

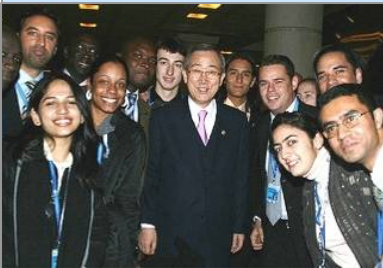


THE ALLIANCE BULLETIN

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Newsletter, 2008:1

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AoC and Youth

The pilot phase of the AoC Youth Solidarity Fund was launched in February this year with a deadline for applications on 30 April 2008. Almost 200 applications were received from all corners of the world! A first round of small grants to outstanding youth-led intercultural dialogue projects will be awarded in the summer. A youth committee, nominated by regional youth platforms, advises the AoC on what projects to fund. [More...](#)



Welcome from the High Representative

Dear friends,

A year ago, when I was called upon to skipper the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations initiative, I must confess I was overwhelmed by the uncertainty of the enterprise and the gigantic nature of the mission that lay ahead of me.



Since then, the AoC has proven itself to be a major outcomes-driven initiative that has been able to garner support for its work at multiple levels: civil society, governments, media, and even Hollywood!

This January in Madrid, we held our first Forum, a key gathering for dialogue between a wide range of social and political actors, including political leaders, heads of international and multilateral bodies, religious leaders, corporate executives, media, youth and civil society representatives.

In large part, any measured success that we at the AoC have had could not have been achieved without you, our partners and our supporters. Your encouragement and interest in our work have motivated and inspired us, and lend legitimacy to our efforts. Without both these things, we would not have gotten this far.

In the following pages, you will learn more about the different initiatives that the AoC has been involved in and the kinds of projects we are currently supporting. I hope that this makes for enjoyable reading.

Jorge Sampaio
High Representative

Global Experts Finder

Global Expert Finder (globalexpertfinder.org) is a resource that aims to connect media professionals covering stories about cultural, religious and political tensions between communities with leading analysts and commentators on inter-cultural crises and their likely long-term impact. Global Expert Finder was developed to bring a diversity of perspectives on issues that go to the core of relations between cultures, and threaten to widen existing divides. [More...](#)



Madrid Forum report

Hosted by the Government of Spain, the First Alliance of Civilizations Forum convened over 500 leaders, activists, scholars, and public figures from every region of the world in an effort to find new ways to bridge the growing divide between nations and cultures, and to establish new partnerships to promote global understanding [More...](#)

MLE Clearinghouse

The AoC Media Literacy Education (MLE) clearinghouse was launched on February 15th as an open site where users worldwide can research and share information and resources relevant to media literacy education, media education policy and youth media. [More...](#)

New Clearinghouses!

The AoC will continue to develop online clearinghouses in its main areas of implementation: youth, education, media and migration with a view to serving as a prominent platform and resource in areas that resonate with its objectives. [More...](#)



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Alliance of Civilizations Madrid Forum Report

Hosted by the Government of Spain, the First Alliance of Civilizations Forum convened over 500 leaders, activists, scholars, and public figures from every region of the world in an effort to find new ways to bridge the growing divide between nations and cultures, and to establish new partnerships to promote global understanding.

Over one and a half days, political leaders including heads of state and government; ministers and senior officials; civil society activists and Nobel laureates; corporate executives; religious leaders; and leading scholars dialogued and debated with each other, launched practical initiatives and made commitments to action aimed at improving relations across regions and cultures.

Following opening remarks by the President of the Government of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero; the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan; the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon; and the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, President Jorge Sampaio, the Forum began with two plenary panels which defined the priority issues to be addressed at the Forum and set a pragmatic tone for the ensuing discussions. Preceding each panel was a major announcement which underscored the Alliance's results-oriented approach:

- H.H. Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned of Qatar announced a \$100 million investment to launch Silatech, a Global Youth Employment initiative involving founding partnerships with the World Bank and Cisco; and
- H.M. Queen Noor of Jordan announced the creation of an independent Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund to support film productions that foster cross-cultural understanding, with an initial investment of \$10 million and founding partnerships with major Hollywood talent, distribution, and production companies.

