



THE ALLIANCE BULLETIN

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Newsletter, 2008:2

IN THIS ISSUE

Director's Welcome.....	1
RRMM report.....	2
Alliance Ministerial meeting.....	2
Focal Points meeting.....	3
Launch of Union for the Mediterranean.....	3
Youth Solidarity Fund.....	4
Media Literacy Clearinghouse update.....	5
Canada, Kuwait join Alliance.....	5
Council of Europe signs MOU with Alliance.....	6
ERB Clearinghouse update.....	6
Peace/Youth Day celebrated.....	7



Second Alliance Forum

On 2-3 April 2009, the second Alliance of Civilizations Forum will take place in Istanbul, Turkey. Minister of State Mehmet Aydin, recently appointed Alliance Focal Point within the Turkish Government, will be working with the Alliance Secretariat to ensure that the forthcoming meeting builds on the progress achieved at the first Forum, which was hosted by the Spanish government in Madrid on 15-16 January 2008.

Welcome from the Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is an honor to serve as the director of the Alliance's Secretariat. Our small team is deeply committed to the high aims of the Alliance and I am convinced that with your help we can jointly raise the impact and visibility of this initiative's action-driven, outcomes-oriented work. The Alliance has already made significant progress in advancing cross-cultural dialogue and launching collaborative projects that meet relevant, on-the-ground needs. Through the efforts of the High Representative, President Jorge Sampaio, and the office of the Secretary General, we have been able to bring together representatives from numerous countries to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue that delivers. We are encouraged by the growing support and involvement of civil society, media, youth, religious movements, academia and the private sector.



Two events worthy of note took place over the last few weeks. The first was our Group of Friends Ministerial Meeting during the UN General Assembly. Since its inception, the Alliance has enjoyed continuous growth in political support. Membership of the Alliance's Group of Friends now totals 91 countries and international organizations. The second event, held in Paris, was the first meeting of Focal Points, who are representatives of Group of Friends governments broadly mandated with the implementation of Alliance objectives in their countries. The following pages will provide more details on both.

Ahead of our next annual forum, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey on 2-3 April 2009, our team is busy working on a number of substantive new projects. Among these is a new clearinghouse on education about diverse religions and beliefs and a major expansion of the Rapid Response Media Mechanism project. You will find more on these below.

I am deeply aware that many responsibilities lie ahead to ensure that the Alliance delivers ever more substantive outcomes that connect people and organizations and help promote trust and understanding across communities and countries. As a political initiative, the Alliance must continue to be a beacon of preventive action. It must help build mutual respect and understanding in difficult times, and at the same time, foster a vision of peace for the future.

Marc Scheuer

Marc Scheuer
Director, Alliance of Civilizations



United Nations Alliance of Civilizations





THE ALLIANCE BULLETIN

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Newsletter, 2008:2

Rapid Response Media Mechanism continues expansion

In January 2008, the Rapid Response Media Mechanism (RRMM) was launched at the first Alliance of Civilizations Forum, in Madrid. Ten months later, the resource is continuing to expand and develop.

At the core of RRMM is an online database of experts accessible by journalists covering stories about cultural, religious and political tensions between communities, and across borders. This resource, called Global Expert Finder (GEF) connects media professionals with leading analysts and commentators on inter-cultural crises and their likely long-term impact. However, RRMM is not a static resource, and is actively mobilized during specific crises to connect relevant experts with journalists, with media advisories sent to a host of international media outlets.

At the time of its launch, GEF had forty experts in its database. It now features over eighty-five experts and opinion leaders from around the world. This number is planned to ultimately



The new logo for the relaunched GEF

exceed 300. This expansion is aimed at ensuring that there will be a diversity of experts able to provide informed commentary on a range of international issues, as well as pursuing greater gender balance and religious representation among the expert database.

As the resource has developed, it has been utilized ever more frequently by members of the media seeking comment on key international headline stories. Terrorist bombings earlier this year in China, the October release of the

controversial novel 'The Jewel of Medina' about the life of Aisha, wife of the Prophet Muhammad, and recent sectarian violence against Christians in Mosul, Iraq, are among the issues which have led to the mobilization of the RRMM. But although the scope of the issues which the resource deals with has grown in recent months, the common element linking all of these issues is that they threaten to impact directly or indirectly on intercultural tensions that tend to play out across national, cultural and religious divides.

