

Participants hail 7th UNAOC Global Forum in Baku

26 APRIL 2016, 16:42 (GMT+04:00)



By Amina Nazarli

The 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) on the theme "Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal" kicked off in Baku on April 26.

Following the opening ceremony attended by the Azerbaijani President and First Lady, the event continued with the panel discussions.

Addressing the plenary session on the "Platform against violent extremism and partnership" Spanish former prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said that Baku is an ideal place for holding the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

Zapatero said that on behalf of Spain, he proposed to create this alliance in 2005. The alliance was created jointly with Turkey and the goal is to develop the dialogue and ensure mutual understanding, according to the former prime minister.

No culture, religion, race, flag stands above others, Zapatero further said, adding that joint work is needed to create this alliance of civilizations.

The UN is one of the leading institutions which can assist in resolving these problems, he believes.

Representative of UNESCO in Africa, participant of the Forum's Youth Event Winnie Kinaro, in turn, said such an event plays an important role in bringing together people and countries.

"I think the issues discussed at the forum are of vital significance in addressing many global problems and building an inclusive society. When looking at Azerbaijan, I understand that we are moving on the right track," she told Azertac.

Another participant of the Forum, Gatien Aba Mbabe from Cameroon noted that the Baku Forum opens up good opportunities to discuss important issues as it brings together influential people from many countries.

He also hailed the Forum's importance to Azerbaijan, saying the country was rapidly developing. "The presence of representatives from a large number of countries in this prestigious event is a striking example of Azerbaijan's growing influence in the region and in the world."

Tunisian novelist, founder and director of the Center for Dialogues: Islamic World-US/The West based at New York University, Mustapha Tlili, for his part, emphasized that the forum provides ideas to better integrate into the international community.

Azerbaijan is a perfect place for holding this forum because the country brings together different cultures and religions, and all the nations live here in peace, believes Iraqi participant of the Youth Event Mohammed Rebaz.

"This forum is of particular importance to me because my country was torn apart by religious and ethnic wars. I wish my country would follow the example of peace in Azerbaijan. May peace come to Iraq," he added.

Professor of journalism at the Middle Tennessee State University Sanjay Asthana, in turn, hailed what the UN is doing for young people.

"I think it is very crucial what the UN is doing for young people," he told AzerTac.
"Particularly Azerbaijan for me is very crucial because it has a mix of different religions because backgrounds of people Christians and Muslims and also it is like a bridge between Europe and Asia and the rest of the world."

Malick Lingani of Burkina Faso noted that such events should become a tradition.

"One of the most positive aspects of the forum, which is excellently organized, is to introduce Azerbaijan to foreign participants," he said.

The three-day Forum targeting to make a contribution to solution of many important global conflicts plans to hold about 30 sessions.

The forum to last until April 27 is also expected to adopt the Baku Declaration. The Youth Forum was held on the first day of the 7th UNAOC Global Forum.

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