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## POLICY INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY



### PROMOTING PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

On November 19, 2014, UNAOC High Representative, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, participated in a meeting in Vienna, entitled 'United Against Violence in the Name of Religion: Protecting Religious & Cultural Diversity in Iraq & Syria'. The High Representative delivered a statement on behalf of the UN Secretary-General in which he stressed that the Syrian and Iraqi Governments, as well as armed groups in areas under their effective control, have the moral responsibility to protect all civilians, regardless of their religion or ethnic affiliation.

Along those lines, on 13 November, 2014, UNAOC, in partnership with Pax Romana, organized a symposium at the UNHQs in New York. The event focused on *Protection of Religious Minorities Worldwide* and convened representatives of OCHA, Office of the Genocide Prevention & the Responsibility to Protect, as well as NGOs and media representatives. Participants agreed that governments, the international community, religious and political leaders have a shared responsibility to confront and curb hostility towards minorities. They stressed that the rights of minorities and principles of non-discrimination is inherent in the UN Charter, various international treaties and conventions.

## COMBATTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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UNAOC is working with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force in addressing Pillar I of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, entitled '*Measures are to be taken to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism*', including Combatting Violent Extremism. UNAOC participated in CTITF and CTED meetings at the UNHQs designed to foster cooperation throughout the United Nations system on this topic. Specific to the agenda for Combatting Violent Extremism, UNAOC is expected to provide substantive engagement on interreligious and intercultural approaches to this topic. Meetings with Department of Political Affairs have informed UNAOC on potential events that could be arranged to further pursue the agenda of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in at-risk situations.

On December 12-13, 2014, the UNAOC High Representative addressed an emergency meeting on *Rejecting Violent Religious Extremism and Advancing Shared Well-being*, held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The event was co-organized by the Religions for Peace Executive Committee and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies Abu Dhabi. The meeting resulted in the Abu Dhabi Statement and a relevant Action Plan, which have been unanimously endorsed by all participants. The statement, while categorically rejecting all forms of violent extremism, urged for the need to forge a multi-religious response to such extremism. It called on the United Nations, notably UNAOC, governments and other stakeholders, to facilitate forming alliances to counter violent extremism. Both documents will serve as a blueprint for on-the-ground-multi-religious action. The organizers circulated both documents to the President of the UN Security Council for the month of December 2014 (Chad), as well as all UN Member States.

## PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

### INTERCULTURAL INNOVATIONS AWARD

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During October 12-17, 2014, UNAOC and the BMW Group hosted a workshop at the BMW Group HQs in Munich, Germany. The event convened ten recipients of the 2014 Intercultural Innovation Award and focused on strategic communication, planning and implementation. Participants from Italy, Australia, Lebanon, Sweden, Germany, India, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the USA and Rwanda participated in various training sessions designed to build their capacity with a view to enhance the long-term effect and sustainability of their projects, such that their initiative can expand and replicate in other contexts. The first part of the event focused on strategic planning, implementation and impact analysis. Experienced train-

ers explored with the attendees case studies, success stories, and experiential group learning to develop a strategic plan for their individual projects. The second part focused on the communications aspect of the workshop, where attendees were trained on public speaking and media, with the chance to participate in mock interviews in a real television studio. The highlight of the workshop was the opportunity for awardees to interact with BMW Group managers, with a simulation of a pitch to potential sponsors. Awardees were asked to “sell” their own projects and received invaluable feedback from BMW Group employees.

Furthermore, in December 2014, UNAOC facilitated a workshop in Beit Jala between two previous Awardees of the Intercultural Innovation Award. Irènia non-for-profit organization specializes on Peace

Games for the Mediterranean area, while the Parents Circle Families Forum (PCFF) has an expertise in working on the ground towards peace and reconciliation between the Israeli and Palestinian communities. Leveraging each others’ expertise, the two Awardees recognized the potential for collaboration, with the idea of developing educational tools and games for use in the communities where PCFF operates. Members of Parents Circle Families Forum, coming from Israel and State of Palestine, attended the workshop led by two trainers from Irènia.

