



**Second Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations
Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April, 2009**

**PLENARY SESSION III
A NEW ERA OF PEACE – EDUCATION FOR A CULTURE OF DIALOGUE**

Background

Peaceful and harmonious relationship between communities, nations, and groups need more than political resolutions imposed from the top-down; they also need changes in attitudes from the bottom-up among people at the grassroots level. One of the most important changes in attitudes is the willingness to engage in dialogue with the “other.” Dialogue presupposes the recognition of the “other” as an equal; the requirement of respectfully listening to counter-narratives of grievances and accusations; and the commitment to move matters beyond the current state of affairs. Education – in both the informal and formal sector -- is a crucial agent of society in planting, nurturing, and cultivating a culture of dialogue.

Organization of this Plenary

This Plenary Session is designed to help participants gain insights into the larger context of the world's most pressing challenges. A panel of distinguished speakers from various backgrounds will engage on this theme of creating sustainable peace and harmonious relationships among cultures through education. Some of the key questions with which they might engage are detailed below. This Plenary Session is divided into two segments. The first segment features a 45-minute discussion among the distinguish panelists and a moderator. During the second segment, audience members will be able to comment or to ask questions to panelists (15 minutes).

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Key Questions

- How can societies improve education for human rights, respect and tolerance, and for citizenship which encourages dialogue among conflicting groups? What are the respective roles of the formal and non-formal sectors of education in these processes?
- How can education curricula be adapted to promote the emergence of informed and engaged citizens?

- At what stage of education does it make sense to introduce the theme of a culture of dialogue? What is the most appropriate way to engage different communities in the formal and informal education sectors? How does one confront entrenched barriers, stereotypes, and biases in educating for a culture of dialogue?
- What is the proper role of governments and civil society actors in encouraging education for a culture of dialogue? How can intergovernmental organizations help governments and civil society to encourage education for a culture of dialogue?
- What is the role of media and policy makers and how can they contribute to better intercultural awareness?