In mid-November, GEF will be relaunched as a more user-friendly and sophisticated website, featuring detailed profiles and short audio clips of experts, key quotations, and links to expert articles and interviews. The website will also have improved navigation and search facilities, including a map search utilizing Google Maps technology.

For more information, contact Emmanuel Kattan: kattan@un.org or Daanish Masood: masood@un.org.

Alliance holds Group of Friends Ministerial Meeting

The Alliance of Civilizations held its Group of Friends Ministerial Meeting during the 63rd session of the General Assembly. The Alliance's Group of Friends is comprised of 91 countries and organizations that have pledged their support to the Alliance and its objectives.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon opened the proceedings by explaining the importance of the Alliance's work in the areas of diplomacy, intercultural dialogue, and interreligious understanding. Following this, President of the General

Assembly Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann had his remarks read through a representative. In his speech, he stressed the need for greater cooperation among the religions of the world. The High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations President Jorge Sampaio moderated the meeting.

Following the initial speeches, the members of the Alliance's Group of Friends respectively made their interventions. The representatives from each state and organization affirmed their support for the overall objectives of the Alliance.

Some called on the Alliance of Civilizations to take a more active role in crisis prevention and conflict resolution.

Over the course of the meeting, the members of the Group of Friends expressed a great deal of interest in the work of the Alliance. Moreover, many member states within the Group of Friends were eager to host future Alliance-related functions in their home countries. Interest in the Alliance of Civilizations is continuing to grow as the initiative expands.



THE ALLIANCE BULLETIN

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Newsletter, 2008:2

First meeting of Alliance Focal Points

In September 2008, the Alliance convened the first meeting of its Focal Points, representatives of the Alliance's Group of Friends charged with representing their countries at the Alliance. The Focal Points met in Paris to discuss national strategies for advancing the Alliance's goals, and to determine the most effective ways to work together.

The Alliance's Partnerships Strategy Manager noted that the Focal Points play a crucial role in communicating and promoting the goals of the Alliance, and that country-specific national strategies form the cornerstone of how each Group of Friends

member will implement the goals of the Alliance. The aim is to have countries complete draft national strategies with clear, concrete objectives within the next twelve months.

National strategies are essential to the Alliance's goal of advancing good governance of cultural diversity. Through this initiative, countries are being asked to implement a national agenda for addressing a number of cross-cutting issues, ranging from education to migration, media and youth - and introduce a comprehensive approach to social policies to address contemporary issues of cultural diversity.

Highlights of the meeting included:

- Two rounds of presentations in a "Marketplace of Ideas," where countries were able to share their achievements on intercultural initiatives;
- The establishment of a diplomatic exchange program between Austria and Indonesia;
- The Canadian Foreign Ministry's creation of a Muslim Community Working Group, which will send missions abroad to build contacts, networks, and understanding;
- Bulgaria's unveiling of an Alliance of Civilizations stamp

High Representative attends launch of Union for the Mediterranean

On 13 July 2008, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, President Jorge Sampaio, attended the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean at a summit in Paris. Forty-three leaders of European Union and Southern Mediterranean states attended, along with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Union aims to revitalize the existing Euro-Mediterranean partnership established under the Barcelona process and promote intensified cooperation in key sectors including science and technology, the environment, immigration and civil society. These objectives were set out in the Joint Declaration at the summit by the assembled heads of government and state, along with plans for an annual meeting of Union foreign ministers, a flagship summit every two years, and the creation of a Union secretariat and headquarters.

Most significantly for the Alliance of Civilizations, Article 18 of the Joint



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy celebrate the launch of the Union.

Declaration called for the Alliance and the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures to take the lead in developing an effective cultural dimension of the new initiative.

