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POLICY INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY

Religious Leaders Discuss Peacebuilding in the Middle East

UNHQ, 18 July 2017 - In line with the commitment of UNAOC to the promotion of interfaith dialogue, UNAOC brought together leaders of faith-based communities for a lively panel discussion on creating sustainable peace in the Middle East. The panel titled, "The Role of Religious Leaders in Peacebuilding in the Middle East," included leaders representing the three monotheistic religions of the Holy Land—Muslim, Jewish, and Christian.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, applauded the organizers for bringing stakeholders to join forces for peace in the Holy Land and highlighted the role of religious leaders to teach the shared humanistic values of tolerance, understanding, compassion and peace. He also noted "...the two-state solution is the only path to ensure that Palestinians and Israelis realize their national and historic aspirations and live in peace, security and dignity".



On his part, the UNAOC High Representative said at the meeting, "We recognized that peace cannot be attained through endeavors of politicians alone". Adding, "We firmly believe that Religion is not the source of the problem. On the contrary, religion can be part of the solution [...] Religious leaders can and should play a role in peacebuilding in the Middle East."

Within their respective mandates, religious leaders agreed to garner support for the Alicante process from more religious leaders in the

Holy Land and beyond. In addition, UNAOC and the Government of Spain confirmed their plan to evolve the Alicante Process by conducting a series of capacity-building workshops for religious leaders.

This panel served as a follow-up to the November 2016 Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East, held in Alicante, Spain – an initiative facilitated by the Spanish Government and sponsored by UNAOC. [...]

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The Summit resulted in the adoption of the Alicante Declaration, which aims to promote the contribution of civil society to peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Social media users helped cover the event using #Religions4Peace as the primary hashtag, generating a total reach of 8.3 million plus 12.4 million impressions on Twitter. The hashtag was the second top trending topic in New York.

Currently, a standing committee, formed on the basis of the commitments outlined in the Alicante Declaration, is providing guidance for religious leaders. Two institutions – The Mosaica Center (Religious Peace Initiative) based in West Jerusalem, and Adam Center for Interreligious and Intercultural



Dialogue, that operates in east Jerusalem, Kafer Qassem, Ramallah, Gaza and Cairo, – serve as institutional partners for the standing committee.

Since 2013, UNAOC has organized more than 30 events with and for religious leaders, creating a global platform for dialogue among those actors.

For more information and to watch the full event, visit:
unaoc.org/2017/07/the-role-of-religious-leaders-in-peacebuilding-in-the-middle-east

UNAOC Celebrates the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

On 22 May, UNAOC participated in the observance of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, established by the General Assembly Resolution 57/249 of 20 December 2002. Ms. Hanifa Mezoui, PhD, Senior Advisor, delivered remarks on behalf of the UNAOC High Representative, highlighting the linkage between peace and development and the importance to recognize the great assets of diversity. She reaffirmed that diversity of civilizations and cultures is a basic feature of human society and a driving force of human progress. In this spirit, UNAOC promotes diversity, mutual understanding and



tolerance on the projects and policy levels, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and based on the guiding principles of the 2006 UNAOC High-Level Group Report. The example of the UNAOC successful project on Hate Speech was provided in view of the fact that the UNAOC's mission is to

deconstruct negative stereotypes in order to raise the barriers that divide people and promote cultural diversity. As 2017 is the year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, panelists emphasized that sustainable tourism can be better achieved when there are sufficient preconditions on the national level.

UNAOC Co-organizes 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue (WFID)



UNAOC co-organized and co-sponsored the 4th WFID on “Advancing Intercultural Dialogue: New Venues for Peace, Security and Sustainable Development”, which took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 4-6 May. Government officials from 50 countries including Heads of States, senior representatives of the United Nations, and representatives of civil society organizations participated in several sessions focusing on how to use inclusive dialogue. UNAOC organized a plenary session and two break-out sessions.

The Plenary Session was themed “Promoting Dialogue and Building Bridges as a Tool to Preventing Violent Extremism”. The focus of the session evolved around the four notions of intercultural dialogue, human security, peace and sustainable development are intertwined and inseparable. The 1st Break-out session was titled: “Inclusive Dialogue in an Age of Polarization: How to Make it Work?” Panelists

highlighted how nurturing dialogue inclusive of all the community sectors is key to building peaceful, just and sustainable societies. The 2nd Break-out session focused on “Promoting Innovative Approaches to Foster Intercultural Dialogue”. The session offered an opportunity to present concrete examples of projects aimed at strengthening intercultural dialogue around the world.

