reaching social cohesion and a strong collective sense of unity and belonging is the main global challenge in today's world.[1]

The Diversity: An Educational Advantage Project

The multicultural nature of Australian society is reflected in our schools, and students' diverse cultural backgrounds create new challenges, as well as new opportunities, for school management, curriculum design and teaching practice.

The Diversity: An Educational Advantage Project is focused on equipping schools to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for all students, to foster positive intercultural relations in schools and to enhance community life through strengthening the links between schools and their cultural communities.

In a context of increasing multiculturalism there has, at the same time, been a degree of hardening against the concept itself, focusing on certain cultural groups such as Asians and, in a more complex manner, people of Arabic background. In this uncertain social climate the project began in partnership with a local community association, working with a number of Melbourne public secondary schools with high levels of enrolment of students from Arabic backgrounds. This early intervention work involved linking a cultural diversity facilitator with the schools to facilitate the engagement of the Arabic community with the life of the school.

Then Prof. Mansouri in partnership with both community associations and philanthropic organizations, won Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project scheme funding. This four-year funding, along with contributions from each of the other partners, enabled longitudinal research involving parents, teachers and students in culturally diverse schools. The project involved 297 students, 80 teachers and 44 parents and found that the effects of racism experienced by 15- and 16-year-old Australians of Arab background, particularly since 9/11, have been underestimated. For example, Lebanese students in focus groups outlined difficulties about having multiple identities and how this lent itself to misrecognition as un-Australian:

"I don't like being, you know, Lebbo and English, 'cause like, I'm both, right, and I still get teased, see no one teases me, 'oh you're Aussie, you're half this that', they always come to me 'oh you're Lebbo you're Lebbo', like that, especially Aussies, like they don't know that I'm half, so they always go 'you're Lebbo'."

"Especially the media, 'cause the media, they show us as bad people through the news."

That research underpins the resources described below.

Model of best practice

This concise document is targeted at those leading change and introduces a 'whole-of-school' model of multicultural education that is both multidimensional and transformative. This is a lead document for the project in that it demonstrates the essential link between schools and the social environment and graphically illustrates how the resources introduced integrate and support one another. It provides an overview of the theories behind the model and includes an audit that can be undertaken by schools to gauge where they need to focus attention in implementing it. More specifically, it brings three key approaches together within one framework to help schools manage and positively embrace cultural and linguistic diversity:

• engagement of an in-school cultural diversity facilitator
• active research and evaluation with students, teachers and parents
• development of teaching resources supported by professional development.

In doing so, the model sets out strategies to foster social inclusiveness and reflexive practice on the part of those developing the curriculum, with a view to enhancing educational outcomes.

Parent handbook

This resource is for school staff or other community members looking to engage multicultural communities more closely in the life of the school. A series of sequential modules outline why it matters to engage with the community beyond the school gates and note aspects to be considered in making engagement successful. These modules are thematic and include sessions to help new parents understand the Australian school system as well as providing opportunities for parents to be active players in delivering the curriculum. While the parent handbooks are focused on Arabic communities, these modules introduce a process that could be

Professor Fethi Mansouri with student participants

used effectively in a range of cultural contexts.

For example, it provides a step-by-step guide on how to engage with people from non-English speaking backgrounds with regard to arranging meetings with parents and facilitating their participation in school events. Additionally, the modules emphasize the need for educators to be aware of different expectations from parents regarding education.

Teacher support materials

Our most innovative resource is our online, interactive website, which provides secondary school teachers with insights into the educational experiences of culturally diverse students and how teachers are responding to some of their needs.[2] Through a series of themes — identity and belonging, relationships at school, stereotypes and cultural perceptions, cultural and ethnic tensions, cultural diversity and multiculturalism, and curriculum, school and culture — teachers can access reflective tasks as well as classroom resources.

A good example of the interactive nature of these tasks is the capacity to download snapshot videos and create personalized libraries of materials on each theme that challenges racism and celebrates diversity. Further, in line with the whole-of-school approach each theme can be explored through additional links to material that provides the student, teacher and parent perspective.

Teacher workbook

A printed teacher workbook provides both a supplement to the website and an alternative when Internet access is a problem. While the website provides links to a wide range of resources that teachers can use in their classrooms, the workbook contains a series of curriculum units that have been developed specifically for the project and link directly to Australia curriculum frameworks.

The teacher workbook contains two modules with four units each:
• *Finding my place* seeks to explore identity, cultural diversity, citizenship and cultural stereotypes in the media
• *Community relationships* encompasses the expectations of the self, parents and teachers, how to develop relationships at school, and both school culture and ethnic tensions.

The aim is to help students to engage in research about cultural diversity, consider experiences from diverse backgrounds, recognize and experience difference and, most importantly, identify and explain issues from both 'Aussie' and culturally diverse perspectives with a view to finding shared solutions.

Since the completion of the project, all three components have been combined in a volume titled *Building Bridges: Creating a Culture of Diversity.*[3] Both the project and the book have received praise from ARC and fellow educators.[4]

The project represents an example of transformative research as the book, upon publication, was distributed to all Victorian schools as a practical teaching and learning resource in the area of multicultural education and intercultural understanding, and is listed as a key resource for challenging racism on the Victorian Multicultural Commission website.[5]

The website and *Building Bridges* have also transcended the Australian school sector. They are advertised as a resource by local and international CSOs, such as the Centre for Multicultural Youth[6] and Volunteer Canada[7] amongst others.

Sites of understanding and transformation: Māori and cross-cultural research

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New Zealand, as a settler state, has a colonial past that it must navigate, negotiate and confront. By its very nature, the settler state is a contested space. Settler histories often write over the histories of indigenous peoples, at once invalidating and rendering invisible their own cultural, political, economic and social landscapes. As *tangata whenua* (people of the land, indigenous people), Māori find their social position in New Zealand society to be a disputed one. One of the characteristics of colonization is the use of violence. In some cases this violence has been extreme and genocidal in intent, in others violence has been used to 'pacify' or to allow the extraction of resources or labour from an indigenous population. The ramifications of colonization are long-term and ongoing and in New Zealand, among other things, have contributed to Māori being over-represented in nearly every negative social indicator including poorer health, education and justice outcomes. Given histories of conflict and oppression the obstacles to rapprochement and meaningful dialogue leading to social justice outcomes are considerable.

Yet, there is a need to recognize that in New Zealand in the last 40 years significant gains have been made to acknowledge past grievances and to build a relationship between the state, its agencies and Māori communities. It is important to note the significant roles that Māori protest movements and the subsequent Māori Renaissance (where things Māori are seen to be politically, culturally and artistically ascendant) have played in creating broad social and political awareness which in turn created the conditions conducive to better cross-cultural dialogue. Māori activists, tribal and community leaders and Māori intellectuals have played seminal roles in bringing Māori experience and knowledge into the mainstream and fostering both consciousness and dialogue between non-Māori New Zealanders and Māori. Protests are sites of conflict but they also always hold the potential for transformative social change and often lay the foundation to build a framework for greater social cohesion.

Māori researchers have also made a meaningful contribution in presenting alternative analyses of colonial and contemporary history and offering different narratives of experience and interpretation. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, an internationally renowned Māori academic, speaks of 'researching back'. This demands that we interrogate the representation and ideological constructions of indigenous peoples found in the mainstream dominant culture and look at the way that it has shaped, informed and legitimated policies that have intentionally alienated indigenous peoples from their land, resources and culture.

In the last four decades the Māori protest movement has contributed to encouraging many Māori to enter into tertiary education in numbers not seen previously, and to the reclamation of the research environment. It has meant that Māori have actively resisted being solely the 'subject' of research for non-Māori researchers but that they have also challenged the entire research process and generated new emancipatory methodologies. These challenges and innovations have changed the way that research is done in New Zealand. They have also influenced the way that research is conducted in many other countries, leading to knowledge-generation and sharing as well as supporting greater mutual understandings. This challenging of dominant research paradigms not only elicits new indigenous research paradigms but also critically reworks existing models and enhances mainstream research practices. Although these changes come with difficulties and contestation, there now exists a far greater awareness which allows issues to be discussed and interrogated, and research outcomes are all the richer for it.

However, the term 'research' itself remains problematic for many Māori and other indigenous communities. For indigenous peoples research has largely been used to classify and subjugate them as well as to invalidate them as holders of knowledge and practice. Mistrust, betrayal and deception have all been features of the New Zealand research landscape. It has been littered by experiences that have distorted and misrepresented Māori experience. Trust and power relations must be examined from the outset of any research endeavour. It has long been observed that the process of conducting research reinforces rather than weakens unequal power relations. It remains critical to consider the historical foreground and background of political and power relations that may be silenced, minimized or decontextualized within the context of the research problem. Too often research has been carried out as if the pursuit of knowledge was acultural and could be undertaken with little regard to history, or to issues of class, ethnicity or culture. These issues are central to cross-cultural research.

Cross-cultural research dynamics — like all research dynamics — are dominated by questions of power and questions of powerlessness. Power relations and power differentials are articulated from the point of setting research agendas right through to research design, research implementation and

Visitors from various tribes and cultures internationally are welcomed to engage in cross-cultural research at Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga's International Indigenous Research Conference 2014

dissemination. Obviously the research environment itself does not exist in a vacuum. Culture, among other things, provides a set of rules and values that guide the way the world is interpreted and experienced. The conundrum of interpreting difference across a cultural divide is one example of the challenges and opportunities that researchers and research participants may encounter. Ethical and cultural considerations, the quality of relationships, the political environment, status management, decision-making, research motivation and engagement, are some of the issues that are particularly salient to research that is transformative in intent. Indigenous researchers and non-indigenous allied researchers, perhaps more than others, bear a special responsibility to attend to these issues and to write them into their work rather than to write them out.

Recognizing and dealing with difference both within and outside of particular communities is important. There is a need to interrogate and even complicate simple insider/outsider research dichotomies. Cross-cultural research relationships are often the most contentious when research is enacted at the margins. While fraught with difficulty, cross-cultural research relationship borne out of an understanding of power, struggle and resistance can foster a deeper understanding for all research partners and participants and ultimately lead to outcomes that promote greater levels of social cohesion and fuller societal participation.

In New Zealand this has meant that Māori researchers, alongside non-Māori allied researchers, have been well placed to critically engage and respond to issues that pertain to both the reproduction of privilege and the reproduction of disadvantage, particularly as they relate to Māori in New Zealand.

Work in the areas of inequalities in health and educational outcomes has benefited from both Māori-led research and research that has a cross-cultural dimension. Cross-cultural research may realize greater insights on the research problem, but it also allows for an appreciation of the challenges that arise out of cross-cultural research relationships and an analysis of who the real beneficiaries of any research project are.

It is recognized that there is often an extractive quality to research. Careers have been made on the lives of those who have been classed as research subjects and yet too often have not been beneficiaries of the research process. Lisa Aronson Fontes, renowned for her work on family violence in cross-cultural settings, asserts that the work of researchers is used to validate or challenge theories that affect perceptions and policy related to people from diverse cultural groups. She underscores the fact that conducting research and disseminating findings are political acts. A critical, reflective research framework demands an ongoing examination of research practice and proposed research outcomes. Alongside the research questions there is also a need to ask how social justice outcomes are progressed within the research encounter.

For cross-cultural research to deliver increased understanding that will promote greater levels of social cohesion, researchers must work to ensure that concepts of interest to a research team truly exist in the participant's culture. They must also be able to demonstrate that researchers within a team have a joint understanding on how concepts are being used. In a bid to render concepts intelligible to plural audiences there is a risk of over-simplifying them to the point that they are divorced from any cultural nuance. Care must be taken to ensure that the use of terms must be strongly

Following the protocol of the home people, Australian Universities are welcomed to discuss and further research collaborations

contextualized so that competing explanations are not lost. There is a need to devise definitions that can be appropriate cross-culturally, and for this act of defining to be consciously done, consciously revisited and consciously revised. Cultures are not static; rather they change and evolve. It is important to acknowledge that culture is partially shaped by contemporary and historical contextual realities including oppression and discrimination. If culture undergirds the behaviour under study, then ample contextual information must be provided so the group differences can be understood properly.

Judge Eddie Durie's paper on Ethics and Values delivered at the Te Oru Rangahau Māori Research and Development Conference nearly 20 years ago spoke of the perception of Māori in history. He noted that most histories, including those appearing before the Waitangi Tribunal,[1] assessed Māori from a Western standpoint. He argued that the cultural interaction was subsumed by an assumption of a stronger and weaker society and that Māori were judged by European contexts rather than on their own terms. He demanded that a better balance be sought.

That balance has been actively sought by established and emerging academics who are critiquing, expanding, developing and offering competing insights. In the field there is now much research that is Māori-led from the design through to implementation. There is also much evidence of cross-cultural research where Māori-led research projects have non-Māori researchers as vital parts of their team. This is of course not new, as there has been some outstandingly good research done by non-Māori with Māori. That much of the most recent work

has non-Māori involved in Māori research who are willing to forgo traditional research control and work within Māori-determined contexts is significant.

It also needs to be noted that most of the research done on Māori issues today is not cross-cultural. Given historical experience, many Māori will prefer to do Māori research with Māori for Māori. There is a place, however, for Māori and non-Māori researchers to work together because of the very real gains that can be made by a reflective engaged research endeavour. There are some real advantages in cross-cultural research and it is multi-directional. Members of oppressed groups have studied dominant groups informally all of their lives in order to learn how to get by and to navigate the dominant space and have insight that comes from their condition of marginality.

As noted earlier, research has largely been seen as a site of exploitation and loss for Māori. For Māori, research has been understood as advancing dominant interests while negative stereotypes have been further embedded. The majority of research has viewed Māori through a deficit lens that has reinforced divisions between sections of society rather than fostering mutual understanding and the ability to collectively work for transformative social change. However, while there is much more work to be done, Māori-led changes in the research environment emerging out of the Māori protest movement and associated Māori Renaissance have meant that researchers, both Māori and non-Māori, are better placed to work in partnership to address the real social issues that confront New Zealand society.

Participation: the key to intercultural dialogue and ethnic inclusion in public services

Ángel Cabeza Monteira, Director; Carolina Pérez Dattari, Citizen Participation Coordinator; and Macarena Lira Turpaud, International Affairs Coordinator, Directorate of Libraries, Archives and Museums, Chile

The regions of La Araucanía and Biobío in the south of Chile are perhaps the most representative regions of the 'Mapuche Conflict' between Mapuche communities and the State of Chile because of the occupation of La Araucanía. Even though many people don't like the use of the term 'conflict', it is the most common way of referring to disputes over ancestral lands, cultural recognition and jurisdictional autonomy. The occupation of La Araucanía was a war fought between 1861 and 1883 that marked the end of the Arauco War, which lasted nearly three centuries. It implied the total occupation of the Chilean side of Wallmapu (the Mapuche people's name for their territory in the southern zone) and the union of Chilean territory. After the Mapuche people were defeated, the State of Chile gave them approximately 6 per cent of the lands they used to have.

From that historic base, having a public service managing patrimonial and cultural spaces in those regions is a conflict itself. That's why it is interesting to take a closer look at two institutions that form the Directorate of Libraries, Archives and Museums,

dependent on the Ministry of Education — the Mapuche Museum of Cañete and the Regional Archive of La Araucanía.

The museographic exhibition, and the historic record of a culture as discriminated as the Mapuche one, carries a lot of questions regarding the real inclusion and participation of local communities in public services, providing open and democratic spaces, making these services connection vessels between the past and the present and promoting a civic vitality that bears the prospect of reconciliation. This is highlighted by the two public services mentioned above, described from the point of view of Mapuche women who work there.

The pertinence or veracity of the story narrated, respect or otherwise for the objects on display, the main language used in the space and other variables are of paramount importance in order to judge a museum. The Mapuche Museum of Cañete, is an example of a successful transition for the Mapuche people, from objects of study to subjects that co-manage that educational and cultural space. In that matter, participative methods play a fundamental role in the difficult task of travelling from an exclusive museographic dynamic to an inclusive one.

Juana Paillalef Curinao in front of the museum. Ruka Kimvn Taiñ Volil means 'the house that safeguards our roots'

Sara Carrasco Chicahual at the southern zone gathering of indigenous women organized by SERNAM

In a paper by Herson Huinca Piutrin, titled 'The Mapuche of the Acclimatization Garden of Paris in 1883: objects of colonial science and contemporary investigation policies,' there is a clear description of one of the most brutal and inhuman museographic experiences in the world: the human zoos. It describes the experience of 14 men, women and children, who were removed from Lafkenmapu (specifically from the city now called Cañete) and taken to Paris, a key city in the nineteenth century for expositions of technology advances and human beings that were considered exotic and strange to colonial eyes. Treated as science objects, these people were exhibited and became a popular spectacle. Huinca Pitruin highlights the fact that this kind of exhibition, combined with mass media, the scholar system and literature of that time, helped a French colonial culture that thought it was a carrier of humanity and civilization. In attempting to show a contrast between a developed civilization and a rudimentary one, these kinds of expositions helped justify the French spirit and actions towards the colonization and conquest of other countries in America, Africa and Asia.

The social imaginary of an 'other' built under scientific theorization suggested an inequality of races that placed the white race as a superior one. Huinca Pitruin mentions that "it is estimated the realization of 40 ethnologic exhibitions were carried out and produced in the heart of the Acclimatization Garden of Paris between 1877 and 1931," including groups of Africans of Nubian origin, Greenland Eskimos and Argentinian gauchos. Huinca Pitruin contends that Mapuche society is still being studied as an object rather than as a subject. While in the present we don´t have an example as radical as the human zoos in nineteenth-century Paris, there is still a brutal exclusion of Mapuche society in terms of culture, language, religion, etc. These exclusions deepen the territorial conflict that has existed in Chile for 500 years.

When you arrive at the Mapuche Museum of Cañete you notice a big mural with pictures of many Mapuche people: old,

Local communities wanted people to know their language. Songs, conversations and poems can be heard in the museum's rooms

young, children, rural and urban people. On that wall you can read many welcoming messages in mapuzugun, the original language of the Mapuche people. This wall was a request from the people of the local Mapuche communities to the museum. They wanted Mapuche people to be welcomed with messages in their own language, as the museum really belonged to them.

Juana Paillalef Curinao is the director of the Museo Mapuche de Cañete. She is a Mapuche woman, and she welcomes her guests in her own language. When she sees the confused faces of the people who do not recognize any sound or word of what she is saying, she probes the fact that in Chile we still don't have a real intercultural dialogue: "In Chile, after 500 hundred years of an alleged cultural relation, Chileans still don't know anything about the Mapuche culture. This wasn't a cultural encounter; in a cultural encounter both sides learn from the other and respect each other." Juana Paillalef studied education at Universidad de la Frontera in La Araucanía. After doing an internship in the local museum, she worked for many years in its education area. She tells of her first impression of that museum: "I started work at the Regional Museum of Araucanía in 1980. As a Mapuche, something that seemed counterproductive to me was the fact that I saw things in the museum cabinets that I still used in my normal life — the silverware I used, the utensils my mother and grandmother still used."

Seeing ethnic cultures behind a cabinet is not strange to anyone exposed to occidental culture for a long time, but for an educated Mapuche woman who didn't separate her culture and spirituality from her cohabitation with the rest of Chilean territory, it was weird. Imagine seeing objects of your ordinary life in a museum exhibition, as if your culture was a dead one, uncivilized and rudimentary. After working there for a while, Juana Paillalef earned a scholarship to study for a Master's in Intercultural and Bilingual Education at the University of San Simón in Cochabamba, Bolivia. In 2001 she became the director of the Mapuche Museum of Cañete, in those days called the Museo Foclórico Araucano Juan Antonio Rios Morales. She arrived in Cañete in the New Year — "not the huinca new year, the Mapuche one in June." There, she saw the state of the museum and noticed that it didn't have a clear script or message. She thought that the best way to improve it was by opening it to the people.

Sara Carrasco Chicahual works at the Regional Archive of Araucanía. When you ask her to describe her trajectory, she speaks in mapuzugun. After that, she translates. She is part of the Gabriel Chicahual Mapuche community and Gabriel Chicahual was her great-grandfather. She studied physical education and worked as a volunteer at the Regional Museum of Araucanía before becoming part of the professional team. She earned a scholarship provided by the Ford Foundation and got a Master's degree in Education and Educative Community with a thesis about intercultural education at Universidad de Chile. After that, she became a professional at the archive: "As Mapuche people we also have presence in the public services. We can be public servants and be inserted in our culture." In fact, her development in both cultures is the added value of the service. The archive is a living example of interculturality. It shares space with the General Archive of Indigenous Affairs of CONADI (the National Commission of Indigenous Affairs). Both receive a lot of people from rural communities looking for documents that allow them to understand their past and

An originary ruka, which is managed by local communities inside the museum's grounds. Dominica Quilapi is a local knitter who is currently managing the ruka

The Wallmapu flag and the flag of Chile at the front of the museum

the relation their families had with the lands in the region. In fact, the whole register of the communities' original names can be found in the archive. "When they come, we greet them in our own language; we receive them as owners of this space." The Archive also receives a lot of visits from settlers. They mainly search for the first documents of their families and make searches related to the territory.

After becoming director of the museum, Juana Paillalef decided to start a participative strategic planning process in which she and the museum's other five workers achieve extraordinary work. They invited Mapuche's local communities, *ñañas* (women), *kimches* (wise men/women), *lamuen* (educators), political leaders, the museums regional network, educational communities (parents, student representatives, educational authorities), artisans, and everybody who thought they could contribute to the museum. She pulled off this process with the help of the museum's Friends Corporation, which helped to perform a participative methodology in order to change the museum's mission and vision. "I went house by house to the Mapuche communities because that's the way to invite people here. I decided to work from who I am — a Mapuche women — so I invited within Mapuche's parameters. First, I said to myself 'I can visit three communities in one day', but I barely finished one a day. You have to equate the public services to the cultural timetables. No community receives you in the afternoon, for example. You have to respect the rituality of life."

In this participative process, the museum invited multiple actors to get involved with the museum, to expose their dreams and ideas around this cultural space provided by the public service of the State of Chile. Many of the people invited did not even know there was a Mapuche museum in Cañete. Juana tells of an experience when she arrived in Cañete: "One day I was on the bus, and I was talking to a Mapuche man. I told him I was

going to the museum, and he told me: 'I always asked myself which *futre* (colloquial: wealthy men) that house belonged to.'"

The participative strategic planning process lasted a year. It was guided by the conception of the museum as a community space were the patrimony is alive and where the historic sense is permanently being actualized. The change of museographic perspective can be seen in the relations the process established, making the collections interact with the patrimony, where the communities and the territory were indispensable in giving the museum an anti-colonialist perspective, and where historic facts were told by 'the south side of the Biobío river', by the people of Wallmapu.

Sara Carrasco Chicahual describes her role in the museum as one connected with the citizens. The Association of Mapuche Investigation and Development is working with Sara in language workshops, were they teach mapuzugun to children and adults. They also organize events related to book publications about Mapuche culture, among other things. They don't teach their language in the occidental way; they climb Cerro Ñielol, a hill that was once used by Mapuche for ceremonial acts, and there they practice their language watching the natural surroundings. During 2014, the archive also hosted the southern zone gathering of indigenous women organized by SERNAM (the National Women's Service), with the aim of listening to opinions about a new Ministry of Women in Chile. The gathering was in Cerro Ñielol, and the archive was in charge of giving the whole activity the Mapuche protocol.

The first request Mapuche's communities made to Juana Paillalef after the participative strategic planning process was to change the museum's name. The original one, Museo Foclórico Araucano Juan Antonio Ríos Morales, referred to the race in the way conquerors did, not in the way they referred to themselves. On the other hand, the name of the museum honoured Juan

The four fathers of the Mapuche represented in Cerro Ñielol: Kuzezomo (the grand old woman), Fuchawencxu (the grand old man), Vllcazomo (the young woman) and Wecewenxu (the young man)

Antonio Ríos, who was a Chilean president of the Radical Party between 1942 and 1946. Many of the *kimches* told how the land where the museum was erected once belonged to Lonko Juan Cayupi Huachicura and was taken by the family of Juan Antonio Ríos. This request involved a law for changing the museum's name, which took almost eight years to accomplish. Juana Paillalef explains that the concept of a 'museum' does not exist in Mapuche culture, so a long period of discussion with the communities was needed to arrive at a concept. Today, the museum is called Ruka Kimvn Taiñ Volil, which means 'the house that safeguards our roots'. In addition, the name Juan Antonio Ríos was replaced with Juan Cayupi Huechicura. This vindicatory act through language is elemental to understanding the path the museum took.

A year after Juana Paillalef assumed the directory of the museum, and after the participative strategic planning process ended, the museum changed its mission to: 'Promote and stimulate la positive valoration of knowledge and thought towards mapuche culture in the national society'. After this process, the museum also started to elaborate a new script. Mapuche poet Lionel Lienlaf was responsible for achieving this and he faced a very important question: why have a museum if the Mapuche culture is a living culture? Leonel Lienlaf worked around the museum's objects not as "the empty remains of the past but as the continuity of memory", as he mentions in a text written for *Museos* magazine in 2010. That is why objects in the museum are not only explained from a historical point of view, they are also described with personal tales of what the object means for a Mapuche person. Therefore, history is built and rebuilt constantly.

Juana Paillalef describes the process with genuine admiration. She recalls that the script process triggered a memory recovery in many people of Mapuche communities. She thinks that the Chilean domination over Mapuche people and, consequently, the delegitimization of their culture, made them hide and therefore forget their own stories and history. In an adversarial context, were many people yet consider Mapuche culture savage, the space of the museum breaks the colonial domination over the hegemonic discourse of Chilean history. In a territory still in conflict because of the territorial problem, the museum, dependent on the Directorate of Libraries, Archives and Museums of the Ministry of Education, is a rare example of ethnic, religious and linguistic inclusion.

Currently, the museum sits in a territory of nine hectares, were people can also visit or use a palin court (a typical mapuche sport similar to hockey), a space for mapuche rituals that hosts the We Tripantu (Mapuche New Year's eve) each year and Council of Lonkos activities, among others. There is also an originary ruka (house), which is managed by local communities. The museum itself has five rooms whose topics were decided by the communities: 'Life in the territory', 'How people live', 'Diverse manifestations of life', 'Living with the earth' and 'The seeking journey'. Each room contains informative audios in mapuzugun, Spanish and English, and sign language, in addition to the voices of Mapuche men and women that are heard in the background of the building. The communities also decided to remove objects that, because of their sacred quality, could not be held inside the building.

Both Sara Carrasco Chicahual and Juana Paillalef Curinao are clear examples of a more participative way of functioning in public services. The concepts of building, collection and public are being removed to make room for concepts of territory, patrimony and community — concepts that reinforce the idea of cultural and patrimonial spaces as real communication vessels between the past and a more promising future where hegemonic and colonial discourses and behaviours are overcome.

Beyond dogma, towards 2030: religious actors driving social change

Azza Karam, United Nations Population Fund

We live in times when atrocities in the name of religion are being committed on a daily basis and broadcast across the world in a hitherto unimaginable manner. Social cohesion is being torn asunder in some communities and countries, and being threatened by divisions along lines which intersect with religion, migration, gender, ethnicities and race, and which disregard national boundaries. Armed conflict in the name of religion and sectarianism, exacerbated by poverty and rising inequalities, is leading to multiple loss of lives. Multiculturalism is under siege among some nations and communities which championed it for decades. These are realities which confront efforts to realize a culture of peace and dialogue among diverse cultures.

Can we really afford to ignore religion when it comes to assessing cultural identity, tangible heritage, norms and values? Can we truly sideline religious institutions in the daily grind of providing development services? And if we do, then how would we justify the quintessential demand to strengthen health systems, when we ignore the faith-based organizations that provide an average of 30 per cent of those services in some countries — a figure, by the way, which can increase significantly during humanitarian disasters and armed conflict? Indeed, even in the developed world, churches run a significant amount of hospitals — accessed by rich and poor alike.

We can ask the very same question about education, sanitation, immunization and a whole host of other basic human needs, which are actually at the heart of international development efforts. Clearly, therefore, these are rhetorical questions. The Second World War may have brought about a secular political discourse (read: a separation of church and state), and a secularized social space,

UNFPA has developed, together with its faith-based partners, guidelines for its national and regional engagements with religious actors

Image: UNFPA's Programme on FGM, 2014

Faith-based actors are advocates, champions, advisors, educators and health service providers

in some parts of the world. But in reality, many societies have remained 'religious' and many communities maintain values, norms and attitudes deeply influenced by religious paradigms of one sort or another.

Faith-based infrastructures include religious institutions, religious leaders (male and female), local community networks and entities, faith-affiliated and faith-inspired service delivery mechanisms, government-sponsored faith-based service partners, government-affiliated faith-based advocates, and international faith-based organizations with local offices. They are tightly interlinked with — if not one and the same as — the often referred to concept of 'communities'. In order to focus the lenses on communities, this kaleidoscope must be appreciated.

Religious institutions are capable of significant social mobilization in addition to a distinct moral standing. Beyond the convening capacities inherent in raising and utilizing legions of volunteers (which no other institution can boast in similar volume and worldwide), they are owners of the longest standing and most enduring mechanisms for raising financial resources. In times when traditional 'secular' development is confronting its strongest set of resource challenges, these capabilities cannot be underestimated.

Religion is an important thread running through the fabric of cultural considerations which are used to justify some of the harmful practices and violence against girls and women — such as female genital mutilation (FGM), sex-selective abortions, child, early and forced marriages to name but a few. Religion and culture are also critical backdrops, as both causes as well as drivers of reform and justice, around issues pertaining to women's empowerment, girls' and women's rights to freedom from discrimination, and the right to health more generally. Most specifically, religion belies the most stringent attitudes around family planning — which include some of the most universally sensitive social and political debates around abortion and contraception — as well as sexuality education. These are all areas in which the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has worked for decades, serving and working with governments and communities. All these sensitive issues, in short, form an important part of UNFPA's mandate.

Which is why, since the early 1970s, long before it was on the radar of international development, UNFPA offices set out to identify key traditional and religious leaders, faith-based health service delivery organizations, religious academia, and religious non-governmental organizations rooted in rural communities. UNFPA sought them out as cultural agents of change and implementing partners in development. Faith-based actors are advocates, champions, advisors, educators and also health service providers. Below are some examples of this engagement from diverse parts of the globe

The UNFPA Ethiopia Country Office started its engagement with faith-based organizations with the

Religion and culture are critical backdrops and drivers of reform around issues pertaining to women's empowerment, girls' and women's rights and the right to health more generally

Developmental Bible it is co-sponsoring with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which is believed to have more than 40 million followers in the country. The Developmental Bible was a joint initiative between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, UNFPA and the Population Council, and revolves around integrating development issues into the daily teachings of the church.

Maternal health, HIV prevention and the medical and social impact of harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and FGM are integrated in the daily teachings of the church through this Developmental Bible. Since 2010, the Developmental Bible Manual has been printed and disseminated to 204 churches, nine theological colleges and clergy training centres in six regions.

More than 2,000 clergy undertook trainings on how to mainstream the Developmental Bible in their daily teachings. Currently the manual is being adapted in to the daily teachings of Sunday schools where the majority of the attendants are believed to be young people. A training and users' guide is also under formulation to facilitate further, and render more widespread, the use of the Developmental Bible.

Building on the experiences from the implementation of the Developmental Bible, UNFPA created the forum for interfaith dialogues on peace, maternal health, youth sexual reproductive health and harmful traditional practices in collaboration with Norwegian Church Aid and the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE). IRCE is led by the highest echelons of six religious denominations that are well recognized by Ethiopians. Since mid-2012, two national and eight regional dialogue fora were conducted, in which 1,680 clergy, pastors and imams from six religious denominations participated. The dialogue fora nurtured strong cooperation and sharing of best practices on peace-building, maternal and child health, adolescent youth and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS. The first national dialogue forum which was conducted in 2011 issued a joint declaration which was systematically monitored in subsequent national and regional dialogue forums in the following years. The deliberations and the outcomes continue to inform policymaking and debates at the national and local government levels.

In Afghanistan, due to the realization that misperceptions regarding family planning among religious leaders continue to constitute challenges to the promotion of family planning as a means to reduce maternal mortality, a close collaboration was forged between UNFPA, the Ministry of Public Health, and Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs (MoHRA). The partnership is considered a means of strengthening and building new strategic alliances to support the roll-out of family planning programmes, including improving access and utilization of birth spacing and other family planning methods. Several national consultations were carried out

since 2012, with a view to building learned understanding of the challenges and seeking appropriate jurisprudence to clarify relevant religious positions.

One such consultation, although oriented towards the context of Afghanistan, deliberately sought out learning from other community-based dynamics in the same region, and involved religious scholars from Muslim-majority countries. The other was a national-level conference which was attended by local religious scholars. The resource persons included authoritative religious leaders from Pakistan, Iran, the Philippines (state of Mindanao), Indonesia, Malaysia and India. Among their deliberations were shared experiences of their respective attempts to seek to correct misperceptions and misrepresentation about Islamic law. Their Fatwas (religious decrees) were then shared with Afghan religious leaders and officials from the MoHRA. The rich discussions at the end of these consultations also led to a declaration supporting family planning and birth spacing, signed onto by all these Muslim participants. Similar discussions in five regions of Afghanistan involving more religious community leaders are currently underway. UNFPA is committed to continuing to support the ministries in their collaboration with religious community leaders, to advocate against harmful practices such as early marriage. Partnering with faith-based organizations is a means of engaging with the social and cultural context in which decisions are made which impact on the lives of Afghan girls and women, and are seen as intrinsically linked to their ability to claim and enjoy their rights.

Many communities maintain values, norms and attitudes deeply influenced by religious paradigms of one sort or another

Breaking through the stereotype of religion as an impediment to sexual and reproductive health and rights

In 2014, during the United Nations General Assembly, as world leaders met to discuss the post-2015 development priorities, UNFPA invited its partner religious leaders and faith-based organizations, from every region of the world and representing all major faith traditions, to attend a side event explicitly around the most contentious set of issues — sexual and reproductive health and rights. While they were gathered to discuss how faith can mobilize communities and is a driver to safeguard reproductive rights, the faith-based partners also came together to develop a statement that is historic in nature, unequivocal in tone and courageous in content. This is what they said:

A Call to Action
Faith for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights in the Post 2015 Development Agenda

As we stand together under the auspices of the United Nations, we, people of faith, representatives of diverse faith-based development organizations, theological and other education centers and ecumenical bodies, recognize our role as cultural agents of change and providers of social services at the community, national, regional and global levels. We acknowledge our responsibility to safeguard the dignity and human rights of all people with our actions, our words and through our respective platforms.

We note — and are grateful for - the many achievements since the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals. We stand today, facing critical challenges. Too many of our communities still suffer the indignities of stigma, discrimination, violence and multiple forms of injustice. When such violations happen in the name of religion, culture, or tradition, we are aggrieved and hurt, as well as challenged to respond.

Not in our name should any mother die while giving birth. Not in our name should any girl, boy, woman or man be abused, violated, or killed. Not in our name should a girl child be deprived of her education, be married, be harmed or abused. Not in our name should anyone be denied access to basic health care, nor should a child or an adolescent be denied knowledge of and care for her/his body. Not in our name should any person be denied their human rights.

We affirm that sexual and reproductive health are part of human rights, and as such, must be guaranteed by governments. We note in particular the importance of preventing gender-based discrimination, violence and harmful practices; upholding gender justice; ensuring that every pregnancy is wanted and that every birth is safe; providing age-appropriate sexuality education; promoting the health, education and participation of youth and adolescents; preventing, treating and caring for people with HIV/AIDS; supporting family planning; and respecting the human body.

We hold these matters to be necessary and relevant for a true transformation of our societies, and central to the sustainability of any development agenda.

We underline, and call for deliberate attention to the importance of strategic partnerships between the United Nations system and faith-based organizations, in collaboration with civil society organizations, to facilitate dialogue and implementation around the sustainable development goals, and uphold human dignity in all conditions of life.

Therefore, as the United Nations convenes our governments to consider what the next global development priorities should be, we, people of faith, call upon the United Nations system and Member States, to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights be made central to the Post 2015 sustainable development agenda.

United Nations Secretariat
New York
September 19, 2014

Image: UNFPA's Programme on FGM, 2014

Traditional and religious leaders, faith-based health service delivery organizations, religious academia and religious non-governmental organizations are cultural agents of change and development

UNFPA-Bhutan engages Buddhist nuns and monks to be 'agents of social change' to address sexual and reproductive health issues and gender-based violence. Currently, three nunneries have institutionalized life skills-based education (LSE) as a co-curricular activity. A total of 42 monks representing monasteries from 12 districts have been sensitized on the importance of LSE and fostering dialogue on social issues such as teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS; as well as gender-based violence and substance abuse. Whereas in the Maldives, UNFPA partnered with other United Nations Agencies — including UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme — and Musawah (a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family), to build the capacity of those engaged in issues of Muslim women's rights within the family in understanding religious texts from a rights-based perspective. This empowers gender advocates at community and national levels to promote gender equality utilizing religiously-sensitive strategies, and also enables them to push for the incorporation of equality measures into national legislation in line with the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

After decades of engagement, UNFPA was the first United Nations entity to undertake three key initiatives: to study and map out its national and regional engagements with religious actors (in 2007); to develop, together with its faith-based partners, guidelines for this engagement, with principles clearly set out; and to convene a group of these national and regional actors globally, and launch its Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development (in 2008). In 2010, UNFPA invited other United Nations Development Group partners to form the UN Inter-Agency Task Force around faith-based engagement. This task force has become a key mechanism in the United Nations system which harvests the experiences of both the United Nations entities and their faith-based partners, to build a common knowledge base and respective capacities with a view to ensuring learned, systematic and principled outreach.

