**UNAOC Asia South Pacific Regional Consultation**

**Harmony through dialogue and diversity**

**Rooting the Alliance of Civilization in Asia Pacific Region**

**Shanghai International Convention Centre**

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**Workshop 3 : Dialogue of Cultures and civilizations as an emerging paradigm in international relations**

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The Aisa-South Pacific region has experienced in the past decade simultaneousely a resurgence of religion and ethnic identity and a weakening of its traditional values and institutions due to the rapid economic development and the adoption of the neoliberal model. The paradigm shift approach, which is not new to the UNAOC, might help understanding and explaining the major changes, particularly the ‘silent revolution’ that is taking place in diplomacy.

Some of the major changes identified by the panelist are :

1)Non-western countries are asking to contribute in a constructive way to the definition of shared values of mankind. The universal dimension of what has been so far percevide as ‘western values’ is more and more constested. In the Asia-Pacific region, most countries are willing to bring their values, cultures and experiences and share them with the rest of the world, thus enriching the global conversation.

Suggestions : The UN Alliance of Civilizations could create the conditions for a worldwide dialogue on new definitions of shared values, of universal and local, of concurrent modernities.

2) International relations are largely perceived as power struggles where the mighty sets the rules and dominates the others, whether is by the use of hard or soft power.

Another way of conducting IR is needed, based on the pursuit of the collective good of humankind. There is a demand to replace self-interest with other principles, based on love, compassion, justice and humanity. The Chinese early Ming Dynasty maritime experience, led by admiral Zheng He (1371-1433) could be seen as an historical case of expansion without domination nor conquest.

Suggestions:

The UN Alliance of Civilizations could help in collecting and reporting about alternative IR initiatives that take place in various parts of the world. The mainstream media mainly report about traditional wars and soft power relations.

[examples of alternative IR initiatives are the ALBA agreement between Cuba and Venezuela in 2004, eventually joined by Bolivia and Nicaragua. Also the Iranian IR under president Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005). ]

3) International Relations and policies are shaped by national political culture which are relatively stable and difficult to modify. Differences in political culture explain some of the differences in the IR approaches and some misunderstanding.

Concepts like “Human Rights”, “Religion” and “National sentiment” have a different meaning from one country to another.

Suggestion: The UN Alliance of Civilizations could create a forum to present, discuss, understand in a spirit of mutual respect these different interpretation of values that are not necessarily conflicting but rather enriching each other.

Final remark: Changes are the result of long-term transforming processes. It is important to keep championing these ideas and to keep talking about both past and non-mainstream successful experiences. Memory is essential.