



Group of Friends Meeting – Permanent Representatives’ Level New York, 26 June 2014

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) held its Group of Friends meeting (Permanent Representatives’ level) on 26 June, 2014. The meeting’s main theme was *Role of Young People in Peacebuilding*. Two other items were addressed in the agenda:

1. Preparations for the Sixth UNAOC Global Forum (Bali, Indonesia, August 29-30, 2014);
2. UNAOC Voluntary Trust Fund update and Call for Contributions.

The United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, chaired the meeting. The event was open to civil society representatives, media, UNAOC partners and those member states and organizations, which are not formal members of the Group of Friends.

Opening session

The High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations started his remarks by informing participants that working with young people has been a major focus area and one of the core pillars of the UNAOC. Young people are indispensable partners as UNAOC recognizes their potential and robust contribution in fostering peace and preventing conflicts. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser highlighted youth’s capacity, energy and resourcefulness in being agents of positive social change. He reminded of the UNAOC’s role in training youth in a vast array of contexts and advancing their participation in larger decision-making processes.

The High Representative briefed participants about the following UNAOC’s projects in the field of youth:

- a. The Summer School aims to reinforce the capacity of youth while mobilizing them as trainers. To date, five Summer Schools were held for over 500 youth from 130 countries. The sixth Summer School is scheduled for mid-August 2014.
- b. The Youth Solidarity Fund supports youth-led projects at the community level in a way that can lead to a policy impact. To date, this initiative funded 40 projects that impacted directly and indirectly over 775,000 people (most of them youth) in over 30 countries.
- c. Entrepreneurs for Social Change project will see its second edition in October 2014. This project aims to address both lack of employment and limited opportunities for participation in social development. The UNAOC provides training and mentoring to young social entrepreneurs from the Euro-Mediterranean region.
- d. PLURAL + is a video festival that acts as an empowering tool for young people to speak out about what they think of migration, diversity and social inclusion, using their own views and voices.

- e. AppPeace is a contest that invites software developers to create applications and mobile games that would be generating new opportunities for intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention.
- f. The Youth Event at the UNAOC Forums is an output-oriented and collective reflection for young people on the theme of the Forum. At each Forum, there is an average of 100 youth from all continents.

The High Representative closed his intervention mentioning the fact that in recent years, there has been a growing recognition that young people's participation in peacebuilding is fundamental to reaching durable peace. UNAOC will continue to advocate for a greater recognition of the young people's role in peacebuilding processes.

Ms. Cheng-Hopkins, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations for Peace Building Support informed that youth is a major question in the sector of sustainable peace. Today's generation of young people is the largest the world has ever seen: young people between the ages of 10 and 24 represent one fourth of the total world population. Furthermore, in many conflict-affected countries, two-thirds of the population is under the age of 25. Ms. Cheng-Hopkins further pointed out that research on why young people engage in violence has demonstrated that there is no one size fits all explanation. Even though young people form the majority of armed groups, they constitute a minority of young people in a society. Young people are among the primary victims of criminality, armed conflict and terrorism.

Assistant Secretary-General stressed that the problem is not young people per se, but it is the lack of investment in young people, lack of access to education, high levels of youth unemployment or underemployment. She emphasized that it is time for a radical change in how the international community focuses on young people's role in peacebuilding. Policies and programmes are rarely developed to address different groups of young people and provide them with the specialized services and the approaches they require.

Ms. Cheng-Hopkins highlighted the efforts of the United Nations sub-working group on youth and peacebuilding which includes a wide range of partners and which has developed Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding.

Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, started his intervention by stressing that equal rights, opportunities and dignity are absolutely important to today's young generation as it is the largest in history. Yet, they are not given opportunities they deserve in peacebuilding and resolving conflicts. They are among the first to suffer from conflict and violations of human rights. They are overrepresented among direct and indirect victims of violence.

Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi recalled that peace is at the heart of the mission of the United Nations and, therefore, people from around the world need a committee for non-violence. Young people can be the agents of peace, but we need to include their voice and that - not by proxy, because youth need to have a seat at the table. In closing, Mr. Alhendawi reminded that currently over 150 countries have national youth policies, however, only one of them is for the participation of youth in peacebuilding efforts.

