



Second Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations
Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April, 2009
Working Session 10
Contributions of entertainment media to cross-cultural understanding (working title)
Tuesday, 7 April, 09:00 – 10:30
Organized by the Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund

Background

The Alliance of Civilizations HLG Report, submitted to the UN Secretary-General in November 2006, prioritized media as one of four main fields of action through which cross-cultural understanding could most effectively be cultivated. To this end, the Report included specific recommendations for “public and private donors to direct greater resources toward the production of media aimed at improving popular attitudes between different cultures;” for civil society and mass media leaders “to be encouraged and supported to produce films and other media content with the aim of improving understanding between different cultures;” and for greater efforts to be made “to promote the Internet as an instrument for cross-cultural dialogue.”

In the 1st AoC Forum, held in Madrid, in 2008, a multi-million dollar AoC Media Fund was announced, that was a first-of-its-kind nonprofit large-scale media production company focused on normalizing images of stereotyped communities and minorities in mass media through partnerships with major Hollywood production, distribution, and talent management companies. The Fund was launched with an initial commitment of 10\$ million, and an estimated target of \$100 million.

Furthermore a session titled *Innovative Uses of Mass Media to Promote Cross-Cultural Understanding* was held. This meeting opened dialogue between leaders in diverse media sectors who are pioneering the use of media for positive social change. The session focused on sharing experiences and best practices in using media to cultivate cross-cultural respect and understanding between groups polarized by conflict. Moreover,

Now in the Istanbul Forum there will be session on entertainment media. It will focus on a report on research findings from the AoCMF-commissioned Media and Conflict study being conducted at Harvard, MIT and The New School. This study, to be published in November of 2009, will provide strong empirical data in support of proving the link between conflict in polarized societies and negative media images as well as establishing new guidelines for media that can affect a positive change in cultural dynamics. Final research findings will be made available to all global partners to support their efforts.

Organization of this Working Session

This session would be organized as a round-table discussion that will have been pre-prepared by the organizing partner (the Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund) so that the session can turn the initial conversations held at the First AoC Forum into working partnerships and a concrete strategic plan to be implemented in the coming year.

Objectives

The global network of public and private media partners assembled at this working session would serve as the preliminary AoCMF partners for developing a strategic plan for the production, distribution and development of media content in three main platforms: film, television and new media.

The session Goals are:

- 1) **Research:** To develop a strategic plan and organizational commitments for extensive global dissemination and application of the Harvard/MIT/New School research final reports and related research from other credible institutions that supports the argument for the use of entertainment media to foster better relations across cultures. To develop a proposal for the translation of these research findings into guidelines for socially responsible entertainment media production with a view to developing an advocacy campaign of media industry leaders who would publicly and voluntarily submit to these guidelines and invite/urge their industry peers to do the same.
- 2) **Film:** To identify best practices for film funding and global distribution for socially-responsible content by identifying the most pressing current obstacles preventing high-quality media content from reaching global mass markets and by developing a strategy to bridge the gaps between social and commercial bottom lines and by seeking commitments from participating Film Festival and Training Lab organizers to facilitate greater cross cultural film development and distribution.
- 3) **Television:** To develop a strategy for introducing characters that serve as positive or well-balanced representation of often-stereotyped minorities into popular and mainstream global television programming. This would include development of a strategy for advancing this idea with script writers and network producers of TV programs in a way that does not entail financial risk for them.
- 4) **New Media:** To develop an agenda for a meeting of digital media industry leaders to be organized subsequently by the AoCMF and partners, where strategies for harnessing the power of new media platforms, including those for media distribution and social networking, in support of peacebuilding and cross-cultural understanding would be generated and commitments sought.