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POLICY INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY

UNAOC Group of Friends Discussed the Role of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue Processes as a Tool for Preventing Conflict and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding



On 19 April 2017, the UNAOC High Representative convened a Group of Friends meeting on the Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue Processes as a Tool for Preventing Conflict and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, in New York, UNHQs. He briefed participants on the considerable progress made by UNAOC to date in promoting the use of interreligious and intercultural dialogue through a wide range of partnerships with non-state actors. The High Representative highlighted UNAOC projects and initiatives, namely, Youth Solidarity Fund, Young Peacebuilders programme, Intercultural Innovation Award and PEACEapp, under which UNAOC and its local partners engage in preventing conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding in Asia, MENA and (...)

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#SpreadNoHate Symposium in Brussels with the EU



In 2017, UNAOC has continued to implement its #SpreadNoHate initiative aiming at countering hate speech against migrants and refugees in the media, in line with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the United Nations TOGETHER initiative against racism and xenophobia towards migrants and refugees, in which UNAOC has been closely involved as a member of the working group.

With the migration crisis in Europe, the rise of populism and xenophobic rhetoric, and the increasing role of media in shaping distorted perceptions of migrants and refugees, UNAOC and the European Union jointly (...)

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Sub-Saharan Africa, or builds networks and platforms for social inclusion and prevention of identity-based conflicts. UNAOC strengthened its collaboration with religious leaders believing in their ability to work with political leaders to avoid the use of divisive language and provide opportunities for an interfaith dialogue. It has recently sponsored the initiative of the Government of Spain – a Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East (Alicante, Spain).

Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Senior Adviser on Policy, who took the floor on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General, and Mr. Oscar

Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, recalled that the United Nations Secretary-General's priorities align with the UNAOC's mission. The Secretary-General has repeatedly called for greater political, cultural and economic investments in inclusivity and cohesion. Prioritizing the agenda of prevention, he aims to steer the United Nations to assist countries to avert the outbreaks of crises. The United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on sustaining peace and the role of inclusive dialogue in sustaining peace and prevention serve as important instruments to pursue

this agenda.

Over 30 delegations reflected on the UNAOC's progress achieved in terms of the scope of its activities, as well as its supporters and outreach. Many speakers noted that UNAOC remains one of the most prominent peace initiatives of nowadays and it represents a conflict prevention mechanism per se. It is strong precisely because it works with a variety of players on the ground, regionally and internationally. Its projects focusing on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue can contribute to conflict management and post-conflict reconciliation processes.

The meeting was live streamed through UN Web TV and covered live on Twitter and Instagram, having ranked that day in top 10 trending topics on Twitter in New York (hashtag #Commit2Dialogue). The posts were delivered to 713,489 accounts and totaled 5,708,029 unique impressions.

organized a symposium to address "Hate Speech against Migrants and Refugees in the Media" under the framework of UNAOC's #SpreadNoHate initiative. The symposium took place in Brussels, Belgium, on 26 January 2017, and gathered over 100 participants from the media sector, civil society, international organizations, migrant communities and tech companies such as Facebook and Google. This fourth #SpreadNoHate symposium included discussions on the role of media in the rise of populism, the triggers and mechanisms of hate speech against migrants and refugees, and the role of Internet intermediaries in combating hate speech.

Speakers included Mrs. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission; Mrs. Cecile Kyenge, Member of the European Parliament; Mr. David Kaye, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Ms. Brittan Heller, Director of Technology and Society at the Anti-Defamation League; and Mr. Ezzat Ibrahim, Managing Editor of Al Ahram newspaper in Egypt. The discussions were broadcast live and reached 13+ million Twitter accounts, with close to 30 million impressions. The symposium

trended on Twitter with the hashtag #SpreadNoHate as number 1 topic in Belgium and among the 35 top topics in the USA.

The event resulted in a set of recommendations formulated by participants. A full report, including key findings and recommendations on promoting positive narratives towards migrants and refugees in the media, will be issued and circulated shortly. More information on the #SpreadNoHate can be found at www.unaoc.org, where videos of the various panels will soon be made available.

