



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

**PLENARY SESSION II
ENHANCING DIALOGUE AND STRENGTHENING COOPERATION:
CONNECTING INNOVATIVE POLICIES AND INITIATIVES**

Background

In an increasingly complex and multicultural world, made up of a mosaic of multiple identities, cultures and faith traditions, the challenge of developing an environment that promotes constructive and mutually enriching relations among diverse communities has never been greater. If the potential for fruitful cultural exchanges is significant, the risk for misunderstanding and rising suspicion and tensions across cultural fault-lines is also great. The challenge for countries is not only to develop effective policies aimed at managing cultural diversity, but also to implement them successfully through initiatives that respond to the needs of communities on the ground.

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 important theme by drawing on their own professional and personal backgrounds in suggesting ways in which dialogue and cooperation can lead to innovative policies and initiatives. 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 distinguished panelists and a moderator. During the second segment, audience members will be able to comment or to ask questions to panelists (15 minutes).

Key Questions

- How are different countries facing up to this challenge? How can they bridge the gap between theory and practice?
- What are the innovative practices at grassroots level which can help inspire forward-looking policies aimed at improving understanding and respect among diverse communities? What are

the best practices that help operationalize intercultural policies, turning them into concrete actions that improve cooperation between communities in practical ways?

- Can policymakers take inspiration from successful grassroots initiatives to improve the management of cultural diversity at national and regional level? And, conversely, how can national policies find implementation channels through partnerships with civil society actors in order to improve mutual respect and understanding at community level?