UNHCR's cooperation with faith-based organizations

José Riera, Special Adviser and Marie-Claude Poirier, Assistant Research Officer,
Division of International Protection, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The United Nations is an eminently secular organization. Since its creation in 1950, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has engaged with faith-based organizations, faith communities and faith leaders in carrying out its work. This partnership has proven its value over the years and yielded substantial protection and other benefits for persons of concern to UNHCR (refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, the internally displaced and others of concern).

UNHCR recently embarked on a 'journey of mutual discovery' with faith-based organizations by exploring the role of faith in humanitarian responses. In December 2012, the fifth High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges explored 'Faith and Protection'. The dialogue assembled over 400 representatives of faith-based organizations, faith leaders and other partners for a two-day discussion in Geneva on partnership with faith-based actors.

This was the first formal multi-faith dialogue UNHCR ever engaged in and it explored the common values underpinning the notion of refugee protection in all of the world's major religions. It also fostered deeper appreciation for and understanding of the role religion and spirituality plays in the lives of those UNHCR serves. Participants further recognized the importance of UNHCR's existing and potential partnerships with faith-based organizations, especially to improve the protection of persons of concern to UNHCR. Participants strongly reaffirmed the key principles underpinning humanitarian work[1] and acknowledged the need to respond to humanitarian situations according to these principles.

At the close of the event, High Commissioner António Guterres underscored "the valuable contributions that faith organizations and communities make to the protection of refugees and the displaced." He highlighted a number of concrete suggestions for follow-up, which included a call to develop guidance on 'faith literacy' for UNHCR staff.

In 2011, the church in Mayen Abun offered shelter to a few hundred internally displaced persons during the night

Malian refugees get ready to break the fast in Goudoubo refugee camp

A Partnership Note, setting out broad guidance about engaging with, reaching out to and partnering with faith-based organizations, local faith communities and faith leaders was issued in June 2014 and timed to coincide with UNHCR's annual consultations with non-governmental organizations. It sets out examples where faith actors have played an important role at local level and by actively meeting the needs of forcibly displaced populations. Given the diversity of contexts in which UNHCR operates, the guidance is meant to be adapted to local circumstances and realities.

The Partnership Note also recognizes that faith-based organizations, local faith communities and faith leaders vary in size from a group composed of a few believers to global religions and broad interfaith networks. These groups encompass a range of faith identities and motivations, with diverse degrees of knowledge of, willingness and capacity to observe humanitarian principles. Faith leaders are believers who play influential roles within their faith communities and the broader local community.

By providing concrete examples, the Partnership Note demonstrates that faith leaders benefit from trust and exercise moral authority over members of their local faith community, as well as shape public opinion in the broader community and even at the national or international level. These examples were drawn from a survey UNHCR undertook in 2013 with the support of a coalition of faith-based organizations to better understand the breadth of existing partnerships between faith actors and UNHCR at all stages of the refugee and displacement cycle. The Partnership Note further recognizes that faith-based organizations have consistently been among UNHCR's top 10 implementing partners.

Partnership is not a unilateral undertaking and must be viewed from the perspective of both UNHCR and faith actors. UNHCR, like the broader humanitarian community, is committed to upholding humanitarian principles and ensuring that protection underpins all its activities. UNHCR does not engage in partnerships that are contrary to these principles and, in particular, support cannot be used for proselytising or imposing conditions on delivering aid that are contrary to humanitarian principles.

On the other hand, it must be recognized that faith actors are occasionally confronted with UNHCR staff who appear to have a bias against them. The challenges of partnership need to be viewed from both perspectives if they are to be overcome, particularly through positive changes in attitudes and approaches.[2]

From UNHCR's perspective, the most difficult partnership challenges are presented when faith actors promote:
- antagonism towards or exclusion of members of other faith backgrounds
- hate speech or incitement to violence directed against individuals or communities of another faith
- proselytization and pressure to convert as a precondition for continued support
- early marriage or other harmful traditional practices
- gender stereotypes and disregard for the specific rights of women, boys and girls, and vulnerabilities in contexts where sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and negative coping mechanisms are widespread
- stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV/AIDS
- stigma and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals and communities.

UNHCR staff report that partnering with local faith communities can become a source of frustration and misunderstanding when the latter lack familiarity with UNHCR's

Winner of UNHCR's 2013 Nansen Refugee Award, Sister Angélique Namaika instructs a literacy class near Dungu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Many of the class are internally displaced people

processes and procedures, including its strategic priorities and notions of risk and vulnerability, or when they may simply not have the desire to serve as 'implementing partners'.

Other documented challenges and concerns about partnering with faith actors, especially local faith communities and faith leaders, include charity-based approaches that can neglect human rights-based approaches to humanitarian assistance. In complex emergency situations, UNHCR staff also recorded that coordination posed the greatest challenge to partnering with local faith communities, their networks and community-based organizations.

It is clear that partnership with UNHCR also poses specific challenges for faith-based organizations, beyond the issue of staff attitudes described earlier. One factor is the inherent inequality of power between a large international organization and a small local institution. An equally important challenge for faith-based partners is UNHCR's procedures and requirements, which they may be unable or unwilling to satisfy, and the fact that staff rotation may affect UNHCR's institutional memory and presence in the deep field, with the risk of calling into question long-standing positive cooperation, albeit on the basis of 'trust' rather than formal arrangements.

Notwithstanding the challenges for both sides, faith-based organizations, local faith communities and faith leaders have traditionally contributed to a wide range of protection activities in humanitarian situations, including:

- providing physical protection and facilitating humanitarian access
- deterring violence and alleviating suffering through presence and accompaniment
- mediating tensions between refugees/internally displaced persons and host communities in conflict or post-conflict situations
- engaging in reconciliation and peace-building activities
- combating xenophobia and discrimination
- preventing and responding to SGBV or forced recruitment
- improving reception conditions and accompanying the detained
- providing legal counselling and asylum case-management
- advocating for legislative changes benefiting persons of concern
- supporting refugee resettlement and/or local integration.

Another initiative that sprang from the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection was a call to develop guidance for faith leaders, which aims to promote tolerance and respect for the human dignity and human rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, migrants, internally displaced and stateless persons.

A father and son pray in Ifo camp, Dadaab. These camps are under immense population pressure as Somalis continue to flood into Kenya to escape violence

From February through April 2013 UNHCR, working with a group of faith-based organizations, networks and religious experts, drafted a text that consists of 16 affirmations which draw upon principles and values shared by the world's major religions. The document aims to provide faith leaders with an opportunity to affirm the role faith communities play to "welcome the stranger, the refugee, the internally displaced, the other … to challenge intolerance … and respect the right of the stranger to practice his or her own faith freely."

The call to welcome the stranger is essentially a statement of belief flowing from principles of hospitality, respect and equality, as these are values that are deeply rooted in all major faiths.

Hospitality: Although non-traditional humanitarian actors, such as local faith communities, may carry out humanitarian assistance activities as an adjunct to their faith-related work, they are often the first to respond to individuals, families and communities in the initial stages of a humanitarian crisis. They respond by virtue of their presence in some of the most isolated and remote areas. Recognition of this fact has sparked renewed interest in engaging with these communities to improve outreach to the most vulnerable.

Respect: Respect for the diversity of identities, values and traditions is pivotal to enhance the protection and resilience of forcibly displaced individuals and communities. Local faith communities are uniquely aware of the fact that, in many countries and communities, faith is a 'basic need' and provides spiritual sustenance for persons of concern to UNHCR. Local faith leaders and faith communities are uniquely positioned to meet these needs.

Equality: Cooperation should be based on a shared set of objectives, and be premised on mutual respect and partnership. Equality should also translate into equal treatment and the right to equal protection according to humanitarian standards.

These principles serve as a normative backdrop to the minimum standards that follow. They are a point of departure for dialogue between UNHCR and faith actors aimed at working together in mutually beneficial ways to serve persons of concern to UNHCR. Principles also help guide partners that may wish to establish dialogue across faiths and between traditional and non-traditional humanitarian actors.

As active members of civil society, faith actors and their organizations can leverage significant social and physical assets for the benefit of those UNHCR serves. Strengthening partnerships is further a goal of the wider humanitarian reform process that aims to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response. Finally, faith actors are widely present in all parts of a given country and their presence

The Affirmation of Welcome is read and signed by representatives of the world's major religions. UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Mr Volker Türk, also participated in this symbolic signing ceremony

is not contingent upon external funding support. They remain long after international attention has faded and funding declined.

Annex: Affirmation of Welcome
From December 2012 through to December 2013, the document, 'Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders'[3] was signed and endorsed by over 1,700 religious leaders, members of faith communities and faith-based organizations worldwide, and formally launched at a signing ceremony before an assembly of 600 faith leaders at the Religions for Peace 9th World Assembly on 21 November 2013 in Vienna.

Welcoming the stranger: affirmations for faith leaders
A core value of my faith is to welcome the stranger, the refugee, the internally displaced, the other. I shall treat him or her as I would like to be treated. I will challenge others, even leaders in my faith community, to do the same.

Together with faith leaders, faith-based organizations and communities of conscience around the world, I affirm:
I will welcome the stranger.

My faith teaches that compassion, mercy, love and hospitality are for everyone: the native born and the foreign born, the member of my community and the newcomer.

I will remember and remind members of my community that we are all considered 'strangers' somewhere, that we should treat the stranger to our community as we would like to be treated, and challenge intolerance.

I will remember and remind others in my community that no one leaves his or her homeland without a reason: some flee because of persecution, violence or exploitation; others due to natural disaster; yet others out of love to provide better lives for their families.

I recognize that all persons are entitled to dignity and respect as human beings. All those in my country, including the stranger, are subject to its laws, and none should be subject to hostility or discrimination.

I acknowledge that welcoming the stranger sometimes takes courage, but the joys and the hopes of doing so outweigh the risks and the challenges. I will support others who exercise courage in welcoming the stranger.

I will offer the stranger hospitality, for this brings blessings upon the community, upon my family, upon the stranger and upon me.

I will respect and honour the reality that the stranger may be of a different faith or hold beliefs different from mine or other members of my community.

I will respect the right of the stranger to practice his or her own faith freely. I will seek to create space where he or she can freely worship.

I will speak of my own faith without demeaning or ridiculing the faith of others.

I will build bridges between the stranger and myself. Through my example, I will encourage others to do the same.

I will make an effort not only to welcome the stranger, but also to listen to him or her deeply, and to promote understanding and welcome in my community.

I will speak out for social justice for the stranger, just as I do for other members of my community.

Where I see hostility towards the stranger in my community, whether through words or deeds, I will not ignore it, but will instead endeavour to establish a dialogue and facilitate peace.

I will not keep silent when I see others, even leaders in my faith community, speaking ill of strangers, judging them without coming to know them, or when I see them being excluded, wronged or oppressed.

I will encourage my faith community to work with other faith communities and faith-based organizations to find better ways to assist the stranger.

I will welcome the stranger.

Founding principles
The call to welcome the stranger, through protection and hospitality, and to honour the stranger or those of other faiths with respect and equality, is deeply rooted in all major religions.
In the Upanishads, the mantra *atithi devo bhava* or 'the guest is as God' expresses the fundamental importance of

In Thailand, a refugee from Myanmar prays in Nu Po Refugee Camp

hospitality in Hindu culture. Central to the Hindu *Dharma,* or Law, are the values of *karuṇā* or compassion, *ahiṃsā* or non-violence towards all, and *seva* or the willingness to serve the stranger and the unknown guest. Providing food and shelter to a needy stranger was a traditional duty of the householder and is practiced by many still. More broadly, the concept of *Dharma* embodies the task to do one's duty, including an obligation to the community, which should be carried out respecting values such as non-violence and selfless service for the greater good.

The Tripitaka highlights the importance of cultivating four states of mind: *mettā* (loving kindness), *muditā* (sympathetic joy), *upekkhā* (equanimity), and *karuṇā* (compassion). There are many different traditions of Buddhism, but the concept of *karuṇā* is a fundamental tenet in all of them. It embodies the qualities of tolerance, non-discrimination, inclusion and empathy for the suffering of others, mirroring the central role which compassion plays in other religions.

The Torah makes 36 references to honouring the 'stranger'. The book of Leviticus contains one of the most prominent tenets of the Jewish faith: "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:33-34). Further, the Torah provides that "You shall not oppress the stranger, for you know the soul of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 33:1).

In Matthew's Gospel (32:32) we hear the call: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." And in the Letter to the Hebrews (13:1-3) we read: "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."

When the Prophet Muhammad fled persecution in Mecca, he sought refuge in Medina, where he was hospitably welcomed. The Prophet's *hijrah,* or migration, symbolizes the movement from lands of oppression, and his hospitable treatment embodies the Islamic model of refugee protection. The Holy Qur'an calls for the protection of the asylum seeker, or *al-mustamin,* whether Muslim or non-Muslim, whose safety is irrevocably guaranteed under the institution of *Aman* (the provision of security and protection). As noted in the Surat Al-Anfal: "Those who give asylum and aid are in very truth the believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous" (8:43).

There are tens of millions of refugees and internally displaced people in the world. Our faiths demand that we remember we are all migrants on this earth, journeying together in hope.

Advancing religious freedom through interfaith collaboration

Adeel Khan, University of Cambridge, Researcher at the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue

At its March 2011 session, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) adopted, by consensus, resolution 16/18, which focuses on concrete, positive measures that states can take to combat religious intolerance while protecting the freedoms of religion and of expression. The Istanbul Process is a series of international conferences seeking to promote implementation of the steps called for in this landmark UNHRC resolution.

The fourth Istanbul meeting was held in Doha on 24 and 25 March 2014, hosted by the Government of Qatar and the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID), and it focused on advancing religious freedom through interfaith collaboration. By bringing interfaith community experts together with relevant experts in government, this Istanbul Process meeting contributed significantly to the advancement of religious tolerance and freedom and the formation of collaborative partnership between government and civil society in promoting those goals.

At this meeting a leading Muslim thinker of our times, Jamal Badawi, said that interfaith dialogue is not a mere intellectual exercise. It should include one of the most powerful quests that are embedded in human nature — the quest for self-purification, knowledge and wisdom. From that perspective, the essence of the Prophet's mission encompasses all. As stated in the Qur'an:

> "Allah has been truly gracious to the believers in sending them a messenger from among their own, to recite His revelations to them, to purify them [spiritually] and to teach them the Book [the Qur'an] and wisdom — before that they were clearly astray."[1]

The atmosphere of interfaith dialogue is more enlightened and permeated with love for fellow humans through the inclusion of the common elements of spirituality. In the Qatari experience of interfaith dialogue at DICID we have developed a new vocabulary of natural rights that is spiritually grounded in nature itself.

Dr Ali Al-Qaradaghi, a leading Islamic thinker from Qatar, pointed out the importance of viewing our dwelling within the kindred 'womb' of our environment and the Earth itself. This maternal view of the Earth as a receptacle, and of it 'birthing' us, diversifies the language of rights since the rights due to our environment are the same ones that are naturally due to our mothers: a universal experience of duty.

Dr Burhan Koroglu related his experience of creating a tool of public education and persuasion — the film *The River that Runs to the West* — emphasizing the metaphor of the river, stressing the notions of flow, permeability, mutual influence and interdependence of the cultural streams that unite East and West in the common current of history. Water is central to the ritual purity of Islam and Christianity. This baptismal metaphor of rivers creates another set of imaginings of our common rights as the source of life itself. This again is a universal experience of right that does not require second-order explanation.

In the creation of earthly and fluid metaphors, DICID partners create a new vocabulary of rights that are viscerally accessible to all people irrespective of their habitat. This process of vocabulary and concept creation is at the heart of the legal effort of the United Nations as a body that brings humanity together in common dialogue. We have diversified our language of rights and found a common civilizational vocabulary for speaking simultaneously about 'difference' and our 'common parentage'.

Simkha Weintraub, a Jewish scholar, links this creation of a green vocabulary for faith and rights by bringing to the fore the question of 'responsible consumption' — a calling that people of faith need to practice, according to him, by 'greening' their own places of worship. Living the faithful life is, after all, about preaching and acting at home first; building our own communities as models for others to replicate.

Encounter: educational research

Encounter moves beyond simple 'learning about' other traditions, which is not sufficient as a basis for mutual understanding for we

As dialogue increases, so does understanding: DICID fosters dialogue in order to help people of different beliefs build on their commonality and face their differences

Coming together

Interfaith spirituality is one not informed by the commonality in the aggregation of religious views but vice versa: religious views are informed by the Ocean of Spirituality (or the spirit of love, of compassion, of interconnectedness). The metaphor of rivers flowing into one ocean has to be reversed to experience the depth and meaning of interfaith spirituality. In the wholeness of being, the ocean is primary, not the rivers. Interfaith beings are border beings, beings who can seamlessly move across religious borders, compassionately, clearly and courageously. *It is the basis of coming together as one being for the benefit of the sustainable cultures we all need for the generations to come.* Whatever the religion we profess, we are today faced with an ecological crisis that threatens all life and Mother Earth. We need to be together as one in this and there is no other way. To be religiously free from this point of view means to be responsible for nature or Mother Earth that hold us together. And there is no use of religious freedom without a planet.

— Nadarajah Manickam, Global Centre for the Study of Sustainable Futures and Spirituality, India

Image: DICID

Dr. Ibrahim Saleh Al-Naimi, Chairman of DICID, presenting an honorary shield to Lord Rowan Williams, previously Archbishop of Canterbury

can only understand the 'other' by interpreting what we encounter in the light of our own experience. However, through encounter students discover a shared humanity and learn that commonality emerges through different religious stories and practices, and that disagreement and conflict may be the result of 'distance' rather than 'discernment' at close quarters. This academic process involves exchange and dialogue. It involves listening as well as speaking; an attempt to understand others in their own terms, as we ourselves wish to be understood, explained Dr Ed Kessler of the Woolf Institute in Cambridge, UK.

Once we are aware of our own perceptions, we can begin to engage with others more effectively. Personal encounters foster dialogue. Through dialogue, neither participant is required to relinquish or alter their beliefs, but both will be affected and changed by the process. As dialogue increases, so does understanding. There is no alternative than to build on our commonality and face our differences.

The youth are better able than we are to do dialogue because they are more flexible. They are less prone to be stuck in ancient arguments. They are more open to see the good in the other and even to see themselves *within* the other. Our youth may be compared to sparks of light that enlighten the world — if we make room for them. We need to encourage our young people to shine their light onto the darkness of this world, a world that is suffering for our sins and the sins of our forefathers.

There is a traditional legend in Judaism that teaches an important lesson about sparks of light — sparks of divine light, explained Dr Reuven Firestone of the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement in Los Angeles, USA.

"At the beginning of time, God's presence filled the entire universe. At this time before creation, God *was* the universe and the universe was God. Every microscopic portion of space was filled with God. When God decided to bring this world into being, He had to make room for creation. So God reduced Himself and contracted. He withdrew from filling everything by, as it were, drawing in His breath. This is called *TzimTzum* — divine contraction. From that contraction darkness was created. Then God said, "Let there be light."[2] Great and powerful divine light then came into being and filled the darkness, and 10 holy

vessels came forth. Each vessel was a container that was filled to the brim with this primordial light which was, if you will, the essence of God Himself.

God sent forth those 10 vessels like a fleet of ships, each carrying its cargo of light. Had they all arrived intact, the world would have been perfect. But the vessels were not strong enough to contain such a powerful, divine light-force. They therefore broke open, split asunder, and all the holy sparks of God were scattered like sand, like seeds, like stars. Those sparks fell everywhere, but more fell on the Holy Land than anywhere else," according to this Jewish legend.

Humanity was the last thing to be created. And this is *why* we were created — in order to gather the sparks of divine light, no matter where they are hidden. God created us so that we would raise up the holy sparks. That is why there have been so many exiles — spread universally to release the holy sparks from the servitude of captivity everywhere in the world. In Jewish tradition, the Jews are the most widely spread community of exiles. It is our responsibility to sift all the holy sparks from the four corners of the Earth. How is that done? By doing good in the world. By helping the poor everywhere, by healing the sick everywhere, by inventing remedies to improve the lives of people everywhere and by preserving the natural world all around us. We ourselves have divine sparks within us, and it is that energy which can enliven us to our task.

When enough holy sparks have been gathered, the broken vessels will be restored and *Tikkun Olam* — the repair of the world, awaited for so long, will finally be complete. Therefore, it should be the aim of everyone to raise these sparks from wherever they are imprisoned and to elevate them to holiness. Our youth are brilliantly enlightened — naturally, by the sparks of God within them. We must do all in our power to preserve the energy of their light, not to extinguish it through oppres-

sion and ridicule, but to enable it to shine. The youth that have led the movements for justice and liberation in the past years are exactly these kinds of people, working together as Muslims, Jews and Christians for justice and the liberation of all people.

There are some practical steps that need to be taken to bring interfaith awareness to educational encounters. We need to develop all of our curricula — and not just religious studies — to cater to living in a world of difference by equipping teachers with the necessary skills to read these texts and bring to bear real-world examples of living in communities of multiple faiths. Moreover, we need to engage in research and collaborative projects for the common good of communities of multiple faiths.

Debating dialogue

The following prescription of identity is attributed to the Hasidic rabbi Menachem Mendel (1787-1859):

> *If I am I because I am I,*
> *and you are you because you are you,*
> *then I am I*
> *and you are you.*
> *But if I am I because you are you*
> *and you are you because I am I,*
> *then I am not I*
> *and you are not you!*

The suggestion here is that our sense of self — our sense of who we are — cannot come from any mockery or putting down of others. We see that suggestion again in the verse from the Qur'an that reminds Muslims of the caution from God:

> *"O you who believe! Let not a people deride another people. Perhaps they are better!"[3]*

In interfaith communication, disparagement and a sense of superiority would be sure-fire guarantees of failure. Our sincerely held faiths are of vital importance to each of us because they direct us to the essence of who we are and what we are about. Vitally important, too, is the desire we each have to follow truthfully in our faith. This is not to be mocked. But there are many who have cautioned as to possible dangers. Writing with a dry sense of humour in his novel *Lake Wobegon Days,* Garrison Keillor described communities of people who dissected teachings, each sect striving to be purer and purer adherents, until "having tasted the awful comfort of being correct" they could look down on those who had not reached that state. There are, though, powerful goals for all to strive for and these direct us beyond that kind of complacency. Thomas Merton was an American Catholic and a Trappist monk. He spoke of "the mystery of the freedom of divine mercy which alone is truly serious."

An important part of interfaith understanding is renewing our joint achievements from the past. Our ancestors have achieved much in the past in being able to create the infrastructure of our faiths based on mutual learning. In the medieval period they have been open in learning from the experiences of each other's faiths. These achievements surely need to be celebrated and acknowledged in any new interaction that takes place today — for example the spirit of *convivencia* that was achieved in Islamic Spain and the removal of *dhimmi* status for

Advancing Religious Freedom
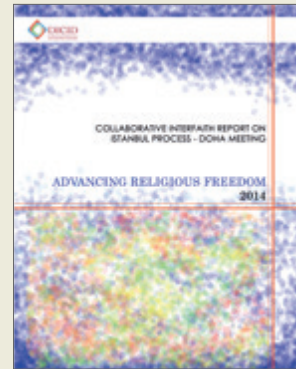
This report was written in collaboration with interfaith scholars from different religious traditions from around the world. It documents the discussions that took place at the Istanbul Process Meeting 2014 at Doha to discuss the implementation of UNHRC Resolution 16/18. It was a rare gathering hosted by DICID, consisting of interfaith practitioners with representatives from UN institutions. An attempt was made to develop a common vocabulary about "Religious Freedoms" based on diverse institutional, cultural and religious experiences.

the Jews of Yemen based on a saying of the prophet of Islam in what is called by Muslims *Israiliyat* literature.[4]

The important point is to remember that there are parallels in religions both in time and space. We can call this approach of finding parallels 'transversal fractals'. This would denote the similarities across time and in the present experience of lived religion between religions like Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

As the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Rowan Williams advises, we should compare like with like in each religion and should not 'compare apples and oranges'. We compare the best manifestation and expression with each other in dialogue. And likewise we would like to suggest extending from the Archbishop's advice that we make spaces available for debate to take place between those of religious attitudes that would like to emphasize differences in a more critical debate paradigm in order to convert the other. Without looking down upon the people of mission and debate among our co-religionists, and without a sense of superiority in relation to them, we provide them space for expressing their strongly held convictions. After all, religion is about convictions. Convictions can be historicized by some of us but others rather choose to live in the present of convictions, and that attitude of religiosity has as much if not more of a right for expression than those of us who prefer to historicize our convictions and hence relativize them. It can only lead to mutual enrichment across faith boundaries if we are able to make space for the expression of our religious compatriots as well as those of other religious adherents.

The interfaith community at large wholeheartedly welcomes this United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization publication of *Agree to Differ* to celebrate the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). We hope that our support in this timely effort is received and recognized as a collective voice of the faith communities around the world that stand for peace, understanding and justice.

Living together better:
a linguistic contribution

Raymond Renard, International Centre for Applied Phonetics, University of Mons, Belgium

The International Centre of Applied Phonetics (CIPA) in Mons, Belgium, was created half a century ago in 1965, as a non-profit organization with the aim of promoting another way of developing speech as a discipline which is open to human development. The centre gradually turned to cooperation, essentially with French-speaking Africa, and to the defence of peace. In association with the French-speaking United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chair in Language Planning and Language Teaching in Educational Systems since 1995, its expertise was rapidly recognized at an international level and was consecrated, initially by gaining UNESCO consultative status and later a mutually informative status with the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

CIPA immediately opted to defend UNESCO's specific founding principles expressed in its famous 1953 report, summarized below:

The importance of the mother language in the development of the individual. The mother language, or that of the environment, is a complex, multisensory and mainly oral process, which has a decisive effect on the child's psychomotor, cognitive, social, emotional and moral development; it involves a person's whole personality as far as intelligence, affectivity, imagination and behaviour are concerned; it is the means by which one relates to the environment: to master language is to master the world; language is the pillar of the child's cultural identity, the basis of a feeling of security; which we can sum up as: speak well, feel well.

The role of the language of the environment regarding education, social integration and social, economic, political and cultural development is capital in every society. The mother language's capacity to accurately reflect the reality of the environment, as opposed to that of a foreign language, justifies the necessity to use it at least in basis education and explains why resorting to an exogenous code can only lead to a separation between society and school, and thereby make education ineffective and unpopular. Is it necessary to demonstrate the impossibility of a development respecting human rights, democracy and 'good' governance without resorting to the local language?

These characteristics, common to all languages and the fact that every language contributes to an understanding of the universe in its own way, assure equal dignity to everyone. Besides, the extraordinary richness of multilingualism, naturally spread universally, legitimates the battle to protect this world heritage.

The value of multilingualism in states and individuals is important because although every language gives access to the universal, some of them haven't yet reached a lexical standardization or development which gives access to modernity, unlike every developed country's language which is a support for science. Moreover, the knowledge of foreign languages allows the person to escape a single way of seeing the world, to reconcile identity and difference, the latter being a real indicator of the former. Multilingualism is also recognized as a factor of tolerance, togetherness and solidarity in as much as it promotes the passage from the multicultural to the intercultural and prevents withdrawal into one's identity or drifting into ethnicity.

> "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed"
>
> **— Preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO, 1945**

Raymond Renard of CIPA: "Cultural dialogue equals mutual enrichment"

A group of teachers at CIPA, invited by the Governor of Hainaut

That is the reason why CIPA has worked in favour of indigenous languages in several member countries of the OIF, mainly in Africa. We would like to point out in particular the publication, in local indigenous languages, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in French, Kikongo, Kiswahili, Lingala and Tshiluba, on the initiative of a member of the World Association for the School as an Instrument of Peace (Switzerland). These versions, widely distributed in schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are being adapted to oral expression and the encouraging experimentation of this model inspires other countries to adopt them.

Readers of the current volume will be more interested in the educational aspects developed by CIPA during its numerous summer schools and training sessions with multi-ethnic groups, which have been fully documented. This is mainly a question of a teaching method originally associated with the UNESCO Linguapax programme, the application of which was highly recommended during an important symposium in Mons in 1997, through creating a 'Linguapax university network' of several dozens of higher education institutions.

As the name suggests, the aim of Linguapax is above all else to bring a specific, linguistic response to problems raised in the search for peace, the protection of human rights and the promotion of a real education for democracy. In this perspective, the methodological terms and conditions are established in order to achieve the following.

One aim is to create a general climate in favour of a dialogue in a continual interaction between the teacher and the learner on the one hand and between the learners themselves on the other hand. This dialogue would be the best way to sharpen the learners' senses for listening and expressing themselves, and therefore to prepare them for a true participation in democracy.

There is a need to develop a critical mind, involving a new relationship between the teacher and the pupil (that is, avoiding magisterial classes), and the promotion of discussion,

open debate, analysis, reflection and documentation (rather than censorship).

A further aim is to enable a search for communicative situations consistent with the learner's 'inner self'. The interest and the desire to defend one's own point of view stimulate communication, emphasizing the affective element — an important stimulant to communication in methodology as well as in the formulation or the choice of didactic equipment.

CIPA's also aims to develop capacities for autonomy, creativity and the preparation of projects; to seize every intercultural opportunity (such as an unexpected meeting or reaction or the discovery of a stereotype) and to vary teaching resources (to reinforce the intercultural environment) and work on up-to-date documents and topics, always taking the reality of the educational system in the countries concerned into account. The goal is to turn school into a living centre, a collective tool and a forum so it is not just a school, but an educational place. Objectivizing discussions helps to address the risk of excessive enthusiasm, admiration or rejection in order to avoid any personal argument. Priority is given to play activities and those corresponding to the needs expressed by the pupils. Finally, the objective is to go beyond the stage of tolerance (the 'right to be different') to stress the richness to be found in diversity.

Starting from these objectives, a whole range of educational activities have been developed, including the use of oral literature, fairy tales and proverbs from the mother tongue in a second language course (translation, comparison and so on). Round-table conferences for argumentation have been held, so pupils can learn negotiation techniques. Role-play might entail enacting the resolution of a problem in a certain situation, or involve different reactions according to culture. This pushes foreign learners to introduce themselves by highlighting their culture's specificity and encountered 'peculiarities'. Further activities include the comparison of games; critical analysis of history pages from different textbooks; listening

The CIPA headquarters in Mons, Belgium; established in 1965, the centre has developed to focus on cooperation and the defence of peace

to and watching news programmes or reading newspapers; preparing a project (such as a life project or holiday project), presenting it and comparing it with another person's; and letter-writing to explain contents and style with regard to the social level of the correspondents.

Preparation of a school trip and a school exchange are also undertaken, entailing knowledge of traditions and useful geopolitical notions such as what to do, what not to do, what to say, what not to say, and expressions. Assessment is in the form of a story: for example, what was surprising? What was good and what was not?

Analytical exercises include the analysis of documents, which involves searching for signs of ethnocentrism, racism, exoticism, tolerance and solidarity, the explanation of these notions and a reflection on the subjects of identity and cultural differences. Analysis of foreign comics entails cutting out the speech bubbles rewriting them, showing the class how they portray 'the other' and comparing comics of different origins in order to reflect on how stereotypes are created. Stylistic analysis of newspaper articles and reports includes detecting positive and negative signs, such as aggressive styles in sports reports or political reports.

In learning arithmetic, pupils are asked to describe basic operations according to the terms of the mother language and those of the second language. The objective is to discover different ways of proceeding and a sense of reality.

Detecting prejudices is done with the aid of definition and examples, and can involve practicing a speech that might be preceded or followed by an essay. Critical analysis of clichés, stereotypes and prejudices is undertaken. Learners also look at the broadcasting and exploitation of documentaries about foreign countries; if necessary, an 'expert' is the last one to speak and there is an analysis of eventual interpretation mistakes.

Several colleagues confirm the efficacy of these procedures in obtaining a better knowledge and comprehension of the other. For example, in Niger, secondary school teachers successfully experimented with the translation of myths and proverbs into djerma language. At the University of Mons, interculturality was discussed by comparing different versions of myths and fairy tales (for example, 'Little Red Riding Hood'). On the other hand, the teaching of negotiation techniques or argumentation, thanks to simulated 'round-table conferences' in multicultural classes, revealed unsuspected aspects of the way tolerance is applied in different societies. The colleagues said that you can get the best and the worst of both worlds with languages, but they can become a means of mediation and intercultural integration.

Bilingualism as presented here, as an absolute priority for children, is functional to the extent that by avoiding a possible disturbance of the child's social, emotional, intellectual and moral development, it ensures a peaceful complementarity between the languages concerned and the reinstated mother tongue, favouring the second language, now recognized as necessary.

In conclusion, multicultural societies can — and must — live together as convivially as other ones. To defend the cultural rights of a community does not mean pushing it into isolation, but promoting the idea that keeping a cultural identity safe is allowing it to live, evolve and recreate itself thanks to its cohabitation with other societies. Cultural togetherness is the way to go from a multicultural to an intercultural society. To know a different culture means not only learning to think differently, but also developing otherness in oneself, developing a path to the other.

And finally, it is a way of encouraging everyone to see things differently because cultural dialogue equals mutual enrichment. It is the very nature of living well together.

Miracle on Waterloo Street — religious harmony in Singapore

Professor Tommy Koh, Special Adviser, Institute of Policy Studies,
Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore

Religion can promote peace between people and between nations. It can also be a cause for conflict and war. Religion has often been hijacked by unscrupulous men to gain or retain power and used by such men as a weapon against their adversaries. There are many situations in the contemporary world where religion is a threat to peace.

Let me cite a few examples. The Buddhists and Muslims have clashed in Myanmar, especially in the Rakhine state. In Pakistan and the Middle East, Sunni terrorists have been blowing up mosques and other places sacred to the Shiites. In Iraq and Syria a group of Sunni extremists, who call themselves the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), is seeking to create a new caliphate by violent means. In one of our neighbouring countries, Shiite teachings are deemed to be against Islamic law. In Europe, there is growing animosity between Christians and Muslims. The early-2015 shootings at a Copenhagen café during a seminar on free speech, and the killing of Charlie Hebdo cartoonists in Paris, are manifestations of this chasm. So too are the anti-Islam demonstrations in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

Viewed against this backdrop, the religious and racial harmony we enjoy in Singapore is remarkable. Many of us grow up, work and play together with friends and neighbours of different races and religions. I consider Singapore's religious harmony one of the most precious achievements of the past 50 years. We must do everything we can to preserve it.

Singapore may be a small country but it is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world. Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Taoism and Hinduism are the main religions of Singapore. Sikhism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism and Baha'ism have small followings. All 10 religions are represented in the non-governmental organization called the Inter-Religious Organization (IRO).

The fact that Singapore is physically very small means that the places of worship of different religions may be located on the same street, and sometimes even next door to each other. In other countries, such proximity could lead to misunder-

Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple on Singapore's Waterloo Street: religious harmony is one of Singapore's most important achievements of the past 50 years

standing and even conflict. Luckily for us, this is not the case in Singapore.

I often take visitors from abroad to join me in a walking tour of Waterloo Street. On this street, we have a Jewish synagogue, a Hindu temple and a Buddhist temple dedicated to the Goddess of Mercy, Kuan Yin. My foreign friends are amazed at the sight of Buddhists worshipping at the Hindu temple and vice versa. I tell them that this is one of the miracles of Singapore.

However, relations between the followers of the different religions in Singapore have not always been amicable. In 1950, riots occurred for several days when an insensitive British judge ordered that a Dutch girl, Maria Hertogh, be remanded in a Catholic convent, pending his ruling on whether custody should be awarded to Maria's biological mother or her Malay foster mother who had raised her.

In 1964, a procession to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday was attacked by Chinese gangsters. This led to several days of rioting, arson and mayhem.

The memories of those riots, as well as the one which occurred on 13 May 1969, will never be forgotten. They have motivated Singaporeans to work hard to prevent the recurrence of such unhappy events.

Singapore's state of religious harmony did not happen by chance. We got here from crafting important policies, laws and institutions which helped to promote religious harmony in the country.

Secularism, Singapore style

First, Singapore is a secular state. We do not have a state religion, unlike Malaysia or the United Kingdom. The state does not promote religion. It is, however, not hostile to religion, unlike the communist countries.

The Sri Krishnan Temple on Waterloo Street, Singapore, where several places of worship of different religions coexist in peaceful proximity

Second, Article 15 of the Singapore Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and the right to propagate one's religion. The Court of Appeal has held that it is not illegal for a Singapore citizen to be a Jehovah's Witness, a proscribed group. He is, however, not exempted from being called up to serve his national service. In another case, the same court held that a citizen working in an educational institution is not exempted from singing the National Anthem or reciting the National Pledge on account of his religious beliefs. In other words, in Singapore, a citizen's right to religious freedom is subordinated to the public good.

Third, in Singapore the right to free speech is not an absolute right. The Penal Code makes it an offence to utter words which deliberately wound the religious feeling of others. The Sedition Act makes it an offence to promote feelings of ill will or hostility between different races or classes of the population. In 2005, three bloggers were convicted under the Sedition Act for posting web-blog comments that were anti-Muslim. In Singapore, unlike Denmark and France, cartoons which depict the Prophet Muhammad would be deemed to be offensive, punishable under both the Penal Code and Sedition Act and not protected by the freedom of speech.