The Importance of Intercultural Dialogue at the 11th Plenary Session of PAM

On 23-24 February 2017, Mr. Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, President of the Portuguese Parliament, hosted the 11th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) in Porto, Portugal. The objective of the Plenary Session was to review the crises in the region, including violent extremism, security challenges, civilian protection, human rights, Mediterranean cultural heritage and economic trade and cooperation. Ms. Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson for the High Representative, represented UNAOC and delivered remarks on behalf of the High Representative. She highlighted the paradox of today's society: as we are more connected through trade, technology and migration, we are also becoming more apart. The economic interdependency overshadows the increasing chal-



lenges to live harmoniously with diverse cultural beliefs and languages. UNAOC has continuously worked to use diversity to strengthen relations across civil society in efforts to succeed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. While UNAOC and

PAM are reinforcing partnership relations in intercultural dialogue, both organizations focus their work on minorities and migration. Ms. Saad concluded remarks by emphasizing on how dialogue prevents and defeats violent extremism.

“Embracing the Other”: the 6th Annual Interfaith Harmony Week 2017

On 6 February 2017, the UNAOC High Representative, in collaboration with the United Nations Committee of Religious NGOs, inaugurated the 6th annual Interfaith Harmony Week at the Tillman Chapel, Church Centre for the United Nations. The theme of the 2017 celebration was “Interfaith Harmony: Embracing the Other”, a goal which UNAOC holds within its mandate. UNAOC was created to find ways to diminish hostility and to promote harmony between nations, communities with a platform for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation. In his remarks, the High Representative noted that UNAOC is continuously working on diversity while reducing the fear of “the other”. Its initiative #SpreadNoHate



echoes the message of Interfaith Harmony in combatting hate speech, fostering diversity and ending radicalism. He recalled the role of religious leaders, who act as catalysts for mediation, humanitarian action, community building and prevention of violent extremism. In line with the United Nations Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism are the UNAOC core pillars that aim to promote inclusive societ-

ies and foster interreligious dialogue among all faiths. “My approach is to defuse religious and cultural tensions by mobilizing religious leaders, grassroots organizations and especially youth and women leaders... I am convinced that instilling our shared values among youth is essential for our world to prosper in peace and embrace the other”, stated the High Representative.

UNAOC Took Part in the Roundtable on Preventing Violent Extremism through Universal Values in Curriculum, CIES 2017 Conference

On 7 March 2017, UNAOC was invited by UNESCO International Bureau of Education to participate in a roundtable discussion on “Preventing Violent Extremism through Universal Values in Curriculum”. The panel focused on the UNESCO initiative aiming to identify values that are “universal” and that, if carefully

integrated into curricula, could promote peace, dialogue and mutual understanding. It also explored the different interpretations, tensions and assumptions that confront the notion of “universal values”. The discussion drew on the extensive personal and professional experiences of leading scholars in the field and their

substantial contributions to thinking and writing about inclusion, values, peace education and human rights in various contexts worldwide. The event intended to stimulate an ongoing debate about a crucial role and potential of the curriculum in a global dialogue on the prevention of violent extremism through education.

The Italian Diplomatic Academy’s Message to Young Leaders

On 11 March 2017, at the United Nations General Assembly, the UNAOC High Representative joined forces with the Italian Diplomatic Academy to welcome young men and women to the “UN: A Message to Young Leaders” event. The Italian Diplomatic Academy is an example of collaborative relationships between the United Nations and academic institutions that seek to empower youth in international relations. In his remarks, the High Representative underscored the importance of respect and tolerance and the role of youth in leading the way forward to foster inclusive societies. UNAOC’s message to young people covered the issues of combating hate speech



and promoting young peacebuilders. UNAOC projects #SpreadNoHate and Young Peacebuilders enable youth to come together and embrace each other’s diversity in order to work on the most pressing challenges, including counter hatred, discrimination and violence. It was also reaffirmed that the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 is the resolution of the youth and that young people must be a



part of the international peace agenda and implement it at the national and local levels. In conclusion, Mr. Al-Nasser said, “We are here with messages for you, but we know that you have messages for us too. Let us listen to you, make your voices heard and help you transform discussions into action”. The UNAOC emphasis remains on the engagement and empowerment of youth at all levels through education.