Ambassador Y. Halit Çevik, Permanent Representative of Turkey, recalled that youth empowerment is critical and youth are a key to sustainable peace and mutual understanding. The role of youth is a significant part of an inclusive and participatory peacebuilding process. Young people should be an indispensable part of effective peacebuilding, which also requires national ownership and leadership, capacity building, inclusivity and coherence of national and international strategies. Inclusion

of the youth and other stakeholders in the efforts for prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts is of an utmost importance for Turkey. Ambassador Y. Halit Çevik welcomed the fact that UNAOC organizes a youth event, as well as a thematic session on *Role of Young People in Peacebuilding* in the context of the Bali Forum in August 2014. He reiterated commitment and support of his Government to the Alliance of Civilizations.

Ambassador Román Oyarzun Marchesi, Permanent Representative of Spain, applauded the work of the UNAOC for young people. He stated that the Alliance's activities in the youth sector are action-oriented and produced results that could be quantified. With regards to the Bali Forum, Spain thanked the Indonesian authorities for their efforts and highlighted the fact that the Youth Event at the Bali Forum is going to be another way to give attention to young people. Spain welcomed the UNAOC's cooperation with other entities and departments in the United Nations system. On the topic of regional cooperation, Spain noted that indeed it is hard to work with all continents of the world and it may be better to focus on specific areas of action (e.g. Central Asia, Pacific region, etc).

UNAOC Sixth Forum in Bali, Indonesia

UNAOC staff made a presentation on the Sixth Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations in Bali, Indonesia. The presentation was followed up remarks delivered on the Bali Forum by the representative of the Host Government. Delegations received an update on the invitation letters and status of RSVP; registration process and deadline; latest Programme; ten side events that the UNAOC's partners organize in the context of the Bali Forum; pre-Forum events (Focal Points meeting; IIA Ceremony; Youth Event) and the Bali Forum Declaration, which is one of the outcomes of the Forum.

Group of Friends: Views on the UNAOC's Role and Activities

- Delegations highlighted the importance of youth in peacebuilding efforts. A few participants reminded that effective youth participation must be ensured in the context of post 2015 development agenda. Young people deserve an opportunity to leverage their advantages and make positive contributions, be involved in all stages of peacebuilding processes and share their views. Such inclusive approach will make peacebuilding efforts more sustainable.
- Many speakers welcomed the action-oriented work of the Alliance of Civilizations and the results that it has already achieved, particularly in the field of youth. In collaboration with the United Nations, the Alliance of Civilizations appears a useful platform to prepare youth to prevent conflicts and promote a culture of peace.
- Delegations expressed their appreciation for the Government of Indonesia to host the Sixth Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations. They thanked for a briefing on this subject and for all preparatory work done for the Forum, reiterating their anticipation to take part in it. It has been acknowledged that the Focal Points for UNAOC in capitals have already received the first draft Bali Forum Declaration; its advance distribution and consultations with the members of the Group of Friends was welcomed.
- A number of delegations noted with appreciation that UNAOC is expanding its range of partners in the private sector; they encouraged the Alliance to continue down that road. Some delegates acknowledged receipt of the recent appeal of the Secretary-General for a continued

commitment and financial support to the Alliance of Civilizations. At the occasion of the meeting, a few delegations announced pledges to the UNAOC Trust Fund.

Closing Remarks

The UNAOC High Representative closed the meeting by recalling the need to invest much more in young people. There is a need to change the narrative about young people in general and, more specifically, young people in conflict situations as they are not simply victims or perpetrators. The overwhelming majority of youth are focused on providing positive contributions to their country's peace and development. The High Representative called for celebration of young people's achievements and invited to learn from them. He reiterated the UNAOC's commitment to systematically partner with young people when it comes to peacebuilding efforts and support regular exchanges of views between the United Nations, states and youth organizations to collectively make progress. The work of the United Nations Sub-Working Group of Youth and Peacebuilding via their recently launched Guiding Principles and the upcoming Operational Guidance will help support these efforts.

List of Speakers

Opening Session

UNAOC High Representative, PBSO, UN SG Envoy on Youth, Spain, Turkey, Qatar

Statements by members of the UNAOC Group of Friends

Indonesia
Pakistan
European Union
Morocco
Slovenia
Egypt
Italy
OIC
China
Mexico
Montenegro

Statements by Observers

Palau

Closing remarks

UNAOC High Representative