Fourth, in 1990 the Singapore Parliament enacted the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. The law established the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony, a body consisting of both religious and lay leaders, to advise the President on matters affecting religious harmony.

The law also empowers the Government to issue restraining orders against preachers who threaten our religious harmony. A few years ago, a good friend who is a pastor in an independent Protestant church sought my advice. He told me that he had received a letter from the Government warning him that he would be stopped from preaching unless he refrained from attacking the Catholic church in his sermons.

I asked him to show me the text of his recent sermons. After reading them, I told my friend that I agreed with the Government's warning and that he should stop his unwarranted attacks on the Catholic church.

I remember that a few years ago, a Christian pastor was caught on film badmouthing the Buddhists and Taoists. The video went viral and the public response was unanimous. He had crossed the line and should apologize. The pastor did apologize and the Buddhists and Taoists decided to forgive him.

Fifth, I believe that the IRO has played a very positive role in the maintenance of religious harmony in Singapore. IRO's members belong to 10 different faiths. They serve in their individual capacities and not as the official representatives of their respective religions. The fact that they get along well, respect one another's faith, visit one another's places of worship and appear together at public performances of joint religious prayers is an inspiration to the community. They set a good example for others to follow.

In conclusion, I would reiterate my point that religious harmony is one of Singapore's most important achievements of the past 50 years. Our success is due partly to our policies, laws and institutions. It is also due to the good sense of the people of Singapore. Singaporeans have developed the cultural DNA to respect one another's faiths. It is un-Singaporean to insult, disparage or make fun of the deities or religious beliefs of others.

An intercultural dialogue from within Muslim communities: a global overview

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Muslims now account for about one-fifth of humanity. About one-third of the global Muslim community live as national religious minorities. On the basis of this demographic fact alone, the way Muslims conduct their intrafaith and intercultural relations with the rest of the world can have great bearings on the future of the world order. Islam and Muslims have already captured significant global attention, particularly as reflected in the world media. However, Muslims worldwide generally perceive this mostly Western-originated media coverage as largely negative.

In light of this unprecedented global attention to Islam, we are witnessing a growing number of intercultural dialogue initiatives from within Muslim communities.[1] There follows a global overview of Muslim intercultural relations and dialogue, particularly since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Many academics, scholars and political observers of the Muslim world identify the 1970s as the beginning of a new global Islamic resurgence or revival that has impacted the global *ummah* (community) in practically every aspect of its contemporary societal life, particularly the educational, political and intellectual. The impact continues to be felt in its intra-Islamic, interreligious and intercultural relations. Of particular relevance to the current discussion is the impact on Muslim intercultural relations of which dialogue is a significant component.

The 1970s: a major turning point

The first significant societal phenomenon to be associated with this Islamic resurgence was the emergence of a modern Islamic civil society with its vast international network. At the national level numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sprang up championing the cause of Islam within the Muslim communities as well as the cause of Islam and its ummah globally. Muslim youth of the 1970s were the prime movers of the resurgence, but their activism was mainly inspired by the ideas and teachings of the religious *(ulama)* and Western-trained scholars of Islam of the older generation, many of whom lived in the West.

South-East Asia

The most influential and significant of the national Muslim youth movements in the 1970s was perhaps the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM). First, it united members from both the traditional religious and Western secular streams of education by bridging their intellectual gap using the principle of unity of thought, and through its organizational project of turning intellectuals into ulama and ulama into intellectuals. Second, ABIM was the most intellectually oriented Muslim youth movement and was open to ideas from all schools of thought, including Shiite scholars, although it was basically a Sunni organization.

Third, ABIM was an exceptionally inclusive organization with members of different political, religious and intellectual persuasions. Its female members were integral to the shura (consultative) process. Its founding members were mostly Malays, but it recruited members from the small minority groups of Chinese and Indian Muslims who were to become pioneering 'intercultural bridges' between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

Fourth, ABIM was a pioneer in conducting interreligious dialogues between Islam and other religions, particularly Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. Building on the new atmosphere of dialogue generated by the National Consultative Council and aided by other like-minded NGOs, particularly ALIRAN, ABIM helped interreligious dialogue to take root in Malaysian soil.[2]

Fifth, ABIM succeeded to a certain extent in striking a middle position in its collective thinking between idealism and pragmatism and between intellectualism and legalism. Its organization provided ample space for a fuller expression of all dimensions of Islamic teachings in a very interactive way – so much so that it became a meeting point of ideas from all schools of thought, especially as realized through its nationwide study circles.

ABIM saw Islam's representation by the religious and political establishments in the country as limited in form. It was critical of the 'secular space' in society, which it saw as a domain impregnated with modern Western-originated materialistic values that went against the fundamental spiritual teachings of all religions. Aware of Malaysia's character as a precarious pluralistic society, it sought to engage in active and meaningful dialogues with the followers of other religions, aiming to create a just society based on common spiritual and ethical-moral values.

As in Malaysia, Islamic resurgence in Indonesia in the 1970s was spearheaded by student activists in the country's major university campuses. The country's two distinct mass movements, Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama, are the biggest Muslim NGOs in the world representing Islamic modernism

An entrepreneurial class at Universiti Brunei Darussalam: intercultural mixing is common in Brunei's private and state-funded educational institutions

and Islamic traditionalism respectively. Guided by different ideologies, they were often at odds with each other on a wide range of religious and social issues, but both were awakened by the Islamic student movement of the decade which helped to transform them into parts of the Islamic resurgence network in Indonesia and the rest of the Malay-speaking world.[3] The two organizations appeared to find a common position on several religious and social issues, and from the 1980s the leaderships of both demonstrated a greater openness to interreligious dialogue.[4]

The Arab world

In the Arab world of the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), the oldest and perhaps the only then existing mass Islamic movement, benefited from the world-wide Islamic resurgence, particularly the religious awakening among Arab students and youth. It was energized by recruits from among Arab students studying in Western universities and also their seniors, who upon graduation decided to stay in the West. Intellectually and organizationally, however, the Muslim Brotherhood changed little over the decades leading to the twenty-first century. Unlike in South-East Asia, Arab-Islamic resurgence did not produce any new Islamic civil society movement worthy of the name independently of the longer established organization that could serve as a viable alternative to them. In particular, it hardly produced a single internationally renowned Muslim voice of interreligious dialogue. Only the Muslim Brotherhood of

Sudan, under the leadership of Hassan al-Turabi, emerged as more open in intellectual outlook and more flexible in its organizational operation.

The Indian subcontinent

Decades before the 1970s two mass Islamic movements had existed in pre-partitioned India. The older one, Jamaat al-tabligh, founded in 1921 by Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi, was a spiritual and *da'wah* movement aimed at the spiritual reformation of individuals. The other, Jama'at al-Islami, established 20 years later by Abul A'la al-Maududi, was a religious-political movement.[5]

The global Islamic resurgence that began in the 1970s helped both organizations to grow into well-known international movements, and they in turn played a significant role in influencing the course of the resurgence in the subcontinent and beyond. However, Jama'at al-tabligh proved to be a far more popular movement, now boasting more than 20 million members worldwide.

As a whole, Islamic resurgence in the subcontinent manifested itself in the expansion of each movement's ideological influence beyond the region to Malaysia and other places where there were large numbers of Pakistani and Indian migrants, while preserving its identity. Whatever new Islamic student, youth or other organizations were created in the 1970s, such as Jamaat al-Islami of Afghanistan, no other Islamic organizations emerged to complement the civil

society roles of the two movements and fill the gap they left unattended, unintentionally or otherwise, particularly in the area of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Turkey and the Turkic-speaking world

Of all the geocultural regions of the Islamic world, perhaps Turkey and the Turkic-speaking world had the most consequential Islamic resurgence of the 1970s. Turkish Islamic civil society was then in the making. Turkish-Islamic spirituality, intellectuality, education and politics manifested themselves anew within the milieu of the country's secularism.

The rise of political Islam in Turkey began in the 1970s with the establishment of an Islamic-rooted political party, the National Order Party or *Milli Nizam Partisi,* headed by Necmettin Erbakan. Since then, Turkey's political Islam movement has grown steadily in strength to become its most dominant political force.[6]

Intellectually, the 1970s saw a national discourse on issues related to the place of Islam in secular Turkish polity and the relations between Islam, the West and modernity. Individual scholars of Islam and intellectuals associated with some religious movements or groups, such as the Nursi movement founded by Said-i Nursi Bediuzzaman and the National Outlook Movement led by Erbakan, debated on these issues. Although Islamic intellectualism of the decade was pluralistic and even volatile with the once-dominant Nursi movement disintegrating as an intellectual force as a result of its fragmentation, especially after Fethullah Gulen's faction broke away from it, as a whole it became increasingly dynamic and interactive in the following decades. The 1980s witnessed the rise of Gulen's spiritual-educational movement which later became global in its mission.

The 1970s also saw the resurgence of Turkish Sufi groups, especially the Naqshbandi Order, who because of their traditional influence in society were courted by leaders of political Islam. The three major forces of Turkish Islam that crystallized during these two decades – the democratic political Islam spearheaded by Erbakan, the spiritually rooted social movement of Gulen and the Naqshbandi Sufi Order – helped pave the way for the empowerment of Islam in modern Turkey. All three are pro intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

The second significant event associated with the Islamic resurgence of the 1970s was the institutionalization of the collective voice of the global Muslim ummah. In 1969 heads of state and government of 25 Muslim majority countries attended a summit meeting in Rabat, Morocco where they decided to establish the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). The OIC was officially established in 1971 with its permanent secretariat to be based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Now with a membership of 57 states, some of which are not Muslim majority countries though having large Muslim populations, and renamed the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the OIC is the second biggest intergovernmental organization in the world after the United Nations.

The OIC's spirit of openness and inclusiveness in its membership and organizational programmes demonstrates

An intercultural and interreligious dialogue event in Malaysia: celebrating United Nations Harmony Week

the commitment of the Muslim ummah to intercultural and interreligious cooperation and dialogues at the international and global levels.

New Islamic intellectual movements

The third significant event of the 1970s was the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977, which gathered the cream of the Muslim world's scholars of Islam and intelligentsia to discuss the core problems of education in modern Muslim societies. This generated a series of world conferences dealing with different facets of education in the Muslim world, the last of which was held in Cape Town, South Africa in 1996. Its global impact is most visible in the emergence of the influential intellectual movement popularly known as the Islamization of knowledge, which sought to synthesize traditional and modern thought over a wide range of academic disciplines, and in the growth of intercultural and interfaith dialogue.[7]

Both the idea of Islamization of knowledge and the educational institutions attempting to realize it invited reactions from non-Muslims that necessitated intercultural rapprochement and dialogue. Over two decades the series of world conferences on Muslim education helped to inspire and generate cross-cultural perspectives on education, including science education that gained popularity in the 1990s, particularly within Muslim minority communities. During the decade regional workshops were held on cross-cultural perspectives on education under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Dialogue at the dawn of the twenty-first century

Muslim initiatives in intercultural understanding and interfaith dialogue in the 1990s at all levels – national, regional and global – have had such an impact on other cultures and religious communities that if it weren't for that fateful event of 11 September 2001 the dialogue momentum they had generated could have charted a more promising course in the twenty-first century. On the eve of the new century the OIC affirmed its collective stand on the Huntingtonian thesis of

The way Muslims conduct their intrafaith and intercultural relations can have great bearings on the future

the clash of civilizations by enthusiastically adopting the May 1999 Tehran Declaration of Dialogue among Civilizations that categorically rejected the thesis. The OIC Tehran Declaration was itself a speedy follow-up to the General Assembly of the United Nations' proclamation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.[8]

The need for such an event had been proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran under President Khatami, in the wake of the controversy surrounding Huntington's thesis and the various international seminars on 'civilizational dialogue' organized by the University of Malaya's Centre for Civilizational Dialogue organized in 1995 and 1996. The first seminar, on dialogue of civilizations between Islam and Confucianism, had a lasting impact on Muslim-Confucianist relations. It inspired similar dialogues in Malaysia, Indonesia and China and the formation of study circles aimed at deepening the subject of the dialogue. The second seminar, on civilizational dialogue between Japan, Islam and the West, was notable for the presence of Huntington as an invited speaker, and for the participation of several Japanese scholars.

The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Amman, Jordan, was internationally prominent in its interfaith activities in the 1990s, creating the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in 1994. But it was in the first decade of the twenty-first century, under its Director, Prince Ghazi, that it attracted global attention, especially through its 2007 high profile 'Common Word between Us and You' initiative that declares the common ground between Christianity and Islam and calls for peace between their respective followers. At the dawn of the new century many new Muslim intercultural dialogue outfits, both governmental and non-governmental, appeared on the national and international scenes. Among the prominent non-governmental ones are the International Institute of Dialogue among Civilizations founded by Khatami (2006) based in Tehran and the Gulen-inspired intercultural dialogue outfits, namely the Istanbul-based Journalists and Writers Foundation, the Washington-based Rumi Forum

and the New Delhi based Indialogue Foundation. Notable government-funded interreligious dialogue outfits include the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue in Qatar (2008), the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies, Malaysia (2008) patronized by Malaysia's former Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Badawi, and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (2011) in Vienna, founded by Saudi Arabia.

At the global level, Muslim governments took fresh initiatives to advance the cause of world peace through interreligious and cross-cultural dialogue. In 2005 the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain launched the Alliance of Civilizations which was later adopted as a United Nations initiative. Mainly in response to the atmosphere of mutual distrust, fear and polarization that characterized the global community in the post-11 September era, the initiative was aimed at reversing this trend "by garnering a broad coalition to foster greater cross-cultural tolerance and understanding." Muslims generally welcome the United Nations initiative, with many governmental organizations and NGOs devising programmes and establishing educational institutions to pursue its aims and objectives.

The European scene
Every contemporary society faces the challenge of how to deal with ethnic and religious diversity and pluralism so that citizens belonging to different ethnic and religious groups can live in peace and dignity. Basically, in every society we see two different responses to this diversity and pluralism: to reject it or behave as if it could somehow be erased (a response that usually comes from within the majority community); or to accept the fact and confront its reality.

Muslims in Europe have to face the challenge of dealing with both responses. The former response has manifested itself in many different guises collectively referred to as Islamophobia, the phobia of Islam's danger to European society from within.[9] The other response, which implies acceptance of living in a pluralistic society by both indigenous and immigrant commu-

Proactive steps to enhance mutual respect and understanding include intercultural exchange programmes among youth and students, particularly within the ASEAN regional community

nities, raises issues of national integration and assimilation which are by no means easy to resolve. Both responses call on Muslim communities in Europe to conduct intercultural rapprochement and interreligious dialogue with their respective indigenous majority communities.

There are scriptural, historical and pragmatic imperatives for positive interfaith relations and dialogue between Muslims, Christians, people of all religious faiths and those of none. Muslims understand the interrelatedness and interdependence of the human family. They have always teamed up with others in order to bring about values that will encourage moral and spiritual development. This is why interfaith relations, and Christian-Muslim relations in particular, are always important to the Muslim agenda.

Since the 1970s, active groups of Christians, Muslims and people of other religious faiths have done practical things together as equal partners in various European countries. The establishment of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (CSIC) in the then Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham is a prime example of what has been achieved. CSIC, which later became part of the Department of Theology and Religion in the University of Birmingham, has been involved in training, both academically and otherwise, a host of Christians and Muslims around the world who have gone on to be active in interfaith relations either as educationists or in other fields. The centre no longer exists in the same format, but the justification for its transformation was that it had created enough similar centres and institutions in Britain and around the world.

In the United Kingdom (UK) in particular, organizations such as the Interfaith Network, UK, the Christian-Muslim Forum, the

World Congress of Faiths and the International Conference for Dialogue amongst Jews, Christians and Muslim in Europe (JCM) are active in interfaith dialogue. At the Europe-wide level, perhaps, JCM Partners in Dialogue is the most enduring in terms of bringing together groups of religious leaders, theologians, academics and research students of theology and religious studies from the three Abrahamic faiths, annually for a Conference on Interfaith Dialogue.[10] There are a number of local interfaith groups around the UK involving, perhaps, all religious faiths on the planet.

At the academic level, with CSIC having paved the way, there are now a host of institutions offering programmes in interfaith studies. The Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations, University of Cambridge; the Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World, Edinburgh University; the Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Centre for Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge, and the Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, Oxford have a specific mission of research in interfaith studies.[11] The Al-Waleed Network links institutions around the world: Edinburgh and Cambridge (UK), Beirut (Middle East), Cairo (Africa) and Georgetown and Harvard (USA), all of which are committed to intercultural/interfaith research and activities.

Case study: Brunei Darussalam

At the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2014 the current ruler of Brunei Darussalam, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, stressed that the country will continue to be involved in worldwide initiatives to promote the principles of respect and mutual trust among communities across the world through interfaith and intercultural dialogues, and emphasized that these principles should serve as the foun-

Bruneian students participating in Women's Day celebration in Viet Nam

dation for conflict-solving and peace-seeking efforts. Under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, and guided by Brunei's national philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy, the country upholds its citizens' freedom to maintain their distinct religious and cultural identities and practices.

All religious groups in Brunei generally coexist in peace despite the existence of policies and laws that enforce restrictions on the propagation of beliefs other than those of Islam. Non-Islamic festivities such as Chinese New Year and Christmas are officially recognized by the Brunei Government as national public holidays. Christians, Buddhists and followers of other non-Islamic religions may celebrate their religious festivities in the privacy of their own communities. A common sight in Brunei is intercultural mixing in private and state-funded institutions; many Malay parents seek to enrol their children in Chinese schools, where there is greater opportunity for learning Mandarin and understanding the Bruneian-Chinese culture, while Chinese students enrolled in Malay-majority schools often sit for Islamic and Malay-related classes and mix freely with the majority group.

Muslim intercultural rapprochement initiatives in Brunei, especially in relation to the outside word, are mostly taken by the state institutions. The two most relevant ministries in this respect are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Ministry of Education. The Government has taken proactive steps to enhance mutual respect and understanding, such as establishing intercultural exchange programmes among youth and students, particularly within the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional community, of which Brunei is a member. The visible trend in recent years is the country's move towards closer intercultural relations in various

fields with all fellow ASEAN members. Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) is raising its international profile by hiring more non-Muslim academic expatriates and admitting foreign graduates for higher degrees. Many non-Muslim foreign graduate students coming from Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands receive scholarships from the Brunei Government.

UBD's Discovery Year Programme is helpful in promoting intercultural relations both within and outside Brunei, since students are given the opportunity to gain community-based or international experience outside the university campus. Similarly helpful is the Global Discovery Programme, launched in 2011, that offers international students an opportunity to experience student life in this culture-rich kingdom. Also important in promoting intercultural relations and dialogue is the role of the Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS), UBD's graduate centre established in 2010. Although new, SOASCIS has established an excellent international network, including organizations and institutions dedicated to the advancement of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Osman Bakar, SOASCIS' current Director, has been involved in intercultural and interreligious dialogue activities at all levels, from local to the global, during the last four decades. He has participated as speaker and paper presenter at numerous activities, and is author of many writings on the subject. He was closely associated among others with the Georgetown University's Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, The Archbishop of Canterbury's Building Bridges Seminar initiative, the University of Malaya's Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, The West-Islamic World Dialogue Initiative of the World Economic Forum, Geneva and the Centre for Buddhist-Muslim Understanding of Mahidol University, Thailand.

The universal message of Sikhism to mankind

Kulwant Singh and Inderjit Singh, Members, and Birendra Kaur, President, Institute of Sikh Studies

"None is a Hindu and none a Muslim" were the first words pronounced by Guru Nanak (1469-1539 AD), the founder prophet of Sikhism, when he reappeared after having been absent for three days. Hindus and Muslims, the two prominent religious communities of his times and region, were at loggerheads; hatred, intolerance and injustice were rampant and forcible conversions were the order of the day. Thus, he conveyed emphatically that foremost of all we are human beings, over and above any classification. He clearly desired to create individuals who rise above denominations: "We neither are Hindus nor Musalmans: Our body and life is Allah-Rama's."[1]

Sikhism, in its entirety, is the sum of the mystical, revelatory and cumulative experience of Guru Nanak and his successor nine Sikh Gurus (1469-1708). It provides a purely spiritual message for peaceful coexistence and integration to the whole of mankind. Sikhism believes in the complete non-duality of God, who is the prime cosmic energy at once transcendent and immanent in its created visible and invisible universe. It exists, creates, sustains and, at times, destroys its creation according to its own will, which remains inscrutable and beyond human reckoning. The quantification of its extent and the nature of its creation are beyond human comprehension. However, the magnitude of its immensity can be realized through mystical experience of some of the attributes of its persona — the single, monistic nature of its all-pervading, all-controlling power; its abiding eternal presence and its existence beyond the limits of time, space and vacuity; its progenitive energy; its inherently instinctive inclination of being free from fear and malice; its timeless, eternal existence; its mysterious self-created being and becoming and, above all, its all-embracing compassion, love and bounteous disposition. Sikhism's resultant theology, philosophy, ideology, history, societal practices, conventions and way of life are a corollary of these essential, seminal postulates enumerated in the very first verse, *mool mantar,* of Guru Nanak's *Japu* — a preamble to the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, the eternal Guru.

The firm belief of Sikhism in the monotheistic identity of Godhead and its malice-free, indiscriminate compassion and love for all created species, gives a message of the equality of human beings irrespective of their racial, ethnic, territorial, religious, cultural and civilizational affiliations: "Since from one Light is the whole world created — who is noble, who inferior?"[2] It preaches the fatherhood/mother-hood of God — "Thou art my father and mother, conferring joy on my life and breath"[3] — from which follows brotherhood of man: "Of one father are we all children; Thou my Preceptor."[4] Sikhism does not recognize any social hierarchical order, and respect for dignity of every individual is inbuilt in the Sikh metaphysics and way of life. Stress on the equality of women is unparalleled. It was Guru Nanak who challenged the age-old biases against women and demolished these with logic: "Why revile her of whom are born great ones of the earth?"[5] He advocated equality of women with vehemence, unknown before him or even now. Courtesy of the concepts and practices of women's empowerment introduced by the Gurus, Sikh women have performed significant roles of service, valour and leadership throughout Sikh history.

The Sikh Gurus preached their message through their precept and example, words and deeds and their verses in Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak, along with his two disciples — Bala, a Hindu, and Mardana, a Muslim — travelled across the length and breadth of India and a few neighbouring countries and held discussions with the leaders of religious faiths, also acquainting them with his own mystical realization of the monotheistic presence of God and His abiding love for all creatures. The third Sikh Guru, Guru Amardas, initiated the tradition of partaking food together by all, irrespective of social status, caste, class or religious denomination. This practice *(langar)* continues to serve humanity throughout the world in Sikh places of worship, *gurdwara,* to this day and inspires, through its generous, charitable act of free distribution of food, to serve the victims of natural calamities and disasters. Serving the needy is considered an expression of one's love for God: "Lord! Thy grace falls on the land where the poor are cherished."[6]

The fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, got the foundation stone of the historic Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple at Amritsar, laid by a Sufi saint, Hazrat Mian Mir. In its architectural design, he kept four doors opening in four directions, symbolizing access to all to the *gurdwara* and further endorsing the pluralistic outlook of Sikhism's message and appeal. There is not a trace of any communal, religious or sectarian bias or exclusiveness about the Sikh faith either in the stance of Sikh Gurus as the sole intermediaries between man and God, or in the worship of Sikh Gurus as cult figures leading to the ultimate emancipation of human beings. In fact, the Guru identifies himself with the lowliest of the lowly: "The lowest among the low-caste; those still lower and condemned — Nanak is by their side; He envies not the great of the world."[7] In addition,

Image: Kirpal Signh, 1952

Bhai Kanhaiya serving water to Sikh and enemy soldiers on the battlefield – an example of the importance in Sikhism of doing selfless service to friend and foe alike

he prays to God to save the world through whichever way He deems fit: "Save by Thy grace, the world in flames; save it at whatever portal it may be saved."[8] The customary daily Sikh prayer, *Ardas,* concludes with the supplication 'welfare of all'. A similar spirit of respect and love for the whole of mankind runs throughout the linguistic phraseology of Guru Granth Sahib. The scripture is a unique text of pure spiritual ecstasy, reflecting the unity of the divine creator and its creation in a rare cosmic togetherness. In addition to the verses of the Gurus, selected verses of various contemporary sages and saints from different religious denominations are also included herein. Many a name used for God by Hindu, Muslim and other oriental religious faiths finds mention in it with equal respect to emphasize the divinity and oneness of the divine power.

The Guru's religion is a whole-life religion, and aims at a balanced development of the individual physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. The Guru rejects the dichotomy of spiritual *(piri)* life and temporal *(miri)* life,

and stresses the significance of spiritual ethics in temporal deeds. The Guru calls life a 'game of love', which is to be played with absolute commitment. He beckons his followers thus: "Shouldst thou seek to play the game of love, step into my street with thy head placed on thy palm: While on to this stepping, ungrudgingly sacrifice your head."[9]

Sikhism's message is to live a life of dignity and uphold human rights; one must protect not only one's own rights, but also those of the oppressed and the suppressed. Tyranny should be resisted by all means, even by fighting if all else fails. Brave is considered the one who fights for the helpless: "The true hero is one who fights in defence of the humble; is cut limb after limb, and flees not the field."[10] The saint-warrior is a fundamental concept of an ideal human being in Sikhism, in whom the righteousness of a saint and the dynamism of a warrior integrate and assimilate. In other words, one is neither to frighten anyone nor fear anyone: "One that strikes not terror in others, nor of others stands in fear — saith Nanak: Listen my self, know

Many Sikh institutions and charities provide valuable services to disadvantaged sections of society, across the board

such a one to be liberated."[11] One is to recognize God's will and, as His instrument, ever engage in carrying out the same through altruistic deeds. Respect for each other's beliefs and views is the bedrock of Sikhism: "None now is our foe, not a stranger — with all are we in accord."[12] It holds this fundamental human right of freedom to profess one's faith to the extent of defending it even at the cost of one's life. The voluntary sacrifice of the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, in 1675, in protest against the forcible conversions of followers of another religion, Hindus, by the then Mughal ruler, bears testimony to the earnest Sikh espousal and vindication of the basic human right of religious freedom. Subsequently, the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh's militant combating of religious persecution through his creation of the Khalsa commonwealth and their ultimate sacrifices for righteousness further corroborate Sikhism's firm belief in human rights. Sikhism lays great stress on inculcating virtues, as these go a long way to create individuals, who are sensitive to the needs of fellow beings: "Break no heart — know, each being is a priceless jewel. Each heart is a jewel; evil it is to break any; Shouldst thou seek to find the Beloved, break no one's heart."[13]

Sikhism places as much stress on the justness of the means as on that of the ends. It advocates earning one's livelihood through hard work and honest means, sharing this with the needy and living in continuous remembrance of God. This trinity of the fundamental doctrine, *kirat karna, wand chhakna* and *naam japna,* keeps human beings from being arrogant and parasites, freeloaders and ascetic escapists: "Those that eat the bread of their labour and give

away something in charity, saith Nanak, truly recognize the way."[14] Grabbing and acquiring what does not come through one's own labour finds widespread condemnation in Sikh thought: "Saith Nanak: To grab what is another's is evil, as pig's flesh to the Muslim and cow's flesh to the Hindu."[15] Living a life of uprightness — good moral conduct — is therefore deeply etched in the Sikh psyche; so much so that Sikhism puts a premium on truthful living even more than on truth itself: "Realization of Truth is higher than all else — higher still is truthful living."[16] Rendering selfless service to the deprived and the disadvantaged through voluntary assistance in any form makes truthful living more tangible than mere rhetorical talk about truth. Bhai Kanhaiya's free and indiscriminate act of serving water on the battlefield to Sikh and enemy soldiers alike, and dressing their wounds on Guru Gobind Singh's bidding, is an example. Many premier Sikh institutions and individual charities provide valuable services to disadvantaged sections of society, across the board.

Sikhism, being a comprehensive way of life, is as much concerned with the physical aspects of human life and its environment as with the metaphysical and philosophical aspects of life. It considers both the planet Earth and the human body as equally sacred abodes of the divine: "This world is the holy Lord's chamber; in it is His abode."[17] Acts of pollution and the contamination of both is considered an act of sacrilege and desecration. The concluding verse of Guru Nanak's *Japu* considers air as the guiding breath, the water as seminal paterfamilias and the Earth as the creative mother: "Air is the vital force; water the Progenitor; The vast Earth the mother of all; Day and Night are nurses, fondling all creation in their lap."[18] The Sikh Gurus developed water bodies, planted mangroves and made Sikh shrines on the banks of rivers. The Sikh scripture gives a message to keep away from drugs and intoxicants, and to live in tune with nature. Sikhs maintain the body in its natural form as gifted by God — the most eco-friendly way of life.

It is for the holistic value system of Sikhism that leading historians, scholars, Nobel laureates and thinkers have recognized and appreciated the universalism and significance of the Sikh religion to mankind. To quote Pearl S Buck: "I have studied the scriptures of the great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find in these volumes (Guru Granth Sahib)... They speak to the person of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind,"[19] and Arnold Toynbee: "The Adi Granth (Guru Granth Sahib) is part of mankind's common spiritual treasure. It is important that it should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible."[20] The Sikh value system is a unique blend of concepts and practices, which are ideal for creating an environment conducive to peaceful coexistence among communities and cultures, on account of the simplicity of its metaphysics, the span of its vision and the universalism of its approach.

All the quotes of Guru Granth Sahib are taken from its translation by Gurbachan Singh Talib: Sri Guru Granth Sahib – in English Translation, Punjabi University, Patiala, (Punjab) 1997.

Religion is part of the solution

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When, in 1935, Joseph Stalin asked: "How many divisions?" to gauge the relevance of the Vatican on the international scene, he pretty much encapsulated the disdain of state rulers of the time regarding religion as a significant component of world affairs. Neither good nor bad, religion did not matter. There were several reasons for this neglect, such as the building of the international community after the Wesphalian treaty of 1648 as a club of rational state actors acting primarily on material and security interests — although reality may not always have complied with this dominant perception.

Nevertheless, the end of the cold war and the emergence of political groups which are religiously motivated, most notoriously Al Qaeda and now ISIS, has dramatically

Image: Berkley Center

To overcome essentialization, it is important not to reduce religion to beliefs or texts

changed this perception. It has been the work of Samuel Huntington, first presented in a 1993 article in Foreign Affairs and subsequently elaborated in a 1996 book, which has dominated the discourse on culture as an element in international conflicts. Huntington argues that Islam is uniquely incompatible with and antagonistic to the core values of the West (such as equality and modernity). This argument resurfaces in most current analyses of international affairs and globalization, notably in terrorist studies since 9/11. However, as abundantly proven by the social sciences, civilizations are not homogenous, monolithic players in world politics with an inclination to 'clash', but rather consist of pluralistic, divergent and convergent actors and practices that are constantly evolving.[1] Thus, the 'clash of civilizations' fails to address not only conflict between civilizations but also conflict and differences within civilizations. In particular, evidence does not exist to substantiate Huntington's prediction that countries with similar cultures are coming together, while countries with different cultures are coming apart.

In all these analyses, the answer provided to the question, "Why do they hate us?" rarely takes the wider context of competition for political influence, regional dynamics and historical sequences into account. Rather, it is almost always based on discussion of textual and ideological use of religious references by Muslim actors.

The cultural divide is thus envisaged as the primary cause of international crises. Admittedly, the 'Huntingtonian' position is based on a premise that cannot be simply dismissed: that identity and culture play a decisive role in international relations. But what culture and what Islam are being spoken of here? The idea of a monolithic Islam leads to a reductionism in which the conflicts in Sudan, Lebanon, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan are imagined to stem collectively and wholly from the domain of religion. It is, moreover, ironic that the role of religion, so long ignored or neglected in terms of international politics, is now exaggerated and decontextualized in an ahistorical perspective, which has elicited its fair share of criticism from scholars of Islamic cultures.

Seen in this light, the clash of civilizations is an attempt, albeit a consistently inadequate one, to shift international politics away from an exclusively nation-state-centric approach, only to immediately recreate and legitimate the view of a fixed world of cultural agents participating in predetermined conflicts of interest. This is to say that any attempt at an analysis of culture and global cultural conflict
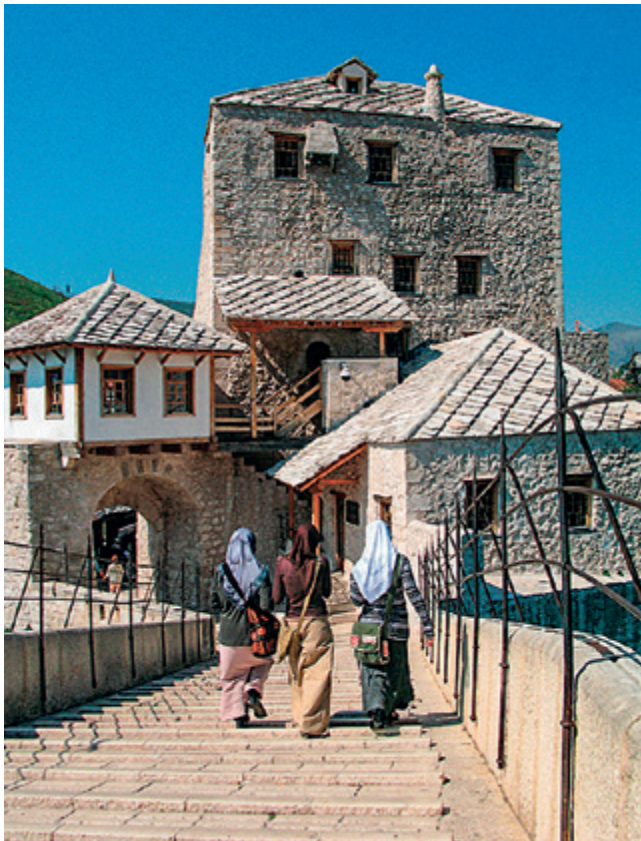
Since the mid twentieth century, several global movements for interreligious peace have broken barriers between the world's leading religions and among governmental, civic and religious leaders

is an admirable one, but it must not be done through a reification of both culture and civilization.

This ahistorical approach to Islam's global role affects all other religions and their role in international relations.[2] Most of the time, religious manifestations are seen as ideological phenomena — that is, as ideas or beliefs. Such an approach reduces religion to a rhetoric that is used in political mobilization and hence gives the illusion that the knowledge of concepts and symbols of religious traditions is the major way to understand their role in politics.

To overcome this essentialization, it is important not to reduce religion to beliefs or texts. Doing so, does not allow an understanding of how and when it can be positive and a tool for rapprochement. For example, young Muslim activists in South Africa fought against apartheid alongside other religious communities and justified their fight through an interpretation of the Ummah (community of believers) as synonymous with a more inclusive South African nation. Today, the same references are used by radicals like ISIS to divide and fight. So the religious texts do not explain political conditions, unless we take into account the contexts: the cultural and historical conditions that inform the behaviours and interpretations of the believers.

More generally, it is imperative to include religious actors and groups in any attempt at conflict resolution. Since the mid twentieth century, several global movements for interreligious peace have broken barriers between the world's leading religions and among governmental, civic and religious leaders. For example, Religions for Peace (established in 1970) has played a significant role in hosting peacebuilding conventions among religious leaders, United Nations delegates and representatives of state governments; and the Christian Community of Sant'Egidio (established in 1968) has, in addition to its services for the poor, played a noteworthy role in mediating peace negotiations in Mozambique, Algeria and elsewhere. Encouraged by such movements, a number of religious leaders have, increasingly over the past five to ten years, called for direct cooperation among the world's religions to renounce interreligious violence and nurture interreligious peace. Recent statements by the emergent Global Covenant of Religions serve as a prototype for these calls.

In April 2014, His Majesty King Abdullah invited religious scholars, faith leaders and diplomats to Amman to respond to calls for a 'Global Covenant' and to form a steering group — the 'Ring of Faiths' — to work together

Religion can be a source for civility, especially at the level of local communities, too often neglected by policy makers

on recommendations for a document and process in the United Nations that would lay out actionable and measurable goals to reduce interreligious and intersectarian violence. Participation and support have included His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, His Holiness Pope Francis, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, His Eminence the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom Lord Sacks, Rabbi David Rosen, Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, His Eminence former Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheikh Ali Gomaa, former President of Ireland Mary MacAleese, His Eminence the Nigerian Sultan of Sokoto Sa'ad Abubakar, Director of Shanti Asram Doctor Vinu Aram and Supreme Patriarch of Cambodia the Venerable Tep Vong, among other high-ranking officials and scholars.

In the same vein, religious groups and actors are important in economic development. It has been amply documented that the Sufi group, Tidjaniyaa, has been central in the development of peanut agriculture in Senegal. The role of Catholic and Protestant groups such as Bread for the World and Misereor in the economic development of entire regions in Africa, Latin America and Asia has also been significant. But religious groups are rarely invited to any international discussion on economic development or climate change.

Another neglected aspect is the influence of religion on democracy. For example, three quarters of the countries of democratization's 'third wave' were Catholic. While not all local Catholic churches supported democratization, the Second Vatican Council's endorsement of Human rights in 1963 and Pope Paul VI's 1965 Dignitatis Humanae, which declared religious liberty a basic right rooted in human dignity, certainly played a role in this endorsement. This was a significant change from the Church's previous opposition to democracy and even the Westphalian state.