Celebrating the 5th Year of the International Day of Happiness



On 20 March 2017, at the UNHQs in New York, the UNAOC High Representative participated in the 5th celebration of the International Day of Happiness, co-organized by the International Federation for Peace & Sustainable Development and UNAOC, in

collaboration with Ambassador Hamid Al-Bayati, Former Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations. Mr. Al-Nasser was joined by H.E. Mrs. Katelin Bogyay, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations, Dr. Judy Kuriansky, Profes-

sor at Columbia University Teachers College, and Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Fellow of NY Academy of Medicine. The International Day of Happiness was adopted by consensus on 28 June 2012 through the Resolution A/66/L.48 during the tenure of Mr. Al-Nasser as the 66th President of the United Nations General Assembly. The 2017 celebration focuses on the interconnection between the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that ultimately leads to well-being and happiness. (...)

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Honoring the Work of Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the “Preventative Diplomacy: A Soft Power Tool” Event

On 20 March 2017, UNAOC organized a roundtable discussion on “Preventative Diplomacy: A Soft Power Tool”, honoring the work of Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former United Nations Secretary-General. Dr. Boutros-Ghali introduced his definition of Preventative Diplomacy in 1992, in his landmark report “An Agenda for Peace”. He described it as an “action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur”. The UNAOC High Representative reiterated the motto of preventative diplomacy, on which current United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is focusing. The roundtable discussion featured keynote speaker Dr. Kevin Cahill, University Professor and Director of Fordham University’s Institute of International Humanitar-



ian Affairs (IIHA) and Senior Advisor for the President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly for Humanitarian Affairs. Dr. Cahill highlighted the value of prevention in public health and proposed that prevention could be adapted to diplomacy as well. He noted: “...in international politics, as in human medicine, the physician cannot impose treatment that the patient is not prepared to accept”. The event also featured Mrs. Leah Boutros-

Ghali; Mr. Tomas Christensen, Chef de Cabinet of the Office of the President of the 71th Session of the United Nations General Assembly; Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa; and Ambassador Amr Aboulatta, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations. It drew attention to the importance of moving swiftly to support the Secretary-General’s commitment to the concept and practice of conflict prevention.

Eurasian Economic Summit on “Humanity at the Crossroads”

On 6 April 2017, the 20th iteration of the Eurasian Economic Summit took place in Istanbul, Turkey. The event focused on “Humanity at the Crossroads”, responding to the global challenges of migration and security. It was co-sponsored by the Marmara Foundation Istanbul and the Marmara Group Strategic and Social Research Foundation. The Eurasian Economic Summit was created with the aim to promote cooperation between Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus region and the Middle East. This year’s Summit was strategic in its location on the historic Silk Road, covering Europe and the Middle East, and its sea route amid the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. In his remarks, the High Representative for UNAOC stressed the impor-



tance of inter-religious and interfaith dialogue in achieving peace in times when the world is interconnected, yet borders are being closed and xenophobia is spreading. He recalled that diversity is a source of strength and richness, not a weakness, and reiterated his firm belief in the important role of religious leaders to bring people together, spread the

message of peace and promote dialogue. Participants were reminded that UNAOC works to combat hate speech through its #SpreadNoHate initiative, aimed at targeting xenophobia on social media platforms and preventing violent extremism in support of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Plan of Action on the Prevention of Violent Extremism.

First International Conference on “Peace in Diversity: the Integrative Approach to Intercultural and Civilizational Affairs”

On 6-7 April 2017, the 1st International Conference on “Peace in Diversity: the Integrative Approach to Intercultural and Civilizational Affairs” commemorated in Agadir, Morocco. The conference was co-organized by UNAOC and the International University of Agadir; The Federation of Universities of the Islamic Word; ISESCO; Ma'din Academy, India, in collaboration with Universiti Putra Malaysia; Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University, Brunei; International Islamic University Malaysia and A Common World Among Youth, UK. In his remarks to the participants, Mr. Al-Nasser reaffirmed the mission of the Alliance and the dedication to education and knowledge to enrich future generations of youth to build a more inclusive so-



ciety in the future. Ms. Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson for the High Representative, took part in the round table discussion on “The Institutional Role in Ensuring Harmony and Peace in Multi-Cultural and Multi-Religious Environment”. The conference also marked the inauguration of the Ibn Batuta International Center for Inter-Cultural and Civilizational Studies, which al-

lowed UNAOC to reinforce its links with the academic and Islamic world. In the margins of the conference, the UNAOC High Representative received the “International Outstanding Achievement Award 2017” for the work of UNAOC to promote intercultural, interreligious dialogue, diversity, respect and tolerance among all people.