Furthermore, the Forum featured the publication “Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa,” which is co-authored by UNAOC.

During the opening, the UNAOC High Representative, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, emphasized the need to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He also delivered remarks at the 2nd Plenary Session on “Intercultural Dialogue, Food Security and Commu-

nity Resilience: Essential Elements in Achieving Sustainable Development and Peace”, where he noted the importance of having a conversation on food security, considering that there are 1.4 million children at risk of dying from famine and 20 million people on the verge of starvation in Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and Nigeria. The High Representative recalled that during the Sixth UNAOC Global Forum in Bali, Indonesia (2014), FAO and UNAOC co-organized a side event on diversity in food production. The event explored the role that food production systems play in supporting diversity within societies around the world. FAO and UNAOC signed a Memorandum of Understanding in order to increase public awareness on how food systems are a bridge for commercial and cultural exchange between cultures.

UNAOC Joined the International Executive Model OIC Summit 2017

On 11 May, in the margins of the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games and 4th WFID, UNAOC took part in the International Executive Model OIC Summit. The Summit aimed at fostering inclusive and diverse societies by providing a platform for discussion and building partnerships with communities and civil society.

In his remarks at the Summit, the High Representative emphasized the need to empower youth as the primary agents of change, “not just in the future, but in our present”. In this regard, UNAOC provides meaningful alternatives to young people who are often the targets of extremist groups. The High Repre-

sentative highlighted UNAOC programmes that built around this principle, namely, the Youth Solidarity Fund and the Fellowship Program. Through such programmes, young men and women learn to accept their differences and understand how much they can gain from cooperating with one another.

UNAOC Participated in the Conference on Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East

On 24 May, the UNAOC High Representative represented UNAOC at the Madrid Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain as a follow-up on previous conferences, held in Spain and in France, where the Paris Action Plan was adopted (2015). In his remarks, the High Representative recalled that the Paris Action Plan encourages participants to carry out concrete measures responding to the needs of the population at risk. He highlighted the UNAOC mission to strengthen dialogue between people from different cultures and religions and reaffirmed that such dialogue constituted a tool to prevent and fight radicalization,



violent extremism and terrorism. UNAOC works in line with the United Nations Secretary-General's vision of seeing conflict prevention as the key approach, and carries its projects in the four areas of action accordingly. Mr. Al-Nasser reiterated the UNAOC commitment to expand its areas of action and to empower

civil society through a wide range of partnerships on the ground with grassroots organizations, faith-based leaders, youth, media experts, academia and the business community, as per the Secretary-General's vision on prevention.

UNAOC Promotes Building Inclusive Societies at the Lisbon Forum



The Lisbon Forum on “Interconnecting People: Managing Migration, Avoiding Populism, Building Inclusive Societies and Reinforcing North-South Dialogue” was held in Portugal on 1-2 June. The UNAOC High

Representative delivered remarks at the session on “Building Inclusive Societies”, highlighting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and specifically Goal 16 calling to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for

sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. UNAOC engages in projects and programmes that advance the goals of countering radicalization and polarization. The work of UNAOC programme alumni towards creating inclusive societies demonstrates the benefits of UNAOC training, capacity building activities, intercultural exchange, educational programming, and follow up initiatives.

UNAOC High Representative Marked the World Day for Cultural Diversity

On 9 June, the UNAOC High Representative participated in the celebration of the World Day for Cultural Diversity, organized by the Institute for Multicultural Communications and Development (IF-MC-CA-DI), which enjoys partnership with UNAOC since

2013. Mr. Al-Nasser noted that we all are one human family with a rich array of peoples, cultures, religions, beliefs, ethnicities and customs. He reminded of common aspirations for food and shelter, safety and above all, love of families and the basic desire to live in peace within a community.

This is why the celebration of diversity is so important. The High Representative acknowledged the active work of IF-MC-CA-DI in the field of cinema and television, aiming to bridge divides in New York City and elsewhere.