Writing in the *International Herald Tribune* in the aftermath of the summit, President Sampaio welcomed the opportunity to jointly develop policies with the Union which promote cultural diversity, and emphasized the global importance of creating effective partnerships in a region which has

historically served as a bridge between cultures, and continues to exert enormous geopolitical, economic and cultural influence. However, he also noted that "to overcome our challenges we must move beyond declarations of intent," and called for the coordination of concrete projects aimed at strengthening dialogue and development across the region. The Alliance is already involved in running several such projects within the region including Silatech, a \$100 million youth employment initiative operating in Bahrain, Morocco, Qatar, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

The launch of the Union made headlines for bringing Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to the same table - the only regional summit at which this has occurred. One of the highlights of the summit, this development bodes well for the future value of the Union in promoting dialogue at the highest political levels.



THE ALLIANCE BULLETIN

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Newsletter, 2008:2

Youth Solidarity Fund awards first projects

Seven youth organizations were awarded funding in July as part of the pilot phase of the Alliance of Civilization's small grants mechanism for youth-led projects. The Youth Solidarity Fund was announced at the Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Madrid in January 2008, and aims to provide seed funding in amounts up to \$20,000 to outstanding youth-led projects seeking to enhance intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The call for applications was launched in February 2008, and the announcement of the first round of funded projects was made to the successful applicants on 24 June 2008. Youth played a critical role in the selection process, with an international team of seven young people called upon to review submitted project proposals and make recommendations for funding.

The winning projects



Speaking and Listening with Respect: Students, Faith, and Dialogue

The International Movement of Catholic Students - Pax Romana

IMCS-Pax Romana brings together over 80 national federations of Catholic university students from around the globe in order to help students get involved as social actors at university and in the world. This project will gather Catholic and Muslim students from selected countries for a training session that focuses on promoting mutual respect and acceptance among younger generations.



Embracing Diversity and Nurturing Understanding through the Empowerment of Women for Political Leadership

International Union of Socialist Youth

IUSY comprises 149 socialist, social democratic and labor youth organizations from 100 countries. IUSY's project aims to support women in becoming peace-builders and agents of change, running a two-day workshop which will gather a group of young women leaders for a dialogue of peace and understanding, formulate a best-practices toolkit, and provide young women activists with an opportunity to engage in international solidarity work.



The Role of Youth as Citizens in the Construction of an Intercultural Society

Argentinean Youth Organization for the United Nations

OAJNU is a pluralist NGO created and directed by youth committed to human development. Their project aims to build and strengthen relationships between Latin-American and African youth by promoting a South-to-South Youth Network and offering a seven-day training seminar to build partnerships, encourage peer-to-peer sharing and enhance dialogue skills on intercultural issues.



Capacity Building for Youth Leaders of Religious and Traditional Groups on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity for Sustained Peace and Development in Ghana

Federation of Youth Clubs, Ghana

The Federation of Youth Clubs is a NGO umbrella group of 150 youth clubs and organizations based in Accra, Ghana. Their project aims to build capacity of thirty young leaders from youth organizations in Christian, Muslim and Traditional religious areas of the greater Accra region, by bringing them together for a workshop promoting diversity, conflict prevention, human rights, and tolerance.



God and Me

No Ghetto, France

No Ghetto is an international interactive web magazine launched in January 2008 with the support of UNESCO. "God and Me" will allow No Ghetto to collect and publish testimonies about religion, spirituality, dogmas and traditions from youth of diverse backgrounds, particularly from disadvantaged areas and communities that suffer misrepresentation and discrimination.



Capacity Building for Youth Leaders and Strengthening Youth Networking for Peace Building

Generation Peace Youth Network, Philippines

GenPeace is a network of organizations and individuals committed to youth-led advocacy for a just and sustainable peace in the Philippines. Their project will allow the delivery of youth leadership training sessions on peace and human rights in Mindanao, in the Southern region of the Philippines. The project aims to increase the capacity of youth leaders and connect different Muslim, Christian and Indigenous youth organizations for more consolidated youth peace advocacy in the Philippines.



Interethnic Youth Alliance

Cultural Center DamaD, Serbia

Cultural Centre DamaD is a NGO whose mission is to affirm a culture of dialogue and human rights through creative work in the local community and beyond. Their project focuses on youth from seven towns in the multiethnic and multireligious Sandzak region of southwest Serbia, and aims to contribute to empowering them with leadership skills to be used in addressing local community issues directly affecting them.