UNAOC and its Partners Discussed Educational Strategies for the Prevention of Violent Extremism

On 10 February 2017, UNAOC and UN Academic Impact organized a roundtable discussion on “Media and Information Literacy: Educational Strategies for the Prevention of Violent Extremism” in New York, UN-HQs. The event centered in the notion that Media and Information Literacy (MIL), rather than censoring media that is potentially harmful, invests in a long-term strategy that aims to promote the development of discerning critical thinking skills in individuals. Skills that, in fact, protect and enrich the worldviews of these individuals while promoting a culture of peace and understanding among individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds. MIL abilities are key to “unlearn” false assumptions and to forestall extremism and the violence it can trigger. UNAOC has developed pedagogical platforms, encouraging and energizing intercultural dialogue



and providing opportunities for the prevention of identity-based polarizations. During the event, Dr. Renee Hobbs, Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Rhode Island, reflected on the need to better assess notions linked to propaganda and the framing concepts such as “terrorism,” underscoring the urgency for citizens to be alert to the long social history of perceptions connected to the concept of “fake news”. Moder-

ated by Mr. Torrent, UNAOC MIL Project Manager, the panel included Ambassador Hahn Choonghee of the Republic of Korea, Dr. Regina de Assis from the Ministry of Education of Brazil; Ms. Magda Abu-Fadil, Director at Media Unlimited, Lebanon; Dr. Guy Berger, Director at UNESCO's Freedom of Expression and Media Development; and Mr. Liam Hackett, Founder of the Ditch the Label project, UK.

UNAOC Participated in “Faith-Based Approaches to Forced Migration” Conference at Princeton University

UNAOC participated in the conference entitled “Seeking Refuge: Faith-Based Approaches to Forced Migration”, organized by Princeton University on 4 March 2017. UNAOC was invited to present its #SpreadNoHate initiative and its work to combat hate speech in the media against migrants and refugees as part of a panel on media and migration. Other panelists included Ms. Deborah Amos, International Correspondent for NPR; Mr. Eldar Shafir, Professor of Behavioral



Science at Princeton University; and Ms. Naomi Hunt, Programme Manager, Refugees in Europe, at King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International

Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

UNAOC Participated in Journalism Workshop on Covering Islam and Muslims at Princeton University

UNAOC spoke at the workshop on “Covering Islam and Muslims”, organized by Princeton University on 23 April 2017. The goal of the event was to provide tools to the media community on good terminology for covering Islam and to help decode some of the anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments in the public discourse. The workshop included two main discussions on “The Complexities of Covering Islam and Muslim Debates” and “Politics of Being Muslim in America”, in which Ms. Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet and the Spokesperson for the High Representative, took part as a panelist. Other speakers included Ms. Dalia Fahmy, Professor at LIU-Brooklyn and a scholar of



Middle East politics; Mr. Mucahit Bilici, Sociology Professor and Author of Finding Mecca in America; Ms. Kim Lawton, Managing Editor and Correspondent for the PBS show Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly; and Mr. Sohaib Sultan, Princeton University Muslim Chaplain and Author of The

Koran for Dummies. The workshop was attended by journalists and journalists in training, and the format of the event allowed for genuine discussions and debates on Muslim life in America and the challenges faced by journalists in the current political context.

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“The very fact that Member States have come to agree on the need to incorporate the subject of happiness as an integral part of the SDGs is proof enough to explain the importance

of the issue in the lives of people everywhere and the desire for change in that direction”, said Mr. Al-Nasser. UNAOC dedicates its efforts to foster respect and tolerance between

peoples of diverse cultures and religions to engage everyone in the pursuit of peaceful and inclusive world of happiness.

PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

UNAOC Selected Seven Organizations to Implement Intercultural Dialogue Projects Focused on Peacebuilding and Violence Prevention under YSF

In January 2017, UNAOC launched an open call, inviting proposals for youth-led projects advancing intercultural dialogue with a view to prevent violent conflict, promote social inclusion and peacebuilding in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Seven organizations were selected, each receiving a grant of up to USD 25,000 and technical support from UNAOC. The projects will be implemented in 2017 and focus on 1) social inclusion of migrants through arts-based public events in rural areas of Morocco; 2) contribution of youth to peaceful elections and

preventing inter-ethnic violence in Liberia; 3) role of the media in promoting tolerance and preventing violence in South Sudan; 4) peace education to reduce instances of violence and hatred towards refugees in Uganda; 5) training youth to advocate for sustainable peace through film making and story sharing on pluralism and violence mitigation in India, Nepal and Bhutan; 6) training Pakistani youth in interfaith dialogue and advocacy to prevent violent extremism and advocate for the localization of Security Council Resolution 2250;

and 7) engaging young Afghani women in peace clubs and sports to promote diversity. They will include a combination of capacity building and awareness raising activities, public events and advocacy, and produce tools for youth and the broader community to use during and after the projects. Coordinators of the selected projects are 3 young women and 4 young men aged 23 to 35 years old. YSF is supported through contributions of Finland and Spain.

Capacity Building Workshop for Intercultural Innovation Award Recipients Held in Gurgaon, India

M&E, organisational development and leadership were the focus of the 2nd capacity building workshop for ten recipients of the 2016 Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA - <https://interculturalinnovation.org>). Hosted by UNAOC and the BMW Group, the workshop took place in Gurgaon, India, on 12-16 February 2017. Participants came from Brazil, Bulgaria, France, Germany, India, Israel, Kenya, the UK and the USA. The training sessions were designed with the aim of building their long-term impact and ongoing sustainability so that their initiatives could be expanded and replicated in other contexts. The first part of the event focused on leadership, organisational development and sustainability, taught by experiential group learning, case studies and simulations. The participants were then taken through the steps to develop a monitoring plan and

how results from M&E could be used in making management decisions and for communications. The highlight of the workshop was seeing the work of current IIA awardees - Routes 2 Roots and Safecity. Based in Delhi, Routes 2 Roots is an organisation that promotes peace through cultural diplomacy. Workshop participants were able to view one of their projects "Virsa", which teaches cultural heritage to students throughout India on an interactive digital learning platform. Meanwhile, Safecity is a platform that crowdsources personal stories of sexual harassment and abuse in public spaces. The organization arranged for their Youth Campus Ambassadors to conduct an example of their meetings on gender rights



and stereotypes, which takes place in colleges throughout several cities in India.

PLURAL+ Received “Cine y Salud 2017 Prize” from Aragon, Spain



PLURAL+, the youth video festival on the themes of migration, diversity and social inclusion, co-organized by UNAOC and IOM, was awarded the “Cine y Salud 2017 Prize” by the regional government of Aragon, Spain.

Cine y Salud is a programme for high school students from the region, where once a week, during school time and as part of their curriculum, students watch and discuss films that have health relevant themes on its narrative. This innovative programme, quite unique and creative, offers students opportunities for health discussions through filming experiences, intertwining health education and entertainment. In addition, the programme includes production of videos by the stu-

dents participating in the initiative. Cine y Salud has been a partner of PLURAL+ for several years, supporting the outreach and distribution of PLURAL+ award winning videos within their network of schools. The Prize certificate was handed to Mr. Jordi Torrent, UNAOC Project Manager for PLURAL+, by Mr. Francisco Javier Faló, Aragon’s Director General for Public Health. For further information on PLURAL+ and to view the award winning videos, please visit: pluralplus.unaoc.org.

UNAOC Fellowship Programme 2017: the Role of Civil Society and Media in Combatting Hatred and Fostering Inclusion

UNAOC completed a call for applications and will soon announce names of the twenty-four young civil society leaders, who will participate in the UNAOC Fellowship Programme 2017. Encouraging intercultural collaboration between the West and the Arab Muslim world remains the core objective of the UNAOC Fellowship Programme. Activities and discussions of the 2017 edition will also focus on the role of media and

civil society in combatting hatred and fostering inclusion. The Programme participants will be selected for their professional achievements in the fields of media and civil society, and for their strong motivation in engaging with peers from various cultural and religious backgrounds. The fellows will travel to seven countries across the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and North America and engage with a wide range of



partners, from international institutions to grassroots organizations, media and religious leaders.