UNAOC Organized Side Event on “Fostering Migrant Integration Through Innovative Civil Society Actions” at GFMD

UNAOC organized a side event on “Fostering Migrant Integration Through Innovative Civil Society Actions,” in collaboration with BMW Group and the Government of Canada, as part of the 10th Summit Meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) at Germany’s Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, 28-30 June. The side event showcased the work of civil society organizations that have contributed to migrant integration.

Selected recipients of the Intercultural Innovation Award included Welcoming America, Give Something Back to Berlin, and SINGA



Deutschland. They presented their activities with migrant communities and focused on lessons learned and recommendations. With Germany and Morocco as current GFMD co-chairs, the Summit included remarks by the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, Mrs. Louise Arbour; Mr. William Lacy Swing, Director-General of the International Organization for Migration; and Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

More than 700 policymakers and practitioners from 140 states, in-

ternational organizations, civil society, and the private sector attended the Summit. Discussions focused on the theme “Towards a Global Social Contract on Migration and Development,” and on balancing the best interests of migrants and their countries of origin, transit and destination, within the goal of safe, dignified, and well-managed migration.

Outcomes of the GFMD Summit will feed into the ongoing process of forging a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, a framework for effective migration governance to be adopted by the United Nations in 2018.



UNAOC attended the 4th Istanbul Mediation Conference on “Surge in Diplomacy, Action in Mediation”

On June 30, the UNAOC High Representative took part in the Istanbul Conference, reiterating the vision of the United Nations Secretary-General concerning mediation as an essential diplomatic soft power tool. A coordinated action between the fields of development, peace, security and human rights are required from the international community. Mr. Al-Nasser underlined the im-

portance of mediators, who could be involved in the capacity-building of parties engaged in negotiations (Mediation Support Unit in the Department of Political Affairs at the UNHQs serves as an example). UNAOC, through its efforts to build bridges between identity groups, actively works to provide a more conducive environment for effective mediation. It fights against intoler-



ance, xenophobia and ethnic hatred, countering issues that contribute to tensions and instability. UNAOC is contributing to the effort to prevent conflicts and combat violent extremism.

UNAOC Celebrated International Youth Day

The official commemorative event to celebrate an International Youth Day took place at the UNHQs in New York on 11 August. The theme for 2017 was “Youth Building Peace”, with the organizer being UN-DESA in collaboration with the Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding within the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. UNAOC is an active contributor to the working group and took part in organizing the event. UNAOC’s programmes were well-represented, with videos from the PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival being shown to welcome the audience. Based on his experience

as a UNAOC Fellow, Mr. Mohsin Mohi Ud Din shared his current venture on activating storytellers from refugee communities in the MENA region to broaden awareness.

In the context of the International Youth Day, UN Women convened an event on the topic of peacebuilding for and by young women. Ms. Saba Ismail, co-founder of Aware Girls and 2017 recipient of the UNAOC Youth Solidarity Fund was invited to speak. She credited UNAOC with helping her organization implement the Security Council Resolution 2250 on the ground in Pakistan.



The International Youth Day is officially recognized on 12 August every year. During 11-12 August 2017, UNAOC maintained a strong social media presence, showcasing the organization’s large network of youth beneficiaries.

UNAOC Collaborates with UNESCO’s Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development on Youth-Led Guide on PVE through Education

UNESCO’s Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEF) invited UNAOC to support their effort to develop a youth-led guide on Prevention of Violent Extremism Through Education. MGIEF has been

working with a small group of young authors who are currently drafting the guide, which is scheduled to be launched during the UNESCO’s General Conference in Paris, France (30 October-14 November 2017). UNAOC is part of the guide’s

advisory board and is reviewing the content to ensure that it is of the highest quality. Also, UNAOC has reached out to its extensive youth and alumni networks to collect their testimonies and to include them in the guide.

PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

UNAOC Attended the 3rd Global Conference of Media Education and Digital Competence



Mr. Jordi Torrent, UNAOC's Project Manager for Media and Information Literacy initiatives, delivered a keynote speech during the opening panel of the Third Global Conference of Media Education and Digital Competence celebrated in Segovia, Spain (15-17 June). The opening panel included, among others, Ms. Clara

Isabel Luquero de Nicolas, the mayor of Segovia; Mr. Jose Luis Blanco, Director General of Evaluation and Cooperation of Spain's Ministry of Education; and Mr. Daniel Miguel San Juan, President of the University of Valladolid in Segovia. During his remarks, Mr. Torrent stressed that UNAOC's interest in Media

Education is within the framework of peace building and the development of the much wider framework that represents the Sustainable Development Goals. UNAOC understands Media Education as part of Peace Education; as another educational strategy to infuse global citizenship and civic education within the general school curricula. During the conference, UNAOC presented its PEACEapp initiative - a series of workshops, where young refugees and youth from the host countries work together developing video games, thereby enhancing participants' digital literacy skills while providing at the same time an opportunity for face-to-face intercultural dialogue experience.