In these conditions, it is imperative that leaders take religions seriously both domestically and internationally.

However it is easier said than done for the reasons enunciated above: since the Westphalian treaty, states actions are defined on secular principles in the international arena. There is therefore a strong secular culture that prevents or inhibits governmental and international agencies to take into account the religious dimension of peace building, conflict resolution and any form of positive development. The main reason for this inhibition is related to the dominant but false perception that religious groups and actors are not as rational, nor inclined to compromise, as non-religious ones. This perception is reinforced by a primary focus on religious texts and ideologies to apprehend religion and politics which disregards the empirical reality of the 'belonging' and 'behaving' of religious individuals and groups. It also neglects the crucial influence of political and cultural contexts that fashion and shape the readings and interpretations of religious texts. In other words, the understanding of the context in which religious actors are operating is key to identifying the ones that could support international initiatives in favour of peace or rapprochement. It also means that such international policies inclusive of religion will require specific information and understanding that cannot be gathered in the high peak of crisis or conflict but rather through a prior understanding of religion across nations and regions. In this regard, the very rich and diverse information on and from religious groups in different national and regional contexts is an important resource that should be gathered by an international agency such as UNESCO in order to be available to international organizations and state actors during times of crisis. It would also be critical to create a global network of religious groups and actors of all denominations and traditions who work locally in favour of peace, economic development and social justice. The key word here is 'local'. Too often, the action of religion at the international level consists of high profile religious figures signing a document enunciating the broad principles of peace and tolerance. In most of the cases, these documents do not have any impact on the ground. For example, the Amman Message, initiated by the King of Jordan in 2004 is a remarkable document bringing prominent Muslim figures to assert or re-assert the tolerance of the Islamic message. Regretfully, this document is not known or referenced by religious actors in different localities. In contrast, a more positive action led by an international organization would create a continuously updated repository of resources and information on religious groups and actors who are not automatically religious scholars and authorities but who act positively in the name of religion. Such an international observatory and database does not have to be built from scratch. It can take advantage of the existing information and data from the national levels and international religious organizations.

When world leaders met in the year 2000 at the United Nations, to identify major challenges for the new millennium, they did not include religion as a tool of economic and political development. Introducing religious actors and organizations into policymaking is certainly sorely needed to overcome the one-sided perception of religion as the problem for national and international peace.

Creating and supporting interreligious councils in the Asia-Pacific region

Professor Emeritus Gary D Bouma, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Relations, School of Social and Political Inquiry, Monash University, Australia

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chair in Interreligious and Intercultural Relations – Asia Pacific (UCIIR-AP) is an educational, research and policy activity centred in the School of Social Science, Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. The UNESCO Chair for the Asia-Pacific was awarded to Monash University in 2004 and was launched by the late Abdurrahman Wahid, former President of Indonesia. The Chairholder is Professor Emeritus Gary D Bouma, the Deputy Chairholder is Professor Greg Barton, and the UCIIR-AP Senior Associates are Dr Anna Halafoff (Deakin University) and Dr Basoeki Koesasi.[1]

UCIIR-AP activities in recent years have centred on conducting and reporting research in the area of religious diversity, religious resurgence, religious responses to climate change, interreligious youth networks and countering radicalization in the Asia-Pacific region. Our research findings have informed local, state and Commonwealth government policy in Australia, as well as other governmental and non-governmental bodies working for interreligious understanding and harmony in the region and globally.

Interreligious councils

The UCIIR-AP has focused on research-informed policy initiatives to promote healthy interreligious relations in the Asia-Pacific region. This has taken several forms.

The Chairholder and team were instrumental in winning the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions (PWR) for the region. This is the most inclusive of the interreligious movements as all persons, of whatever religion and none, are welcome to be heard respectfully. Over 5,000 people participated and the impact continues in myriad ways around the world.

The most direct impact of PWR 2009 has been the formation of interfaith councils in 23 of the 25 city councils that exercise local government in the city of Melbourne. With a highly diverse population of 5 million people, over one-quarter of whom are migrants and who follow over 125 different religious traditions, Melbourne provides a model for healthy interreligious relations.

The Chairholder and team have been instrumental and very active in meeting with local interreligious councils including the Multi-Faith Advisory Group to the Premier of the State and the Multi-Faith Council of Victoria Police. In addition, regional interreligious councils have been established in country towns to assist in the inclusion of migrants from diverse religious backgrounds. These migrants, although culturally different, are welcome because their presence keeps open local services such as schools, clinics, banks and pharmacies.

When disruptive or potentially disruptive events occur either locally or overseas, these interreligious councils are active in convening meetings of a wide spectrum of religious leaders with government officials, police leadership and other community organizations to ensure that the correct information is circulating, that aggrieved persons and communities have opportunities to be heard, and to replace understandable fearful reactions with community-building action. The fact that structures are already in place and essential trust has been built makes it possible to do this in the face of local incidences of violence. Incidences of harassment against local minority religious groups are treated seriously and referred to the police.

The Chairholder and associates of the UIICR-AP are regular participants in, and are called on to address, interfaith gatherings along with politicians and other civic leaders. Because we are ourselves people of faith, and are familiar with the faith lives of those from many other traditions as well as those with none, we offer a balancing perspective that values the role of beliefs and world views in society. We provide in the team an example of interfaith cooperation and mutual respect.

Most recently the Chairholder has been involved in working with other civic leaders to settle a conflict that was sparked in a medium-sized country town when resident Muslims wished to build a mosque. Individuals and groups who were not residents had stimulated a few locals and brought in outsiders to protest. The protest failed and the building permit was issued, but the community was unsettled. The local Muslim community, with local and state civic leaders, held meetings with community leaders and then sponsored an Eid festival dinner celebrating the community's religious diversity. Out of this, an interfaith council has been formed for the region and is commencing its role in promoting interfaith understanding and mutual respect.

The Chairholder and New Zealand associates were part of the effort to establish an interreligious council for the Pacific Islands. Following this the Australian and Indonesian governments sponsored a series of Regional Interfaith Dialogue conferences which drew together first leaders and then youth from the Asia-Pacific region to share stories and approaches. The Chairholder and associates were involved in planning and conducting these sessions.

Since most of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region have one very dominant religion with only quite small minority

religious groups, one of the most pressing tasks is to provide opportunities for people of different faiths to meet each other in safe environments. On some occasions the UCIIR-AP has been able to provide Jewish participants with interfaith dialogue sessions in Indonesia.

The Chairholder and associates have been working in cooperation with several organizations in Indonesia to promote interreligious understanding and respect. We have been regular contributors to the International Conference of Islamic Scholars, Muhammadiya Third World Peace conferences and others. Gadja Mada University in Yogyakarta has an excellent graduate programme in interreligious relations and has ongoing research and teaching ties with Monash University. Being able to describe a very different situation, one that shows how religious diversity can be managed in such a way that it is viewed as a strength and asset, is very important in these contexts as everywhere the world is becoming more diverse. The UCIIR-AP has been very active in finding ways to help those for whom religious diversity is a new reality to overcome their fear and initial negative reactions.

The Deputy Chairholder, Professor Greg Barton, and the Senior Associate Dr Koesasi are in regular contact with senior figures in the Australian and Indonesian governments on issues related to interreligious relations. These issues directly intersect with security and counter violent extremism policies and programmes.

The role of religious groups in countering violent extremism has occupied a substantial amount of time and effort for all the UCIIR-AP team. Balancing security needs with promoting intergroup understanding and respect is utterly critical at this point. Through research and community consultations the UCIIR-AP seeks to ensure that the wisdom of religious leaders is heard and that, in the face of the temptation to accuse and berate others, efforts to learn from and support each other in a community of mutual respect and care characterizes our dispositions and actions.

The role of education

The UCIIR-AP (Bouma and Halafoff), along with Associate Professor Mary Lou Rasmussen of the Faculty of Education, have worked with a team of colleagues from Warwick University to win a Monash-Warwick collaboration grant to develop a consortium to study religious literacy and its correlates in Australia. This is a key educational initiative in the area of interreligious and intercultural relations and offers the opportunity not only for a deeper academic understanding of religious literacy, but also the possibility of information for evidence-based policy in this area.

This research has grown out of a five-year programme of active lobbying and community education about the need for education about religions and world views in the curriculum of the state schools in Australia. When they were established, state schools were declared to be secular. Teaching about religions was forbidden in order to exclude Christian sectarian rivalry from disrupting education and to release the state from having to act as a broker of 'orthodox' teaching about Christianity. The fact that this leaves citizens ignorant about a major force shaping not only the lives of others, but also global conflict and development, has begun to be appreciated along with the need for helpful teaching about religions and

The Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 in Melbourne, taking a stand for sustainable living

world views. The UCIIR-AP is now directly involved in revising the curriculum and in devising new initiatives in this area.

In addition to a long list of publications, both academic and those intended to inform the public, the UCIIR-AP has produced well over 20 PhDs to work in this area. But the ongoing legacy will be found in the extensive and growing list of interreligious councils bringing together people of faith to learn about each other and from each other in a context of mutual respect. Both reflecting and supporting our efforts and those of many others, the success of Australia's approach to multicultural policies and religious diversity is seen in the bipartisan commitment to promoting mutual respect in a diverse community. The State of Victoria Government multicultural policy is titled 'Victoria's Advantage'. Diversity, including religious diversity, is seen as an advantage, not a challenge or a problem. Where possible, the UCIIR-AP seeks to help other communities take steps in this direction and to maintain structures and networks that enable mutual trust and respect among people and groups of different religions and world views.

We have also focused on establishing academic networks and building bridges between religious communities in Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and India. Links are also being forged with other UNESCO chairs, regionally and globally, in order to coordinate activities and thereby strengthen their impact.

While always at the forefront, the UCIIR-AP has a long list of associate organizations and people who share the aim of promoting interreligious understanding and mutual respect in the Asia-Pacific region. We support and are involved in the work of Religions for Peace, Religions for Peace (Asia), the Dialogue of Civilizations, the Parliament of the World's Religions, the Interfaith Youth Core and many others. In this context our focus has been on education about religions and world views that is grounded in a holistic encounter with the other, which provides an experience of mutual humanity facing shared challenges and being strengthened by finding solutions by our faith and/or world views.

The Commonwealth's Civil Paths to Peace

*Nabeel Goheer, Director and Lauren Stasinowsky, Governance Support Officer,
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Civil Paths to Peace (CPP) is the Commonwealth approach to conflict prevention and promoting sustainable peace. At the 2005 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), heads of government requested the Commonwealth Secretary-General "to explore initiatives to promote mutual understanding and respect among all faiths and communities in the Commonwealth." In response, the Secretary-General convened a Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding which was chaired by the Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen and comprised eminent persons from across the Commonwealth. The commission's report was presented to the 2007 CHOGM.

The CPP approach is deeply rooted in the concepts of respect and understanding. It hinges on the appreciation of multiple identities and celebration of diversity in a globalized and interconnected world. It is anchored in the Commonwealth values of multilateralism, tolerance, dialogue, democracy, human rights and social inclusion and identifies young people, women, education and the media as four important areas of focused effort.

At the 2011 CHOGM, heads of government reiterated the importance of the CPP approach. The related communiqué emphasized that promoting tolerance, respect, understanding and religious freedom is essential to the development of free and democratic societies.

The CPP approach

CPP has a very narrow and focused mandate — it is about finding ways for different groups of people to see each other as human beings with a variety of concerns and affiliations that do not need to be constantly at loggerheads with each other. The Commonwealth could play a significant constructive role in the use of dialogue and multilateralism in dealing with issues related to violent conflict. The commission also suggested that in doing so, we should recognize the positive and construc-

Children participating in the Commonwealth Class, learning about the Commonwealth values of respect and understanding

tive role which civil initiatives can have in building peace. It also underlined the critical role women and youth can play in reconciliation. Moreover, while it stressed that individual policies must depend on specific circumstances and vary from country to country, it emphasized the overwhelming importance of agreeing on general policy priorities.

The commission's report enabled the Commonwealth to develop a number of tenets to underpin its work in this area. The first is the Commonwealth's fundamental values, especially human rights. Of particular importance is respect for the right of others to hold and express a view, even if one does not respect or share the doctrine, belief or view espoused.

The second tenet underpinning the Commonwealth's work in this field is that ethnic and/or religious identities are rarely the root causes of conflict: rather, people fight to wrest power or maintain hegemony.

Thirdly, we recognize that humiliation can add insult to injury, leading to frustration and violence. Addressing these emotions, and where possible their causes, is vital for finding lasting solutions.

Fourth, the Commonwealth's approach is based on dialogue, negotiation and consensus. Processes that use this approach are essential, as military paths cannot themselves create sustainable solutions.

Finally, the Commonwealth recognizes that individuals have multiple identities. People do not live, feel or act out singular identities, such as 'Muslim', 'Westerner', 'Lawyer' or 'Teacher', and should not be labelled in such a singular way. Individuals should be encouraged to explore their own multiple or cosmopolitan identities.

A key difference in the Commonwealth's work from other initiatives is this notion of multiple identities. The concept provides a different way for individuals to think about themselves and others that has the potential to be more helpful in dealing with conflicts. It presents an argument that there is a need for more dialogue and discussion on the richness of human identities and the counterproductive nature of placing people in rigidly separated identity boxes linked with religion or community, regardless of how positively each religion or community is described. The importance of individuals' cosmopolitan identities also demands greater recognition, without denying that other identities can comfortably coexist.

CPP takes a different perspective by encouraging people to think of themselves and others in terms of their multiple identities. It further considers the importance of addressing grievances and humiliation to bring about a lasting peace. It does not consider clashes on the basis of religion to be inevitable. Instead, from the Commonwealth perspective, each nation is first and foremost a society of individuals that have multiple sources of affiliation and many bases on which to relate to each other.

There is a need for much more dialogue and discussion on the richness of human identities and also on the need to avoid placing people in rigidly separated boxes, linked with religion or community. The cultivation of a non-denominational national identity can also be very important in providing political cohesion within a country, without denying the claims of broader identities that people may also wish to pursue linked with continental loyalties or even the shared human

Nabeel Goheer presenting Civil Paths to Peace at the South American Business Forum in Buenos Aires, Argentina

identity that all enjoy. Policies here have to pay particular attention to the nature and content of school education, as well as public discussion. The avoidance of sectarian divisions within a nation can be a very important component of the civil approach to peace.

Faith has been used throughout history to promote the interests of those with destructive aims. As a legitimizing discourse for violence, faith has an advantage over purely political ideologies because of its ability to justify, inspire, empower — and not be proved wrong. This is due to the transcendental nature of belief, the inspiration of religious hope and the centrality of faith. Convinced by their leaders that their way of life or their belief system is superior to others, individuals can be easily persuaded that their fundamental values and way of life are under threat. Once the threat has been internalized and a powerful sense of fear generated, it is a small step to believing that violence is justified and that a war must be waged to preserve their pre-ordained way of life.

Systematically engineered violence makes effective — and often lethal — use of selected group identities with adversarial attitudes towards other groups, combined with the downplaying of many other identities that individuals also have, including the broad commonality of our shared humanity. For example, the recruitment of terrorist activists and the creation of a climate where violent deeds are tolerated by a large section of a normally peaceful population undoubtedly rely on impassioned advocacies of violence and the emotional evocation of a special group identity, to the exclusion of all other affiliations.

The challenges of global violence and hatred are by no means new to governments and the international community.

Former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Kamal Hussain, Lord Alderdice, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Kamalesh Sharma, and Prof. Amartya Sen at the launch of the Commonwealth's book, 'Peace and Democratic Society'

We have seen that one-sided imposed solutions have tended to fail in carrying hearts and minds, and that such approaches are therefore unlikely to be effective or credible.

Communication is a key to overcoming violence, and mass media has an enormous influence in helping to shape public opinion and underlying sentiment. A flourishing media can make a very large contribution in strengthening the civil paths to peace and security. A flourishing media can make public discussion better informed, allow alternative points of view to be more fully expressed, and also help make the shared objectives of the nation and the world more analysed and understood. This is not to deny that there are cases in which the media has been used to generate hostility to others and to promote violence. While some restraint would thus be useful and sometimes necessary, particular care has to be taken to make sure that the steps to do this are proportionate and balanced to in order to safeguard freedom of expression, which is central to CPP.

Civil peacebuilding initiatives can play a positive and constructive role in achieving reconciliation, particularly when women and young people are engaged as positive agents of change. It is important to pay special attention to the participation of these often marginalized groups, including development and training, and sharing models of successful incorporation.

The biggest gains in shaping shared narratives across potential divides will most likely come from investment in, and rethinking of, education. Educational participation itself can be a symptom of embedded inequality and lack of opportunity. The distribution of education shapes tendencies towards inclusion or exclusion and, thus, general patterns are evident in a particular society. The effects on respect and understanding can be substantial, although they may be indirect in their nature.

In addition, educational content is linked with the promotion of respect and understanding — or the opposite. Thus the educational curriculum is central in embodying and communication values and messages about the relationships and understandings between and across existing identity groups. Teaching children in the compulsory schooling system about the cultural heritage of a range of ethnic and religious communities is a typical intervention based on multicultural models of stimulating appetite for knowledge. As well as giving an understanding of comparative religion and ethnic and cultural groups, it is important to teach children that there are fundamental human values that transcend religious, cultural and ethnic boundaries — the duty to treat others with respect and dignity, and to do unto others as you wish to be treated yourself.

Education is not just about formal education; it is about life-long learning, including in very particular situations. For example, it includes programmes that aim to bring conflicting parties together in peacebuilding activities or in political education programmes for post conflict-situations. As such, education is an instrument for understanding both differences and the potential for fault lines to descend into conflict and violence.

The Commonwealth has a well-established approach to tackling conflict and political differences, involving multilateral consultations and extensive dialogues, even when the positions held by different parties seem distant. In a world in which different people, despite sharing a common interest in peace, security and justice, find themselves divided by mutual incomprehension and scepticism — and sometimes even suspicion — the affirmation of the importance of multilateralism, with mutual respect, can help to create a more positive climate for tolerance, support and collaboration. The Commonwealth attaches great importance to the constructive use of a dialogue-based approach to dealing with issues of group-based conflict in the world today.

Strategy and practical steps

The Commonwealth's work on respect and understanding did not end with the publication of the CPP report. The Secretariat has adopted a three-pronged strategy to propagate CPP. Firstly, the CPP messages are being disseminated through international fora, the Commonwealth family and broader media networks. Secondly, work is underway to understand the anatomy of conflict and local peacebuilding initiatives in countries of the Commonwealth. This baseline work will be used to devise strategies of engagement that are suitable within the local and national context. Thirdly, the CPP approach has been further clarified by undertaking comparative analysis with other contemporary approaches. This includes comparisons with the cultural approach that emphasizes 'civilizational conflict' and the economic approach that places focus on 'poverty' as the primary source of conflicts.

The Commonwealth's ongoing engagement with various multilateral and academic institutions aims to raise awareness of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and religious tolerance and diversity.

The Commonwealth Secretariat was invited to deliver the keynote address at the South American Business Forum that was held in Buenos Aires in 2011. A presentation on 'Living in exponential times' focused on highlighting the importance of wisdom, democracy, diversity and dialogue.

In 2012, the Secretariat participated in the British Council's Global Citizenship Forum as one of 50 selected experts, analysts, academics and civil society activists from across the world. Diverse viewpoints and perspectives were shared by the participants and a strong case on defining 'global citizenship' from the values perspective was made by the Secretariat which was adopted by the forum.

The Secretary-General chaired a three-day dialogue on 'Multiculturalism and religion in foreign policy' organized by the Ditchley Foundation, Oxford in April 2012. This seminar was attended by 37 selected policymakers, diplomats and academics from different countries, ethnicities and religious predispositions. They exchanged thoughts and ideas on this complex issue. The outcomes of the meeting have been disseminated to academia and senior policymakers.

In 2013, the Commonwealth Roundtable on Reconciliation brought together expert practitioners, state representatives, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations to present a rich mosaic of how member states have sought to realize reconciliation and other post-conflict needs across the Commonwealth.

In preparation for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, the Commonwealth Secretariat together with the British Council and the BBC launched Commonwealth Class to promote understanding of the Commonwealth, its goals and values among schoolchildren, linking Commonwealth themes of democracy, development and diversity. The initiative delivered 30 knowledge products and capacity building programmes reaching 88,091 schools across the Commonwealth.

Most recently, in 2015, the Secretary-General presented the Commonwealth's work on respect and understanding to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Executive Board.

The Commonwealth also continues to engage at the national level in all its regions. In Asia, a preliminary report on the types and sources of conflicts in Pakistan and ongoing conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives has been completed. The Commonwealth Secretariat is also in dialogue with the Pakistan Chapter of 'Charter of Compassion' to develop pilot projects to promote common messages. Initial discussions are also ongoing with consultant(s) to develop a feasibility study for establishing a Commonwealth institute for dialogue and democracy in Pakistan.

In the Caribbean, an exploratory mission coordinated by the Belize High Commission in London brought youth and media as two plausible entry points for the Commonwealth Respect and Understanding work. A number of local organizations and two United Nations agencies (the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Labour Organization) were interested to collaborate in imparting dialogue skills as a way of conflict resolution, creating opportunities for enterprise development through training young people, and using sport as a medium to promote peace and development.

In Africa, an exploratory study has been commissioned to carry out a situational analysis of South Africa. The study will identify the types of conflicts; their history, evolution and resolution; sources of ongoing conflicts; existing local initiatives, and mechanisms of conflict resolution. Once completed, the study will be shared with stakeholders in a roundtable conference and entry points and institutions for further Commonwealth assistance will be identified.

Globally, respect for diversity has been firmly embedded in one of the three goals of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2013/14-2016/17. In 2013, the Commonwealth Roundtable on Reconciliation brought focus to this work. The report of this high-level roundtable was shared with Commonwealth member governments, national human rights institutions and key stakeholders in the United Nations Human Rights System to help advance respect and understanding of values.

Plural citizenship and the right to peace in the agenda of intercultural dialogue: an Italian case

Antonio Papisca, Professor Emeritus, University of Padua and Chairholder, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Chair on Human Rights, Democracy and Peace

Cultures are mobile. They move from one country to another and from one continent to another, thanks not only to the impalpable dynamics of ideas, but also physically, through migratory flows, refugees and asylum-seekers, who bring with them their sufferings, their expectations and their grudges. The transmigration of cultures, favoured by the tentacular processes of globalization, represents a challenge to social cohesion, peace and international security.

The 2005 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions shows an awareness of this. Its preamble highlights the fact that cultural diversity is considered a "defining characteristic and common heritage of humanity" and that it "flourishes within a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures [that] is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels". Consistent with this preamble, Article 1 states an objective "to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace."

Intercultural dialogue generates, as stated in Article 4, point 8 of the convention, "shared cultural expressions" and creates what we can call a strongly action- and policy-oriented transculture of an axiopractical nature. It is culture that facilitates the ongoing processes of genuine universalization of human rights all over the world, the tangible realization of which begins in towns and villages, where people live their everyday lives.

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall work in vain for progress in the larger world."

These are words written by Eleanor Roosevelt, commenting on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She is referring to the principle of subsidiarity and to the link between the local and the international, an increasingly significant link nowadays for the sustainability of the human condition in the age of complex interdependencies. From this human sustainability perspective, citizenship rights, social cohesion and international peace in a context of multi-level good governance are terms which are interconnected with one another.

At the national level, the processes of multiculturalization connected to migrations are challenging the realization of human rights and the practice of democracy itself even in the countries which have the longest experience of it.

In order to implement non-violent steps to prevent the critical mass of conflict intrinsic to these situations boiling over, practices of intercultural dialogue must be activated on the ground. But dialogues to what end? What to do? Certainly for a reciprocal exchange of narratives of the different histories of their place of origin, to compare them with one another and to encourage their testing against the paradigm of universal values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Each culture, and each religion, must be cleansed of the negative side of their respective histories, drawing on the common source of the 'universal' in a healthy, positive secularism approach. But for this necessary process of exchange and cleansing to be fruitful, it must be accompanied by actually working together, in the places where people live their everyday lives, to realize objectives for the common good.

It is from this standpoint, which is both teleological and communitarian, that dialogue must be entered into between subjects who are enabled to exercise equal citizenship rights in an inclusive city. This means redefining citizenship, in terms of standard-setting too, starting from the fundamental rights inherent to each and every human being as such, regardless of his or her respective national citizenship of origin. If it is true that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," as proclaimed in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration, then all human beings have an inherent status of universal citizenship: in other words, inasmuch as they are human beings, they are born citizens, holders of a *primary citizenship* which, contrarily to the traditional national citizenships, is not *octroyée* (bestowed upon them). This citizenship does not cancel national citizenships, but makes them *derived,* and so they must be compatible with the paradigm of universally recognized human rights.

The Palais des Nations in Geneva: a delegation of mayors delivers a copy of the first 100 motions on intercultural dialogue approved by local councils

Hence, human rights-based citizenship is a plural citizenship which, unlike traditional national citizenships built on the premise of excluding foreigners (*ad alios excludendos*), is characterized by the premise of including human beings, any human beings (*ad omnes includendos*). A tree metaphor can help illustrate this. The trunk represents the status of universal citizenship, the roots are universally recognised human rights, and the branches are derived citizenships (national and sub-national), which, in order to survive, need to absorb the life-giving sap running up through the trunk; that is, they must be consistent with the egalitarian nature of universal citizenship. Redefined thus, where the overarching parameter is the *ius humanae dignitatis* (the right to human dignity), there is clearly no room for the discriminatory *ius sanguinis* (right of blood). For administrative-civil registry purposes, the determining factor is a non-nationalistic interpretation of the *ius soli* (right of the soil). All this requires a radical overhaul of national laws, starting from those on immigration. It is not an easy journey and it will take a long time for racism, nationalism and 'war hero' attitudes to be subdued, but it is time to start working on it.

There are several initiatives heading in this direction in Italy, promoted by academics, local authorities and civil society organizations and which, in many cases, go beyond the limits of national laws. For example, some local administrations grant honorary citizenship to immigrants'

children regardless of the legal or illegal immigrant status of their parents; others present all school pupils, including immigrants' children, with a certificate as 'pioneers of plural citizenship'. The principle to which they make more or less explicit reference is that of 'the best interests of the child" set forth in Article 3 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As is well known, since 1992, plural citizenship has existed within the European Union's (EU) legal-territorial space, comprising a national citizenship and a European citizenship deriving from the former: one is a citizen of the EU if one is a citizen of an EU member state. So although this citizenship is not directly grounded in human rights, and despite its reproducing the *ad alios excludendos* premise, it is still a sign that citizenship can be made plural. It should be noted that the EU is a thriving laboratory of multi-level governance, which has adopted its own EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the central figure of which is the human person as such. Taking into consideration the constitutionally evolutionary vocation of the EU, the University of Padua Human Rights Centre is advocating for a uniform European law that, starting from the EU Charter, would invert the relationship between EU citizenship and national citizenship, making the former primary and the latter derived citizenship. Its strapline is: "why a single currency (the Euro) and why not a single European human rights-based citizenship for all member states?"

Peace and plural citizenship are at the same time both a precondition for and the outcome of intercultural dialogue. But peace is a human right according to the *vox populi* (voice of the people), not yet recognized as such under international law. In order to fill this yawning gap, since 2012 the United Nations Human Rights Council is drawing up a declaration on the right to peace, recognized as a fundamental right of individuals and of peoples. This new international instrument should in particular detail the obligations of the principal duty bearers, the states: first of all to fully implement the United Nations Charter, to finally make the collective security system work, to carry out real disarmament, starting by controlling arms production and trade. Unfortunately, the council's admirable initiative is meeting strong opposition, even from states which have a long tradition of respecting the rule of law, human rights and democratic principles. In short, they want to continue to keep the right to peace *(ius ad pacem),* as an attribute of their sovereignty, closely tied to the much stronger attribute which is the right to go to war *(ius ad bellum)*. History proves that they make an ill-fated pair. The issue now is to free peace from the clutches of warmongering sovereignty claims and to bring it into the healthy area of human rights.

A broad transnational civil society movement has recently gone into action, linking the right to peace to the supreme right to life. In Italy this has taken the original form of city diplomacy. Hundreds of local authorities, following resolutions approved by their respective councils, have adopted a petitionary motion drawn up by the University of Padua Human Rights Centre and the UNESCO Chair on Human Rights, Democracy and Peace, together with the National Coordination of Local Governments for Peace and Human Rights.

It is significant to note that the local authorities which have worked for the recognition of the right to peace are running programmes on intercultural dialogue in their respective locations. The petition has been sent to the representatives of the member states of the Human Rights Council. Further, a delegation of mayors has travelled to the Palais des Nations in Geneva to deliver a copy of the first 100 motions approved by local councils.

In addition to the principle of subsidiarity to be upheld in the global political space, this action by local governments beyond state borders is formally legitimized by Article 1 of the 1998 United Nations Declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, as follows. "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to *strive* for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms *at the national and international levels"* (italics added). This same United Nations Declaration, which is considered the charter of human rights defenders, who are genuine pioneers of universal and plural citizenship, also legitimizes new approaches and actions to ensure due consideration is given them: "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to develop and discuss new human rights ideas and principles and to advocate their acceptance." Plural citizenship and city diplomacy can

City and University, a fruitful alliance for a human rights to peace culture

legitimately be included under this provision, which has a logical and productive link with the prospect of creating "shared cultural expressions" such as those advocated by the UNESCO Convention on cultural diversity.

The human rights paradigm extols the life and dignity of all members of the human family. It is hardly necessary to point out that war not only causes the violation of all human rights, but it kills the original holders of those rights: it is a collective death sentence. This is why the cultural dialogue agenda must necessarily include the issue of world order, together with that of citizenship and social cohesion at the local level. Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides us with a general model when it states that "everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized." This rule implicitly contains the definition of positive peace, which is built along a road which leads from the city up to the United Nations.

The current examples of city diplomacy illustrate the effort being devoted to building peace from below — "bottom-up peace" — not against but in support of the 'good' diplomacy of states. The on-the-ground experience of building bridges between the different cultures present in cities, starting from the supreme right to life and from the basic needs of all the people who live there, constitutes a fundamental resource which can help translate the logical interconnection between social order and international order, as in the aforementioned Article 28 of the Universal Declaration, into hard facts, to the benefit of all human rights for all.

Integrating human values in education for promoting tolerance

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Values are the main beliefs that people use for determining what is right or wrong, good or bad, fair or unfair. As a result, human values such as tolerance, respect and cooperation affect people's personal perceptions and judgements, motives and actions towards others in different situations in varying cultures, societies and religions. Due to their importance in shaping people's lives and relations in a positive way, there is a need to consider them in education at all levels. This means that incorporating human values in education should not be restricted to schools, but should be considered in post-secondary school educational institutions such as teacher training colleges and even universities.

The aim of including human values in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction is to qualify student teachers not only professionally and academically, but also humanly since they live in a deeply divided society, ethnically and politically, which suffers from increasing violence either at school or in the street. Lately many cases of violence — not only pupils against pupils, but also pupils against teachers — have been reported in the press, in Jewish schools particularly. Similarly, violence cases that end with killings have increased dramati-

cally in Arab towns and villages in Israel. Some young people solve disputes with others through the rifle.

Israeli society is not only deeply divided ethnically, but also polarized economically. Besides the ethnic divisions, there is a lack of social solidarity among the different ethnic groups.[1] The divisions are witnessed not only between Arabs and Jews in Israel, but also among the different ethnic groups in Jewish society itself. The Jewish population in Israel is constituted not only from traditional groups such as the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, but also from other ethnic groups like Ethiopians and Russians or immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Divisions among the latter group between Jews and non-Jews also exist. Moreover, there is a clear division between the religious Jewish groups and the secular mainstream population. Furthermore, there has been a lot of tension lately in some cities in Israel between the Israeli citizens and African refugees. Therefore, there is a need for civic education in a democratic country.[2]

Civic education includes values that promote understanding, sympathy and acceptance among the members of different ethnic groups. At the local level, Arab and Jewish students share a space by studying together in the campus, where these student teachers are trained to become English teachers. In the global context, student teachers should be well qualified to cope with
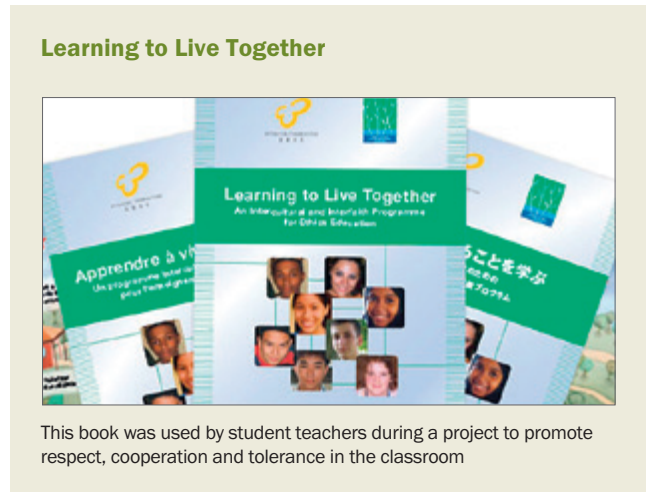

The Tunnel of Time project: a 1940s Arab coffee shop in Jaffa, with a menu written in Arabic and Hebrew and period clothes for both groups on display

the challenges of the twenty-first century in terms of knowledge, pedagogy, technology and multiculturalism.[3] However, due to the complexity in the current Israeli society, dealing with such diversity is not an easy task. Many proposals have been prepared by experts in the field, and none of them was fully implemented to include all segments of society. The existing civic education is still based on the nature of the state, a Jewish democratic state, which promotes patriotism to Zionist values rather than to democratic principles that strengthen citizenship. Despite the fact that the proclamation of independence guarantees the social, political and religious rights of all citizens of Israel, some minority groups, mainly Arabs, are discriminated against as well as oriental Jews and Ethiopians.

After signing the Oslo agreement between the Palestinians and Israel in 1993, an atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation started to prevail in Israeli diverse society. However, after the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, the right-wing parties resumed power. Consequently, a discourse of discrimination and racism started to be loudly heard from highly influential politicians and even ministers. Recently, more activities have been recommended by the Ministry of Education aiming to strengthen the Jewish heritage and traditions. Schools are required to launch educational tours to Jerusalem and other Jewish sites. In addition, the Bible quiz has been restored at the national level. In contrast, launching meetings or programmes that would foster understanding among Arabs and Jews is restricted to local initiatives that usually come from interested school staff members and educators. For example, three bilingual schools called 'Hand in Hand' were established in Jerusalem, in Kfar Karaa', an Arab town in the centre of Israel, and in Misgav, a Jewish community in the northern part of Israel. All subjects are taught in Arabic and Hebrew by an Arab teacher and a Jewish counterpart. These two narratives, the Jewish as well as the Arab one, are included in the curriculum. Hand in Hand's success and longevity demonstrate that children, families and entire communities of Jews and Arabs can live and work together with mutual respect and friendship. Beit Berl Academic College, a leading teacher training college in Israel, could be another example that promotes cooperation, tolerance and respect through a variety of projects and activities like the Tunnel of Time project. As part of the project, students re-enact the life of Arabs and Jews in the Holy Land from the 1940s to today. Life is modelled in booths that include music, dancing, traditional costumes, ethnic food, games, plays and movies.

Following Doler's report, the qualification of teachers in the twenty-first century is based on four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.[4] Learning to know refers to the mastery of learning tools to understand the world around them, lead their lives with dignity, develop their occupational skills and communicate with other people. The second pillar is learning to do, which means how to adapt education in order to equip people to do the types of work needed in the future. It also includes the needed technological skills, which means the ability to locate, assess and represent appropriate information quickly. Learning to be includes equipping people to develop their own independent, critical way of thinking and judgement, so they can make up their minds on the best courses of action in the different circumstances in their lives. Learning to live together

Learning to Live Together

This book was used by student teachers during a project to promote respect, cooperation and tolerance in the classroom

as the fourth pillar promotes cross-cultural understanding. It is expected to teach pupils and students about human diversity and to instil in them an awareness of the similarities and interdependence of all people. It requires working on projects to enable people to transcend the routines of their personal lives and attach value to what they have in common rather than what divides them. Therefore, there is a need to develop curricula to introduce people to collaborative projects such as project-based learning and involvement in community activities.

Human values are an important aspect in education since they determine human beings' behaviour in society. They would ultimately help in producing ethical and responsible members of society. Therefore, teachers should not care only about the academic level and improvement of their students, but also about their personal growth as human beings. Moral education in pluralistic societies is necessary to educate pupils in their rights and duties, discussing differences and making informed decisions. Global human values including truth, honesty, love and sacrifice would contribute to peace. Including human values in the curriculum would help learners develop social responsibility and global citizenship.

Respect, tolerance and cooperation are three main humanistic values that promote collaboration and peaceful living as well as the acceptance of cultural or religious diversity and individual differences. Respect is an intangible but essential aspect because it is crucial to an individual's welfare and well-being. Moreover, it is also an important factor as far as human beings' participation and involvement within their communities' activities and affairs.

Tolerance guarantees the acceptance of differences and disagreements. Being tolerant means being able to control feelings of anger, disagreement, discomfort and dislike. It can describe feelings, attitudes and states of mind. People need to work together with willingness to cooperate, to help out or get involved. It means encouraging, sharing and working together. The more cooperative the group, the greater is the fitness for survival which extends to all of its members.