PEACEapp Workshop Helped Youth Create Digital Games on Relevant Social Issues

In January 2017, a week long PEACEapp workshop took place in Algeciras, Spain, where undocumented youth, young refugees and youth from the host city of Algeciras worked together, creating digital games on relevant social issues to their lives as a platform for encouraging and facilitating intercultural dialogue and digital literacy. The twenty-five participants included youth from nine countries: Algeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mali, Morocco, Paraguay, Senegal, Spain (...)



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and Ukraine. The workshop was an opportunity for these young people, who would, due to their legal and social status, not necessarily meet and work together, to jointly develop video games using MIT's Scratch platform. Furthermore, besides developing digital competencies, youth improved their communica-

tion skills that will help them to find opportunities for social inclusion into a new society (for the migrants) and to better appreciate the multiple challenges that refugees and unaccompanied youth find upon arriving to a new country (for the local youth). After the workshop, local gaming company OmniumLab

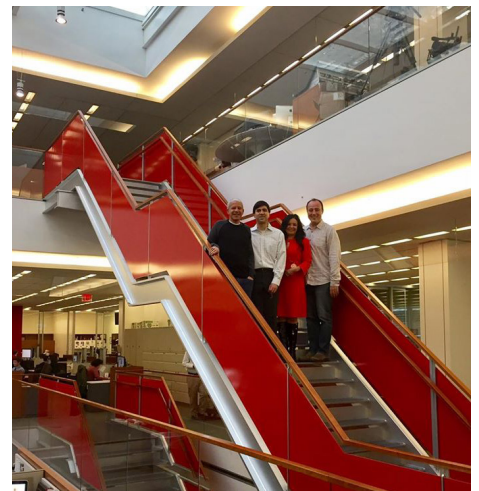
joined the initiative and continued working with the group. They have created SURVIVAL - a gamified app on the challenges of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe. The game can be downloaded at: unaoc.org/2017/02/refugees-and-local-youth-participate-at-the-peaceapp-workshop-in-algeciras-spain/

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UNAOC Meets with New York Times "Race and Ethnicity" Team

UNAOC met with the New York Times' Race and Ethnicity editorial team, composed of several journalists and editors, who cover news related to race and ethnicity, including commentary and archival articles published in the paper. Organized in January 2017 at the New York Times headquarters in New York, the meeting was an opportunity for UNAOC to share information about its work to foster diverse and inclusive societies, with a focus

on the UNAOC's #SpreadNoHate initiative to combat hate speech against migrants and refugees in the media. Participants in the meeting included Mr. Marc Lacey, National Editor, as well as Mr. Damien Cave, Deputy National Editor for Digital, and Mr. Adeel Hassan, journalist. The exchange was fruitful and led to discussions about potential synergies and collaboration between the New York Times and UNAOC.



UNAOC Participated in the CTITF Inter-Agency Expert Retreat on the Development of National and Regional PVE Action Plans

On 22-23 February 2017, the Alliance took part in the session on "Empowering Youth and Education, Skill Development and Employment Facilitation", along with UNESCO, UNDP, Silatech, Mercy Corps and the Government of Canada. The discussion focused on the priority areas of youth empowerment and education, skill development and employment facilitation, as well as the different

means to protect young people and harness their idealism, creativity and energy through practical measures in the prevention of violent extremism. Panelists addressed questions related to quality education that can unleash the full political, economic and social potential of youth, and identified good practices and possible context-specific model projects. The session served as an opportuni-

ty to showcase the UNAOC's work and activities to the United Nations colleagues and other partners, including from the private sector and civil society. During the presentation, the innovative aspect of the UNAOC's projects and products, as well as their link to social inclusion and sustainable development, were emphasized.

UNAOC Director's Visit to Germany

UNAOC Director Mr. Matthew Hodes travelled to Germany on 19-23 of March for meetings with the Foreign Ministry and the BMW Group. The meetings with the Foreign Ministry centered on current UNAOC project activities, in particular, the Fellowship Programme. Mr. Hodes met with the Focal Points for UNAOC at the German Foreign Ministry, Ms. Heidrun Tempel and Ms. Petra Drexler. He also met with Mr. Dirk

Loelke, the recently appointed Head of the Task Force on the Responsibility of the Religions for Peace in the German Foreign Ministry. They discussed ongoing UNAOC activities within that topic area as well as German plans for an event on the role of religious leaders to take place in Berlin in May 2017.