For more information about MIL, please visit the following: unaoc.org/media-information-literacy.

Intercultural Innovation Award Demonstrated a Continued Growth in Applications Received

The Intercultural Innovation Award opened its call for applications from 12 April until 5 June 2017. During that period, 1,356 applications were received, representing a 36% growth rate from the number of applications received for the last edition of the Award. Organizations applied from 130 countries, increasing from 120 countries. The Intercultural Innovation Award has seen a continuous growth in

applications since the award had been established, demonstrating the programme's expanding global reach. Applications are currently being reviewed by an international jury composed of scholars and practitioners, representing Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, MENA and North America regions. Awardees are being chosen through a rigorous selection

process that is guided by the principles of fairness, transparency and integrity. Four editions of the Intercultural Innovation Award have occurred since the programme's establishment with 41 awardees to date. For the fifth edition of the Award, recipients will be announced at an Awards Ceremony, which will take place on 29 November 2017 at the UNHQs in New York.

Intercultural Innovation Award Recipients Continue to Receive Support Through Online Webinars

Recipients of the Intercultural Innovation Award take part in a one-year support programme that consists of funding, training and capacity building, customized support and mentoring, as well as membership to Intercultural Leaders. The Intercultural Leaders is a unique community of change-makers from around the world, who are working in the field of intercultural dialogue.

An additional method of providing support was tested with recipients of the fourth edition of the Award. A we-

binar on practical social media strategies was held on 10 July, preceded by a webinar on donor networking, conducted in December 2016. Trainees have been chosen as experts in their respective fields. In addition to the webinar, all awardees were given the opportunity to have two hours of individualized one-on-one coaching from the trainers. Feedback on this method of providing support has been very positive. Reports created by the webinar software have demonstrated strong engagement during the webinars themselves. Awardees

THE INTERCULTURAL INNOVATION AWARD

A partnership between
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations & BMW Group

have expressed their appreciation in being able to obtain customized mentoring from experts. The success of this support model means that it will continue to be implemented for future recipients of the Intercultural Innovation Award.

UNAOC Revitalized Intercultural Leaders Platform to Enhance Alumni Engagement and Visibility of Their Work



UNAOC has recently unveiled a new and improved Intercultural Leaders platform to revitalize engagement with its alumni. Intercultural Leaders has been created in partnership with the BMW Group to provide an exclusive skills and knowledge-sharing platform to its alumni. By strengthening civil society capacities, Intercultural Leaders also enhances UNAOC's role as a convener, catalyst, and thought leader.

Initially designed as a private network in 2014, the needs of users

have evolved significantly, and in response, UNAOC devised a strategy to restructure the platform. It has enhanced Intercultural Leaders to provide both public and private components where alumni can now highlight their achievements by featuring their profiles and sharing their success stories. In addition, the platform aims to boost their collaboration by exchanging knowledge and expertise in their respective areas of focus.

More alumni of UNAOC pro-

grammes are expected to participate in the community, including those from the Fellowship Programme, Intercultural Innovation Award, PLURAL+, Young Peacebuilders and Youth Solidarity Fund, among others. With these improvements, Intercultural Leaders is evolving into a robust network of like-minded organizations and individuals with a common goal of achieving a more diverse and inclusive world through intercultural dialogue. More information is available at: www.interculturalleaders.org