Since English is one of the official languages of international organizations and bodies like the United Nations, it is advisable to carry out projects that are in line with the values of such an international body for intercultural understanding and cooperation to foster global education, cross-cultural

The collaborative work of one group of pupils in the project: their high levels of eagerness and involvement are reflected in positive statements

awareness, global values and critical thinking skills besides promoting social cohesion at the local level. Incorporating human values in English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL programmes would create active, caring and responsible citizens nationally and globally who would be agents for positive changes in modern pluralistic societies. Participants of such a programme will learn English indirectly and will develop their critical thinking through problem-solving based learning.

With the development of advanced technology and the growth of social media for transcultural communication, learning English is no longer a solo academic study; it has become an essential skill for world citizenship. As a result, ESL/EFL teachers can involve pupils in the learning process using interesting and authentic instructional materials in an attempt to develop positive character traits, understanding and appreciation of intracultural and intercultural norms, and empathy. In addition, these issues stir discussions that require the participants to analyse, evaluate, reflect and think critically. Participants also learn to express their approval and disapproval politely using specific expressions such as "I don't agree." Furthermore, multimedia and information technology develop not only social skills, but also autonomous learners.

These projects could be carried out through content-based instruction (CBI), which is a method of teaching where language and content are combined for the purpose of language learning. Following a theme, which is human values in this context, content could be chosen from a very big number of different topics, with relevant materials selected for teaching the theme. Addressing values could be carried out in the context of CBI through reading or literature classes such as discussing stories, fables, plays and novels, and in history classes, as well as using multimedia and doing community service. Besides employing CBI, problem-solving should be considered to provide the skills and content knowledge to provide solutions.

Many projects aimed at integrating human values in education have been implemented in different countries, aiming to help learners grow personally and emotionally in order to understand and accept others. There follows an example carried out by my students under my supervision. This project was designed to promote values that help pupils grow intellectually, morally and emotionally, eventually helping to create a productive, healthy and peaceful society. The focus of the project was on three main values: respect, cooperation and tolerance. It aimed to improve relationships among the pupils, increase communication, create trust and enhance feelings of similarity among them. The student teachers worked in pairs during the intensive practical work week in a local junior high school, where they taught the same class for five days a week using materials from a book called 'Learning to Live Together' which was published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 2008. It is also based on the four pillars of the Dolers report for teacher education in the twenty-first century. Therefore, the student teachers not only learned the material, but also knew how to deliver it using technology to better convey it in terms of teaching English and address human values for promoting cooperation, understanding and respect.

Results showed that the student teachers were eager and highly motivated to carry out such a project. The final product of the pupils in this project shows their high level of eagerness and involvement. Pupils reflected on the project by adding the following positive statements: "We wish RACISM ends. We wish child labor ends. We wish everyone is free." Due to the success of the project in general, there is a need to develop a school curriculum that promotes values in order to create a dynamic classroom atmosphere that fosters pupils' intellectual, moral and emotional personalities. The results also showed the enthusiasm of student teachers to implement a variety of activities and ideas for carrying out a project that emphasizes human values. It is important to note that the pupils, as well as the teacher trainers at schools, were very excited throughout the week when the project was implemented. The pupils not only cooperated well with the student teachers, but also asked for more opportunities to extend the project.

In sum, integrating human values in education would help in qualifying teachers in the twenty-first century in terms of developing content knowledge, acquainting them with current and innovative pedagogy, integrating technology and promoting multiculturalism. However, promoting multiculturalism couldn't feasibly be achieved in one week. At least one semester is needed to carry out such a project to instil these values. There is a need to extend it to include a Jewish school in order to enhance cooperation among Jewish and Arab pupils as well as educators aiming to reduce the stereotypes against each other and hoping to promote understanding, respect, sympathy and solidarity among them. A group of EFL educators from both sectors can work together to develop a project to be carried out over four months in two schools, one in each sector. In addition, the participating pupils can also meet and do activities together. The final product could be a play which would be performed on the stage by pupils from the two schools.

The project points to a need for developing a school curriculum that promotes values in order to create a dynamic classroom atmosphere that fosters pupils' intellectual, moral and emotional personalities, and which eventually helps in creating a productive, healthy and peaceful society.

Villa Ocampo's new programme: a contribution to the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures

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Victoria Ocampo (1890-1979) is one of Latin America's foremost cultural figures, and *Sur*, the magazine she founded in 1931 and directed during 40 years, is widely recognized as the most important Spanish-speaking cultural publication of the twentieth century.

During her lifetime she made Villa Ocampo, her house in San Isidro neighbourhood in the outskirts of Buenos Aires City, a meeting point for the most distinguished Argentine and foreign writers and thinkers. The house, which was first constructed in 1890 as a vacation residence for the Ocampo family, became Victoria Ocampo's permanent home from the early 1940s. In 1973, she willed her possessions and property to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), considering that "my house is particularly suited to host permanent workshops, research centres or programmes, or projects related to film, television, theatre, music, literature, translation, or new forms of expression or communication."

Victoria Ocampo's relationship with UNESCO goes back to the origins of the Organization. In 1947, she hosted Julian Huxley, UNESCO's first Director General at Villa Ocampo to introduce him to some of the representatives of the Argentine academic, artistic, literary and scientific community. Years later, Victoria wrote about this meeting: "Huxley spoke about UNESCO, explaining its aims and operation. He was eloquent without eloquence. His arguments won me over." And, several decades later, Huxley was one of the first people Victoria consulted before donating Villa Ocampo to UNESCO: "The last time I saw him I told him about my Project regarding the donation of the property to UNESCO, of which he was aware. He approved of it."

Shared values prompted Victoria Ocampo (right) to bequeath her home, Villa Ocampo, to UNESCO

The communion of interests between Victoria Ocampo and UNESCO on the importance of intercultural dialogue and the culture of peace was long and productive. It started with her attending the Nuremberg Trials as an audience member and with a shared position regarding Nazi crimes and the need for the international community's intervention to avoid their repetition. "For me, what took place at Belsen, at Mathausen, at Auschwitz, at any concentration camp, is as if it had taken place here. I am Argentine, but my homeland is the world." The struggle for gender equality — she was a founding member of the Unión Argentina de Mujeres (Women's Union of Argentina) during the 1930s and the first woman to join the Argentine Academy of Arts in 1977 — was another of the principles they shared. But the most important ideal upheld by Victoria Ocampo throughout her life was the need to promote a dialogue between cultures as a key factor for the development of societies. "Interaction between cultures is fruitful provided the characteristics of each cultural group are respected," she wrote in 1976, "and I believe this is one of UNESCO's creeds, as it is mine."

The first activity organized by UNESCO at Villa Ocampo in 1977 had enormous significance: it was the Colloquium on the Dialogue among Cultures, an intercultural meeting lasting five days, attended by eminent representatives from the intellectual communities of several Latin American, European, Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries. The colloquium report was published in a special issue of *Sur* magazine in 1978. The 'dialogue among cultures' was — in the words of Victoria Ocampo, "the dream of my life".

The fortieth anniversary of the donation of Villa Ocampo to UNESCO was commemorated on 10 December 2013. This donation arose from the many coincidences between Victoria Ocampo's values and those of the organization: the role of culture as a determinant for development and inclusion; promotion of cultural diversity and women's rights; tolerance and openness to others' ideas. In fact, it was a donation with responsibilities: for promoting these shared values, for continuing the active cultural life that the property had enjoyed for over half a century, and for the property "to serve, in a living and creative spirit, for the promotion, study, experimentation and development of activities spanning culture, literature, the arts, social communication and peace among peoples."

Under its management, UNESCO carried out innumerable activities at Villa Ocampo, such as the Regional Seminar on Cultural Management Policies in the MERCOSUR; the workshop on Places of Memory on the Slave Route in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay; the meeting of 42 Ministers of Education from the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean; and the workshop on the declaration of Outstanding Universal Value of Latin American and Caribbean sites on the World Heritage List.

During the first stage of the 2003-2013 project, UNESCO concentrated on the renovation and conservation of Victoria Ocampo's house, garden, library, archives, furniture and works of art with highly satisfactory results. Restoration works were possible thanks to the contribution of the Argentine state.

In addition to the state, the Municipality of San Isidro, a wide range of national and municipal museums, the Friends of Villa Ocampo Association, the Fundación Sur, which holds Victoria Ocampo's copyright, the private sector and various embassies have generously collaborated with us over the years.
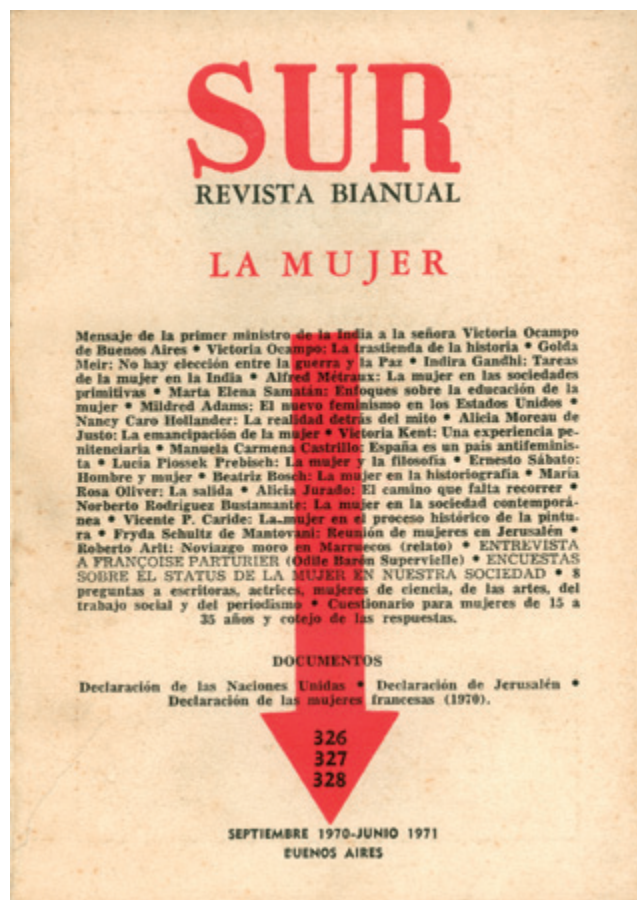
The last issue of *Sur* magazine, entirely dedicated to women

Following this stage of the restoration and appreciation through a wide-ranging artistic programme involving concerts, theatre, conferences, literary presentations, children's programmes, art shows, contemporary dance, movie screenings and filming in the house, Villa Ocampo's management now needs to adjust itself to meet the organization's programmatic priorities. As Victoria Ocampo wrote in her donation: the property must be used in order to contribute to "UNESCO's aims, in accordance with its constitution and to programme activities adopted by the General Conference."

Villa Ocampo, faithful to its owner's intellectual and ethical legacy, must fulfil the role of cultural rapprochement and contribute to forging "a new humanism," understood as a new way of being together in the mutual respect of cultural diversity and universal ethics. This was the essential principle that guided Victoria Ocampo's role as editor of *Sur* magazine: to build bridges across different cultures and languages and to give space to the most diverse cultural expressions. The only criterion was literary quality and humanistic values.

On 20-21 November 2014, UNESCO and Villa Ocampo organized a series of important activities in Buenos Aires to launch a new phase of the Villa Ocampo Programme. These activities all had a common theme: that of Victoria Ocampo's legacy and her close connection with UNESCO's mandate within the international system. The activities were supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Argentine Nation, organized civil society institutions, the United Nations and the academic community.

Participants in the Colloquium on the Dialogue among Cultures in 1977, the first activity organized by UNESCO at Villa Ocampo

The basic outline of the new Villa Ocampo Programme will be carried out by relating UNESCO's own specializations and the broad-ranging intellectual and cultural legacy left by Victoria Ocampo. Within the framework of this new scenario, projects are being planned to promote support, exchange and training aimed at governments and civil society in the countries of the sub-region.

Among the above-mentioned proposals, Colmenar is an exchange and reflection project geared to converting Villa Ocampo into a laboratory for ideas that will anticipate emerging trends with the ability to formulate forecasts and recommendations in the field of culture. "I see Villa Ocampo as a place of our own and of those who come with valuable contributions," wrote Victoria Ocampo.

For its part, Ombú will be aimed at strengthening capacities and work with reference indicators in the field of culture and intercultural dialogue. Through the promotion of training courses, the preparation of new approaches to complex regional challenges regarding heritage and cultural diversity will be encouraged. "I believe in education and that all must be given equal opportunities," wrote Victoria Ocampo. "There are those who will take advantage of them and those who won't (this is another matter). In this way all that will be

left among men will be real and insurmountable differences. Because men are different and have different aptitudes. Even leaves on the same branch are different."

Finally, one of Victoria Ocampo's essential features was her capacity to stimulate the development of a creative vocation among those around her and to promote dialogue and interaction between cultures. This dual purpose was one of the reasons that encouraged her to found *Sur* magazine in 1931 and, as she herself said, "our magazine and our publishing house have made known a great number of writers from all the countries… But *Sur* has attempted not only to introduce in South America the best of the world's liberal arts. It has attempted to take a reverse path. That is to say, to take our culture to the world… With perseverance, it has contributed to making known what is outstanding in Argentina."

Through the Pilares project and inspired by the work of Victoria Ocampo, access by underprivileged groups to cultural production will be supported. Pilares may include a series of incentives (grants and competitions) towards this goal, thus increasing these groups or people's creative and management capacities, seeking to propitiate a culture of peace and non-violence.

All these projects will integrate gender issues as a cross-cutting theme for intercultural dialogue and as a concrete

The first stage of the 2003-2013 project focused on restoring and conserving Victoria Ocampo's house, garden, library, archives, furniture and works of art

Argentina's Minister of Culture, Teresa Parodi, and Lidia Brito of UNESCO attended the Gender and Culture event at Villa Ocampo in 2014

follow-up of the Victoria Ocampo legacy. A pioneer in the struggle for gender equality, Victoria Ocampo fought since her youth against the cultural and social barriers that held women within the roles of housewife or social ornament. She was raised to submit to masculine authority, but her need for independence and her literary vocation drove her "against wind and tide" towards a new identity that didn't have any antecedent nor role model in Hispanic communities. Thus she opened a path to personal and creative fulfilment for women in Argentina and other Latin American countries.

The presentation of these new working hubs was made during a press conference and an important event on Gender and Culture covering various proceedings. The opening of the event was attended by high-ranking authorities: the Minister of Culture of the Argentine Nation, Teresa Parodi; the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Argentina, René Mauricio Valdés; and the Director of the UNESCO Montevideo Office and UNESCO Representative in Argentina, Lidia Brito. During this event, the above mentioned new outline of the Villa Ocampo Project was presented, the report on 'Gender equality, heritage and creativity' was publicly launched, the inscription of the Villa Ocampo Documentation Centre on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register for Latin America and the Caribbean was celebrated, and a homage was made to the Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa for her exceptional track record promoting folklore music and for enhancing the role of women in the knowledge societies, with the participation of the artist Victor Heredia. To close the event, an exhibi-

tion on 'A room of one's own: Victoria Ocampo and gender equality' was inaugurated, showing photos, manuscripts, original documents and speeches accompanied by her own bibliography and those of others on the feminine condition from her archives and her personal library.

The following day, 21 November, a colloquium on Gender and Culture was also held at Villa Ocampo. With the participation of distinguished specialists from Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay an analysis was made of the report's contribution to the present debates on gender, using it as a tool to reflect with greater depth and step up action on a world and regional level on the role of culture as a close ally to equality between sexes. Furthermore, each of the experts submitted a report regarding their respective countries, based on the guidelines set out in the report.

Thanks to this initiative, awareness was raised directly among over 100 people, together with innumerable other members of the general public in an indirect way thanks to the mass media. Support by government authorities from the four countries, organized civil society and the academic community reflected the interest in these issues and their introduction into working agendas.

In this respect, information presented on opportunities and challenges for gender equality in the field of creative industries and heritage in their respective countries will be essential to fine-tune objectives and design action strategies for future projects framed in the new working hubs for Villa Ocampo as an exceptional intercultural cultural platform for UNESCO and its partners.

Tourism — celebrating diversity, linking cultures and promoting peace and understanding

Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

We live in a diverse, interdependent and inter-connected world in which every day we are reminded that we need to live together in peace, despite existing differences in cultures and fundamental beliefs. Yet, the question remains — how to build such peaceful world; how to promote cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding in an environment marked by rising intolerance and tension, often exasperated by increasingly complex inequality and interdependence on shared resources.

With over 1 billion people crossing international borders every year — generating more than US$3 billion every day

in export earnings — tourism has become one of the major socioeconomic activities of our time, representing 9 per cent of global gross domestic product and 30 per cent of the world's exports of services, and creating one in every 11 jobs. Never before have so many people travelled to so many places. Few places on the planet have escaped the curiosity of the traveller and few are now unreachable.

Yet, tourism is much more than its immense numbers; tourism is what happens behind these numbers, the daily exchange of stories, experiences and beliefs. It is the direct encounter between people from different backgrounds and ways of life, the millions of conversations that take place as visitors and hosts come together; it is the new language we

The contribution of tourism to peace can enable our sector to become a more effective player in promoting multicultural respect and social justice

Image: Rabin Chakrabarti/World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

The beauty of travel lies in seeing the people you meet with new eyes

read on the signs as we arrive at our destinations, the unfamiliar music on the taxi's radio on the way to our hotel, the food we eat and, most importantly, the stories we hear from the people we meet — this is what makes tourism so different to most other economic activities.

By now we have probably heard the saying that the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new places but in seeing them with new eyes. Conversely, the beauty of travel also lies in seeing the people you meet with new eyes.

Indeed, the fundamental experience of tourism — visiting a new place and immersing one's self among its people and culture — is a connecting thread between visitors and hosts and a powerful transformative force that breaks down cultural barriers, builds bridges between people and between communities and nations, promotes tolerance and understanding — the building blocks of peace — while, at the same time, it creates jobs, generates income and contributes to poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

Furthermore, like few other economic sectors, tourism has the ability to help communities value their place in the world, their cultures and traditions, and their environment. This helps build self-esteem among local communities, which is particularly important in those that have suffered from any form of conflict.

If one thing has become clear in recent years it is that tourism needs peace in order to flourish and, by the same token, it is itself a harbinger of peace. First of all, because it is impossible to feel enmity for someone you know personally, or that you have hosted or visited, and whose concerns you have come to understand through direct contact, although you may not always share such concerns. Second, because both tourism destinations and operators in a given region are linked by a specific commonality of interests and destinies around shared development projects. Why oppose one another when peace benefits everyone and conflicts no one?

In this respect, the words of Mahatma Gandhi, who is perhaps one of history's greatest ambassadors of peace, should be recalled: "I have watched the cultures of all lands blow around my house and other winds have blown the seeds of peace, for travel is the language of peace."

And yet, tourism largely remains an untapped resource whose full potential as an agent of peace is yet to be fully realized. Its undisputable role as a mind- broadening educational experience can indeed bring a significant contribution to building a more harmonious and peaceful world.

Every day, 5 million people will be travelling around the world by 2030, potentially becoming global ambassadors

Every tourist can become a global ambassador of peace and come closer to realizing the United Nations shared vision of a better world

in steering the values of international peace and security, multicultural respect, human rights and social justice.

As the United Nations specialized agency for the promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism, peace is at the heart of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) mandate. Article 3 of the organization's statutes clearly states that: "The fundamental aim of the Organization shall be the promotion and development of tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace and prosperity."

Tourism as a force for peace, human rights and mutual understanding is a also the fundamental axis of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a set of guidelines for the development of sustainable and responsible tourism, approved by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001. Article I of the Code states that: "The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism; stakeholders in tourism development and tourists them-

selves should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples and recognize their worth."

Celebrating diversity is paying tribute to the fundamental essence of our sector. But as we do so, we must recall the responsibilities that come with it. It goes without saying that any successful action to link cultures requires the cooperation of the public, private and civil sectors and, of course, of the main actor, the traveller. Only concerted efforts to uphold diversity and human rights will truly transform the sector's potential from an untapped resource to an effective means of promoting genuine dialogue and understanding.

UNWTO is thus committed to promote, with the United Nations system and jointly with other partners, stakeholders and key role players, the emergence of a culture of tolerance, peace and mutual understanding and to develop a solid knowledge base for education and awareness-raising on the linkages between tourism, peace and sustainable development.

To this end, the organization is currently engaged in five key initiatives, which are detailed below.

UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture, 4-6 February 2015, Sieam Reap, Cambodia: over 45 ministers and vice ministers of tourism and culture gathered at the UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture to advance sustainable cultural tourism development

As a member of the Group of Friends of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and a partner of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, UNWTO works to enhance the contribution of tourism to the alliance's and the forum's objectives with a view to upholding and celebrating diversity, linking cultures, diffusing tension and promoting cross-cultural dialogue and understanding.

In partnership with the Austrian Government and the Centre for Peace Research and Peace Education of the University of Klagenfurt, UNWTO recently launched the first International Handbook on Tourism and Peace. This provides a tool to better understand the intrinsic relationship between the tourism sector and global peacebuilding efforts and to showcase successful tourism initiatives that advance peacebuilding and sustainable development, and that contribute to conflict resolution, mutual understanding and post-conflict socioeconomic recovery. Particular attention is paid in raising awareness about these initiatives to support attitude changes required from educators, travel organizations, journalists and the tourists themselves.

UNWTO works closely with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in strengthening the links between tourism and culture at the local, national, regional and global levels, and in ensuring that the responsible use of cultural assets for tourism create much needed employment opportunities, generate income for local communities and alleviate poverty, thereby contributing to social development and stability and, at the same time, to heritage protection and preservation. Jointly with UNESCO, UNWTO is providing platforms to advance the sustainable development of cultural tourism and in to develop and promote cultural tourism routes, itineraries and programmes that foster regional development, promote cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue and cooperation, as key instruments for strengthening social cohesion, solidarity and peace.

Alongside the Government of Flanders, the organization is developing ethical guidelines for visiting conflict-related historical sites with a view to educating future generations to reflect on the past and draw lessons about the importance of upholding a culture of tolerance and peace.

Finally, UNWTO is working with member states in proposing the celebration of 2017 as the International Year on Tourism for Development and Peace. Auspiciously, this would come 50 years after the 1967 United Nations International Tourism Year under the theme 'Passport for Peace'.

These are initial steps in advancing the contribution of tourism to peacebuilding and sustainable development that can enable our sector to become a more effective player in reducing prejudice, distrust and hostility and in promoting multicultural respect, social justice and the protection of our planet. Indeed, tourism can help to achieve unexpected breakthroughs and transform even the most challenging situations. Who would have thought that just two decades ago, countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia would emerge from isolation and become successful tourism destinations and important generating markets for Europe? Who would have believed that Cambodia and Viet Nam would arise from the shadows of war, and become bright spots on the tourism map, driving Asia's rapid tourism growth? Who would have guessed that South Africa would achieve intercommunity peace and dialogue and become one of the tourism powerhouses of the continent?

This is what the tourism sector can do and this is how each and every tourist can become a global ambassador of peace and come closer to realizing the United Nations shared vision of a better world.

History teachers hold the key to sustainable peace

Jonathan Even-Zohar, Director, European Association of History Educators

Many factors have to be taken into account when working to prevent — or rather transform — conflicts, but one element that usually plays a prominent role is the issue of history and especially its 'correct' interpretation. This can take several forms and shapes. It can be about the history of the land; a group's claim to territory going back into ancient history, or a more recent unjust ruling by a greater power about new borders. It can be a matter of a perpetrator's unwillingness to admit past crimes or a victim's exaggeration of the crime. It might even be the results of historic football matches. All conflicts are rooted in history, and the way in which they are learned through history either resolves or sustains them. As the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization founding mantra goes, war starts in the minds of men, or to be more precise, in the minds of boys. At school, learning about battles and borders has been the dominant story through the existence of history as a school subject since its birth in the nineteenth century. For this reason, we believe history teachers to be of enormous importance to the creation of a more peaceful world, and this is the story of our association's fight to be the change in the field of history education.

The European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO) was officially founded in 1993, but already in 1992 delegates from 14 countries (Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium, Portugal, Hungary, Estonia, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, Finland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Sweden and Norway), representing 18 history teachers' associations, had decided that a European organization was needed to support the learning and teaching of history by sharing and exchanging knowledge and professional experience. The immediate cause for the foundation of such an institute was the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1992. These events changed the scope and perspective of history and history education in Europe completely, and for many countries a European dimension in history education suddenly became possible and important for the future.

Thus the decision was made to renew contacts between East and West and reinforce a history education that could act as a tool to foster integration, peace and stability in Europe. From 1993 onwards, EUROCLIO grew rapidly and today it represents 71 member organizations from 50 (mostly) European countries. It connects not only 40,000 historians and history, heritage and citizenship educators

Teachers from the Netherlands visited Turkey in 2008, gaining profound insights into the complexity of history teaching

The encounter of Dutch and Turkish perspectives in history education opened new horizons for professional intercultural dialogue, resulting in a unique support, training and collaborative writing project

In 2014 delegates of EUROCLIO's member associations unanimously approved EUROCLIO's Manifesto on High Quality History, Heritage and Citizenship Education, which is becoming a guiding document

in primary, secondary and higher educational institutes, but also museums, universities, archives and libraries.

All EUROCLIO teacher training activities are organized in close cooperation with local academics and institutes for history teacher education, and international experts, in order to train history teachers how to use the most modern teaching methods in their classes. EUROCLIO, always in close partnership with member associations, has organized more than 40 international conferences and over 90 national and regional training and development courses.

EUROCLIO implements several long-term programmes:

- International Trainings provides cross-border professional capacity-building for history, heritage and citizenship educators related to innovative and responsible history education
- Historiana – Your Portal to the Past promotes digital literacy through history, heritage and citizenship education by means of an online multimedia tool, offering students multiperspective, cross-border and comparative historical resources to supplement their national history teaching tools
- History that Connects in the Western Balkans restores the professional relations between history, heritage and citizenship educators and explores opportunities for a collaborative approach to teaching history in the region, including sensitive and controversial issues
- Mediterranean Dialogues enables educators across the Euro-Mediterranean region to open a common dialogue, to share experiences and to develop cross-community and cross-border cooperation and networks
- Innovating History Education in the Black Sea Region raises awareness in this region for approaches in history, heritage and citizenship education which enhance democracy and intercultural dialogue, and is creating sustainable national and cross-border networks.

All of these projects, programmes and activities have been aimed at fostering and promoting intercultural dialogue. But intercultural dialogue is not the reason for these activities; good history education is — and this is only possible with a proper investment in the cross-border professional development of educators themselves. Let us share some examples of what we mean by this.

In 2008, 25 history teachers from the Netherlands joined a study visit to Turkey, organized by EUROCLIO in partnership with several young and upcoming history teacher trainers in Turkey. During the intense one-week programme the participating teachers had a chance to meet textbook authors, educational publishers and policymakers on local, regional and national levels; teachers, pupils and school principals from public as well as private schools; teacher trainers and civil society activists. In all these talks, the Dutch teachers were able to discover the complexity of education in such a large and rapidly developing country generally, but more specifically they were able to look at history using a Turkish mirror, and came back with profound new insights and experiences. They shared these insights in magazines at school level, but also at national level through a documentary. Later on, as EUROCLIO was able to set up and support a new history teachers' association in Turkey after it engaged the aforementioned Turkish history teacher trainers in a new project, new Dutch-Turkish school partnerships were formed and more study visits, some of them now with pupils, took place. What is most important here, however, is not the material impact and valorisation of the new networks which grew out of the study visit. Instead, the profound encounter of perspectives in history education on what to teach and why to teach it opened new horizons for discussion among the cultures. This was professional intercultural dialogue — in other words, peer-learning. Out of this professional discus-

sion about historical selection, perspectives and learning outcomes there also emerged a unique project of support, training and eventually collaborative writing of freely available and translated educational resources, written by and for history teachers and about history which is multilayered and has multiple perspectives, and thus is not owned by one group of people.

From the very beginning of the organization its founding members, with a lot of support and guidance from the Council of Europe and through common projects in EUROCLIO, have been able to bring history teachers in many more countries together to help them establish history teachers' associations. But this was not simply a process of legal registration and networking. The idea that teachers should not only be in the classroom to deliver the curriculum and prepare students for their exams, but that they may also be an important part of active civil society and even an independent community of professionals who could take charge of their subject, was not common. Through our common projects, history teachers — as individuals and collectives — have been able to increase their capacity to democratically promote their beloved subject, but also to be critical against its political abuse. Being able to easily access and work together across borders has helped to provide legitimacy and access to expertise when needed, and working together on the production of joint educational resources has demonstrated the reality that history does not stop at the border and that a lot of it shared.

One of the best examples here is the association called EUROCLIO HIP BiH. HIP stands for Historia, Istorija and Povijest — words which mean 'history' in Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian, the three languages that come together in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). This association was established during early EUROCLIO activities in 2004, but it took another year for this enthusiastic and multicultural group of history educators to have their association legally registered — such a procedure did not yet exist in the country just 10 years after the war. Ten years after being established, having constructively participated in many different projects and having reached out to over half of the country's history teachers in a positive way, the association is now working together on the most difficult part — recent history. Once more we see genuine intercultural dialogue — not to establish a definite version of history as 'truth', but to allow students to understand how their parents' generation saw their respective 'other' through the media before the war, and how that influenced the decisions that people made once the spark was lit. This is not dialogue for the sake of dialogue, but critical thinking which promotes and sustains a mindset for dialogue.

Based on over 20 years of field work, in 2014 the delegates of EUROCLIO's member associations unanimously approved EUROCLIO's Manifesto on High Quality History, Heritage and Citizenship Education. This is becoming a guiding document. Of course there are no fixed commandments; rather, there are carefully put together recommendations for an innovative and responsible approach to the learning and teaching of history — one

EUROCLIO has worked closely with member associations to organize more than 40 international conferences and over 90 national and regional training and development courses

of the most politicized and politicizing subjects taught in schools worldwide.

From 2015 onwards, EUROCLIO seeks to work more closely together with civil society partners all over the world, including Facing History and Ourselves, the International History Non-Governmental Organization Forum, the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research and the Network of Concerned Historians.

In the end, we seek to welcome all history teachers in the world to join our family, so that together they may find ways to overcome differences. Ultimately the goal is to achieve a sustainable peace. What is needed for this is a change in what society thinks matters in history. Not (only) one long story of important white males making critical political and military decisions, but (also) all the perspectives that are in the shadows, and new themes which help students to understand both how the complex world around them came to be, and how history might help them to creatively and sustainably address the challenges to build a better future. How? History starts with a question which sparks an investigation into sources, which deliver evidence for arguments. In the case of intercultural dialogue, what we want to know is how we can best live together in diversity. Looking into history with this question in mind, we find countless episodes in our shared human past where this was challenging and where these challenges were resolved. In this way, history is no longer the monster under our bed, but rather a useful tool for progress — and this is the key that history teachers hold.

Rapprochement of cultures — the Hungarian way

Dr Péter Hoppál, State Secretary for Culture, Hungary

The Hungarian people arrived in their homeland from the East more than 1,000 years ago. They came from a place where great empires forged together peoples of different languages, cultures and creeds for centuries. In his Admonitions to his son Emeric in the early eleventh century, Hungary's first Christian king, Saint Stephen, said: *"Unius linguae uniusque moris regnum imbecille et fragile est"* (a kingdom that has only one language and one custom is weak and fragile). These words indicate that the Hungarian state in the Carpathian Basin had a deep-rooted tradition of uniting diversities. Waves of migrations have reached Hungary from all directions; Saxons, Cumans, Romanians, South Slavs, Germans and Jews came in large masses, preserving their traditions for shorter or longer periods of time, but all contributing to Hungary's cultural diversity. Except for a short era filled with sorrow, Hungary has remained open to various influences and received these communities with open arms.

The new Fundamental Law of Hungary adopted in 2011 reflects this thousand-year-old tradition, and the religion,

Hungary believes that an ethical cooperation based on mutual respect is the foundation of a true rapprochement of cultures

education and culture policy of our current state is concordant with this historical legacy and principles.

Until the late nineteenth century, the primary source of education in Central and Eastern Europe was religion. In our region this was led by Catholicism, but Protestantism also had a strong influence after the Reformation in the sixteenth century. However, the attitude of all Hungarians was shaped by the perception that first provided equal rights to the Christian denominations in 1568 at the Diet of Torda, whose adherents in other parts of Europe fought bloody and prolonged fraternal wars. This is why followers of Eastern Christianity, then also Jewish people, were admitted to the country in great numbers, and both were given the opportunity to integrate into Hungarian society.

Pursuant to our laws, today everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The state and religious communities are separate; religious communities are given independence and may decide to cooperate with the state at their own discretion. Their initiatives are assessed by the Parliament. Religious communities participating in such a framework of cooperation are accepted churches, and due to their participation in community service they enjoy unique privileges.

There are 32 recognized churches in Hungary (communities with a great past and highly embedded in society, such as Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, Jewish and Orthodox, but also numerous other internationally recognized protestant churches, such as Methodists, Adventists, Pentecostals, Mormons and the Salvation Army). Somewhat uniquely in Europe, the authentic Hungarian representatives of great world religions, such as Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus, are also working as recognized churches in Hungary. Otherwise, any religious community may use the designation 'church' and may be registered with the word 'church' in its official name.

The Hungarian state considers religious communities as partners in efforts for public welfare, hence it supports various programmes with this view in mind. In order to promote religious diversity and dialogue between religious communities, not only professional consultations and educational activities, but also international conferences which dwelled upon the situation in Hungary and practices in other countries, were needed. The most prominent event was the Conference on the Christian-Jewish-Islamic Dialogue in Gödöllő in June 2011, which was held in the context of Hungary's presidency of the Council of the European Union. In addition to European participants, this conference was attended by the religious and secular representatives of Russia, the United States of America

The Hungarian Táncház method has been recognized on UNESCO's Register of Best Safeguarding Practices for intangible cultural heritage

(USA) and states of the Middle East such as Egypt, Israel, Kuwait and Lebanon. The conference discussed common values, the problems of the freedom of religion within the European Union, the social and religious projection of migration and issues relating to religious diversity.

Recognizing and emphasizing one of the greatest tragedies of twentieth-century Hungarian history, the Government of Hungary declared 2014 the Holocaust Memorial Year. The aim was to commemorate the grievous events that occurred 70 years ago, so that such events cannot happen again and the peaceful coexistence of various religions and nations can continue. In light of this, the conference of Tihany was organized on the basis of the Vatican's document Nostra Ætate, by the Ministry of Human Capacities and the Hungarian National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in March 2014 with the title 'Our Shared Future — Our Shared Responsibility' on the coexistence of Jewish and Christian communities in Hungary. Many ecclesiastical leaders as well as internationally renowned experts and researchers of interreligious dialogue attended the event, including His Eminence Péter Cardinal Erdő; Deputy Prime Minister Dr Zsolt Semjén; Minister Zoltán Balog; President of

the Hungarian National Commission for UNESCO Dr Miklós Réthelyi; and Israeli Ambassador to Hungary, His Excellency Ilan Mor. In the closing document the participants committed themselves to the priority of honest talk, friendship and respect in human relationships, denounced anti-Semitism and all forms of exclusion and negative discrimination, and called attention to the unpredictable consequences of passive behaviour disregarding everyday critical issues. The success of the conference is proven by the continuation 'Tihany 2' meeting, which will take place in summer 2015. We have high hopes that participants will manage to find solutions to the most pressing current issues of interreligious dialogue, thereby facilitating the peaceful coexistence of religions on the basis of tolerance and mutual acceptance.

Our history proves all too well that intellectuals educated abroad can have an important intermediary role between cultures with a dominant influence on the development of all peoples. Until the early twentieth century, Hungary had a rather passive role in that respect. Then, for 40 years starting from the middle of the century, thousands of professionals were given education in Hungary (mainly Eastern and Central Europeans and those from developing countries). On returning to their homeland, these professionals became the everyday ambassa-

Through our good practices developed over 1,000 years, Hungary has proved that cultures can approach each other peacefully and affect one another productively

dors of the rapprochement of cultures. It is the definite objective of our Government to increase both the number of students arriving in Hungary and the number going abroad, after a temporary period of decline. Institutions of higher education provide high-quality training, and Hungarian students need the knowledge that can be acquired outside Hungary. This goal is promoted by several programmes.

The programme launched in 2012, bearing the name Campus Hungary, is based on the fundamental principles of the European Quality Charter for Mobility; its budget of nearly Ft5 billion (US$17 million) promises a real breakthrough. One of its subprojects is supporting the mobility of students and instructors (sending 7,000 students with scholarships and instructors to 87 countries in three years), while the other subproject is increasing the number of foreign students in Hungary. In the framework of the Erasmus programme 40,000 Hungarian students have had the opportunity to study abroad, and 25,000 students from around the globe travelled to Hungary for at least three months. This year the number of students arriving came near to the number departing from Hungary. The proportion of Asian, South American and African students is on the rise once again and now it is approximately 20 per cent of the total number of students. The Government launched the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship programme for the most gifted students, wherein those

countries outside the European Union for whom Hungary offered this option could participate.

The public opinion of Europe, and hence the rest of the world, with an interest in Hungary saw our country as an isolated and even exotic place (mainly due to our characteristic native language). In fact, this is not true, since our culture has been closely linked to the cultures of peoples around us, as well as those far away, for many centuries, while maintaining and shaping its own characteristics, living by universal human values and creating such ideals as well. Bearing this in mind, our state has taken an epoch-making step by founding the public body responsible for the recognition and support of free artistic creative work, the Hungarian Academy of Arts, which promotes the rapprochement of cultures by attaining cultural assets and values through the management of its institutions.

