



United Nations Alliance of Civilizations



## III UN Alliance of Civilizations Forum

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, May 27-29, 2010.

### SUMMARY OF EVENTS ON MAY 27 AND MAY 28<sup>1</sup> AND MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of events of May 29 will be posted on the RioForum website.

## May 27 Events

1. A roundtable was held on **Joint Reporting Across Cultures** , which featured a report on the first cross-cultural joint reporting exercise of its kind in the Middle East sponsored by the United Nations.
2. A working session on building partnerships for the community on **migration and integration** provided an opportunity for discussion with potential partners from civil society and governments.
3. The **Anna Lindh Foundation forthcoming Report on Intercultural Trends** was discussed at a panel that commended its innovative participatory methodology, emphasized its outreach to ordinary voices, and its policy-relevance to the Mediterranean area.
4. The **InterParliamentary Union** convened a meeting of Members of Parliament from around the world to bring the goals of the Alliance of Civilizations closer to legislators and national parliaments.
5. A session on “**Addressing Islamophobia: building on unused opportunities for mutual respect and inclusion**” generated a lot of interest and attracted a big audience. The various aspects of this complex issue were shared by the participants in the round table who recognized the need to address this challenge.
6. A session on **expanding exchanges** featured AoC focal points/designees from several countries that emphasized exchanges in their national plans. The session called for exchanges to be established as a strategic political priority, especially at the national level. A key recommendation was that the effectiveness of exchanges needs to be demonstrated by ongoing evaluation of programs and their impact that is relevant and actionable for policy-makers. A proposal was made for interested actors to come together in Berlin in October 2010 and have a pre-meeting at the AoC's session of focal point countries along with others active in facilitating exchanges.
7. Displaying the important role played by the Alliance's on the **audio-visual dimension of intercultural relations**, an award winning documentary, BUDRUS, was shown, as well as award-winning videos of the Plural + Youth Festival. The IOM General Director confirmed IOM's continuing support of **PLURAL +**, the youth video festival on migration, diversity and social cohesion.
8. A **Dialogue Café** between Rio and Lisbon was inaugurated and generated a lot of interest among students and youngsters who participated in the event.
9. Several organizations whose interests complement those of the Alliance made presentations during the **Open Space** program.
10. A first meeting of **thematic platforms** was held. After a general discussion and agreement on the modus operandi, two platforms were established: one on bridging divides in the humanitarian and development area and the second on media literacy. Following a first round of exchanges, positioning papers will be prepared in both cases on time for the Focal points meeting in Berlin this October.

11. UNESCO confirmed their interest in supporting the creation of **the UNESCO UNITWIN AoC Chair on Media and Information Literacy for Intercultural Dialogue**. The Autonomous University of Barcelona proposed initiating the activities of this network in October 2010.
12. The **Focal points** meeting discussed and agreed on the Rio Declaration, which was prepared by the host country.
13. At the **Focal Points meeting on SouthEast Europe**, participants took note of the draft Action Plan implementing the AoC Strategy for South East Europe, prepared by the Secretariat, and stressed the need to finalize it in order to move forward
14. At the **Focal Points meeting on the Mediterranean Strategy**, participants took stock of the progress made since the last preparatory meeting and agreed on a time line which will lead to the first Regional Conference to be held in Malta at the beginning of November where the Strategy and the Action Plan will be endorsed.

## May 28 Thematic Sessions Summary

The thematic sessions were very well-attended. Especially notable was the enthusiastic and large participation of Brazilian young people in the sessions. What follows is a quick recap of the Ministerial meeting and some thematic sessions.

