



LA Dialogue on Creating Cities of Belonging | 5 – 6 March 2020

Concept Note

Venue: Los Angeles

Date: 5 – 6 March 2020

Co-Chairs:

- His Excellency Miguel Angeles Moratinos, High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
- The Honorable Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles

Background

Urban populations around the world are becoming increasingly multicultural and multifaith, interacting daily in public spaces, from the workplace, to public transit, to schools. Culture is shared and enriched and reciprocal understanding developed. And yet, the challenge of creating peaceful cities of belonging is growing more difficult. Ethnic and religious tensions are resurfacing across the globe. Places of worship have been attacked and civilians killed in the name of xenophobic movements and perverted interpretation of holy texts. Religious and ethnic minorities continue to face discrimination and violence if not displacement and disappearance.

From East to West, xenophobia, nativism, racism, toxic nationalism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia are on the rise. Hate speech is spreading like wild fire through mainstream media and social media. Ultra-nationalist ideologies are now heard in national parliaments and governments for the first time since World War II.

The time has come for cities and city leaders to help turn the tide.

Since their very beginning, cities have been places of change and exchange and historically accommodating of cultural diversity and religious pluralism. Against a trend of growing division and confrontation, cities, and civil society can come together to exchange best practices and join efforts to defend dialogue and our shared humanity. As dynamic laboratories of ideas and practical solutions to problems affecting co-existence, cities can and must lead the way in promoting inclusion, co-existence, and belonging.

This is the mission of the LA Dialogue.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles is uniquely placed to host such a convening of cities. It brings its vast global connections, its experience with racial and ethnic strife, its desire to be a city where every resident and visitor feel valued, in support of a constructive conversation on how best to promote dialogue, inclusion, and belonging.



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Over the last century, Los Angeles has proudly become home to a large population of Latinos, African-Americans, Asians, Europeans, and Middle Easterners from 140 countries and with more than 220 languages spoken. It hosts many of the largest diaspora communities in the U.S., if not the world, and draws strength from its multitude of ethnicities, religions, and beliefs.

Faithful to its worldview and values, the City of Los Angeles signed an Memorandum of Understanding on May 29, 2019, with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), with the common objective of contributing to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal #16, affirming that: “peaceful, just and inclusive societies are necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,” calling for institutions and citizens alike to “promote inclusion and respect towards people of different backgrounds, ethnic origins, religions, gender, sexual orientations or different opinions”.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) is the United Nations entity that has placed dialogue among different cultures and faiths at the core of its activities. Its mandate is “to improve understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples across cultures and to reduce polarization at local and global levels. With the mantra “One Humanity, many cultures” UNAOC is an ardent defender of inclusiveness. It recognizes that there is a plurality of civilizations. Each and every one of them has contributed to enriching our common and single humanity. UNAOC work is based on the notion that shaping the future we want for humankind, does not only rest in our collective efforts to save our planet, but also on nurturing cultural diversity, pluralism and a sense of belonging.

Convinced that cities play a critically important role in supporting UN values and practices, UNAOC has found in the City of LA its natural partner in promoting diversity, inclusion, and belonging, and in so doing, advancing the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal #16.

Together, they have chosen LAMEDINA as the non-governmental organization in charge of planning and executing their common projects.

The **LA Dialogue** is the first of such projects.

LAMEDINA

LAMEDINA ’s mission is the promotion of diversity and co-existence, with a special focus on Los Angeles. Counting on its robust knowledge and expertise in the field, as well as on its international network, LAMEDINA pursues its objective by conceptualizing, setting up, and managing informal high-level dialogues around issues that affects coexistence.



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The LA Dialogue on Creating Cities of Belonging

The LA Dialogue on Creating Cities of Belonging aims to foster reciprocal knowledge, understanding, and exchange in a safe and stimulating intellectual environment.

The neutral venue of the LA Dialogue, as well as the private, off-the-record nature of the discussions, are designed to help participants develop a deeper comprehension of each other's challenges and look for collective creative solutions to these challenges.

Under the chairmanship of LA Mayor Eric Garcetti and UNAOC High Representative Miguel Moratinos, Mayors from around the world will interact with select cultural, religious, political, and business personalities to discuss issues of pluralism and diversity.

This unique dialogue structure can thus connect local actors - municipal leaders as well as global players - the United Nations, and civil society. It will take place in Los Angeles at the heart of a global search for a peaceful, inclusive, and multicultural coexistence.

The LA Dialogue will take place over 1.5 days in Los Angeles.

Day 1:

Mayors will tackle the items of the agenda with the support of UNAOC, LAMEDINA, and other thought partners.

Day 2:

LAMEDINA will summarize the proceedings of the dialogue, identify elements of convergence and divergence among its participants, and select the ones, among them, that require further attention, clarification, and elaboration. These elements will constitute the agenda of the following LA Dialogue meeting. LAMEDINA will be supported by personalities invited to the dialogue. The LA Dialogue will not issue official documents unless UNAOC and Mayors require so.