THE ALLIANCE BULLETIN

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Newsletter, 2008:2

Update on Alliance's Media Literacy Education activities

The Alliance has made considerable progress on its Media Literacy Education Clearinghouse and related initiatives during the last few months. The [MLE Clearinghouse](#) has become an international portal of reference with an average of 9,000 users visiting the site monthly to search for information on Media Literacy Education, Media Education Policy and Youth Media.

The network of partner organizations which form the core group updating the site with new content has grown to 31 members. This group of universities and organizations working on the field of media education and media policy is truly an international, cross-cultural, network; the last four to have joined are: [Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya](#), Catalonia, Spain; [Youth Media & Communication Initiative](#), Canada & Nigeria; [University of Malta](#), Malta; and [The Institute of Modern Media](#), [Al-Quds University](#) in Ramallah, Palestine. Registered users



from across the world have also been active on the clearinghouse, uploading new content and submitting articles for the Magazine section of the website.

In addition, the Alliance's media literacy initiative regularly participates in international media and information literacy seminars and conferences:

- OfCom's International Conference on Media Literacy Research in May
- Paley Center for Media and the Alliance ran a media literacy education

workshop with a group of middle school educators from the MENA region on a Summer exchange program organized by the University of the Middle East in July

- Salzburg Academy's Global Media Literacy Seminar in August

- The International Seminar on Television Regulation organized by Chile's Consejo Nacional de Television in October where the need to include media literacy programs as part of government media regulation policies was discussed

- UNESCO's group of experts initiative to create curricula for training middle school teachers on media literacy, expected to be rolled out in late 2009 in five to seven developing countries.

For more information on the AoC Media Literacy Education Clearinghouse and related activities, please visit us at www.aocmedialiteracy.org

Canada and Kuwait join Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends

The Alliance of Civilizations was delighted to recently welcome Canada and Kuwait as new members of the Group of Friends.

In August 2008, Canada formally accepted its invitation to join the Alliance in a letter from the Ambassador John McNee, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, stating "we [the Canadian government] support the Alliance of Civilizations' objective to mobilize concerted efforts to promote cross-cultural relations among diverse nations and communities."

Kuwait formally joined the Alliance in September after Ambassador Abdulla Ahmed Al-Murad, Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations, transmitted Kuwait's acceptance of an invitation, extended by the Permanent Representatives of Spain and Turkey in July, to join the Alliance. Ambassador Al-Murad gave his assurance of Kuwait's continued support and cooperation in the future work of the Alliance.



See the full list of members of the Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends [here](#).



THE ALLIANCE BULLETIN

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Newsletter, 2008:2

Council of Europe signs Memorandum of Understanding with Alliance

Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and President Jorge Sampaio, High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, signed a three-year renewable memorandum of understanding between the two organizations on 29 September 2008. The memorandum defines the scope of cooperation between the Council and the Alliance in the field of intercultural dialogue, with priority areas of cooperation including human rights, democracy and the rule of law, education, youth, culture and media, migration and social cohesion. The document also pledged that the two organizations would avoid developing overlapping policies, and instead seek complementarity in their work. To this end, the Council and the Alliance agreed to establish focal points within their secretariats who would be responsible for permanent contacts between them, and selected the Council's 'North-South Centre' in Lisbon as a specific institutional vehicle which would have a role in implementing the memorandum.

The new memorandum underlines the Council's continuing commitment towards promoting intercultural dialogue, understanding and respect at the pan-European level, goals which are based on the core values of the organization and were reaffirmed in May 2008 with the publication of the Council's 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue.' The Council of Europe is a member of the Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends.

Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) Clearinghouse update

The Education about Religions and Beliefs Clearinghouse continues to move toward its launch in April 2009.

Earlier this year, the Alliance embarked on a project to create an online repository of information on education about religions and beliefs documenting existing curricula, resources, and events. Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB), as a concept, includes teaching factual information about religions, as well as the need for critical thinking about beliefs. It also explores the connections between religious education, tolerance, and citizenship. ERB is based on the premise that those who learn about other religions and think critically about beliefs are less likely to accept stereotypes or fall prey to inflammatory actions and words.