Also in December, David Lubell, the Executive Director of Welcoming America – recipient of 2014 Award from UNAOC, was acknowledged for his work and recognized by U.S. President Barack Obama. On December 9, 2014 at the Immigration Town Hall in Nashville, President Obama stated “...David’s initiative is

*expanding across the country. This is what makes America exceptional. That we welcome strivers. We welcome dreamers from all around the world... We hope that if it happens around the country, that eventually it will drift into the House of Representatives, and we are going to get the kind of comprehensive legislation that we need to actually solve this problem”.*

The Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA) was established by UNAOC and the BMW Group in partnership geared towards creating a new model for collaboration between the private sector and the UN system. It aims to select highly innovative grassroots and sustainable projects of non-profit organisations that promote dialogue and intercultural understanding, while making vital contributions to prosperity and peace in global societies.

## FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

During November and December 2014, UNAOC conducted two series of fellowship visits for 27 emerging leaders looking to expand their cultural horizons. The November fellowship embraced 12 emerging leaders from Iraq, Syria, Jordan, State of Palestine, Yemen, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, who conducted a visit to the USA, Germany and Finland. The December group of 15 fellows from Croatia, Ukraine, Poland, Italy, U.K., France, Germany, Belarus, Cyprus and the USA went on a mission to Qatar, Jordan and Morocco. Thematically, the 2014 Fellowship Programme was geared towards governance,



civil society, citizen participation, media and arts. The topics were selected based on the information and survey answers, which were provided by the fellows in their

applications. In the visits to MENA and Europe and North America the fellows met and engaged in substantive discussions with high ranking officials from different ministries



of foreign affairs, learning about current and future policies of visiting countries; political parties; civil society organizations; local council and mayors; media centers and research institutions. Furthermore, the programme included cultural and artistic activities enabling them to learn about diverse communities living in the countries and their

successful stories and challenges from ethnic, cultural and religious perspectives.

The Fellowship was created with an objective to facilitate positive cooperation and understanding between MENA and Europe / North America, by supporting emerging leaders from these regions to

develop a nuanced understanding of each other. The Fellowship Programme is made possible by grants from the Federal Foreign office of Germany. In 2014 it was also supported by the following partners: Qatar Committee for the UNAOC, Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Jordan and Morocco.

## SOMALI DIASPORA TRAINING

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In Autumn 2014, UNAOC's project known as the Somali Diaspora Training, brought together 30 media professionals from the Somali diaspora to a capacity-building workshop in Cardiff, Wales. The event focused on enhancing the craft and understanding of storytelling and narrative with an aim to encourage empowering narratives, reporting and content production to address narratives of hate, violence and extremism. It was held in Cardiff, home to one of the oldest Somali

diaspora communities in Europe and engaged in a meaningful way with the local community and Somali elders, providing opportunities for learning and exchange. Training participants were coming from countries across Europe and North America, representing a diverse range of professional media interests, work and qualifications. Resulting from this workshop, 3-5 proposals for multidisciplinary, multinational follow-up projects were tabled for UNAOC and other potential partners' consideration.

UNAOC is building an online platform to capture the outcomes of the retreat, share good practices and amplify positive narratives. The project was made possible through the support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It is implemented in partnership with United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, with additional logistical and substantive support from Radical Middle Way and the Institute for Narrative Growth.

## ENTREPRENEURS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (E4SC)

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From 16 to 22 October 2014, twenty social entrepreneurs from 14 Mediterranean region countries participated in a capacity-building training, organized by UNAOC in Turin, Italy. The training programme focused on building business models, fundraising, generating employment, facilitating intercultural understanding, engaging local communities, and addressing marginalization. Its results were featured in a Webdoc produced La Stampa, one of the major Italian newspapers.

Following the event, UNAOC started to provide social entrepreneurs with the opportunity to benefit from both one-on-one and group mentoring sessions allowing to practically apply lessons they learned during the training, approach potential investors, strengthen business plans, and test their social impact. Some participants have already been able to report back on their experience: Pezana Rexha, CEO of an Albanian social enterprise that offers interior solutions and furniture while employing people

from marginalized groups, said that *"in one week with the UNAOC I have changed my way of being, thinking and my approach towards others, and can't wait to see the change I will face after 9 months of mentoring."* Thanks to the Turin training, Pezana Rexha was first invited to pitch her social enterprise in front of Peace Nobel Laureate Mohammad Yunus and then invited by the US Department State to the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Marrakech as the best young Albanian entrepreneur.



