

Youth from 65 Countries Walking to Learn about Cultural Diversity in Rio neighborhood of diversity on May 26

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (May 24, 2010) -- Over 150 young leaders between ages of 18 and 35 and from over 65 countries will come to Rio de Janeiro on May 26 to take part in a unique Cultural Youth Walk in the neighborhood of SAARA, a popular, busy bazaar-like area in Rio de Janeiro that is often referred to as “the small Brazilian United Nations”.

This event will take place in the context of the Third Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) held from May 27 to 29, and is organized by the UNAOC, the Abraham Path Initiative and the SAARA organization. The overall objective of the Cultural Youth Walk is to showcase the peaceful co-existence of people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds in Rio and the entire country of Brazil.

“I chose Rio de Janeiro to host the Forum because I believe that in Rio, as in the rest of Brazil, people turn their cultural differences into a factor of enrichment. We are not only a mixed people, but a people who like to be mixed”, said Brazilian President Lula da Silva earlier this year.

In SAARA, people from various cultural and religious backgrounds work side by side in a peaceful and collaborative atmosphere. Bringing these young leaders to this area, which embodies the core values of the UNAOC, will allow them to identify and understand mechanisms behind the success of this culturally diverse neighborhood and thereby enable them to have constructive discussions during the Forum in the following days.

The main elements of this Cultural Youth Walk include inauguration speeches by representatives of SAARA and the Deputy Mayor of Centro in Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Thiago Barcellos, a guided tour in small groups lead by local guides, visits to stalls of traders who will share testimonials about their life in Rio, as well as “sharing bread” ceremonies with the local population during which issues related to cultural diversity and mutual understanding will be discussed. Finally, later in the night, youth will all gather again for a dinner to share their thoughts about what they saw and experienced in SAARA during the day.

Mr. Muhammad Shahzad, from Chanan Development Association said that “this Cultural Youth Walk will inform, inspire, invigorate and involve young people in a meaningful and enjoyable manner. I am certain I will learn a lot about the solidarity among Brazilian people and the way they achieve common goals through cross-cultural understanding”.

The lessons learned from the Cultural Youth Walk will inform the briefing that these international young people will give to world leaders also coming to Rio for the Forum. Politicians, religions leaders, as well as representatives from the corporate, academic and media sectors will receive specific recommendations from youth who will have taken part in this Cultural Youth Walk. A larger piece of Rio’s success story will hence be included in the conclusions of the UNAOC Rio Forum as well as in what young people bring back home after this unique experience in Brazil.

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