PLURAL+ 2017 Received 320 Entries from 67 Countries Across the World

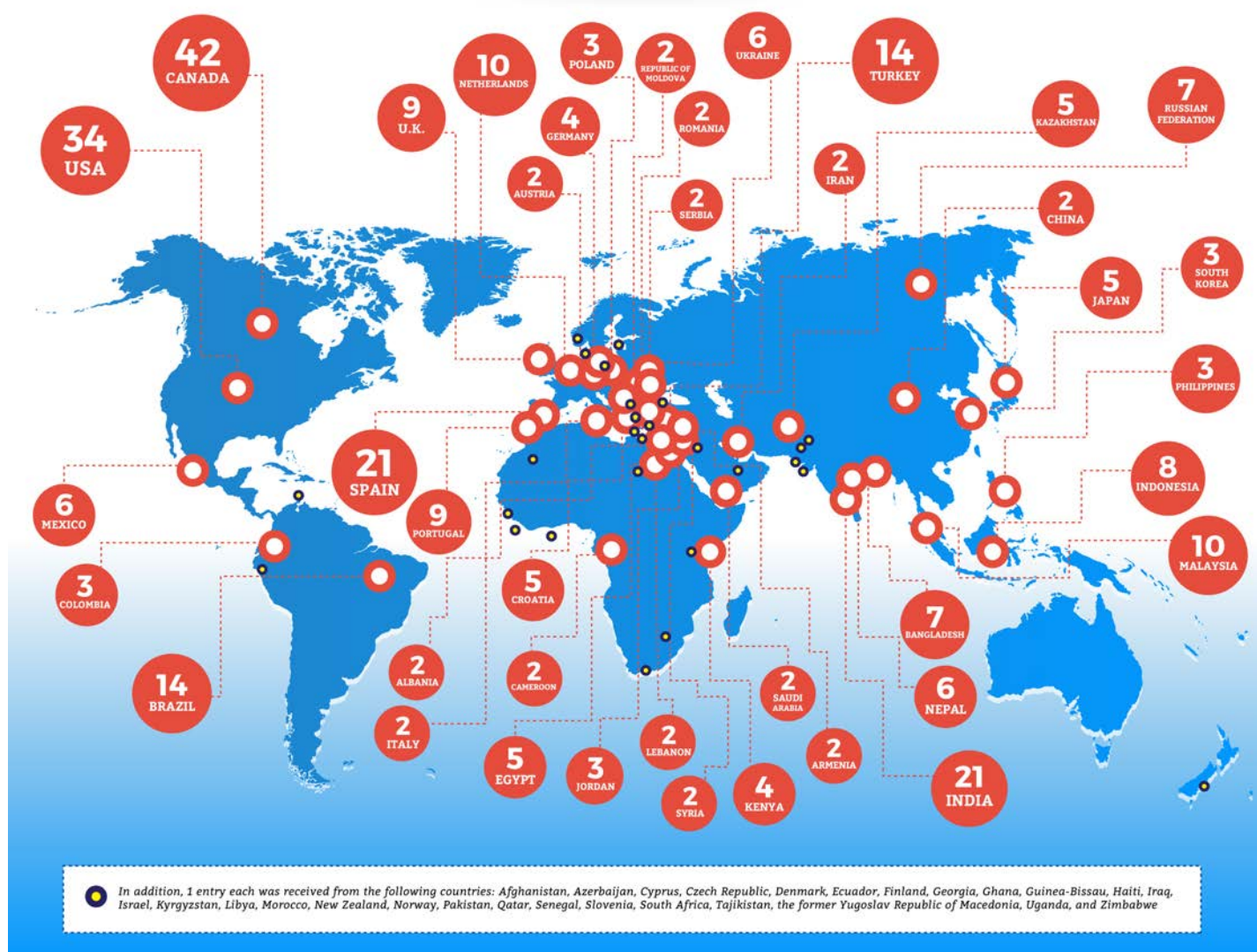
This year PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival on Migration, Diversity and Social Inclusion, a joint initiative of UNAOC and IOM, received 320 video entries from around the world. Award winning videos will be screened and celebrated at the PLURAL+ 2017 Awards and Festival events on 9 November at the UNHQs and on 10 November 2017 at the Paley Center for Media

in New York. PLURAL+ as a platform of distribution continues to grow, to which several new partners joined this year, selecting videos for awards and supporting PLURAL+ video screenings in multi-media platforms. Some of the new partners include the TOGETHER campaign, the United for Peace Film Festival (Japan) and Reza Visual Academy. In 2017, for the first time in the history of the

Festival, UNAOC and IOM will also select a video for a Special Award on the Prevention of Xenophobia. The three international jury Award winners and the Prevention of Xenophobia Award winners will be invited to New York to receive their awards and discuss videos with the audience of those events. For more information, please view: pluralplus.unaoc.org