The presentation of outstanding achievements both inside and outside Hungary was always an objective in the field of arts. International relations are freely established and maintained by our contemporary artists and institutions. Foreign singers and musicians regularly perform at our opera house and concert halls, and at theatre and book festivals and exhibitions we have artists and theatre companies, just as Hungarian artists are welcome in institutions and events around the world. Naturally, our cultural government takes part in achieving the strategic goals of the country, for instance a

Over the years, waves of migration from all directions have contributed to Hungary's cultural diversity

Hungarian-Chinese media forum was organized in 2015 for the sixty-fifth anniversary of the commencement of Hungarian-Chinese diplomatic relations in the framework of the policy of 'Eastern Opening' as well as enabling the publication of books in Chinese by young novelists in the 'Flash Fiction — Flash Europa 28' project implemented in cooperation with the Hungarian Academy of Arts. István Fischer and the Budapest Festival Music Band were well received and had great success at crowded concert halls from Hong Kong to Taipei in 2014. Also in 2014 the National Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Zoltán Kocsis gave a concert in one of the most prominent Turkish concert halls, the İş Sanat Istanbul Hall. In 2013 the programme of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, 'Hungarian Rhapsody — America' was performed more than 70 times in the USA and Canada. We hold our cultural ties with Israel dearly, and this is proven by continuous guest performances at the Budapest Operetta and Musical Theatre, the Honvéd male choir and the Vígszínház, among other things.

The state, church and public-private collections, libraries, museums and archives keep numerous documents and works of art originating from distant cultures. The material remains of South American Indians at the Museum of Ethnography, the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Vietnamese, Indonesian and Islamic collection of the Hopp Ferenc Asian Museum of Art, and the Tibetan, Turkish and Hebrew documents as well

as the Buddhist and Manichean manuscripts of the Eastern Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences are of outstanding value to the cultural legacy of mankind.

Our large public collections are continuously working in cooperation with the relevant institutions of distant countries. In this context numerous significant exhibitions have been realized in recent years (Museum of Ethnography: Egy hánya-tott sorsú vidék: 'Tóhoku kézműves hagyománya' — Japanese folk art exhibition; 'Vietnami porcelán' — Vietnamese porcelain: a fragile remembering; Museum of Applied Arts: 'Két korszak határán' — Persian arts in the Qajar era).

Besides our native language and literature, our national culture is the most idiosyncratic, but within that Hungarian music and folk art are the most easily received by the outside world. In 2011 the Hungarian model of preserving folklore, the Táncház method, was recognized by UNESCO as one of the elements on the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices for intangible cultural heritage. This model, serving as a reference to the preservation of the musical native language of other peoples and to 'reusing' the rapidly declining reserve of heritage of mankind, could not be devised without our world-famous composers and scientists of the twentieth century, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. Its creation and international recognition contributed significantly to Budapest being given the opportunity to host the World Music Expo (WOMEX). The number one representative international event of folk and world music, WOMEX is recognized by UNESCO as the event for the preservation of cultural diversity. After Berlin, Thessaloniki, Copenhagen, Brussels, Marseille and other cities, Budapest will receive nearly 70 performers, music bands and approximately 2,500 guests from around the globe.

An international event of similar renown is the Europa Cantat festival, founded in 1961, which will take place in Pécs this year. Europa Cantat puts the emphasis on gaining a better understanding of each other's cultures, international reconciliation and the creation of common artistic productions. Participants from approximately 40 countries will come to the 10-day-long international choir festival, which is organized every three years and attracts some three thousand singers who will work together in 50 musical workshops.

Nowadays, we may feel that the coexistence of cultures is not always smooth and free of problems. We, Hungarians, through our good practices developed over 1,000 years, have proved that cultures can approach each other peacefully and affect one another productively. A special mindset became an integral part of our culture, in that if we face a challenge we try to find a solution relying on our traditions and through our characteristic national approach. The seeds of this special approach are the values that are important for every person, which can also inspire people to joint action. Work and everything that strengthens families are considered our fundamental values, as well as efforts that provide families with a home, preserve health and ensure that the order needed to keep our values is maintained. We believe that the main reason and goal of organizing people into a society is ethical cooperation. This is a shared interest that may not be overwritten by any individual or particular group interest, and we believe that an ethical cooperation based on mutual respect is the foundation of a true rapprochement of cultures.

Multicultural Viet Nam: ethnicity and cultural diversity

Associate Professor, Dr Nguyen Thi Hien, vice director,
Viet Nam National Institute of Culture and Art Studies, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism

Respect for cultural diversity is a key issue that plays an important role in the solidarity and unification of various ethnic groups in Viet Nam. Through thousands of years of the history of establishment and protection of the country, its ethnic groups have been unified in cultural diversity. This tendency works out well due to the efforts of the Vietnamese Government, constitution, Law on Cultural Heritage and other legal documents. There follows a discussion of the cultural identity of ethnic groups in Viet Nam and the Vietnamese Government's focus on cultural rapprochement to achieve ethnic solidarity in the development and the advancement of well-being.

Viet Nam is a country with 54 ethnic groups, among which the Kinh is the major one and the other 53 groups are minorities. The population of Viet Nam is 90 million, with the ethnic minorities accounting for only 12 million of these. They live in dispersed areas, or symbiotically in certain villages or regions, in deltas, coastal areas, valleys, hill feet or mountainous areas. Their cultural identities contribute to multicultural Viet Nam. The land in Viet Nam includes mountains, forests, plains, deltas, plateaus, coastal areas and islands, with the mountainous area occupying three-quarters of the entire territory. The habitation of the ethnic groups is also diverse, and is located according to the terrain and altitude.

In linguistic terms, the 54 ethnic groups are divided into eight language groups, namely the Viet-Muong, Tay-Thai, Mon-Khmer, Mong-Dao, Kadai, Austronesian, Sino and Tibetan groups. These linguistic groups are distinguished not only in their languages, but also in their habitations.

Image: Hoang Son

People of Vi Village in Phu Tho province bear a palanquin containing the Hung Kings' tablet at their traditional festival

Image: Nguyễn Trung Bình

Chau van singing at a spirit possession ritual at Tien Huong Palace in Nam Định province

Making a petition to spirits for good luck, good health and prosperity

For instance, the Tay and Thai are very good at wet rice cultivation and successful in the development of their socio-economic models for cultivation in the valleys and at the feet of mountains. They have created the famous rice granary in the very northern part of Viet Nam. They have formed their own culture – known as the wet rice culture — with their traditional festivals related to the harvest, new rice welcome events, the rice god and a system of belief in natural spirits.

The Mon-Khmer group live in the high mountainous area and cultivate the swidden land. Their culture is related to the highland and forest regions, with colourful patterns on their costumes and lively dances with the sonority of song and music. Particularly, the Khmer people in the south live in the large delta and practice Theravada Buddhism. Among the Austronesian peoples, the Cham in the central part of Viet Nam are used to living along the coastal areas and their culture is imbued with the sea. They still have their own ancient writing system and contribute to the cultural diversity of Viet Nam with the famous My Son holy site, Poh Nagar Tower and their own special festivals dedicated to their gods and ancient kings with songs, dances and rituals.

The Hmong-Dao group have been able to cultivate the wet rice on the mountainsides and are very good at forging iron tools, husbandry and herb medicine. Thus, the habitation of the ethnic groups creates their living environment and cultural traits depending on their locations: the delta zone, the coastal zone, the midland zone, the valley and mountainous zone, the high mountainous zone or the plain zone. The cultural zones reflect the shared cultural identities and at the same time the cultural diversity that once again creates multicultural Viet Nam.

The cultures of ethnic groups in Viet Nam are always in exchange and share similarities. They bear common traits of the culture in Southeast Asia, but they are influenced by each other and depending on the natural environment, habitation and historical conditions. Some cultural traits can be found among many ethnic groups in certain areas and become the regional cultural trait. Thus, in Viet Nam, cultural regions have been created, each with its own customs, traditional festivals, songs and rituals such as the Lang region, Thanh region or Dong region.

Cultural diversity can also be seen in various parts of Viet Nam among an ethnic group. This is due to cultural adaptation to the living environment and conditions, as well as cultural exchange among neighbouring ethnic groups. For instance, for the Kinh people, its culture in the northern, central and southern parts has distinguishing traits. A number of the Kinh immigrants who moved from the north to the south and settled there for thousands of years have been in cultural exchange with the indigenous peoples there such as the Cham or the Khmer and adapted to their living conditions. These living conditions and symbiosis make the Kinh culture in the south different from the one in the north, especially in dialects, customs, traditional costumes and folk performances.

Vi-Giam singing in the corn field

Language is among the elements that the Vietnamese Government focuses on to nurture cultural rapprochement for the solidarity and unification of the ethnic groups. In order to safeguard and develop the ethnic languages, the Government has issued a number of policies. Ethnic groups have a right to use their own language in their life, education, cultural and political agenda and economic development. Article 42 of the Vietnamese constitution of 2013 states that "Citizens have their right to identify their own ethnicity, use their mother tongue, and choose their language for communication." The Government has issued decree number 05/2011/NĐ-CP on an "ethnic mission" that is "to ensure the preservation of the spoken and written languages, cultural identities of ethnic groups, and to promote customs, traditions and good cultural traits of each ethnic group." Article 7 of the Education Law regulates that "The Government enables ethnic people to learn in their languages and writing systems in order to stimulate the development of cultures and assist children of ethnic groups to learn easily at schools and other educational divisions." In the recent resolution of the 9th Central Conference (Term XI) on the building and development of the Vietnamese culture and people to meet the demand of the sustainable development of the country, the aim is clearly confirmed to "preserve and promote the cultural heritage of ethnic groups, especially the spoken and written languages, customs and traditional festivals." Also, ethnic language is one of the elements of intangible cultural heritage identified in the Law on Cultural Heritage in Article 21: "The Government has its policies and creates favourable conditions to protect and develop the spoken and written languages of ethnic groups in Viet Nam."

Among the 53 ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam the Chinese, Cham and Khmer have their own spoken and

A folk performance of the 100 jobs competition at a traditional festival

Epic telling among the Bahnar ethnic group in the Central Highlands

written languages, and most ethnic minority groups have their own spoken language although they do not have their own written language. Through written language development, the Latin alphabet has been used to create the written scripts of a number ethnic groups such as the Kinh (as so called the Viet language), Mong, Rhade, Jarai and so on. Some other ethnic groups use the ancient scripts that use Sanskrit, such as the old Cham script, the Thai script, the Khmer script or the Lu script. Or they use Chinese characters to recreate their own Sino-Nom languages such as the old Viet language, the Dao written language, the Giay, the Tay, the Nung, the San Dui languages and so on. Today, they use the Sino-Nom scripts to write up religious petitions, or for religious images or books. Up to now there are about 30 ethnic groups that have their own written language, such as the Tay, Thai, Chinese, Khmer, Nung, Mon, Jarai, Rhade, Bahnar, Sedang, Koho, Cham, Hre, Mnong and so on. A number of the spoken and written languages of ethnic groups are used in the media such as the Tay, Thai, Dao, Mong, Jarai, Rhade, Bahnar, Cham and Khmer. Together with the newspapers in the national language of Viet, the newspaper agencies at the provincial level have issued their newspapers in ethnic languages, or they publish the newspapers exclusively for ethnic minority people. The Voice of Viet Nam and the Television of Viet Nam have their channels in different ethnic languages such as Mong, Khmer, Rhade, Jarai, Bahnar, Sedang, Koho, Thai, Cham, Dao and Mnong. Also a number of provincial television stations air their programmes in the ethnic languages. Today there are 2,700 schools and classes in 30 provinces, in which about 140,000 children are taught in their ethnic languages and which have course books in 12 ethnic languages. Typically, in Soc Trang province the Khmer language is the teaching language at all elementary schools.

Thus, the ethnic language is a very important tool for education and for rapprochement for the country's development and to understand the ethnic cultures.

Ethnicity and solidarity occupy an important strategy in Viet Nam's policies on culture. The ethnic groups in Viet Nam are equal, united and they respect and assist each other in their sustainable development. The governmental policy is to preserve and promote cultural identities, spoken and written languages and other cultural expressions of all ethnic groups. The Government also launched prior policies in which the cadre and intellectuals of ethnic minorities have their privilege to get education and training. They will come back to their homeland to work. The people who work among the ethnic groups in the remote areas are required to understand the customs and languages of the ethnic minorities. The understanding and reciprocal knowledge of the cultural diversity and languages of the ethnic groups in Viet Nam are clearly identified in the Viet Nam constitution of 2013. Article 5 of the constitution states that:

1. The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is a unified nation of all ethnic groups living together in the country of Viet Nam.
2. All the ethnic groups are equal and unite with, respect and assist one another for mutual development; all acts of discrimination against and division of the ethnic groups are prohibited.
3. The national language is the Viet language. Every ethnic group has the right to use its own spoken and written language to preserve its own identity and to promote its fine customs, practices, traditions and culture.
4. The State shall implement a policy of comprehensive development and create the conditions for the minority ethnic groups to draw further their internal strengths and develop together with the country.

The International Islamic University Malaysia's role in promoting interreligious harmony

Prof Dato' Sri Dr Zaleha Kamaruddin, Rector, and Prof Dr Ainul Jaria Binti Maidin, Director, Office of Corporate Communication and Marketing, IIUM International Islamic University Malaysia

The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is a public university sponsored by the Malaysian Government and eight other governments from the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The university was established in 1983, founded on Islamic principles with the aim of becoming a leading international centre of educational excellence.

The philosophy of the university was inspired by the recommendations of the first World Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977. The spirit of this philosophy is based on the verses of Surah Al-Alaq in the Qur'an. According to this philosophy, knowledge shall be propagated in the spirit of Tawhid, leading towards the recognition of Allah as the absolute creator and master of mankind.

The spirit behind the recognition of Allah as the Lord of the World (Rabbal-Alamin) represents the apex in the hierarchy of knowledge. Thus, all disciplines of knowledge should lead towards subservience to this truth. This is because knowledge is a form of trust (amanah) from Allah to man, and hence man should utilize knowledge according to Allah's will in performing his role as the servant and vicegerent (khalifah) of Allah on Earth.

The International Islamic University Malaysia: students learn to work together with people of different beliefs and diverse cultural backgrounds in order to promote peace and harmony

In line with the mission of its establishment, the university is constantly striving to promote understanding of Islam and harmony within the multiracial and multireligious communities in Malaysia and in other parts of the world. The university has developed an integrated curriculum to prepare students to face the challenges they will encounter upon graduation, particularly in an increasingly globalized world. IIUM, in line with the mission, trains students to work together with people of different beliefs and diverse cultural backgrounds in order to promote peace and harmony.

IIUM strives to inculcate in its students a deep love of and commitment to the principles of moderation promoted by Islam as a way of life. IIUM has taken on the role of disseminating the message on the importance of moderation for Muslims. Moderation can be practiced at every level of society by choosing mutual respect and inclusivity, strengthening the bonds between different communities and faiths. Islam enjoins Muslims to be tolerant, respectful of other's beliefs and rights, and to promote peace amongst nations to ensure political stability and sustainable development.

Promoting interreligious harmony in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multiracial, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious country where the initiatives to unite, integrate and harmonize the peoples have become the most important challenges to the Malaysian leadership. Since Malaysia's independence, continuous efforts have been initiated with the establishment of institutions like the Department of National Unity and Integration and the Committee for Promoting Understanding and Harmony among Religious Adherences by the Government to promote interreligious harmony.

A harmonious nation requires people of diverse backgrounds in terms of race, language, culture and religion to learn, understand, compromise, work and live together for a progressive and prosperous future. Interracial and interreligious harmonies are core requirements of modern societies and need to be nurtured. The World Interfaith Harmony Week can play an important role in Malaysia.

In line with the mission of IIUM, the university decided to collaborate with the Department of National Unity, Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia to organize annually the International Seminar on Interreligious Harmony and Tolerance and Award Ceremony in conjunction with the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week. The university has organized four seminars since 2012.

The mosque at IIUM: the university strives to promote understanding of Islam and harmony within multiracial and religious communities

The Honourable Rector, Dr Zaleha Kamaruddin, delivering her speech at the 4th International Seminar on Interfaith Harmony and Tolerance 2015, Malaysia

The university supports the idea that more dialogues and seminars pertaining to racial and religious relations should be organized to foster harmony and prevent conflicts among the country's multiracial and multireligious society. Dialogues involving community and religious leaders could create better understanding of communal and religious issues and hence, help to strengthen peaceful relations.

The university management upholds the stance that religious principles should be studied, carefully understood and must be geared towards fostering harmony and mutual respect through dialogue programmes. The President of the university is confident that social media could play a role in fostering understanding, peace and love between the different races and in enhancing the principle of mutual respect and understanding acceptance among people of different religions and cultures.

The participants in the Interfaith Harmony programmes come from 14 different countries including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Turkey, Brunei Darussalam and the United Arab Emirates. Disseminating principles and tools of intercultural dialogue through quality education and the media can help to reach out to the younger generation.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week is not a call to water down one's faith, but rather a call to respect inevitable natural differences and personal beliefs. It is a clarion call for unity believing that all human beings came from the same source, and they can only live in harmony if they build their relationship upon a solid foundation of dialogues. The international seminar endeavours to promote the ongoing discussions on tolerance and mutual acceptance among different religions and communities and to open an avenue for positive engagements on interfaith harmony and tolerance.

The primary objective of the series of seminars organized during the Interfaith Harmony Week is to spread the message of harmony and tolerance among the followers of religions, faith and beliefs. This year seminar papers and discussions concentrated on the following major areas of media and international relations:

- mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity as well as supporting reconciliation efforts
- building a framework for commonly shared values which fosters social cohesion
- disseminating principles and tools of intercultural dialogue through quality education and the media
- fostering dialogue for sustainable development and its ethical, social and cultural dimensions.

The seminar aims to promote the common basis of 'Love of God and love of the neighbour' or 'Love of the good and love of the neighbour' to strengthen the message of harmony and tolerance, which is necessary to reduce anxiety, stress and personal pressure among individuals, society and countries.

IIUM has taken part in local and global initiatives with strategic partners such as the Ma'din Academy, JPNIN and the Jawatankuasa Mempromosikan Persefahaman dan Keharmonian Antara Penganut Agama (JKMPKA) in the area of interreligious and interfaith concord to strengthen the belief that the maximum output of human endeavour comes through cooperation among the different nations. This is in line with Qur'an 5:2 which provides: "Help ye one another unto good deeds and righteousness and help not one another unto sins and transgression."

IIUM developed the Certificate in Interfaith Mediation programme to be considered by JKMPKA for use in training religious leaders in Malaysia in order to promote the understanding and peaceful coexistence of people of various religions in the country.

Although people from multireligious backgrounds can live in harmony, conflicts are unavoidable, for it is a legitimate part of human social and political life. In many places conflict may turn violent, inflicting grave costs in terms of

The opening ceremony (left) and award giving (right) at the 4th International Seminar on Interfaith Harmony and Tolerance 2015, Malaysia

loss of lives and livelihoods. Violent conflict disrupts development and it can spill over borders and reduce growth and prosperity in the entire region.

It is most unfortunate that religion is now being viewed as a motive for conflict and seems to be depicted as a key component in many current and past conflicts. In principle all religions disapprove of violence and encourage coexistence, peacebuilding and reconciliation among the interfaith community.

The Certificate in Interfaith Mediation programme was inspired by the drive to adopt a more learned attitude and aptitude to deal with conflicts among people of different religions in Malaysia. The programme focuses on building understanding and respect between people of all faiths to work towards promoting a cohesive society where all faiths are not only tolerated but where individuals are respected and diversity is valued and celebrated. Interfaith coexistence can contribute towards a developed society free of violent ethnoreligious and sociopolitical conflicts.

Interfaith coexistence can be achieved through facilitating dialogue, joint action and civic participation, as well as raising awareness and understanding. Equipping leaders of all faith communities to engage with each other and the wider community is an important aspect of conflict avoidance initiatives. In order to achieve this, it is essential for religious leaders to be equipped with knowledge, skills and tools for conflict prevention, mediation, transformation and peacemaking.

In promoting skills required to curb potential future conflicts the programme addresses the root causes of the past and current conflicts in Malaysia. The programme also finds it essential to promote the moral and spiritual aspects of religion against religious sentiments, prejudices and emotions dominated by ignorance of the values of other religious practices and beliefs.

The Certificate in Interfaith Mediation programme has been developed to:
• provide participants with the skills to mediate and with knowledge of the principles and values of interfaith mediation
• promote peaceful coexistence between political, social and religious groups in Malaysia
• address the root causes of religious conflict
• promote awareness of the psychology behind religious violence and address its root causes, drawing on the power of spirituality and the peaceful interpretation and application of religious texts
• promote credibility in the community with the joint involvement of religious leaders in the conflict resolution process to create a community where acceptance and compassion can overrule emotions dominated by ignorance of the values of other religious practices and beliefs.

This pioneer Certificate in Interfaith Mediation programme is designed to provide training to the country's religious figures to become peace ambassadors in their various communities in Malaysia.

Research shows that establishing interfaith mediation centres in various parts of the world has credibility in the community since the involvement and efforts of religious leaders in the conflict resolution process will create a community where acceptance and compassion set the precedent. The university is in the process of establishing an interfaith mediation centre to promote research and training for religious and community leaders involved in promoting peaceful coexistence between the multireligious communities in Malaysia. The centre will address the root causes of religious conflict and try to identify the best mechanisms to reduce conflicts and tensions. This is expected to create a harmonious community where acceptance, compassion and tolerance set the precedent for resolving disputes.

Current status and issues for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Brunei Darussalam

Mohd Abdoh Damit, Acting Assistant Director (Culture and the Arts), Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

Brunei, properly known as Brunei Darussalam (the Abode of Peace), is a small Malay sultanate located on the north-western coastal fringe of Borneo, the third-largest island in the world. To the south-west of Brunei is Sarawak, to the north-east is Sabah, while to the south lies Kalimantan. Both Sabah and Sarawak belong to the Federation of Malaysia and Kalimantan is a part of Indonesia. Borneo itself is located in the islands of South-East Asia, the crossroads of trade, commerce and cultures.

Brunei Darussalam has a total area of 5,765 square kilometres (2,226 square miles) with coastline of 161 kilometres. The country is divided into four — the Brunei and Muara, Belait, Tutong and Temburong districts. Its population is about 400,000, comprising Malays, Chinese, Indians, indigenous groups and expatriates. Bandar Seri Begawan is the capital city, the seat of the Government and centre of population and commerce.

Brunei and ASEAN

In 1984, Brunei Darussalam became independent from Great Britain and marked the beginning of its participation in the international scene. Brunei has been a member of many regional and international organizations, among them the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The country played a great role in this organization, such as in culture and heritage. Brunei was part of the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI), an organization that was formed in 1978 to look after ASEAN's cultural development and activities. Apart from organizing ASEAN-COCI projects in the country, Brunei Darussalam was also a very active participant in other ASEAN countries' programmes and projects. To better understand the ASEAN culture and heritage, Brunei has also established the ASEAN Corner at the Brunei National Museum to showcase ASEAN culture and tradition. ASEAN Corner was an ASEAN-COCI initiative to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of ASEAN, as stated during the 8th Sub-Committee Cultural ASEAN-COCI Meeting held in November 2006 in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. All member states have to establish their own ASEAN Corner at their respective national museums. Brunei's ASEAN Corner was opened at the National Museum in November 2007, highlighting the respective culture, lifestyle and spirit of the 10 ASEAN member countries as a form of informal education.

Bronze cannon making is an important traditional art, and has been a significant Bruneian symbol of power and wealth since the thirteenth century

The weaving of Kain Jong Sarat and silversmithing are important traditional skills; these traditional textiles and silverware are used in daily cultural practices in Brunei Darussalam

Brunei is also involved in the ASEAN Blueprint for the Socio-Cultural Community 2008-2015. The 13th ASEAN Summit, held in Singapore on 20 November 2007, agreed to develop an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint to ensure that concrete actions are undertaken to promote the establishment of an ASCC.

Among the initiatives was the building of an ASEAN identity through the promotion of ASEAN awareness and a sense of community. The strategic objective was to create a sense of belonging, consolidate unity in diversity and enhance deeper mutual understanding among ASEAN member states about their culture, history, religion and civilization. It also aims to promote the conservation and preservation of ASEAN cultural heritage, to ensure its continuity and enhance people's awareness and understanding about the unique history of the region and the cultural similarities and differences between and among ASEAN member states, as well as to protect the distinctiveness of ASEAN cultural heritage as a whole.

Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

Brunei is predominantly Malay with Islam as the official language and monarchy as its system of government. The Bruneian identity is defined as civilization, values and personalities governed by the national ideology of the Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB). With intangible cultural heritage (ICH) being practiced, we are sure that Brunei Darussalam will be coherent and the identity of us Bruneians will be sustained whatever the challenges of the global world are.

The seven Malays have rich cultural heritage. The arts, traditional medicine, culture, practice, cuisine, traditional motives, literature and other forms of ICH were passed on through stories, legends, folklore, rituals, songs and customs. The role of the Adat (customary law) and Pusaka (heirlooms of the ancestors) is vital

in maintaining the ICH of the Brunei Malays. The unwritten legislature of the codification and implementation of the Adat and its role as a Pusaka takes place in all aspects of society.

In Brunei Darussalam, various government agencies and institutions have been working hand-in-hand to protect ICH. The Ministry of Education, through SPN21, has highlighted the importance of ICH in the subjects of MIB; Social Studies; and Business, Art and Technology in the curriculum. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, through its Culture and the Arts Section, is working on an inventory of arts, culture and ICH, in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Museums Department and the Brunei History Centre have been doing anthropological and archaeological studies on the ICH; so have Universiti Brunei Darussalam and other government agencies. The Attorney General Chambers have been actively involved in the protection of intellectual properties through Brunei Darussalam's Emergency (Copyright) Order, 1999. The Brunei Economic Development Board established the Patents Registry Office early this year.

The Brunei Museums Department was established in 1965 to manage the richly endowed and diversified cultural properties. The department has expanded tremendously and embarked on a multidisciplinary and holistic approach in the collection, preservation, execution of research and disclosure of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

In 1984 Brunei Darussalam gained its independence. That year also witnessed the setting up of ministries and departments which include the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. In 1985, the Culture and the Arts Section of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports was established. One of the main tasks of the section is to oversee culture and heritage and protect them.

Kampong Air (Water Village) depends on the perahu tambang (water taxi) for mobilization; this traditional art of memburis perahu (boat making) is passed on from generation to generation

Four national Acts were adopted: the Antiquities and Treasures Trove Enactment in 1967 (amended in 1984 and 1991); the Preservation of Books Enactment in 1967 (amended in 1984); the Brunei Darussalam National archives Enactment in 1975 (updated in 1983); and the Wildlife Protection Act in 1978 (updated in 1984). Under these Acts, the respective responsible agencies are required to protect, preserve and promote as well as document the country's properties by publishing and producing materials such as books, photographs, video, film and audiotapes which will be stored at the National Archives of Brunei Darussalam.

As much as the nation has put in place legislations, institutions and government agencies to protect ICH, it is up to us, the pride of the nation and the people of this peaceful and prosperous country of Brunei Darussalam to carry on protecting our ICH through constant usage of this knowledge, and to include every aspect of the ICH in our lives through living culture.

Main activities to safeguard ICH

In May 2006, the former Director-General of UNESCO visited Brunei Darussalam. Brunei was encouraged to ratify the International Conventions in order to ensure protection, preservation, safeguarding and promotion of such cultural heritage. Brunei was not then a member of the conventions.

In May 2009 and March 2011, Masanori Nagaoka, Programme Specialist for Culture at the UNESCO office in Jakarta, went on a mission to strengthen UNESCO's commitment and cooperation with Brunei in the broader domain of culture, especially ICH. Significant challenges were identified for safeguarding efforts in ICH.

In November 2011, Brunei Darussalam ratified both conventions as part of its initiative to secure UNESCO status for its cultural treasures. This is seen as a step further in its contribution to the international body. Additionally, it demonstrates the country's commitment to protect its cultural heritage and natural environment, which will serve as reference and historical sites not only to Bruneians, but to people the world over.

As part of the initiative to achieve this recognition, a national committee has been set up at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, which is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Datin Paduka Hjh Adina binti Othman.

A workshop was developed, dubbed the 'World Heritage Nomination Procedure', which involves a series of lectures and visits to potential heritage sites in the country. Reports were produced as part of the workshop's input to be used as a framework. Among the contents of the workshop are a definition of world heritage, the setting up of national committee, criteria for the assessment of outstanding universal values, protection and management, a process for the inscription of properties in the world heritage list, and the process for monitoring the state of conservation of world heritage properties.

In March 2012, an in-house project called the 'Restoration of the Ashik Dance' was started. Other activities such as the 'Language Month' have been organized since 2012 as an annual event to commemorate the diverse dialects and national language of Brunei Darussalam to the public. Activities such as competitions, book reading, book festivals, village libraries and national competitions in poetry, creative writing, publications and the project of 'Brunei's Best Sellers' are among the many activities to inculcate the importance of the Malay language in Brunei Darussalam.

Educational, formal legislation and activities promote the ICH of Brunei Darussalam to the young. Other than these, the continuous practice through the written legislature where the codification and implementation of the Adat and its role as a Pusaka takes place in all aspects of society, is the main modus operandi in ensuring that the identity, the arts, practice and culture of Brunei Darussalam are sustained for the generations ahead.

Enhancing national unity and harmony through intercultural dialogue founded on the 1Malaysia concept

Kapli Bin Emek, Deputy Director General (National Harmony) and Zulkifli Bin Hashim, Director (Unity Management), Department of National Unity and Integration, Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia

Headlines about national unity among races in Malaysia often appear in local newspapers and magazines nowadays. Malaysia has a diverse community consisting of three major ethnic groups — Malay, Chinese and Indian — plus several other indigenous tribes. These ethnic and cultural diversities result in a wide variety of languages spoken and religions practiced in Malaysia.

In 1992, the National Unity Advisory Panel agreed that national unity could be fundamentally conceptualized as "a state in which all citizens from various groups (ethnic, religion, regions) live in peace as one united nation, giving full commitment to national identity based upon the Federal Constitution and the National Ideology (Rukun Negara)."

Calls for national unity have been manifested in many slogans and campaigns such as national integration, interracial harmony and the spirit of unity, all of which stem from the same objective of uniting the three major races to embrace the spirit of oneness; the Malaysian spirit.

The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak: "We are committed to staying the course to strengthen 1Malaysia and transform the nation"

Malaysia is a nation that is indeed unique and blessed. The uniqueness of this beautiful nation, among others, lies not just in its multiracial and multi-ethnic make-up, but also in its religious diversity. As for Malaysians, their religion does not just shape who they are spiritually, but also acts as a major influence on their culture and social identities.

Creating oneness or unity within a multireligious and multicultural nation is challenging. Some countries with plural societies have adopted the concept of full assimilation to forge or even force a single national identity. Malaysia, on the other hand, has chosen a different route — that of unity in diversity and inclusiveness, while ensuring fairness to all. Anchored in our constitution, this concept means that we embrace a diversity of ethnicity, religions and beliefs and, by being inclusive, build mutual respect and acceptance into a solid foundation of trust and cohesiveness.

In order to nurture and strengthen national unity and bring societal harmony to a greater height, the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, has introduced the concept of 1Malaysia. It is an idea that aspires to promote the integration of the multi-ethnic society as one functioning nation, without assimilating or eliminating their background of diverse cultures and traditions.

Malaysia's mission of unity is not merely for the sake of harmony and good relations, but is critical to building a productive and competitive Malaysia. The path to a united Malaysian nation may be difficult, but the benefits will be greater given the richer resultant cultural diversity and the competitive advantage this approach engenders.

In his Government Transformation Program Roadmap, the Prime Minister, said: "It is important that we first acknowledge the tremendous progress that we, as a nation, have made in creating a more united and inclusive Malaysia. Nevertheless more needs to be done, and it is my belief that Malaysians have reached the level of maturity necessary to discuss some of the tougher issues we face. These issues often do not have a solution and represent polarities that require compromises to be made by all parties. All Malaysians have an opinion on what is needed to build 1Malaysia. Often these opinions differ. However, they are based on a common underlying objective of making Malaysia a greater and more resilient nation.

Image: Dept of National Unity & National Integration, Malaysia

Malaysia's mission of unity is not merely for the sake of harmony and good relations, but is critical to building a productive and competitive country

We are committed to staying the course to strengthen 1Malaysia and transform the nation."[1]

By embracing inclusiveness, compared to other multiracial and multireligious countries, Malaysia has been able to sustain relative peace and harmony. However, there are occasions when divergent views and differences in perception and interpretation result in conflict. This is exacerbated when issues of contention involve religion, language and culture, all of which can become highly emotive and explosive. Fortunately, few such conflicts have resulted in bloodshed.

The challenge of sustaining harmony and unity remains real and relevant — hence the need to continually remind ourselves of the challenge and to constantly renew and nurture the sense of oneness and the unity of purpose, as enunciated in 1Malaysia.

1Malaysia emphasizes the attitude and fortitude of acceptance among the multiracial citizens, whereby a race will accept the uniqueness of another race as it is, so as to live in respect of each other as citizens of a nation.

A foundation to all this is the principle of justice for all, which entails that the fate of a race will be taken care of and no party will be marginalized. The different levels of racial development must be considered where justice is concerned. Thus, government policies and constitutional allocations which provide protection to those who require it will still be implemented.

1Malaysia is a continuance of the nation's development agenda. To achieve development for the nation, the people must be developed first, and this is done by first nurturing the attitude of acceptance and fortitude among races, which brings about an unwavering unity. By achieving unity, matters pertaining to national development will be carried out smoothly.

The Department of National Unity and Integration (JPNIN) under the Prime Minister's Department is the foremost agency responsible for the challenging task of managing unity and integration in Malaysia. JPNIN was established following the racial riot on 13 May 1969, which raised many concerns on the importance of dealing with issues related to race, culture and religion.

With more than four decades in managing issues related to social and ethnic diversity in Malaysia, the experience gained and the creation of peaceful and harmonious Malaysian society are now recognized as a successful model among the international communities or Asian countries nearby.

The model for managing social and ethnic diversity is presented according to the phases of development from 1970 to 2012, consisting of confidence-building (1970-2007), strengthening community cohesion (1982-2004) and conflict management (2005 onwards), as well as an outline of the issues and challenges of conflict management.

National unity and social harmony are both societal conditions and subjective perceptions which are not easily

To achieve development for the nation, the people must be developed first, by nurturing acceptance and fortitude among races to bring about an unwavering unity

The implementation of programmes and activities plays a major role in promoting national unity and unifying the different backgrounds of Malaysian societies

measured. Attempts to do so are often met with criticism. However, attempts have been — and should continue to be — made to more scientifically and systematically measure the situation in Malaysia and compare it to that in other countries or societies.

At present, the relevant index for Malaysia is the Societal Stress Index (SSI). It measures the number (per million population per year) of interpersonal or group conflicts reported to the Malaysian police involving two or more ethnic or religious groups, plus the number of street demonstrations on issues of social conflict, and controversies involving race or religion being reported or debated in the media. The SSI for 2012, 2013 reflected 2014 was 19.9, 18.9 and 14.1 incidents per million respectively.

While the SSI does not take into account public perception about the incidents it measures, it provides a basis for comparison over the years. It also enables the identification of hot spots that need special attention and mediation efforts. Currently, JPNIN uses this information to channel more resources to these hot spots for the training of community leaders in mediation skills.

Our premise is that more interactions among different segments of Malaysian society at home, in communities, workplaces, schools and universities will encourage greater acceptance and celebration of diversity, which in turn should enhance inclusiveness and ultimately improve unity. Several programmes and projects have been implemented to promote social integration among Malaysians, reflecting the long-term commitment in the past few decades. They have achieved varying levels of results and therefore will need further enhancement upon more in-depth review.

Unity as described by the 1Malaysia concept is very much different from the assimilation concept practised in other countries, whereby the ethnic identity is eliminated and replaced with one national identity. 1Malaysia appreciates and respects the principles of the Federal Constitution as well as the ethnic identity of every race in Malaysia, and considers it as an asset or advantage to be proud of.

Unity is the heart of political stability, economic development and social harmony. The current peace and harmony of life inspire Malaysians to strengthen the relationships among the different ethnic groups, and to ensure that Malaysians understand the importance of unity as enshrined in the National Ideology.

The implementation of programmes and activities plays a major role in promoting national unity and unifying the different backgrounds of Malaysian societies. These programmes help to shape a one-of-a-kind culture in Malaysia that is conducive to nation-building to promote and enhance unity and harmony among peoples of various races.

1Malaysia is also a reminder of the importance of achieving national unity. Although the leadership in Malaysia changes from time to time, the vision to achieve peaceful and harmonious social cohesion remains unchanged.

Achieving national unity has been and will continue to be the most important mission for Malaysia and Malaysians. It is an ongoing and perhaps never-ending mission requiring significant commitment. 1Malaysia has provided a renewed sense of direction and purpose, a new breath of inspiration and a heightened aspiration. New outlooks and new ideas are emerging.

The management and approaches of cultural diversity through intercultural dialogue as a means of promoting awareness, understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, as well as preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and the cohesion of society, is a good mechanism for strengthening national unity that is more educational, systematic and suitable for a multicultural nation like Malaysia.