1. At the **Ministerial session**, Ministers and High Representatives from Governments as well as Heads of International organizations (members of the Group of Friends), expressed renewed support to the Alliance and made suggestions on further improving its effectiveness. They shared information on various national initiatives, including the adoption of National Plans and reports on their implementation. Several partnerships on new projects or ongoing projects of the AoC were announced.
2. The thematic session on **Democracy, good governance, and cultural diversity** emphasized the importance of building trust through dialogue through mechanisms such as inter-religious councils who have a regular and ongoing program of consultations and discussions, which can help to diffuse tension and misperception. It was also pointed out that authorities need to facilitate and promote the effective participation of ethnic and cultural minorities in public life. Political parties have a particular responsibility in ensuring gender equality and the political representation of minorities. Finally, the session called on the need to invest in youth through education for all, offering spaces for youth to express themselves in public life, and facilitate exchanges among youth of different cultural backgrounds. One concrete proposal referred to the establishment of youth political shadow systems, to advise government officials with youth perceptions and suggestions on major political, economic and social issues.
3. The main result of the discussions at the **Human Rights Session** was that it should be our aim that we experience human rights as our daily culture where everybody has the feeling of belonging to a community with dignity and respect. For this we need 3 Cs: cooperation, communication, and competence; and 3 Is: information, inspiration, and involvement. In conclusion, we need a new social contract and a personal commitment by all of us to pursue human rights in our communities.
4. The **Empowering Women Through Education** session emphasized the transformative power of education, not only for women, but for societies and the world. Recognizing this, some governments have chosen to magnify this transformative power through policies at the national level and through their international aid policies. NGOs representatives emphasized the importance of educating boys and girls, men and women through both formal and informal education. It was also pointed that when cultural groups are marginalized and denied access to opportunity, half of such groups are women. An innovative element of this was the Soliya Terana project of bringing voices, through videos, from diverse countries who opined on the issue considered by the session.
5. A synopsis of the discussions in the **New Media session** is that the Internet is allowing people to connect and mobilize in new ways, and access and provide news in original ways. This is particularly relevant to regions where traditional media face challenges. At the same time, one must recognize that there are limits to media, such as the digital divide. Additionally, there are

consequences for people who are sharing information that is perceived as sensitive for governments.

6. Three main points were raised in the **Living Together in Urban Societies** session. First, although diversity in cities did lead to growth and development, challenges remained in addressing poverty and inequality in divided cities. Second, the importance of multi-level governance was underlined to enhance the diversity advantage of multi-cultural urban societies and the role of local governments. Third, there was a need to learn about practical, concrete and feasible projects such as those that deal with new technologies and education for a better understanding of cultural diversity.
7. In the **Shaping Perceptions, Challenging Stereotypes** session, multiple cases like Iran and Gaza demonstrate the differences that shape perception of the issue at hand. These include language, access to media, and agendas of different players. Although speakers felt that we are closer than ever before in terms of an interconnected world, media coverage does not necessarily reflect this fact. One of the key questions to be explored further is: how do we diversify voices that we hear from within the context of different media markets?
8. The **History as an Integral Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue** session speakers pointed out that history teaching should emphasize interactions – both positive and negative – to enable understanding of the complexity of history. It was felt that a major challenge was to transform the enormous amounts of available material into forms that could be educational in the classroom and the larger public. Although the use of new technology could help tremendously in this regard, there was a need for training, tracking, and judicious selection. The Alliance of Civilizations was encouraged to work with international partners to develop concrete projects in this regard in the Mediterranean and other regions of the world, as in the case of Southeastern Europe. A youth representative pointed out that since youth were important agents of change in promoting inclusive history, youth should be encouraged to develop inclusive history projects worldwide.
9. In the **Public-Private partnership** session,( with 4 Heads of Foundations and 4 representatives of corporate sector ), a consensus emerged that intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity are a full component of the sustainable development agenda, or at least should be recognized as such. Indeed, sustainable development cannot be restricted to economic and social goals (MDGs) and climate change. This strong message reinforced the need to mainstream intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity in the sustainability agenda. An outcome of the meeting was that a group of partners are willing to generate a set of rough indicators and measures to assess progress made by countries in the field of intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity.

## MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

This is a list of major announcements at the Rio Forum that are not already incorporated in the preceding pages.