Meanwhile, some participants of E4SC's 2013 edition have progressed enough to become trainers themselves. Mohammad Issa, General Manager of a Palestinian enterprise that uses puppet theatre to improve the psychosocial well-being of children and youth affected by conflict, in 18 months, was able to attract investments for \$500,000. He established a business model, which is attracting interest from the Mediterranean region and reaches out to 18,000 children in the West Bank. *"I shared my story. I spent 3 years – he said – in trying to make a connection between theatre work and income-generating projects. I struggled*

*until I came to the UNAOC training in Torino in February 2013. The training is outstanding, it opened me the secret world of tools and skills that are needed to succeed".*

E4SC project aims at supporting young entrepreneurs in the Euro-Mediterranean region, who, through their business activities, are committed to creating employment opportunities while promoting non-violent social change and facilitating intercultural understanding. The project is implemented in partnership with Fondazione CRT and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy.

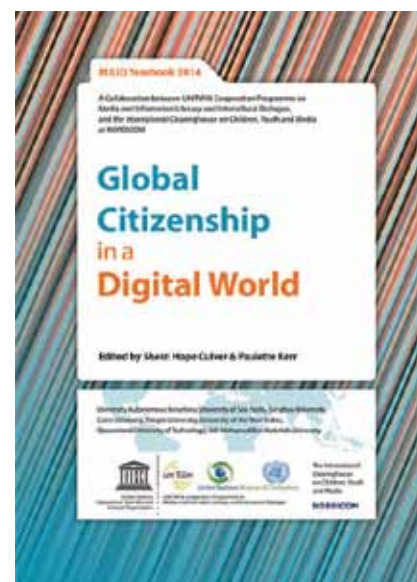
## MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY (MIL) INITIATIVES

UNAOC, in collaboration with UNESCO, is working on editing and publishing of a publication "MIL in the MENA Region", due early 2015. It will highlight the results of the series of teacher training workshops on media and information literacy which UNAOC conducted in 2013 in Egypt and Morocco. In addition, the publication will also include contributions from MIL experts based in other countries of the MENA region. The whole initiative was made possible through the funding support from the Government of Spain.

Another recent UNAOC-supported Media and Information Literacy publication is the book "Global Citizenship in a Digital World" published by NORDICOM, with

UNESCO and UNAOC. The publication brings together a range of reviewed articles, which articulate the theme of global citizenship from varied perspectives and regions of the world. The articles represent different expressions on media and information literacy from researchers and practitioners, who offer new strategies, share research findings, best practices and reflections.

Finally, UNAOC has just completed an interactive website for UNESCO's "MIL Curriculum for Teachers." The webpage, a main resource for educators, can be navigated in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. For general information on MIL, please visit [www.milunesco.unaoc.org](http://www.milunesco.unaoc.org).



## PLURAL+ YOUTH VIDEO FESTIVAL

On December 4, 2015, PLURAL+ 2014 celebrated its Awards Ceremony at the Paley Center for Media, New York. Already on its 6th year PLURAL+ continues to develop and further support the distribution of youth-produced media on the topics of migration, diversity and social inclusion. In 2014, young media makers from Spain, Canada and Jordan received the International Jury Award, while with the support of PLURAL+ partners other twenty videos were also selected for awards which included monetary contributions as well as professional opportunities and invitations to other events where the young media makers will be presenting their works. With the support of a grant from the Open Society Foundation, UNAOC produced 2014



Educational-Discussion Guides on PLURAL+ videos which will be widely distributed within formal and informal educational settings. The guides are available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. PLURAL+

is a joint initiative of UNAOC and the International Organization for Migration with the support of many partners from across the world. For more information, please visit [www.pluralplus.unaoc.org](http://www.pluralplus.unaoc.org).