In Munich, Mr. Hodes met with Mr. Bill McAndrews, Vice President for Corporate Communications, and

Ms. Milena Pighi from the Corporate Social Responsibility office of the BMW Group. They discussed current programming and options for extending the relationship between UNAOC and the BMW Group beyond 2017.

UNAOC Attended the Advisory Group Meeting of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

The Finn Church Aid hosted the 7th Advisory Group meeting of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers on 7 April 2017 in Helsinki, Finland. The event was supported by the Government of Finland. Drawing on the expertise of the participants and building on mutual commitment and members' expressed interests, the meeting served as a space

for further conversations on the National Dialogue Conference, member experiences in the focus areas, regional dynamics and local dialogues, especially in the MENA region. The meeting enabled the Network members to share strategic thinking and planning, particularly in regards to shifting global trends in the peace and conflict field, and to learn from and shape each other's

thinking in order to collaboratively form effective responses. The Advisory Group meeting contributed to sharing best practices, practical tools and methods on religious and traditional peacemaking. It also helped to deepen collaboration and strategic thinking between the Network members and its partners to enhance an overall engagement in the field.

Donor Support 2016

UNAOC wishes to recognize and thank donors, which provided contributions to its Trust Fund in 2016: Argentina, Azerbaijan, Finland, Germany, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Morocco, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey as well as the BMW Group. Several member states have provided an in-kind support on the ground for the UNAOC Fellowship Programme: Egypt, Morocco and Qatar.



OPPORTUNITIES AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 2017

On behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development, UNAOC co-organizes a **workshop on the role of humanitarian NGOs in conflict zones** in partnership with the British Council, the European Commission and the University of Georgia. It will be held on 22-23 May 2017 at the UNHQs, New York (CR9).

The **UNAOC Fellowship Programme** call for applications is open from 10 April through 21 May 2017. The theme in 2017 is "The Role of Civil Society and the Media in Combatting Hatred and Fostering Inclusion". To be selected, eligible candidates must demonstrate a strong interest in intercultural dialogue and professional achievements in the fields of media and/or civil society. Details of the call and all eligibility criteria can be found here: fellowship.unaoc.org/apply/.

The **Intercultural Innovation Award** call for applications is open through 31 May 2017. Eligible to apply are not-for-profit organizations managing projects focused on promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding, and which are willing to expand their range of action. More details about the call and the Award can be found here: interculturalinnovation.org/the-award.

June 2017

PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival invites youth to submit original and creative videos focusing on migration, diversity and social inclusion. The deadline for submission of videos is 4 June 2017. Further information, including guidelines, rules, regulations and the entry form can be found at the PLURAL+ website: pluralplus.unaoc.org.

On 28-30 June 2017, UNAOC delegation will participate in the **10th GFMD Summit** "Towards a Global Social Contract on Migration and Development", Berlin, Germany.

The UNAOC High Representative will take part in the **IV Istanbul Conference on Mediation** "Surge in Diplomacy, Action in Mediation", 30 June, Turkey.

UNAOC will launch the second edition of the **Young Peacebuilders Programme**. The peace education programme will be offered to young emerging peacebuilders from the Middle East and North Africa region. The call for applications should be launched shortly.

August 2017

The UNAOC High Representative will represent the United Nations Secretary-General at the **38th Meeting for Friendship Amongst Peoples**, which will take place in Rimini Fiera, Italy, on 20-26 August.

September 2017

The **UNAOC ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends** will be organized in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly high-level week, New York, UNHQs.

UNAOC is organizing a panel entitled "**Unraveling #fakenews from opinion-making information: a News Literacy discussion**" on 7 September, 11-1pm, UNHQ Conference Room 6.

October 2017

PEACEapp video games and digital literacy workshop will take place in Tangiers, Morocco.

November 2017

The **2017 Awards Ceremony of the PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival** on Migration, Diversity, Social Inclusion, Against Xenophobia will be organized on 9-10 November in New York.

Fall 2017

#SpreadNoHate Symposium in the MENA region: Given the interest generated by the #SpreadNoHate initiative, UNAOC is currently working to identify a country in the MENA region to host its fifth #SpreadNoHate symposium in 2017. Following this MENA symposium, UNAOC will draft a full report that will include key findings and concrete recommendations on promoting positive narratives towards migrants and refugees in the media.

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