Participants spent the remainder of the first day of the Forum and the morning of the second day in smaller focused discussion groups, including a high-level political dialogue for members of the Alliance of Civilizations' Group of Friends, eight working sessions, and two working breakfasts. In these sessions, participants delved deeper into the issues of politics, economics, culture, and religion that are central to expanding cross-cultural understanding, shared security, and peace. Several practical initiatives were generated or launched, including:

- The announcement of national and regional strategies for cross-cultural dialogue by governments and multilateral organizations to advance Alliance of Civilizations objectives in their respective countries and regions;
- The launch of a Rapid Response Media Mechanism beginning with an online resource that will feature a list of global experts, who are available to comment and give media interviews, particularly in times of major cross-cultural crises;
- The debut of an online clearinghouses on policies and projects related to Alliance of Civilizations objectives;
- The creation of a North-South network of private foundations and philanthropists;
- A consensus statement by diverse religious leaders committing to advance conflict resolution and to provide youth with guidance to counter extremist influences;
- The prioritization of cross-regional youth mobilization and exchanges to be supported by a newly-created Youth Solidarity Fund;
- The signing of partnership agreements and memoranda of understanding between the Alliance and major multilateral agencies and international organizations; and
- The establishment of an Alliance network of goodwill ambassadors made up of prominent, high-profile, internationally recognized figures drawn from the worlds of politics, culture, sport, business and entertainment to help in promoting the work of the Alliance, highlighting priority issues and drawing attention to its activities.

A third plenary panel held at the end of the Forum served to make the transition from the wide-ranging discussions held at the Forum to the mechanisms for implementation and action that are to follow in the coming months [More...](#)



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A new resource in Media Literacy Education: AoC Clearinghouse

The Alliance of Civilizations Media Literacy Education (MLE) clearinghouse was launched on February 15th. It is an open site where users from around the world can research and share information and resources relevant to media literacy education, media education policy and youth media. Users can navigate the website in three languages (English, Arabic and Spanish) as well as gain access to relevant resources in any language, as long as it is available on the Internet.

Part wiki, part portal, part list-serv, the AoC MLE clearinghouse also features a Magazine and a Forum. In the Forum section, users can engage in open discussions regarding the many issues and themes pertinent to the broad field of media education. The Magazine section is published continuously; it is designed as a multi-lingual platform where MLE practitioners, experts and researchers from



around the world can publish and share their findings and ideas. The “first issue” of the Magazine includes articles by Divina Frau-Meigs, David Buckingham, Renee Hobbs, Asli Tunç, C. K. Cheung, Samy Tayie, Geoff Lealand, Alexander Fedorov, Fathia Al Ourashy, Robin Blake, Sanjay Asthana, Maria Dolores Souza, and Andrew Calabrese.

The clearinghouse is designed to encourage the user’s engagement and participation; all registered

users are invited to submit relevant content.

Rather than becoming a media literacy organization in itself, the AoC MLE initiative aims to support and expand projects that are already underway in the MLE field.

A newly created network of Partner Organizations will become the *de facto* Administrators and *engine* of the AoC MLE clearinghouse. They will ultimately be the content administrators as well as actively providing content. There are currently 23 universities and media education organizations from 14 countries that have already signed a Memorandum of Understanding and are actively updating and adding content to the clearinghouse.

Please visit the MLE website www.aocmedialiteracy.org For more information please contact Jordi Torrent torrent@un.org

Developing further AoC Clearinghouses: next steps

Part of the implementation plan for the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) in 2008-09 is to continue to develop online clearinghouses in its priority areas: youth, education, media and migration. As a global organization explicitly involved with bridge-building, facilitating, and advocating trust and understanding between cultures, the AoC serves as a prominent platform and resource to enable the widest possible dissemination of information and materials that resonate with its objectives.

To avoid duplication of effort and

to enable effective leveraging of already existing resources, the AoC will work in partnership with key IGOs, foundations, and civil society organizations, including existing projects at UNESCO and OSCE.

Participants at the AoC January 2008 Madrid Forum expressed the strong desire that the next AoC clearinghouse should be a clearinghouse on “Education about Religion and Belief” (ERB). Education about different religions and beliefs, and critically thinking about the nature of beliefs, enables populations to



deal sensitively and tolerantly with the reality of globalization and multiculturalism in modern societies where one will encounter people who believe in many different religions, or people who may not believe in any religion at all.

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The clearinghouse will aim to be **dynamic** by continuously updating its various sections, with the aid of partner organizations; **useful** for educators, policy-makers, and religious leaders; and widely **accessible** to different kinds of users.

In terms of contents that will enable the new clearing house to be dynamic and useful, it will have the following areas: 1. An overview on Education about Religion and Beliefs. 2. A search function. 3. A section on **education about religion and beliefs in schools** (K-12) that

includes links to consensus guidelines about teaching about religions and belief in K-12 schools; collections of curricula about religions and belief in K-12 schools, and where possible, evaluations of curricular outcomes; links to relevant associations, institutions and organizations; and events of interest to researchers, policy-makers and educators working in this area. 4. A magazine similar to the one featured in the Media Literacy Education clearing-house that will contain articles on the issues above in several languages.