## PEACEapp

PEACEapp is an initiative developed by UNAOC in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme. UNAOC conducted a global call for entries, inviting video games and gamified apps that were developed as venues for intercultural dialogue and violence prevention to apply. As a result, over 100 entries from around the world were submitted for review. An Interna-

tional Jury selected five games, awarding them a small financial support, certificates of recognition by the UNAOC and UNDP leadership, as well as the opportunity to present their work at the upcoming 'How to Build Peace' conference (April 2015, Cyprus). The five winning games are from developers based in Germany, Kenya, Australia, Canada and Brazil. With this

initiative UNAOC further explores creative ways to engage with young audiences in innovative and strategic platforms to develop better understanding among individuals and communities from different cultural and religious backgrounds. For more information, please visit [www.unaoc.org/peaceapp](http://www.unaoc.org/peaceapp).

# INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## UNAOC RESOLUTION

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Following consultations with the UNAOC High Representative, co-sponsors Spain and Turkey, joined by member states that have hosted or are scheduled to host the Global Forums of UNAOC (Brazil, Qatar, Austria, Indonesia and Azerbaijan), have taken the lead in the drafting of a new United Nations resolution relating to UNAOC. The last resolution (A/RES/64/14) that directly described UNAOC dates back to November 2009. The new document will be instrumental for UNAOC, adequately describing its role and status within the United Nations system. A consensus draft from this group is expected to be presented to the Group of Friends for broader consultations in first half of 2015.

## AGREEMENT WITH UNF

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In November 2014, the United Nations Foundation (UNF) and the United Nations, representing UNAOC, signed an Agreement through which the UNF will receive funds raised from contributors, including private sector, foundations, and/or individual donors, to support UNAOC. The UNF will provide Internal Revenue Service tax recognition to the USA-based private sector contributors and philanthropists. The Agreement serves as an important vehicle for UNAOC to generate greater funding from US based donors to its Trust Fund to support programme and operational needs.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### JANUARY 2015

UNAOC launched a call for applications, inviting youth-led organizations to apply for the Youth Solidarity Fund 2014-2015 edition. Eligible organizations were welcome to apply by January 12, 2015 (deadline).

From January 26 through March 9, UNAOC will launch a call for applications, inviting young people from around the world to apply to take part in the Summer School. A total of 75 individuals aged 18-35, representing a diversity of countries, faiths and cultures, will be selected based on their affinity with the summer school goals, their ability and potential to promote intercultural dialogue as well as their ability to apply the lessons to broader networks and audiences, hence multiplying its benefits.

On January 27, UNAOC and the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan will co-organize a presentation of the *World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue* in New York, UNHQs. The Group of Friends have been invited.

### FEBRUARY 2015

On February 18, UNAOC will convene a Group of Friends meeting at the Ambassadorial level in New York, UNHQs. The event will feature leadership of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as the keynote speaker. It will be open to observers, media and civil society.

### MARCH 2015

On March 10-12, UNAOC and Global Movement of Moderates Foundation will co-host the *Second International Conference of the Global Movement of Moderates* in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### APRIL 2015

UNAOC and the Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly will convene a High Level meeting on *The Role of Reconciliation and Forgiveness to Combat Extremism and its Effect on Development*.

### MAY 2015

On May 18-19, UNAOC and the Government of Azerbaijan will co-organize the *Third World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue 2015* in Baku. The forum is

part of the "Baku Process", initiated by the Government of Azerbaijan and implemented in partnership with UNAOC, UNESCO, WTO, ISESCO and the Council of Europe.

### JUNE 2015

UNAOC and its partner Education First EF will co-organize an annual summer school in Tarrytown, NY on 13-20 June.

### MAY 2016

UNAOC will collaborate with OCHA on preparation for the *Global Humanitarian Summit 2015*, which the UN Secretary-General will convene in Istanbul, Turkey. UNAOC will support this event by highlighting the role of faith-based institutions as actors for humanitarian action and promotion of peace.

### 2016

*The Seventh Global Forum of UNAOC* will be hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan in Baku during April-May 2016 period. Dates and formal invitations to the UNAOC partners, including member states, international organizations, civil society, youth, academia, media and private sector, will be issued upon consulting the Host.