The next chapter of the Anna Lindh Foundation

Ambassador Hatem Atallah, Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Foundation

The Anna Lindh Foundation is ushering in a second phase of action, ten years on from its creation as the first common institution of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Building on its established programmes and networks across 42 UfM countries, this next chapter aims to invest in communicating dialogue as an alternative path in the face of rising radicalization and violence, and to confirm the foundation's position as the leading regional institution for intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean region, once again at the centre of the global agenda, is experiencing the most challenging and hazardous situation of the last two decades. To the north as to the south, societies are facing deep crises and cultural regression. In the Middle East, some countries are experiencing an unprecedented level of violence. Yet there have been positive developments, the most significant among them being the awakening of civil society and its renewed capacity to become a player for social change in the region.

The founders of the Anna Lindh Foundation anticipated the centrality of civil society in working for a common Mediterranean future.

Twenty years ago, in the aftermath of the Oslo Peace Accords, the Barcelona Process established a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, bringing together 42 countries. In 2004, the High-Level Group on Intercultural Dialogue proposed the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation with a mandate to promote intercultural dialogue in the region. As a result, the Anna Lindh Foundation was established in Alexandria, Egypt.

The foundation's mandate for intercultural dialogue was not defined as a simple meeting between cultures, but as a long-term process leading to a social transformation of individuals with different identities and expectations.

Image: Anna Lindh Foundation

The Young Arab Voices debate programme has enabled the cultural exchange of ideas, diversity and dialogue and stimulated youth development

The Anna Lindh Forum in 2013 underlined the role of Mediterranean cooperation in supporting civil society's work for open and pluralistic societies

The foundation — having the objective of bringing people together as a way to promote dialogue between cultures and respect for diversity — adopted an approach based on shared values and aspirations to address the true causes that have deepened the gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean. In this context, the work of the Anna Lindh Foundation today, a decade on from its creation, is more challenging and more essential than ever.

In making intercultural dialogue happen, the Anna Lindh Foundation works in diverse fields — including education, arts and media — to establish tools enabling and encouraging dialogue between cultures. The foundation has been working, through its national networks, with civil societies and youth across the region, establishing and building multiple initiatives to bring people from across the Mediterranean together.

Education for intercultural citizenship

The Anna Lindh Foundation develops programmes and resources for educators and youth leaders, with a focus on promoting dialogue skills and intercultural citizenship learning. Its flagship publication, 'The Anna Lindh Handbook on Intercultural Citizenship', resulted from a two-year work process, involving 90 educators and experts from the south and north Mediterranean. The Euro-Med Handbook, which has also led to a complementary resource for Arab countries, is the basis for a regional training programme for educators on intercultural citizenship learning.

The foundation has also launched, in collaboration with the Council of Europe, the manual 'How to Cope with Diversity at Schools'. In collaboration with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Swedish Institute, it has launched the 'Guidebook for History Textbooks Authors'.

Media across cultures

Engaging journalists from the Mediterranean in a permanent dialogue on issues of cross-cultural reporting is at the heart of the Anna Lindh Foundation's approach to the media field.

This approach has been carried out through a programme of co-organized national debates involving media, academic experts and civil society representatives from 42 countries on diverse fields, such as rapid response to intercultural crises (Athens, 2008); conflict reporting (London, 2009); peace-building (Stockholm, 2009); press freedom (Marrakech, 2010); the role of media in democratic transition (Tunis, 2011); the Arab Spring and Europe's perception of Islam (Palermo, 2012); and reporting on extremism with Thompson Reuters Foundation (London, 2014).

Providing international platforms for advocacy on media matters has been another pillar of work. In this effort, the Anna Lindh Foundation co-organized, following the historic events of the Arab social uprisings, a global media forum at the headquarters of the League of Arab States (LAS), with the presence of the LAS Secretary-General and leading international journalists.

In line with these objectives, in 2006 the Anna Lindh Foundation initiated a leading journalistic prize, the Mediterranean Journalist Award, for reporting on issues of cultural diversity. In total 52 'Media Reporters Across Cultures', including winners and special recognitions, have

Creative Entrepreneurship, Active Citizenship: this event provided participants with the entrepreneurial skills needed to develop ideas and projects to face difficult economic conditions and contribute to positive societal change in their communities, while also encouraging youth to become more community-oriented

seen their works awarded by the Anna Lindh Journalist Award. Renowned Mediterranean personalities Amin Maalouf (Lebanon), Edgar Morin (France) and Tim Sebastian (UK) have chaired the Anna Lindh Journalist Award.

Arts for social change

Arts for social change has been a theme running through the foundation's capacity-building work with cultural leaders since 2005. This ranged from the Cross-Border Arts Project, launched following the 2006 Lebanon war to bring together Euro-Med artists using cultural creation as a means of reconciliation, to the 2014 Dawrak training in Amman with 44 cultural leaders and youth workers from 10 Arab countries.

The flagship cultural event for Alexandria, the host city of the foundation's headquarters, has been the Farah el Bahr Festival. The event, which has had five editions since its inception in 2005, combines grass-root artistic initiatives and educational outreach activities with cultural contributions from Europe and the Mediterranean on the theme of cultural diversity. Alexandria has also played host to an innovative programme of Music Debate Workshops, organized as part of Dawrak and Young Arab Voices, where young people had the opportunity to voice their concerns using hip-hop music and debating skills.

The foundation has organized a series of high-profile cultural events, among them: Euro-Med Dialogue Night (2008), held simultaneously across 38 countries, involving over 30,000 people in public events and debates on cross-cultural issues; Euro- Arab Concert for Dialogue (2009), broadcast from the Cairo Opera House; Hip-Hop Connection (2010) with music groups from Germany, France, Turkey and Egypt; and Arts, Instruments and Expressions for Social Transformation (2014) in Taroudant, Morocco, with several Anna Lindh National Networks.

The foundation was able to involve more than 60,000 people and artists from across the Mediterranean in its main cultural programmes.

Young Arab Voices

The Young Arab Voices (YAV) programme not only enabled the cultural exchange of ideas, diversity and dialogue; it also stimulated youth development.

Launched in 2011 in response to the historic events of the Arab social uprisings, the YAV programme involved in its first three years more than 90,000 youth in debating activities in six targeted countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. The programme, which was co-created by the Anna Lindh Foundation and the British Council, has been structured around three main components: a regional training for trainers programme in debate methodologies; investment in the creation of debating hubs within education institutions and civil society groups; and international exchange opportunities for debaters from the Mediterranean region and Europe.

In addition to grass-roots debate activities, YAV has provided major platforms for youth advocacy. This

Arts for social change has been a theme of the foundation's capacity-building work since 2005, and it has organized a series of high-profile cultural events

included the first High-Level Debate with The Elders (2012) involving former President Jimmy Carter and President Mary Robinson, and dialogue events with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the President of the European Parliament. The exchange component of the YAV programme has allowed hundreds of debaters from the Arab region to travel to international events in Europe and the wider world, as well as peer-to-peer good practices exchange between debate trainers on the two shores of the Mediterranean.

In the YAV programme, more than 1,000 debates took place, engaging more than 9,000 debaters with 59 per cent male and 41 per cent female participation.

Translation for the Mediterranean

The Anna Lindh Foundation has continually supported the efforts of translators throughout the Mediterranean as translation provides a basis for the convergence of ideas, concepts and cultures through its reception.

Over the past two years, the Anna Lindh Foundation has supported 'A Mapping of Translation in the Euro-Mediterranean Region', a promising study involving a large number of partner organizations, researchers and translators, in collaboration with Transeuropéennes (France). The project mobilized approximately 64 literary translators, publishers and researchers (doctoral and postdoctoral) knowledgeable of the world of translation and trained in comparative literature, human and social

sciences. Enhancing the debate on issues of common concern with a specific focus on the topic of citizenship and social cohesion is a pivotal aim of the Anna Lindh Foundation's translation programme. As a final step of its programme on translation, the foundation organized a Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Cairo on Translation and Intercultural Dialogue.

Anna Lindh Mediterranean Forum

Every three years, the foundation gathers the region's main actors for intercultural dialogue, including CSOs, youth leaders, policymakers and experts on cross-cultural issues, in a forum.

The Anna Lindh Forum's programme centres on two key pillars: the 'Agora', dedicated to plenary debate and workshops with experts on the achievements and challenges of social and cultural cooperation in the regional framework; and the 'Medina', which brings together members of the Anna Lindh Networks and regional partners to foster ideas and build new partnerships and initiatives.

Two forums were created in this image, in Barcelona in 2010 and in Marseille, France in 2013. The latter mobilized more than 3,500 civil society leaders during its preparation process, significantly increasing the participation from the southern and eastern Mediterranean region. Taking place in the aftermath of 2011's Arab social uprisings, the forum's conclusions underlined the role of Mediterranean cooperation in supporting civil society's work for open and

The ceremony of the Mediterranean Press Awards at Reuters building, London, UK, 15 October 2014

Milestones

1995: The Barcelona Declaration establishes the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

2003: High-Level Group on Intercultural Dialogue recommends the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation

2004: Euro-Med Ministers of Foreign Affairs agree on creating the Anna Lindh Foundation

2005: Creation of Anna Lindh Foundation National Networks International Headquarters inaugurated in Alexandria, with the first Heads of National Networks Meeting

2006: First ALF Call for Proposals
Launch of the Euro-Med Dialogue and Journalist Awards, and Regional Education Programme

2007: Training for Trainers programme is rolled out across the Anna Lindh Foundation Networks, in more than 30 countries

2008: First Regional Campaign, 1001 Actions for Dialogue, launched for the Euro-Med Year of Intercultural Dialogue

2009: Regional initiative, Restore Trust, Rebuild Bridges, in response to the Gaza war and the impact of the economic crisis on intercultural relations

2010: First Anna Lindh Mediterranean Forum takes place in Barcelona, and first Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Trends launched with Gallup

2011: Tunis Exchange Forum and Young Arab Voices debate programme launched in response to the historic social uprisings in Arab countries

2012: Dawrak: Citizens for Dialogue programme launched in nine Arab Mediterranean countries, with a focus on exchange and capacity-building

2013: Second Anna Lindh Forum takes place in Marseille with more than 1,300 civil society members and institutions from 43 countries

2014: 10th Anniversary celebration event takes place in Naples
Second Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Trends published
The Anna Lindh Foundation launches a new operational phase and three-year programme from 2015

pluralistic societies, and the emphasis on the contribution of citizens to building a shared Mediterranean space.

Report on Intercultural Trends

In order to ensure the best outcomes of the Anna Lindh Foundation's work and to reach its objectives, understanding the social, political and economic reality of the societies in question was a necessity. Therefore the foundation created the Anna Lindh Report on Intercultural Trends and Social Change. It is a pioneering tool for knowledge and action on cross-cultural relations in the Mediterranean region. Published every three years, the Report combines a Gallup public opinion poll gathering the voices of thousands of people across Europe and the southern and eastern Mediterranean region, with a wide range of analysis by a network of intercultural experts. The content and main findings of the Report have formed the basis of a programme of national debates carried out in collaboration with academic partners, think tanks and the Anna Lindh National Networks, involving media practitioners and social leaders.

Towards The Next Chapter

After ten years of making intercultural dialogue work, the Anna Lindh Foundation is entering a new decade of action. It is a new phase in which the Foundation must confirm its capacity to be a central actor in offering an alternative to the Mediterranean's young generation in the face of rising radicalism, xenophobia and extremism.

In this perspective, the Anna Lindh Foundation will continue to invest in 'intercultural competences', 'spaces and opportunities for dialogue' and 'networking and exchange' across the Euro-Mediterranean region. At the

same time, the foundation will put communication at the heart of its action plan, with the central objective of reaching and involving the people at large. Through a new partnership with media and journalists, we will work to ensure the visibility required to bring credibility to the Mediterranean dialogue agenda which is essential for any prospect of building a shared space of mutual respect and co-existence.

The newly elected honorable President, Elisabeth Guigou, and myself as newly appointed Executive Director, are committed to bringing together the main institutional bodies of the foundation — its headquarters in Alexandria, 42 heads of civil society networks, its Advisory Council of cross-cultural experts and intergovernmental Board of Governors — around a shared strategic vision to make the foundation the leading institution for intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean.[1]

The second mile

Prof. Alberto Melloni, Fondazione per le scienze religiose Giovanni XXIII

In these early years of the twenty-first century, everything concerning interfaith relations and their intensity is in flux; words and meaning, reasons and reasoning, the journey and the goal, causes and effects, the real and the fake. Hendiadys has become dichotomy and relations become disputes. However, the reverse is also happening. In an ever-changing scenario alternating between times of turbulence and calm, immense suffering and unexpected surprises have surfaced. Centuries of coexistence have sunk into bitter hatreds and atavistic prejudices have given way to unexpected encounters. This course of events produces a cloud of foul-smelling fumes that rise from the surface of the real world blurring our vision and critical thinking, and the historian's work is made even more gruelling as he or she is called upon not so much to tame the wild horses of ideology, but to strive to avoid the stagnant pool of clichés.

We stand on the brink of an age where our capacity for critical thought is dulled as though we were debating the causes of destiny or trying to trace the origins of an evil which goes so far back aetiologically as to defy any attempt at explanation. In the global context, communication techniques dominate the way individual and collective emotions are brutally expressed, without even feeling the need to doubt or to question. As a result, objectively commonplace impressions and formulas become part of a shared vocabulary.

With regard to interfaith differences and their consequent impact on an understanding of the 'religious non-self', this all has a profound effect. The thoughts and behaviour of the less informed are driven by the mistaken impression that they are faced with an unprecedented event. For those with painful first-hand experience, the return of atrocities can only be defined as barbaric, medieval, primitive, using the kind of language typical of those who interpret our current era as 'modern' and who refuse to see the reactionary and regressive force of faith, or faiths, as they drive an insidious wedge into a 'modern' but vulnerable freedom. On the other hand, for those attempting dialogue in a context rife with centuries-old prejudice and ruthless repression, there is the undeniable dawning of a glimmer of hope which was denied to their fathers and prophets.

Our consciousness and memory have been alerted and trained to remember how the bloodiest violence tore worlds apart in certain moments of history, but as they wane we become less aware of how close those historical ties are something which bind us to an era which purports to be in the remote past. However, those times are not remote. They were times when extermination governed both the relationship between exclusivist beliefs (or non-beliefs) and the fragility of those peace agreements which, in historical terms, have yet to prove fit for purpose.

The uncontrollable outpouring of violence, random in its ferocity and fierce in its randomness, brings tears to the eyes of its victims as they stand powerfully, in dignified silence, before history.

Those explanations which resort to René Girard's model of the 'sacrificial crisis' explain nothing except a desire to exorcise the unbearable return of the murderer who kills in the name of God, a God who is not dead but rather lives once again in the assassin. There is, however, a part of public opinion which differs, stating that the violence that has once again bloodied the great fault lines of religious cultures (between Shi`ite and Sunni, Orthodox and Latin Christians, etc.) is deep-rooted. Faced with the threat posed to pluralistic society, they explain that this root, which poisons the present, can and must be severed, and they think that terrorist violence is the abuse of the name of God. As if this could somehow solve the problem, without having to deal with God himself and the victims of that very same violence.

Many religious authorities have made strong and commendable efforts to subtract any theological legitimacy from the killers and from religiously motivated terrorism, acting often out of sincere motivations and, on the rhetorical level, with commitment. Yet for those theorists of the eternal 'too little too late', these efforts may often be regarded with suspicion. They gain currency in, and only in, those assemblies where dialogue, inclusion theory and the principles of coexistence are practised and have been circulating on many levels for over a century.

Those principles have borne fruit, fanned by a spirit of convergence (the Latin *con-spiratio*) that gradually came to accept the dialogic principles and paradigms of otherness based on widely disparate philosophical bases. This *con-spiratio* has made the first mile possible, the first step on the long road of peace meetings between men and women of different or shifting communities, faith, ideology and nation.

That first mile has been a journey of astounding beauty, at times faltering and at times picking up speed as it progressed through history. I shall not list all the events here but it is worth remembering that one of the most intense, defining periods was between 1986 and 1993.

These were the years when Algerian militants were returning from the war in Afghanistan and the outbreak of a bloody civil war that saw the death of tens of thousands of helpless Sunni and other Muslims. These were the years of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the American-led international coalition's invasion of Iraq, which, according to an elderly Christian monk who had only lived in the Middle East for 20 years, was the necessary enzyme that would enable Islamic fundamentalism to become "rooted ideologically."

This was also the period, even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the papacy and the Roman Catholic church entered a gath-

Isaiah's vision of Jesus riding a donkey and Muhammad riding a camel, al-Biruni, al-Athar al-Baqiyya 'an al-Qurun al-Khaliyya (Chronology of Ancient Nations), Tabriz, Iran, 1307-8

ering place in 1986 and lent real meaning to interfaith dialogue in a joint ceremony to pray for peace in Assisi, the city of Saint Francis, who had himself abandoned the principle of the Crusade. Just as Pius XI had done in the early 1930s, envisaging a relationship between those who "at least believe in God," so John Paul II hoped to show, with the prayer meeting in Assisi, that religions' contribution to peace did not come about by simply asking each one to step outside of itself and deposit their individual responsibility in a neutral ground of rights devoid of any past history. On the contrary, through the very act of religious experience which characterizes and decentralizes it, namely prayer, each faith was measured on its ability to find within itself the contribution to the search for peace that pervades humanity. What was new about this was not merely the recognition of a common beneficiary of prayer, but that the sincerity of the person praying was given credit.

Shortly after that prayer meeting, a politological claim which had been circulating for some time made its appearance in the context of understanding the *fait religieux*. As early as 1936, just a few years after Pope Pius XI's speeches to which I referred previously, the French Catholic *Semaine sociale* addressed the theme of 'the clash of civilizations'. A few years after the interfaith meeting in Assisi in 1986, a major American political scientist posited the theory and dynamics of a new *Clash of Civilizations*. In his essay and book Samuel Huntington did not set out to describe an existing conflict or one that was actively sought. He described a conflict situated along the path which was leading the world from the end of the Cold War to the fatal tension between the United States and China, and which he identified as being somewhere prior to the middle of the twenty-first century. In Huntington's view, the halfway stage of this inevitable struggle for global hegemony would be the delineation of large geopolitical blocs between 'civilizations'. Within these blocs, the ancient religions which had all but disappeared in the age of secularization and modernity would once again have a catalysing effect on identity and

would discover a new balance of order (for example solidarity among Abrahamic monotheistic religions).

Although the prospect of internal conflicts within single religious groupings was merely the premise for a real war, the book and its claim were read as the self-fulfilling prophecy of a clash between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is of little use to point out that since each of the three great Abrahamic traditions contained so many of these same differences internally, alongside the memory of bitter or bloody conflicts, to refer to them as incoherent bodies would be to overgeneralize. The perceived mutual threat has recruited minds and bodies.

So in the wake of 9/11 the formula 'clash of civilizations' seemed perfectly suited to describe the struggle. On the one side those within the various spiritual traditions of Islam who have attempted armed insurrection and whose victims have mostly been other Muslims, considered harmful to a regenerative and purifying idea of violence (a typical idea in pre-1914 Europe). On the other, the West, riddled with differences no less radical than those intra-Muslim ones, but perceived and acting as the bearer of an identity with religious overtones of its own.

There are some who have tried to hold out against the idea of a slow slide into the *bellum perpetuum* as theorized by Francisco de Vitoria 500 years ago. An array of centres and institutions, of passion and intelligence, of souls and ideas has been deployed to bring the first mile of interreligious dialogue to completion, with increasingly significant results: these efforts were sustained both by the intent of combating that '30-years war' between Islamic minorities who, within divided traditions, dream of regenerating a mythical past unity, and of limiting the power of political groups in the West who have fought terrorism (the terrorism in the name of God) and thus justified wars and warfare which violate the fundamental principles of democratic states.

This first mile has consisted of well-meaning intentions and sincere commitment in order to educate public opinion, both inside and outside Europe, that fraternity is possible.

Cultivated religious authorities and political representatives have been and are still being called not as 'witnesses' but as 'testimonials' to this possibility, all eager to appear coherent with a politically correct stance before the exponents of a soft power that might be able to guide public opinion.

The instruments of that first mile have been ostensible mutual esteem, friendship, cordiality — similar instruments to those used by political leaders who feign non-existent affinities. It is a journey that has been highly significant and certainly produced effects, even political effects, in the short and medium term. What remains, however, is the priceless resource of brotherhood.

If that resource is to remain intact, it must be said that there has been, and still is, little discussion on the conceptual basis underpinning these attitudes.

Rather than critically examining the categories used, they have been applied in an emergency situation, as must be done when intellectual energies must be rallied. This state of necessity has been generated and exacerbated by the relentless spread of endless war, stretching from the foothills of the Himalayas to Algeria and on down into Mali and Nigeria.

There were many questions that needed asking. Does 'dialogue' really indicate what its practitioners are seeking? Does it have an unambiguous meaning for those who use it? What is the foundation of coexistence and exchange in philosophical, psychological and theological terms? Does the weight and space of history belong to the vast realm of memory or of oblivion? Is the term 'interreligious' an appropriate definition of what we are talking about? What happens when 'interreligious' refers to the life of an individual or group that has changed community? Is it possible, or indeed wrong, that public discourse evens out the internal differences within groups and categorizes as Hindu or Islamic, Confucian or Christian, Sikh or Jewish the positions of groups belonging to such complex families?

Although these issues should not have been set aside they have been so for a very good reason. It was done to enable more ground of the first mile to be more frequently covered by much larger groups; to foster the commitment to friendship and cooperation between peoples, cultures and faiths; to ensure the use of tools which, though at first vague, became increasingly familiar. All this did not, however, prevent a small number of individuals, best described as bold, or pure, or a combination of both, from posing crucial questions which the majority considered to be irrelevant.

Historically speaking, this is what has enabled everyone to travel that first mile. In a world where anyone was and is able to commit violent acts of fundamentalist terrorism, everyone has been and is able to commit to dialogue, peace, exchange and even forgiveness.

Yet the existence of this first mile that so many have travelled over and over, and which many still would do well to embark upon, does not preclude the existence of a second mile of the encounter between religious others which remain unreconciled.

A second mile in which those issues, which were so hastily dealt with previously, become central to a meaningful discussion. One where the aim is not to thwart a threat, or exorcise fear, or defend oneself, but to delve into one's own heritage, to discover what drives us to respect another's faith or to reject our own, or another faith, in the other.

This second mile, pointing towards exchange and pacification, will not simply search for Kantian common principles or for a unitary ethical foundation underlying religious experience (thus apologetically trying to demonstrate the strength of all faiths or, even worse, their 'utility'). Along this path each person will find their own answer to their questions about the other, beginning from their own spiritual heritage, and deep understanding of its history.

There is a very common old fascist saying in Italy regarding cultural heritage. Italy is reputed to have the largest cultural heritage in the world which entails very specific obligations, or even rights. This concept is not only fascist in a historical sense, but in its intrinsic grammar. That is to say that Italians' obligations and rights towards their cultural heritage do not derive from its wealth, but from the fact of its being 'their' heritage — the sole cultural heritage they can draw on and which therefore generates specific responsibilities which derive from this qualitative fact (it is theirs) rather than its wealth.

It seems to me that this example can also be applied to the theological doctrines of the other. We need to find a place for religious (and non-religious) otherness within one's own understanding of mystery and theology, not because of the dimension of the other, or because it is threatening or is being persecuted. It is necessary precisely because it exists as an other, a 'significant other' made significant by the very fact that it has taken one or more decisions regarding faith, belief, adherence to social norms and ethical principles.

The second mile, in short, asks those participating in talks and ceremonial meetings to move on from the showy ostentation of certain types of friendship and mutual appreciation, genuine or staged though they may be. Within each one's own tradition we must ask where, how, and when resentment and hatred of the other was theologically consolidated; where, how, and when respect for the other was consolidated along with the moral determination that precludes killing, indifference and revenge.

It is more important than ever to travel this second mile today. The fact that we have learned to walk the first mile has made it even more urgent. The fact that we have walked the first mile many times has made it essential.

Embarking upon this second mile means acknowledging that the ethical consensus between cultures cannot be reached by the common repetition of the Lord's command, which only resonates when it is truly recognized as such. Consensus can only be reached by acting as 'we' in unison, by committing and undertaking commitments.

These need only be small commitments, enough to barely fill a *parva carta,* stating that 'we' do not kill, 'we' will come to each other's aid, and that 'we' may be reconciled through truth and forgiveness, but only provided that this 'we' can be rooted in a theological intuition that recognizes the inalienable dignity of the other.

The famous 1964 *Böckenförde-dictum* warned that the problem of the secular liberal state was not only that it lived "on premises that it cannot itself guarantee," but above all that it was not "able to guarantee these forces of inner regulation by itself without renouncing its liberalism." The second mile does not contain the answer to those who merely call for religion 'in the abstract'. We must ask ourselves whether the religious experience of real women and men is able to live out that 'we', embracing the diversity which nurtures respect and holding that respect on which diversity thrives. In the second mile we will find the question.

Integrating Muslim communities for sustainable development

Islamic Development Bank

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) is an international development financing institution established in December 1973 to promote the socioeconomic development of its member countries, with a focus on the priority areas of alleviating poverty, improving health standards, promoting education, improving governance and enabling the people to prosper. IDB formally commenced operations in October 1975. Its membership stands at 56 countries spanning four continents. The IDB vision is that "by the year 2020, the Islamic Development Bank shall have become a world-class development bank, inspired by Islamic principles, that has helped significantly transform the landscape of comprehensive human development in the Muslim world and helped restore its dignity."

Cultural harmony, peaceful existence and the promotion of peace are among the most sought-after objectives of Islam. Islam wholeheartedly endorses the concept and practice of community development. The Charter of Madinah, also known as the Constitution of Madinah, which was drafted by the Prophet Muhammad shortly after his arrival at Madinah in 622 CE from Makkah, constituted an agreement between the various Muslim, Jewish, pagan and Christian groups in Madinah. It declared them to constitute 'one community' and formed the basis of a multireligious Islamic state in Madinah. The Charter also called for peaceful methods of dispute resolution among diverse groups living as one people but without assimilating into one religion, language or culture.

As an Islamic development financing institution, IDB fully subscribes to the Islamic vision of the development and prosperity of humanity. This vision in essence is one of comprehensive human, economic and societal development. At the core of the Islamic vision of development or comprehensive human development lie the principles of inclusiveness, community integration and inculcation of moral and ethical values. The concept of comprehensive development resonates closely with that of sustainable development as their ultimate objectives are the same: ensuring responsible industrial development with full regard to societal needs, and morals and ethics that will ensure competent, responsible and conscientious individuals devoted to the well-being of their communities and not just themselves.

The world view of most religions, and particularly that of Islam, emphasizes the concepts of human goodwill and the well-being of all, regardless of the culture or race of a community. This concept is very well embedded in the basic guidelines of IDB in serving humanity and the diverse communities of its member countries. In Islam, the prime focus is on the social and ethical foundations of human life. As such, economic growth does not necessarily attain precedence over other, more fundamental factors that ultimately lead to just and cohesive societies and thus sustainable economies. In such economies, individuals accord due importance to the preservation of natural resources, cultures, ethics and righteousness. IDB, in pursuance of its mandate and the necessity to follow the principles of Islam, promotes economic development that fits perfectly with the definition of sustainable development.

In today's technologically-driven world, with an increased focus on industrial growth, the concept of sustainable development has not yet emerged as the dominant global economic development paradigm. One reason for this is that more often than not a trade-off has to be made between ensuring sustainable development and achieving higher industrial growth rates every year. Due to its absolute necessity for our posterity, ensuring sustainable development which is often defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' has become a cherished objective of the international development community and people at large alike. It is no surprise then that the international development community has come to play an increasingly important role in promoting sustainable development. However, developing and operationalizing a sustainable development model has proved a rather difficult task thus far. Sustainable development where culture plays a prominent role is all the more important because without an appreciation of cultural diversity, societies will not function at their full capacity.

For its part, ever since its inception IDB has been committed to promoting both economic and social development in equal measures. For sure, the development of an economy at the cost of environmental degradation or social breakdown is neither ideal nor sustainable. IDB believes that human development has to go in tandem with economic development.

Improving the well-being of the citizens of member countries is vital for attaining sustainable, inclusive and balanced economic growth. It is for this reason that investment in the social sector (particularly education and health) of member

Since its inception IDB has been committed to promoting both economic and social development in equal measures

countries has continued to receive considerable attention in the bank's financing activities since its inception.

To tackle grass-root poverty and its adverse socio-economic impact, the IDB has focused on education as the basic tool to enable the people of its member countries to come out of the shackles of poverty. In this regard IDB has continued to place a strong emphasis on poverty reduction (the main strategic thrust of its Vision 2020) through focusing its education financing in member countries on:
• basic education (especially bilingual programmes) to attain a universal quality
• tertiary education to upgrade the teaching of science and technology
• vocational training and technical education to enhance youth employability
• informal education and functional literacy through the Vocational Literacy Programme for skills acquisition and productive engagement.

IDB recognizes that without proper education the people of its member countries, whether belonging to Muslim communities or others, will not be able to protect their religious and cultural heritage or to participate effectively and meaningfully in the growth and development of their communities and countries. Among its many activities aiming at such

purposes, IDB places strong emphasis on progressive development of Muslim communities in non-member countries and cooperation between Muslim and other communities.

As the IDB member countries are spread across four continents, their populations demonstrate the greatest possible diversity of cultures. IDB is fully conscious of the need to foster the social progress of its countries where cultural harmony and coexistence are a by-product of its interventions and programmes. In this regard, the prime driver is the investment in people through providing increased opportunities for education and the building of schools, universities and vocational and technical education centres. In addition, IDB believes that through schooling, it is of paramount importance that children are imbued with the right moral and ethical values to make a real difference in the societies that they are part of and thus promote harmonious communities where cultural differences are valued and lead to sustainable development through their diversity and creativity. In many ways IDB's projects and operations play an important role in strengthening solidarity among the people of its member countries. This is evident from its interventions which result in whole populations, not just a section of society, benefiting from the projects financed by IDB. This in itself is a strong enabler of cultural harmony and rapprochement.

IDB's commitment to community development through education: Education Aid Distribution to poor children by IDB scholarship graduates in Bangladesh

With this objective in mind, the IDB, has been rather active in promoting community development programmes.

The IDB launched its Community Development Programme with a view to promoting a sense of community integration and socio-economic development of Muslim communities in non IDB-member countries. The programme is implemented with the full support of Graduates of IDB Scholarship Programme for Muslim Communities. The objective of such a programme is to benefit from the graduates' acquired skills and involve them in voluntary and charitable services for the betterment of the lives of the communities to which they belong The Community Development programme is the IDB's main social cohesion endeavor in its non-member countries such as in Thailand, India, Russia and South Africa. In addition to the core objective of community development, the programme aims to promote cultural rapprochement through serving people of many religions and cultures.

Under this program, the IDB carries out capacity building activities for its development partners which aim to provide equipment, assistance and NGO management workshops to improve performance for IDB partners in the field. The IDB provides the IDB Graduate Associations (IGAs) with partial grant to implement Community Service Projects. Many IGAs and Graduates are running projects and programmes that have made a major difference in the

quality of life for the poor and needy people belonging to various religions and cultures.

Under the IDB Community Development Programme, 53 Community Development Workshops have been organized under NGO management since 2001. The most prominent CDW was attended by over 500 NGO leaders from around the world. CDWs were also organized in Africa (4), CIS (2), India (28) and the rest of Asia excluding India (5).

One good example of IDB's contribution to community development is the voluntary and charitable medical services provided by the IDB scholarship graduate doctors to the people of their communities, both Muslims and Buddhists, who are unable to afford the treatment. Likewise, the IDB Graduates Association of Kenya has been committed to serving the needy families with the help of volunteers under the North Eastern Youth Development (NEYD) Association formed by the IDB Graduates.

Indeed, living peacefully in harmony with the existing cultures is an objective that resides at the core of hearts. However, it is not up to the governments, any single institution, or NGOs to promote cultural rapprochement single-handedly. Better, ethical and moral education of our children from the very beginning, and teamwork and joint efforts are the key to achieving the noble objectives of cultural rapprochement and peaceful existence sooner rather than later.

Five pillars from African traditional education offer hope for global cohesiveness and the rapprochement of cultures

Professor F.X. Gichuru, Founder and Chair, African Cultural Regeneration Institute

The International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) was launched in Kazakhstan by the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Irina Bokova, in August 2013. The decade is expected to promote mutual understanding and respect for diversity, rights and equal dignity between peoples. Indeed, we need a renewed commitment by all to dialogue, tolerance, reconciliation and understanding. Irina Bokova underlined that it is not enough to live together; rather, societies must grow together, not only by exchanging but more importantly by sharing.

The following discussion takes the theme of building a framework for commonly shared values which fosters social cohesion. It is based on five pillars that we consider the core of African traditional education (ATE), in the sense that when

Keiyo community, Kenya: initiation candidates graduate into new roles and responsibilities as adults

Image: ACRI (2012)

we look at the panorama of the African traditional mode of education (the system of values that were inculcated from childhood and reinforced during initiation rites to adulthood), the qualifications that sanctioned such education included the adoption of five pillars: self-discipline, self-drive, integrity, harmony and patriotism. In other words, the child in Africa was expected to achieve those five qualities in life so that he or she may live successfully in society and be able to run a family unit with success. A child was brought up to be able to take care of him or herself and others, starting with his or her family and extending to the community at large. Being careless about the larger community was anathema in Africa, which meant that individualism, or selfishness, was discouraged. For that reason, the individual was educated to be able to make decisions for the benefit of his or her family and the community, and to execute necessary actions, without waiting for orders from above. The precondition for integrity was respect for oneself and for others.

Africa can lend the five pillars to the world in order to promote responsible behaviour and cohesiveness of peoples. Of course, we note the pathetic state of Africa where the traditional responsible citizenship and leadership qualities have been replaced by imported values. Indeed, before telling the rest of the world, Africa needs to revisit and adopt the five pillars that governed its traditional society. The original discourse of this extraction from ATE was entitled: 'Five pillars to create a new society, new nation, and new leadership quality',[1] a theme that can be extrapolated today to cover the global society that needs new leadership quality. Such leadership should be guided by the five pillars in order to enhance mutual understanding, respect, dignity of peoples and cohesiveness. The achievement of these ideals requires that children be brought up according to the pillars. The theory and practice of each of the five pillars is elaborated below, so that different cultures can adopt them in their education systems.

Self-discipline: Global society today is not built on this pillar. People are trained to do things because they fear some authority, not because they follow any specific moral principles. A child is trained to do things because he or she fears the parent, the teacher or the older sibling. An adult does things because he or she fears someone — a policeman, a boss or other authority — not because he or she follows specific principles. The philosophy of self-discipline teaches everyone, starting from the very youngest child, to do things guided

Sengekwo Cultural Group of Pokot, Kenya, calls for peace in the world[2]

by certain principles. Under normal circumstances, a person without self-discipline will look left and right before doing something. If what that person is about to do is bad or illegal, they will not do it when they notice that someone is watching. But if no one is watching, then the person will do the bad/illegal thing. However, a person of self-discipline, even when locked up in a room with all sorts of evils, would come out of the room after three days without having committed any infringement whatsoever, simply because he or she is governed by certain principles. When we manage to create world citizens who are self-disciplined, then we shall avoid many misbehaviours that we currently witness.

Self-drive: This pillar requires every world citizen to have an engine in him or herself. A new generation of world citizens must be developed so that we have people who are self-driven, not those who behave like pushcarts. A pushcart is normally wheeled around, and when you place it somewhere it stays there until you push it again to move it elsewhere. Many people today are generally like pushcarts — they wait to do what they are told, because they have been trained to do only what they are told. Thus, they cannot decide to do what is right simply because they wait for orders from above. For example, at the household level, a child would wait to be told to remove a cup that is wrongly placed on the pathway, or a plate that has fallen off the table. You will see a child

walk over such a cup or plate, not deciding to remove the item from the wrong place. The child expects someone else to do it, or otherwise someone should tell him or her to do it. Such behaviour is witnessed everywhere. Take, for example, a water tap erroneously left turned on and the water pouring wastefully away. A student at a university or any other person would not take the initiative to turn off the tap and prevent the water from wasting; he or she would say, 'it is not my job!' Similar behaviour may be witnessed in offices where a worker may not do anything until the boss says so, even though the work might be extremely important and urgent for the office. A child who has completed schooling would just sit there, waiting for the parent to tell him or her what to do. This happens irrespective of the many employment opportunities available. Such are the types of people we generally have today — people without initiative, people waiting to be told what to do. For that reason, systems of education in the world need to change to incorporate some of these African values.

To train a child to be self-driven, parents and teachers will have to adopt this attitude: *let the child be reasonably challenged in life.* Do not create an unnecessarily easy life for the child by doing everything for him or her. For example, if a one-year-old child is struggling on a bed, lying on its belly to reach a bunch of keys about six inches away, its parent should not just abort the child's struggle by handing over the keys

Bali, Indonesia: showing love and universal parenthood to children of Indonesia and promoting oneness of humanity

to him or her. In doing so, the parent will have removed a developing engine from the child. The child will, in that case, record in his or her psyche that there is no need to struggle — 'someone will do it easily for me'. And that will permanently harm the self-drive in the personality of the child in later life. Parents and teachers have hitherto removed engines from their children and thus created zombies of personalities. By contrast, if a baby is struggling to reach a bunch of keys, the parent or guardian should simply make it possible for the child to reach the keys on its own. For example, one would go to the struggling legs of the child and place a prop at the feet so that the child can step on it and push forward towards the keys. When this child reaches the keys, it will feel such triumph! The child will record in its psyche that 'all you need to do is struggle without giving up and you will eventually succeed!' Experiences of this nature will help the child to eventually adopt the philosophy of survival in life and, hence, he or she will be self-driven.