5. A forum that will allow advocates for education about religion and belief, researchers, and policy makers to meet virtually and exchange ideas.

The ERB clearinghouse will work through a network of partner organizations drawn from different regions to attract materials for the clearinghouse in many languages. Each partner organization will be responsible for maintaining and updating the site for a limited period of time. For questions, suggestions or comments, please contact Thomas Uthup at uthup@un.org.

Global Expert Finder



Global Expert Finder (GEF) is a resource that aims to connect media professionals covering stories about cultural, religious and political tensions between communities with leading analysts and commentators on inter-cultural crises and their likely long-term impact. Global Expert Finder was developed to bring a diversity of perspectives on issues that go to the core of relations between cultures, and threaten to widen existing divides.

Comprised of over 60 experts in a diversity of areas including international relations, politics and religion as well as human rights, GEF was launched at the first Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Madrid in January 2008.

The experts listed in the resource have been selected on the basis of

their knowledge of a broad range of subjects - such as politics, law, human rights, migration and media - as they relate to tensions that may arise across cultures and religions.

In addition to offering comments and analysis to the media, GEF experts are encouraged to write op-ed articles on a range of issues, particularly at times of cross-cultural tensions. The Alliance of Civilizations assists in placing these articles in the international and regional press.

Most recently, media outlets around the world were invited to use the Alliance's Global Expert Finder as a source of expert commentary on the reprinting of the controversial Danish cartoons from 2006 and on the release of Dutch MP Geert Wilders' anti-Islam film *Fitna*.

In order to further improve the GEF resource and to ensure that it remains useful to media professionals around the world, the Alliance is planning to expand it. Work is also underway to conduct short interviews and quotes from experts to enhance the GEF resource.

Finally, a number of planned design improvements to the GEF website will make navigation more user-friendly and the resource will be offered in multiple languages.

Please feel free to visit the site at <http://www.globalexpertfinder.org>.

Should you have any comments or suggestions on how to improve the resource, please email Emmanuel Kattan at kattan@un.org or Daanish Masood at masoodd@un.org.



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The Alliance of Civilizations youth priority area is taking shape! Our first experience of working with youth took place during the AoC Forum in Madrid in January 2008. The event brought together a diverse group of youth from over 30 countries who took part in the Forum alongside religious leaders, Heads of States, royalty, civil society, Nobel laureates, the business sector, media professionals and experts in various fields.

We very much enjoyed and benefited from working with a large youth component during this year's Forum and we will be working to integrate youth further into the next Forum in Turkey in 2009.

AoC and Youth The Youth Solidarity Fund

As well as inviting young NGO leaders in the AoC Forum, the AoC runs one in-house youth project - the Youth Solidarity Fund. The pilot phase of the Fund was launched in February with a deadline of 30 April. A first round of small grants to outstanding youth-led intercultural dialogue projects will be awarded in the summer.

A youth committee, nominated by regional youth platforms, advises the AoC on what projects to fund. The AoC has started working with these regional networks to invite youth voices from around the world

to participate on initiatives and projects under-taken either by the AoC itself, or through partners and relevant actors working in the area of pro-moting intercultural and inter-religious understanding.

Future newsletters will feature highlights and news from our partners and from key civil society organizations with a view to giving a global overview of youth work for intercultural dialogue.

During the second half of 2008, we will also be working to develop a global online resource for youth organizations in this area that will offer materials, links, downloads and interactive spaces.



Youth participants at the Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Madrid, January 2008. Photos courtesy of Ben Powless.

Related initiatives – Regional Seminar on Women and the AoC

A Regional Seminar on **Women and the Alliance of Civilizations - Challenges and Opportunities** took place in Buenos Aires on 28 and 29 April 2008. Argentinean Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana said his country chose this topic because "70 percent of uneducated children are girls, two thirds of the 960 million illiterate adults are women and three fifths of the 1 billion poor people".

The event was opened by the President of Argentina, H. E. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. In her opening address, she confirmed the full support of Argentina for the Alliance which she described as an

outstanding effort in favor of dialogue, understanding and tolerance between nations and cultures.

Ms. Fernández de Kirchner committed herself to continue extending the support of her Government to the process, especially within the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain, H. E. Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé, the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, H. E. Jorge Sampaio, the Director General for Multilateral Political Affairs of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H. E.



Hasan Gögüs and the Secretary-General of the Ibero-American Secretariat, H. E. Enrique Iglesias, followed with their respective opening remarks before turning to the substantive panel sessions on youth, education, media, and migration. To see a complete agenda of the seminar, click [here](#).