



**Second Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations  
Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April 2009  
Breakfast Session #12: Expanding International Student Exchange Programs:  
Challenges and Opportunities, specifically across the Islam-West Nexus  
Tuesday, 7 April 2009, 07:45-08:45**

Organized by the AoC in cooperation with UNESCO, AFS, ISESCO, IIE, European Commission,

**Context, Objectives and Expectations of this Session**

Context: The High-Level Group Report of the Alliance of Civilizations and the Implementation Plan of the Alliance of Civilizations for the 2007-2009 year emphasized the importance of exchanges, particularly through student exchange scholarship programs. This is particularly important when it comes to the Muslim world, since it is quite underrepresented both as a source and destination for such programs. An AFS conference on "Moving beyond Mobility" held in October 2008 identified several challenges in expanding exchange programs --- including the lack of information, credit recognition, financial factors and so on. The Danish Foreign Ministry, in cooperation with UNESCO, AOC, COE, ISESCO, OIC, and ALECSO, held the Copenhagen Conference on "Education for Intercultural Understanding and Dialogue," in the same month which also looked at collaborations of Higher Education Institutions to promote exchange programs. Participants invited for this session will include IIE, AFS, ISESCO, ALECSO, League of Arab States, Erasmus, Commonwealth, US State Department; Private and public funders; prominent alumni of exchange programs (including youth); student exchange programs administrators, university officials and education specialists.

Objectives and Expectations:

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations will bring together Intergovernmental organizations, governments, NGOS, and institutions that have a special interest in expanding exchange programs, particularly between the Muslim world and the West. Statistics show that the Muslim world, both as a source and destination of exchange programs, is quite underrepresented.

Outcome: Participants will explore the specific challenges and opportunities of expanding such exchange programs and move toward the establishment of a network of organizations working to support the expansion of student exchange programs and support and advice for a clearinghouse of best practices.

**Questions to Frame the Discussion**

- What are the myths and realities of student exchange programs between the West and the Muslim world?
- What is the actual result of such exchange programs?
- Can exchange programs between erstwhile enemies (e.g. France and Germany) result in a sea-change in attitudes and thinking of people?

**Organization of this Session**

Participants will explore these issues and put forward practical proposals for creating a network and contribute ideas for a clearinghouse of best practices in student exchanges.

*Chair:*

- Dr. Ahmed Said Ould Bah, ISESCO

