THIRD GLOBAL FORUM OF THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS, in Rio de Janeiro
BRIDGING CULTURES, BUILDING PEACE

Session ‘Expanding International Exchanges and Scholarship Programs’, 27 May 2010, 14.30 – 16.00

Partner organization

AFS Intercultural Programs and International Institute of Education

Background

International youth and student exchanges have been identified as a high-priority item for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (AOC) in its High Level Group Report (e.g. p. 26 and pp. 36-37). The expansion of exchanges is not only emphasized in traditional destination countries and regions such as the US and Europe but also in newly emerging destination countries such as Malaysia, Brazil, and South Africa as well as in the traditional sending countries. Moreover, there is no doubt that when it comes to the Muslim and Arab world, these areas are severely under-represented both as a source and destination for such programs.

In collaboration with AFS Intercultural Programs (AFS) and the Institute of International Education (IIE), the UNAOC seeks to build further momentum behind international exchange programs by organizing a session devoted to this issue. There will be a focus on academic exchanges, since their inbuilt strengths of sustainability and structural linkages offer a firm foundation for exchanges in other areas. Yet, even in the area of academic exchanges, several issues - ranging from security concerns to credential recognition to competing priorities for funding - block the further enhancement of exchanges. However, we will also examine recommendations to enhance other kinds of exchanges, such as those that reach out to non-elite and non-traditional participants.

This session will be enhanced by the presence of several focal points of countries who have explicitly outlined their intentions to expand exchange programs in their National Plans for the UN Alliance of Civilizations, as well as representatives from intergovernmental organizations who are active in the exchanges area.

Questions for discussion

The objective of this session is to have an interactive session that seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by governments, civil society, and educational institutions in encouraging exchanges?
2. What do all partners need to do to enhance exchanges?
3. Since the AoC, in collaboration with AFS and IIE, plans to produce a report by various experts providing an overview of the existing landscape and analyses of challenges and needs (to be published at the Doha Forum in 2011), what are the ingredients of such a report that would be useful to countries seeking to enhance exchange programs?