THIRD GLOBAL FORUM OF THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS, in Rio de Janeiro

BRIDGING CULTURES, BUILDING PEACE

Thematic Session #5, ‘New Media: Towards New Forms of Social Engagement and Participation’, 28 May 2010, 16.30 - 17.45

Background

The session will explore how new media, from blogs to Twitter and YouTube, influences the way public opinion is shaped on issues of cross-cultural diversity. What is the real impact of new media and citizen journalists on public debates on issues that divide communities along cultural or religious fault lines?

We live in a world awash with information and opportunities to learn about other cultures, yet it seems that social networking reinforces the tendency to cluster around small, familiar communities, rather than open up to wider and more diverse networks. New media and social networking hold the promise of bringing people of the world closer together, yet cross-cultural conflicts and tensions everywhere on the planet seem to indicate otherwise. Do blogs, video posts and social networking websites actually widen the gap of misunderstanding among different communities? Or can they contribute to building trust despite existing or perceived political divides?

Questions for discussion

- In what ways do new media technologies and practices alter relationships between communities?
- What is the real impact of new media and citizen journalists on public debates on issues that threaten to divide communities along cultural or religious fault lines?
- Does the emergence of media outlets create niche media that serve to reinforce rather than broaden existing perceptions?
- Do real time reporting and instant analysis of reporting trigger more emotional responses, altering our perception of world events?

Organizing partner

Soliya