Integrity: This should be the measure of a quality personality. Today, what do we value as a measure of quality personality? Wealth and prosperity, irrespective of how one has acquired this. That means that even thieves and criminals are considered quality persons because of their wealth. It explains the nature of our global society because we have thus glorified crime and immorality, and kept vermin as kingpins of our modern civilization. The world needs to make the virtue of integrity the yardstick for quality personality. What is integrity in this case? It refers to what makes a person respect him or herself and others, including their rights. This virtue should be cultivated from the earliest stages in childhood, all through the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education and, indeed, through the churches, temples and mosques, and all public places. School systems, religious systems and political systems will thus have to be engaged in creating a society based on integrity, irrespective of wealth and prosperity.

Harmony: This pillar of society unites people in everything, including culture; people are supportive of one another at work, not undermining each other and running each other down. People stop discriminating others on the basis of where they come from or what their complexion is. For the rapprochement of cultures, people must reject tribalism, ethnicity, sectionalism and racism — at local, national and international levels — to make the world feel and act as one. The campaign for this type of world citizenship should start in the family and move up through the school system,

Group work for peace: the UNESCO Emergency Project, Tana River County, by the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO (KNATCOM)

Tana River delta, Kenya: awarding a certificate in capacity building for peace, harmony and cohesiveness through the UNESCO Emergency Project

through religious institutions, and through political classes, nationally and internationally — being reinforced in school and in society at large. Education systems should teach children to appreciate the diversity of cultures and learn what is good from such diversity. People should learn and nurture the spirit of working together for the common good. This community spirit would mean that people would work together as much as possible.

Here is an example from nature: small ants, and other small insects that God has availed to educate us, should serve as a model for our cooperation and sharing. The ants are able to carry a huge cockroach from one corner of the house to the other simply by cooperating. We, human beings, are capable of doing greater things if we learn to work in cooperation like ants, or like bees. We can live in peace and harmony only if we learn to cooperate and share. That spirit must be promoted as the political philosophy, devoid of the exploitative individualism that has characterized our world today. This working together for a common purpose will be the greatest boost for the rapprochement of cultures. But we must work deliberately and consciously to achieve this oneness. That is not a one-day affair — it will require a long-drawn effort. The young should be the targets for this training, and as new leaders, they must adopt the philosophy and the attitude.

Patriotism: This is the central pillar in the design of ATE, similar to the central pillar of the traditional African hut. We call it patriotic commitment to the common welfare; which in the global community we should call the planet Earth. Global society needs to know that, without consultation or charge to anybody, God gave us this planet and all that is found therein, including the surrounding universe,

for the benefit of all. The problem is that the citizens of our world don't seem to know it and, for that reason, they loot, plunder, rape, sell, betray and mess up the planet in every way. Once the citizens of the world know the value of the Earth, and how unfaithful we have been to it and to each other, then we shall be alert and committed to paradise. The new world that we have to create requires a new generation of leaders and citizens who know the value of this planet, who appreciate it as a God-given paradise, and who share it among themselves with appreciation. With that knowledge, the new world citizens will love the planet, will be jealous of it, will work hard for it, will protect it, will cherish it, and will be committed to it. This means that the new world will have citizens and leaders who will be ready to do everything possible to protect the planet and, above all, appreciate and realize the potential and opportunities it holds for the benefit of all. It will therefore be very hard to deceive the owners of this paradise, and for the sons and daughters of paradise to loot and destroy it as foolishly as we have hitherto done through corruption and mismanagement.

That ethos of the five pillars will be taught to the children of the world from the earliest age through the school system, and to society at large so that it becomes a way of life, and a culture of the people of the world. These world citizens will be self-disciplined, self-driven, possessing integrity, harmony and patriotism, and united by the love of the planet Earth as a paradise that God gave to humanity for the benefit of all. The five pillars will help the world's citizens to reverse the syndrome of underdevelopment and conflict. The mentality of future leaders will follow a different path, a different philosophy based on the concerns of human dignity and fairness.

Initiatives of the African Union Commission in promoting cultural diversity for peace in the continent

Angela Martins, Head of Culture Division, Social Affairs Department, African Union Commission

The African Union has several fundamental initiatives for the promotion of cultural diversity in Africa. These include building a culture for peace and other similar African Union programmes to contribute to the building of a prosperous, peaceful Africa that is driven by its own citizens and is a strong force in the global arena.

Culture concerns itself with socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought. Culture includes intangible and tangible heritage which is varied, complex and in constant evolution. The tangible heritage includes monuments or architecture, art and crafts, sites, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic and historical interest. The intangible heritage includes language, performing arts, music, festive events, rituals, social practices, traditional craftsmanship and knowledge, among other things.

Africa is endowed with a rich and diverse cultural heritage as well as extraordinary ethnic cultural diversity. Much of Africa's cultural activity centres on the family and the ethnic group. Art, music and oral literature serve to reinforce existing religious social patterns. Communities range from rural cultures in which

Women dancers learning an Ethiopian dance: music, art and literature are culturally important and distinctive throughout Africa, and have had considerable impact on other societies around the world

cuisine, religions, dress, tribal roles and daily life have remained unchanged for hundreds of years, to modern city environments which feature a diverse mix of cultural influences. Music, art and literature are culturally important and distinctive throughout Africa, and have had considerable impact on other societies around the world as well within the continent.

The Charter for African Cultural Renaissance adopted in 2006 by the 6th Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government regarding African cultural diversity, identity and renaissance states that African states recognize that cultural diversity is a factor for mutual enrichment of peoples and nations. Consequently, they commit themselves to defend minorities, their cultures, their rights and their fundamental freedoms. It also states that cultural diversity contributes to the expression of national and regional identities and more widely to building Pan-Africanism.

Building a culture for peace

The development and sustenance of peace has been a focus of concern for African leaders for several decades. The achievement of a culture of peace is an important pillar in the quest for development, progress and the building of a prosperous and peaceful Africa that is driven by its own citizens, and which can be a strong force in the global arena.

All sectors of society, including the youth, have a critical role to play for peace to be achieved. Pre-colonial Africa was organized by effective peacemaking traditions of dialogue and mediation starting at the local community level. These traditions were based on respect for the wisdom and value of elders (both men and women). It should be recognized that African people, with their unique peacemaking traditions, can make a major contribution to Africa's peace processes and the world historical transition to a culture of peace. The role of traditional and spiritual leaders is critical in finding ways and means to develop Africa's own remedies and solutions for conflict prevention, management and the promotion and sustenance of a culture of peace in the continent. A culture of peace should be a culture of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the fruit of a reflection on the destruction that is the result of war.

The African Union is devoted to the promotion of a culture of peace in the continent by assisting in resolving a number of conflicts and potential threats to peace and stability in Africa. The role and activities carried out by the Panel of the

Africa is endowed with a rich and diverse cultural heritage: here, cultural troupes from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea and Algeria perform at the inauguration of the new African Union building

Wise, which is a panel of eminent African personalities that advise the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Chairperson of the African Union on all issues pertaining to the promotion and maintenance of peace and stability in Africa, together with the Make Peace Happen programme, are some African Union initiatives in this regard.

The African Union Commission, in collaboration with UN Women, spearheaded the launching of the African Queens and Women Cultural Leaders Network (AQWCLN). AQWCLN is a voluntary non-profit network of queens and women cultural leaders, united to foster African cultural solutions that build positive gender and cultural norms to accelerate the well-being of women and girls by using our tremendous heritage to serve as an important engine for socioeconomic development. AQWCLN aims to build a strong network of queens, queen mothers, princesses and other women cultural leaders that will act as a meaningful and effective partner in enabling Africa to fulfil its aspirations as a unified, peaceful and prosperous continent.

The culture for peace should also focus on the young people, and especially on the children. Children are in most instances the first victims of lack of peace. Their future is threatened by the breakdown of normal social order which prevents them from attending school or attaining adequate health care.

The African Union's efforts towards the promotion of African unity, integration and renaissance will not achieve the intended results unless they are supported by a culture of peace. It is also crucial that we work more zealously at promoting intercultural communication and civic education in schools, as a basis on which to build a culture of peace. The fostering of peace must be recognized as a cultural imperative in African member states, as we grapple with the challenges of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts.

It is important to deepen intercultural dialogue, trust and cooperation among the peoples of Africa in order to make diversity an asset rather than a liability; and to take action to improve relations across cultures, combat prejudice and foster development and lasting peace in the African continent and around the world.

Linguistic diversity

Africa's rich linguistic diversity should enhance cultural coexistence and development. It was through this recognition that the African Union established the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) whose mandate is to:
- promote African languages, cross-border languages and vehicular cross-border languages
- strengthen cooperation between African Union member states in the area of African languages
- promote African languages in all education
- analyse language policies in Africa
- encourage a scientific and democratic culture based on the use of African languages
- support the use of African languages as factors of integration, solidarity, respect of values and mutual understanding in order to promote peace and prevent conflicts.

The African Union has also adopted its Languages Plan of Action (1986), whose main objectives are to:
- encourage each and every member state to have a clearly defined language policy
- ensure that all languages within the boundaries of member states are recognized and accepted as a source of mutual enrichment
- liberate the African peoples from undue reliance on the utilization of non-indigenous languages as the dominant, official languages of the state in favour of the gradual take-over of appropriate and carefully selected indigenous African languages in this domain
- encourage the increased use of African languages as vehicles of instruction at all educational levels
- foster and promote national, regional and continental linguistic unity in Africa, in the context of the multilingualism prevailing in most African countries.

The language policy instruments are gradually being promoted, implemented and used as guiding tools by the African Union member states for the development of national instruments.

A Nigerian cultural troupe: culture includes intangible and tangible heritage which is varied, complex and in constant evolution

African Union Agenda 2063

In May 2013 the Organization of African Unity (OAU)/African Union commemorated its fiftieth anniversary (40 years of the OAU and 10 of the AU). The anniversary was celebrated under the theme 'Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance', and it provided the continental organization with opportunities to take stock of the key milestones of the past 50 years and to project to the future. As the African Union looked ahead into the next 50 years, there was a need to reflect on where the organization wanted Africa to be in 2063, what would be our exact contribution, and what would be the role of all stakeholders in achieving that vision. Hence a strategic framework was developed, the African Union Agenda 2063, to make sure that Pan-Africanism and African wisdom and the legacy left by our founding leaders lives on and is duly transferred to the coming generations.

Agenda 2063 in its popular version sets out seven African aspirations for 2063 which reflect the African Union's desire for shared prosperity and well-being, as follows:

- a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
- an integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of African Renaissance
- an Africa of good governance, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
- a peaceful and secure Africa
- an Africa with a strong identity, common heritage, values and ethics
- an Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of women and youth
- Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner.

In the second aspiration, Pan-Africanism ideals and spirit need to be promoted and taught in all school curricula. Aspiration number five entails the entrenchment of cultural values, identity, heritage, ethics, common history, destiny, respect for religious diversity and consciousness of African peoples and their diasporas. The African creative arts and industries will be celebrated throughout the continent and the diaspora. African languages will be the basis for administration and integration. African values of family, community, hard work, merit, mutual respect and social cohesion will be firmly entrenched.

The development of 10-year implementation plans for African Union Agenda 2063 is currently underway and these plans will contribute the achievement of these aspirations and the building of an integrated and peaceful continent.

Culture is fundamental, although not the only factor for defining and understanding the human condition. Culture affects how people think and act. It can be considered as the way humans and societies assign meaning to the world around them and define their place in that world. It is manifested in many ways including languages and words; ideas and ideologies; customs and traditions; beliefs and religions; rituals and ceremonies; art and music; architecture and furniture; dress and fashion; games; images – in short, anything that is symbolic or representative of the values, norms, perceptions and interest of a culture.

Cultural diversity contributes to the expression of national and regional identities and more widely to the building of Pan-Africanism. The promotion of cultural values and practices is known for its capability and potential for peace-making and conflict resolution.

Engaging religious traditions in the promotion of peace through social justice

Pierre Martinot-Lagarde, Special Advisor for Socioreligious Affairs, International Labour Organization

'Labour is not a commodity', 'decent work', 'peace through social justice' — these three mottoes can provide some insights on why and how the International Labour Organization (ILO) has engaged and is now engaging with faith-based organizations. Such an approach may be surprising for an organization whose focus is on labour, and through labour on the economy.

Labour, however, is part of the lives of many individuals, from childhood to retirement. It helps foster human relationships and communities. Many religious traditions and groups have addressed labour issues in their thinking and ethical commitment. Dignity and solidarity, two values central to the decent work agenda, enjoy a wide interreligious consensus. On the same line, many traditions have also aimed at providing jobs and social protection to their followers and beyond. To help overcome social instability and provide greater social cohesion, the ILO has explored in the context of Egypt how interreligious cooperation can help in ensuring better access to employment for youth. This also connects to the intuition present at the foundation of the ILO and enshrined in its constitution: 'there shall not be peace without social justice'.

Labour is not a commodity

If labour is not a commodity, what is it? Labour is not a good, labour is a not a merchandise, it cannot be exchanged or sold. A negative definition sometimes tells more than a positive one. The essential dimension of labour, the relational one, makes it distinct, different from a good.

There is no labour without persons, individuals, communities, even societies. Labour is generated by people. They act, sometimes they do, they repeat, they reproduce. A few times they invent; in many instances we would love to understand work as creation. More often, they transform something, some raw material — coal, steel, plastics — into manufactured goods. In many parts of the world, when people work, they

Labour is part of the lives of many individuals, from childhood to retirement

Given the amount of time we spend at work, finding a meaning in what we do is of great importance

grow crops or care after cattle. They look after life and nature with a special relationship, expecting more of it for the future than what they have at present. Very often, people exchange, or trade. Work is especially this, establishing relations; sometimes very transitory, just for a quick exchange. People sell goods, food, high-tech products or very traditional ones. The object of the trade is often visible, tangible, but more and more it becomes virtual: minutes and second on the phone, images on a screen that vanish. The number of goods to sell can be very limited: one car a week makes a good car seller. Sometimes it is infinite, unlimited: numerical images and video games can be reproduced almost without constrains. And therefore the chain of relations that is generated can expand beyond territories and borders. Finally, maybe one can say that working is also organizing, leading, facilitating, mediating, supporting, caring, attending. In other words, the essential part of the work becomes the relations themselves. Labour means entering into relations and developing and supporting them.

From another angle, one can say labour is about relations: it connects human beings with land, nature and the environment on one hand, and with their fellow human beings on the other hand — with individuals, families, communities and societies. Finally, and to generalize one step further, one can say that labour is also, for each of us, defined in part by the space and time where we locate ourselves. The place where we work is not a home, but it helps define where our 'home is'. Because of all these aspects, asking about labour invites us to make reference to meaning, to rules and regulations and to ethics. That is probably why it has been so frequent for religious traditions to enter the realm of work, to question it, even to challenge it.

Meaning is probably the most obvious and the most difficult dimension of labour religious traditions we are touching upon. Given the amount of time we spend at work, finding a meaning in what we do is of great importance. The meaning is sometimes direct, it derives from our labour output. What we do, what we produce, makes sense. Our work is a service, a contribution to the common good. Sometimes the meaning is indirect and derives from what it gives access to: a social status, a community, a responsibility, but also resources, capital or revenues.

Labour regulations are also not foreign to religious traditions. They can be part of a legal corpus stipulating the good, the bad or the better, in a normative or prescriptive way. The most obvious are about the possible interference between labour conditions and religious prescriptions: days of rest and religious prayers and cultural practices. Vestment and vesting practices can interfere with religious practices on vestment. But in some instances it is the nature of the work, of the relationships it entails, that are explicitly addressed through legal statement and as part of religious corpus or tradition. One can think of the labour contract and how it should involve 'free contractors', the nature of financial transactions, the welcoming and position of foreigners in the community, the role of domestic workers, the nature of children's activity, salaries and remunerations. They can either be formulated as 'employers' responsibilities' or 'workers' rights'.

Last but not least, religious traditions sometimes reflect on how labour, the conditions of labour and human relationships can be improved in a work environment. It goes beyond the question of good or bad, but is also a way to look for the bettering of the conditions of the workers. Some traditions may be more prescriptive on issues related to hierarchical or fellow

Labour connects people with land, nature, the environment and with their fellow human beings

workers relations. Attention can also be paid to the bettering of the situation of a specific group, such as children, the young and the vulnerable. In many instances, religious institutions have engaged themselves, even sometimes deeply committed themselves, to bettering the situation of these groups.

Decent work

Meanings, rules and ethics related to labour are, or should be, in the background of any interreligious dialogue related to labour. The ILO has experienced several times the importance of such endeavour, be it in Latin America, Africa or Europe, and its possible contribution to peace. Understanding the local context, addressing some of the local interreligious challenges, providing a space for respect, including respectful questioning and engaging with competent mediating and relay institutions are essential elements for success. This being said, and surprisingly so, reaching a consensus of key values impacting on the world of work is within reach. On this basis, I would like to share with you an experience that we have engaged at the ILO.

This has been engaged at two levels: on the one hand, a seminar encompassing global issues and, on the other hand, a series of meeting conducted in target countries: Chili, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Ethiopia. Each meeting was held with different partners representative of the religious scene. Both the meaning of work and the future of solidarities constituted the topics of the initial phase of our meetings. At the end, a handbook was published showing the main values underlying the decent work agenda.[1]

Such experience demonstrated that it is possible to establish a consensus of values focusing mainly on labour.

Therefore, I concur with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's strategy for this decade, which aims at fostering rapprochement among cultures through the identification of a value consensus in dialogue with religious traditions.

The word 'dignity' resounded constantly among our interlocutors in our conversations on labour. In a world where work is continually changing, dignity remains a reference that poses a minimal base and a horizon at the same time, along with involving a critical dimension. It defines a minimum floor to which to compare those jobs which bring about forced or bonded labour, for instance, and especially the worst forms of child labour. But it also offers a horizon since dignity is closely associated with the capacity of men and women to create, transform, invent and take on noble roles. This capacity is an essential aspect of what confers dignity to our human condition at work. We are aware that many jobs are unfortunately offering much less than that. Finally, dignity has a critical dimension. It allows us to ask ourselves about everyday work conditions. Does this job allow a family to live, to educate its children, to give them better living conditions? Is this job fulfilling or stressing? Are the conditions in which it is exerted positive, secure, safe?

The same can be said on solidarity. Durkheim had indeed discovered the mechanisms of transformation of societies, their change from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. We are now in front of a central question concerning labour, namely, we are asking if in a world that is getting more and more deindustrialized as well as in a partially industrialized world, labour must continue to have a central place or must

The word 'dignity' resounded constantly in our conversations on labour

rather be the pivotal point of solidarity. Many religious traditions insist on the need for solidarity, even further to make an essential dimension of our human condition. Yet, this first question leads us subsequently to another question: what about the recipients and addressees of this solidarity? This second question is crucial for organizations and institutions.

And it is probably there that we have been in contact with an important element through our dialogues: religious traditions. Yet, religious traditions are not mere voices without a body. They are rather embodied in social groups. Conversations and dialogues are structured within the social space where we move and which determines social relations. In several cases, the dialogue exists and is structured. In other cases, it is partially structured or not structured at all. The conversations are part of what already exists: a climate of dialogue in Senegal, or a dialogue initiated in Ethiopia after the war in Eritrea, or the struggle against dictatorships between Pinochet's adversaries in Chili.

Peace through social justice

The next step was to go beyond conversations and ask religious traditions and groups whether they could commit together to develop common solidarity projects, in support of decent work. We have initiated this in Egypt and Ethiopia, in both instances engaging the main denomination, with the support of the World Council of Churches, an organization that has a long tradition of dialogue among churches and beyond. The focus was on youth employment, an issue where Egyptian religious organizations had already engaged meaningfully.

The process was conceived as gradual: first a common commitment based on shared values; second, a common diagnosis; third, pilot projects supported by capacity-building activities and, lastly, full-fledged projects. The process has not reached this final phase yet.

The diagnosis phase is essential. It is inherited from a classical approach derived from social dialogue, involving governments, workers and employers' organizations. A common solution can only be developed based on a minimal common understanding of the situation. It was made here through surveys and focus groups. Pilot projects are also a means to get an assessment of the needs and capacities of the partners.

As the experience is still ongoing, it is probably too early to assess the results. Trust is an essential element. It imposes a necessity for the international organization to review and reassess its positioning. It cannot be a lesson giver, or merely an expert provider. It has to accompany its partners in the search for meaningful solutions. It needs also to find the proper level of mitigation, between its own working methods and the one that can be adapted to the methods of its partners.

At the end, I believe the experience is essentially meaningful. It brings back the ILO to the intuition of its founders. Work has become pivotal in many industrialized societies to operationalize solidarity. It enabled us to enlarge solidarities across communities, across affiliations. This is also what can be done when religious organizations start working together and contributing to a common good. This is probably a meaningful way to bring peace through social justice, at a modest yet tangible level.[2]

Harnessing the digital dividend: an approach to knowledge-sharing in Africa

Bakri M Abdul Karim and Bernadette Dia Kamgnia, African Development Bank

Knowledge management is integral to the African Development Bank's (AfDB) mandate as Africa's premier development financing institution. In his inaugural statement at the beginning of a second term of office as President of AfDB (1 September 2010), Dr Donald Kaberuka affirmed that he will strive to "strongly reinforce internal knowledge generation, dissemination capacity, to inform our own work in this area, but also to determine how best Africa draws dividends from this new global economy." This statement is clear evidence of the extent to which AfDB recognizes the importance of knowledge as an agent of sustainable development, and how the bank is building strategies to combine knowledge and financial resources towards developing innovative solutions to Africa's complex development challenges. Established in 1964, AfDB's prime objective is to mobilize financial resources, provide policy advice and knowledge, and build capacity to assist its 54 African member countries in achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Over the past 50 years, the bank has built a huge stock of critical development knowledge that it pledges to make easily available to its member countries as well as to other development stakeholders worldwide. In order to manage this knowledge AfDB has maintained a number of online repositories, which store information resources that can be described as a 'hybrid' collection of both physical and digital material. Most of these resources have not been made available to the public even though the bank has a mandate to share the knowledge it generates with its development partners. This is mainly due to the lack of appropriate tools and platforms for knowledge-sharing.
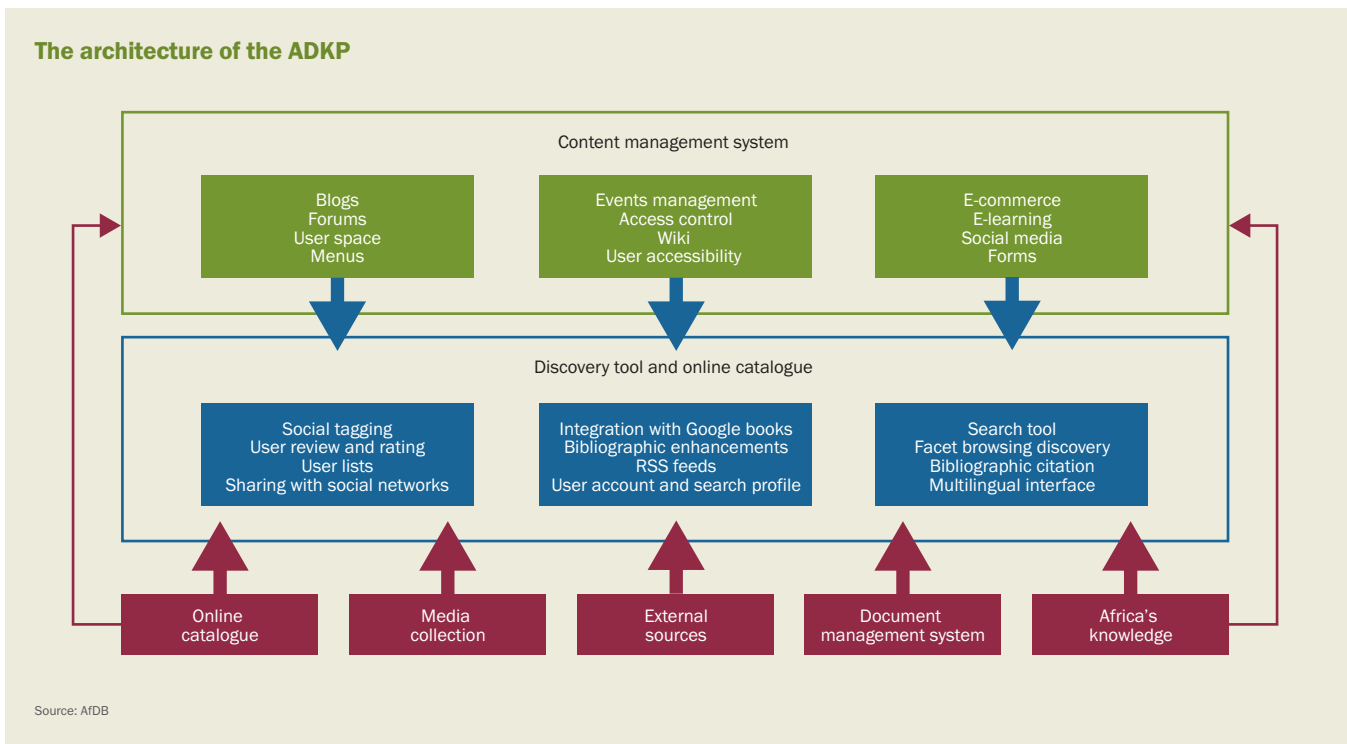
An open-access digital portal, in the form of an African Development Knowledge Digital Portal (ADKP), while complementing the existing Knowledge and Virtual Resources Center of the bank, defines an ideal solution to harnessing digital technology for knowledge-sharing in the continent.

Deployment of a modern digital portal with underlying digital asset management software is necessary to improve access to development knowledge in Africa. The ideal

AfDB recognizes the importance of knowledge as an agent of sustainable development

The architecture of the ADKP

Content management system

| Blogs
Forums
User space
Menus | Events management
Access control
Wiki
User accessibility | E-commerce
E-learning
Social media
Forms |

Discovery tool and online catalogue

| Social tagging
User review and rating
User lists
Sharing with social networks | Integration with Google books
Bibliographic enhancements
RSS feeds
User account and search profile | Search tool
Facet browsing discovery
Bibliographic citation
Multilingual interface |

| Online catalogue | Media collection | External sources | Document management system | Africa's knowledge |

Source: AfDB

platform will allow an institution such as AfDB to offer a unique interface to harness the knowledge resources available internally and externally. The platform also would have an open architecture that uses international standards and is web services oriented, which will allow extensibility and future growth. Finally, the portal will provide a user-centric solution regardless of the location of the content. Any software solution should support either in-house or outsourced digitization. The use of a modern content management system for integrating user access to digital resources provides significant advantages in flexibility, speed of deployment and long-term adaptability.

While many challenges remain in the road towards more affordable and widespread access to the Internet in Africa, connectivity is in motion in many countries. As a result, much emphasis has shifted to the challenge of how to best utilize the technologies that are already available in the countries that possess these technologies. During the past decade, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and particularly the Internet, have started to contribute to economic growth in Africa by creating new jobs that had never existed. Consequently, Africa is on its way into higher productivity rates with services now closer to citizens. Farmers are getting value out of their produce as they receive pricing information on their mobile phones. Governments in Africa are also gearing up to use mobile platforms to offer government services. The mobile Internet is delivering many more services to the people than was envisaged a few years ago. As such, it is high time to harness the emerging technologies as tools to harvest development knowledge.

The African Development Knowledge Digital Portal is a collection of information resources stored in digital formats

(as opposed to print) and accessible online using an information retrieval system through the Internet. The digital content may be stored locally at a global institution, for example on AfDB's server, or accessed remotely through computer networks. The portal consists of various types of interrelated systems, including a digital content repository and an information management system. The main concepts

Image: AfDB

The ADKP will complement the existing AfDB Knowledge and Virtual Resources Center, enabling digital technology to be harnessed for knowledge-sharing

AfDB has built a huge stock of critical development knowledge that it pledges to make easily available to its member countries as well as to other development stakeholders worldwide

AfDB is building strategies to combine knowledge and financial resources towards developing innovative solutions to Africa's complex development challenges

characterizing these systems are organization, content, users, functionality, quality, policy and architecture. The portal will be supported by a management team that will provide services including end-user support, content development, database maintenance and software development.

The information repository of the portal will include digital content such as documents, e-books, images, video, audio recordings, e-learning courses, historical archives and data files. The ADKP has several advantages including:

- the ability to access the portal from anywhere, at any time using the Internet
- ease of self-access using advanced online capabilities to locate content easily and intuitively
- unlimited multiple accesses to the resources by users from all over the world
- the availability of a user-friendly navigation environment, touch screens and menu-driven interfaces to search, locate and retrieve information
- a long-term preservation solution for critical development knowledge
- knowledge networking capabilities whereby African researchers, academic and corporate institutions can collaborate to access development information seamlessly.

Since 2003, the bank has continued to use the Virginia Tech Library System (VTLS) as a knowledge management system for its information management. As such, an integrated suite of tools developed by VTLS has been adopted to support the ADKP. These include the Drupal Management System, a free, open-source content management system and content management framework. It is widely used in personal blogs, corporate, political, and

government portals as well as for knowledge management and business collaboration. It also incarnates a digital asset management system that allows AfDB to manage all born digital or digitized content published by the bank.

Another important feature of the software embedded in the ADKP will be the media platform (VITAL Media) ,which provides a solution that enables users to create interactive rich media content, build digital libraries of that content, and deliver rich content securely and on demand to their target audience.

Development information, whether it is generated by AfDB or outsourced from external providers, will become more readily accessible through the ADKP, thereby contributing to capacity development and improving Africa's involvement in the global knowledge economy. Much of this will be achieved by improved usability, interactive capabilities that encourage resource-sharing through other common social media, and integrated single-search access to a broad array of resources.

The ADKP is envisaged to be the hub of a continent-wide network of knowledge portals to enable Africa to harness its share in the global digital dividend. It is an innovative methodology to harness ICT to achieve regional economic integration in the continent. Africa has many faces, different languages and a diversified cultural heritage. If cross-border roads and railway projects are considered to achieve regional economic integration in the physical sense, modern ICTs are capable of building seamless technological super-highways to enable knowledge to flow and grow as a means of sustainable development, and as tool to enable different African people to coexist.

The ADKP project is currently in its final testing stages, and implementation is scheduled to start in June 2015.

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The Baku Process – the power of intercultural dialogue in a diverse world

1. Sector-specific workshops included: 'How to build the world future together?', 'How to build popular support for cultural diversity?', 'The New Era of Globalization: Hybridity of cultures in a changing world', 'Supporting Intercultural Actions'.

2. Side events prepared and led by partner organizations included an Intercultural Innovation Award ceremony for the Central Asia, Black Sea and Mediterranean regions, a conference of the 'Global intercultural cities learning community', the workshop 'Intercultural Dialogue through History Teaching: Best Practices and Challenges', sessions on 'Tourism as a key driver of mutual understanding and tolerance among cultures', 'intercultural dialogue through faith and science' among others.

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2. http://www.un.org/en/events/culturaldiversityday/background.shtml

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5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

Shared values – the state we are in

1. Sunan al-Tirmidhi

2. As related in the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari and elsewhere

3. d.1392CE/795 AH

4. d. 1694 CE /1106 AH

5. Al-Nawawi, Sharh al-'Arba' in 123. Editor's note: for a further commentary on this particular hadith, refer to the explanation by Shaykh Muhammad Afifi available at: http://mac.abc.se/home/onesr/d/ mubn_e.pdf

Cultural diversity through transformative action research: translating ideas into real world impact

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1. A prime example of how ADRI-CG is approaching this challenge of fostering both intercultural relations and social cohesion is a recent flagship project entitled 'Diversity: An Educational Advantage'.

2. http://www.teachingdiversity.org.au

3. Mansouri, F. *et al* (2009), *Building Bridges: Creating a Culture of Diversity,* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

4. The Australian Research Council featured this innovative project in its *Discovery Magazine* (Winter 2007 issue) while many academics and practitioners provided very positive reviews of these resources. For example A/Professor Libby Tudball, from Monash University, provided a glowing review in the Spring 2010 issue of *Ethos,* the journal for Social Education Victoria, explaining that the resource filled a much needed gap in the literature.

5. http://multicultural.vic.gov.au

6. http://www.cmy.net.au

7. https://volunteer.ca

Sites of understanding and transformation: Māori and cross-cultural research

1. The Waitangi Tribunal is a permanent commission of inquiry charged with making recommendations on claims brought by Māori relating to actions or omissions of the Crown that potentially breach the agreement made between the British Crown and Māori in 1840

Cooperation between faith-based organizations

1. For a full description of the principles, see ICRC, *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief,* http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf. The Code of Conduct has been subscribed by over 520 organizations.

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Advancing religious freedom through interfaith collaboration

1. Qur'an, 3:164

2. The Bible, Genesis 1:3

3. Qur'an 16 (The Bee): 93

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An intercultural dialogue from within Muslim communities: a global overview

1. The word 'intercultural dialogue' is used here in a broad sense to include any form of planned conversation or activity conducted between two or more different religious groups, concerning not only theological but also social issues of religious significance such as poverty, violence, crimes and environmental degradation. Thus included within the popular usage of this word is 'trialogue' as this term is sometimes used by Western scholars of religions when referring to conversations between the three Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

2. Before the 1970s the prevailing wisdom in Malaysia was that followers of different religions could conduct dialogues with each other in public on any subject except religion, which was viewed as the most sensitive of all issues. But this stance did not prevent the eruption of Malaysia's worst race riot of 1969 involving its two largest ethnic groups, namely Muslim Malays and Buddhist Chinese. ABIM was established in 1971, barely a year after the formation of the National Consultative Council to address sensitive communal issues in the wake of the riot.

3. In particular, Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama were intellectually impacted by the Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Assembly of Muslim Students), led by Nurcholis Majid who was a leading exponent of interreligious dialogue. His intellectual perspectives and his relatively liberal interpretation of Islam attracted a large following among students and academics, but were also widely criticized by segments of the country's ulama and intellectuals. His thought influenced a new generation of interreligious dialogue activists.

4. Another major voice of interreligious dialogue contemporary to Majid was Abdul Rahman Wahid, a former President of Indonesia (1999-2001). Wahid became a public figure in 1984 when he assumed the Chairmanship of Nahdatul Ulama founded by his grandfather, Hasyim Asy'ari. Since then, until his death in 2009 when he was the Chairman of Nahdatul Ulama, the founding leader of the National Awakening Party (PKB) and the spiritual guide of the Wahid Institute, a think-tank that he set up in 2004, Wahid established his reputation as a champion of intercultural rapprochement, interreligious dialogue and multiculturalism, nationally, regionally and globally. A highlight of his presidency was the restoration of Confucianism as the country's sixth religion – in addition to Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

5. All the national organizations bearing the common name of Jama'at al-Islami in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kashmir and Afghanistan were the ideological offshoots of the original organization founded by al-Maududi. Its intellectual appeal resided in a political ideology centred on the idea of the Islamic state which it wanted to establish in the whole region. The strength of Jama'at al-tabligh, on the other hand, was in its spiritual appeal thanks to its non-political and non-sectarian approach to Islamic spirituality in its organizational programmes.

6. In 2002 the Justice and Development Party, under the leadership of Recep Erdogan, emerged as the majority party in parliament. Erbakan himself became Prime Minister for the first time in 1996.

7. Most prominent among the institutions that attempted to implement the Islamization of the knowledge agenda were the five Islamic universities of Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Uganda and Niger.

8. The proclamation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations followed the General Assembly of the United Nations' 1998 adoption of a resolution on the need for such an event proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran under President Khatami. The proclaimed event did materialize on 8-9 November 2001, but its significance was eclipsed by the 11 September tragedy.

9. The instilling of fear of Islam among the indigenous white populations includes depicting a future Europe being transformed into an Islamic colony called 'Eurabia' through its 'Islamicization,' the spectre of whites becoming a minority due to 'unacceptable fertility rates among Muslims vis-à-vis the host communities,' and the threat to Western Judeo-Christian values from Islamic cultural values.

10. This used to be held at the Hedwig Dransfeld Haus in Bendorf, Germany and hence became known as the 'Bendorf Conference'. It is now held annually at the Vereinte Evangelische Mission in Wuppertal, Germany, and is in its forty-second year.

11. The Al-Waleed Centre in Edinburgh, for example, is "committed to encouraging a better understanding of Islam and Islamic Culture" as its mission statement points out.

The universal message of Sikhism to mankind

1. *Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh scripture)*, p. 1136

2. Ibid. p. 1349

3. Ibid. p. 1144

4. Ibid. P. 611

5. Ibid. p. 473

6. Ibid. p. 15

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid. p. 853

9. Ibid. p. 1412

10. Ibid. p. 1105

11. Ibid. p. 1427

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The next chapter of the Anna Lindh Foundation

1. For media enquiries on the Anna Lindh Foundation, contact Paul.Walton@bibalex.org or visit www.annalindhfoundation.org

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2. The views expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessary reflect those of the ILO.

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