- MoU and Action Plans: renewed MoU with UNESCO; MoU with IRCICA; Action Plan implementing previous MoU with OIC and ALECSO; Letter of Intent with ILO; finalization of the preparation of the MoU with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the World Bank
- 4<sup>th</sup> global meeting of Focal Points of the Alliance to be held in Germany on 25-27 October 2010;
- Recent launching of the Youth website
- 1<sup>st</sup> Alliance of Civilizations summer school – “bridging hearts, opening minds and doing things together” (Aveiro, Portugal, one week in August) – a multi-stakeholders initiative, to celebrate the International Year of Youth
- 1<sup>ST</sup> I conference of the Global Youth Movement for the UN Alliance of Civilizations in Baku in October 2010 at the invitation of the government of Azerbaijan
- Launching of the third edition of the Youth Solidarity Fund
- Launching of an Online Community on Migration and Integration in partnership with the IOM
- Presentation of the new Global Expert Finder website, a free online resource of experts and opinion leaders, which supports the work of journalists
- Presentation of a new resource for journalists of the Mediterranean region in collaboration with the European Commission and the Anna Lindh Foundation and to be fully developed in the framework of the future Action Plan implementing the UNAOC Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean
- The creation of the United Nations University International Institute for the Alliance of Civilizations, based in Barcelona
- Dialogue Café network: inauguration of the two first Dialogue Cafés in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro and further expansion of a Mediterranean sub-network

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Model United Nations organized by the United Nations (Department of Public Information) will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in August 2010 on the themes of the Alliance of Civilizations, in partnership with the government of Malaysia
- Second phase of Fellowship Program to take place in November 2010;
- The Rio Forum in a nutshell globalizes the Alliance of Civilizations further and provided new and existing partners with the platform to connect with each other to launch cooperative projects in the field of intercultural relations.

## ANNEX A

### **RIO DE JANEIRO DECLARATION ON THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of States belonging to the Group of Friends of the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations;

Together with the General Directors and other Heads of Delegation of international organizations also belonging to the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations;

On the occasion of the Third Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 28th and 29th May, 2010;

Reaffirming our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other relevant international instruments, such as the Constitution of UNESCO and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity;

Recognizing that all cultures, civilizations and religions contribute to the enrichment of humankind;

Convinced that the world's cultural diversity is a wealth to be cherished by all as a factor of peace;

Stressing the importance of respect and understanding for cultural and religious diversity, and encouraging tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures, civilizations and peoples;

Recognizing the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in order to promote tolerance, mutual respect and peace, and expressing its support for the diverse initiatives taken by many countries and regions towards such dialogue;

Emphasizing the important role of UNESCO and other international organizations on the matter;

Welcoming and stimulating the continuing efforts made by the United Nations' Secretary General and His High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations to promote greater understanding and respect among civilization, cultures, and religions, by means "inter alia" of concrete projects in the priority areas of youth, education, media and migration, in collaboration with Governments, international and regional organizations, the private sector, foundations and civil society in general;

Taking into consideration United Nations' General Assembly Resolution 64/14, of 10 November, 2009, adopted by consensus,

1. Welcome the new members of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations;
2. Reiterate our commitment to the advancement of the goals and principles of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations;
3. Express our support to the priorities identified in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Implementation Plan of the Alliance of Civilizations, submitted in June 2009 to the UN Secretary General and the Group of Friends;
4. Stress the importance of implementing the Alliance's goals at national level, in collaboration with governments and civil society, namely through the implementation of National Plans for Intercultural Dialogue;
5. Support the development of regional processes to increase cooperation among countries on intercultural dialogue, praising, in that regard, the Regional Conference for South-Eastern Europe, held in Sarajevo, in December 2009;
6. Acknowledge the importance of the annual Global Forums, involving the Group of Friends and partners, together with leading personalities of various areas, as a means to

discuss, approve and promote the Alliance of Civilizations as well as its programmes and projects;

7. Reiterate our appreciation to Spain for the First Global Forum, held in Madrid in January 2008, and to Turkey, for the Second Global Forum, held in Istanbul, in April 2009;
8. Welcome the offers already made by Qatar and Austria to host the next two global forums in Doha, in 2011, and in Vienna, in 2012;
9. Extend our gratitude to the Government and people of Brazil, in particular to the City and State of Rio de Janeiro, for convening the present Third Global Forum in the period 27-29 May, 2010;
10. Call upon the full implementation of the announcements made in the Rio Forum
11. Express our conviction that the Rio Forum has achieved its main objective of making the United Nations' Alliance of Civilization a really global undertaking, with universal aims.