Over the summer, progress on the clearinghouse was made in three areas: design of the website, collection and organization of material for the website, and the signing up of partners.

Most of the work during this period was involved with the detailed development and design of our website. The site was conceived early on as analogous to a 'bicycle' – simple,



accessible, but also dynamic. As of now, the site will have the following main pillars: *About* (the site); *Resources* (Guidelines and Learning and Teaching Materials); *Organizations*; an *ERB Journal*; *Events*; *Forum*; and *Partners*.

In preparation for the site's future launch, guidelines, learning and teaching materials, and other information resources have begun to be collected from relevant organizations and events. The clearinghouse has also benefited from responses to questionnaires sent to the Alliance from countries and individuals who work with the initiative.

Meanwhile, work continues on partners who will form a diverse network

of knowledge on issues relevant to the ERB. The ultimate aim is to have partners from Africa, Asia (East, South East, and South), North America, South and Latin America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and the Middle East. Partners who have already signed up include:

- Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- Center for the Study of World Religions, Dharmaram College, India
- Intercollege Project for Education about Religions and Cultures, Japanese Association of Religious Studies, Japan
- School of Education, Clemson University, USA
- Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia
- Religion and Public Education Resource Center, California State University-Chico, USA
- Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, University of Warwick, UK

The Alliance is continuing to hold exploratory talks with partners. Contact Dr. Thomas Uthup, Research Manager, UN Alliance of Civilizations, for more information at uthup@un.org or 917-367-2985.



THE ALLIANCE BULLETIN

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Newsletter, 2008:2

Report of the first Alliance of Civilizations Forum published

In January 2008, the first Alliance of Civilizations Forum convened over 500 leaders, activists, scholars and public figures from around the world in Madrid. Over one and a half days, heads of state and government, ministers and senior officials, civil society activists and Nobel laureates, corporate executives, religious leaders and leading academics discussed ways to bridge the growing divide between different nations and cultures.

A number of practical initiatives were launched and genuine commitments to action made, including



the launch of the \$100 million youth employment initiative Silatech, the multi-million dollar AoC Media Fund, the Alliance's Rapid Response Media Mechanism, and the Youth Solidarity Fund. A consensus statement was

adopted by diverse religious leaders which committed to advancing conflict resolution efforts, helping provide youth with guidance to counter extremist influences. Significant memoranda of understanding and partnership agreements were signed between the Alliance and major multilateral agencies and international organizations.

In August, the final report of the Forum was published by the Alliance and contains a comprehensive listing of the themes and outcomes of every session of the Forum. It can be found at www.unaoc.org.

Alliance celebrates International Youth, International Peace days

In celebration of International Youth Day, 12 August, and International Day of Peace, 21 September, the Alliance of Civilizations released two short videos which were featured on the video-sharing website YouTube, citizen journalist newswire Demotix, the United Nations' iSeek service, and various other online resources. Both videos were produced by United Nations



headquarters interns working in the Alliance of Civilizations Secretariat office in New York.

For International Youth Day, the Alliance interns spoke to other UN interns hailing from locations as diverse and afar as Australia, Cameroon, Mongolia and Switzerland, about their hopes and dreams for the future of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation. For International Day of Peace, an even more ambitious production was conceived, with a host of religious leaders from around New York asked to share their thoughts on the potential of religion to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Members of the Baha'i, Christian, Hindu,



Jewish and Muslim faiths, including representatives of the Baha'i International Community (BIC), the Temple of Understanding, and the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding took part, and collectively voiced an overwhelmingly uplifting message of peace.

Watch the two videos on the Alliance website or on YouTube at www.youtube.com.

For further information about the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, or to comment on this newsletter, contact: Emmanuel Kattan (kattan@un.org) or Daanish Masood (masoodd@un.org)



United Nations Alliance of Civilizations



Office of the Secretariat

866 UN Plaza, suite 300, New York, NY 10017

www.unaoc.org