PLURAL+ 2017 ENTRIES

In 2017, PLURAL+ received 320 video entries from 67 countries



24 Young Leaders Will Participate in the UNAOC Fellowship Programme 2017



UNAOC has selected 24 Fellows who will participate in the 2017 edition of the Fellowship Programme. Coming from 20 different countries in the MENA region, Europe and North America, the 2017 Fellows are all professionally involved in the fields of media and civil society. Besides their professional achievements, Fellows have also been selected for their strong interest in intercultural

dialogue and for their motivation in developing cross-cultural collaboration with peers from different backgrounds. During a trip to the United States, Germany, France, Spain, Morocco, Egypt and Qatar, these young professionals will meet with local stakeholders to discuss the 2017 theme of the Fellowship “The Role of Media and Civil Society in Com-

batting Hatred and Fostering Inclusion”. At the end of the programme, participants will write collective final reports on specific issues related to the theme. Using knowledge gained during the trip, Fellows will share observations and recommendations on the role journalists and civil society workers can play in fighting hatred and promoting inclusive societies.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UNAOC High Representative Accepted Honorary Doctorate at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

On 8 May in Almaty, the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and Mr. Galym Mutanov, Rector of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue to ensure human development and progress, peaceful coexistence, harmony and interaction among people of different backgrounds. Following the

signature, Mr. Al-Nasser was awarded by Al-Farabi Kazakh National University the title of “Honorary Doctor” in recognition of his outstanding activity in scientific and intellectual development.



UNAOC Signs an MOU with the MFA of the People's Republic of China



On 14 May, the UNAOC High Representative and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UNAOC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. The MOU aims to strengthen cooperation and promote dialogue and communication among civilizations under the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st century Economic Maritime Silk Road" initiatives. The signature of the Memorandum

took place during the "Diversity week", which highlights the UNAOC commitment to promote diversity and to build an inclusive world and a community of shared future for mankind. In this regards, the article 1 of the MOU affirms that the parties believe that the Belt and Road initiative provides an important platform for "boosting regional and international dialogues and communication among civilizations, which contributes to maintaining the diversity

of world civilizations". At The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (14-15 May), the High Representative also participated in the session titled "People-to-People Connectivity". The panel discussion aimed at giving a momentum to the people-to-people bonds in partner countries with the aim of promoting mutual understanding and achieving common prosperity for all.

UNAOC signs an MOU with the Constantinian Order of Saint George

On 30 May, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Constantinian Order of Saint George and the Royal Order of Francis I, represented by H.R.H. Prince Charles of Bourbon Two Sicilies, Duke of Castro, and UNAOC, represented by the High Representative, was signed in Monaco. The MOU declared a joint commitment to improve relations between peoples of different cultures, religions and traditions, and promote mutual understanding

and respect. Eminent personalities, figures of the diplomatic corps and dignitaries of the United Nations were present at the ceremony. Following the signature of the MOU, the High Representative was awarded the title of Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Francis I in recognition of the important role that he has played for his country and for the United Nations, for peace and security, sustainable development and South cooperation.





OPPORTUNITIES AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS

October 2017

PEACEapp video games and digital literacy workshop will take place in Tangiers, Morocco, on 2-7 October.

Fellowship Programme 2017 timeline:

- 01 October – 18 October: MENA Fellows travel to the USA, Germany, France, Spain;
- 15 October – 01 November: EUNA Fellows travel to Spain, Morocco, Egypt and Qatar.

November 2017

The 2017 Awards Ceremony of the **PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival** on Migration, Diversity, Social Inclusion, Against Xenophobia will be celebrated on 9 November at the UN Headquarters and 10 November at the Paley Media Center in New York.

The 2017 **Intercultural Innovation Award Ceremony** will take place on 29 November at the Delegates Dining Room, UN Headquarters, New York.

December 2017

#SpreadNoHate Symposium in the MENA region

UNAOC is currently in the planning phase of a fifth Symposium as part of its #SpreadNoHate Series, to engage global media in a dialogue on hate speech against migrants and refugees, and the sharing of best practices to combat it. This fifth Symposium will take place in Cairo, Egypt, on 13 December.

Fellowship Alumni event

Under Fellowship programme 2017, on 6 December, sixteen alumni will convene in New York at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations, to present recommendations on the role of media and civil society in fostering peace.

On December 9, UNAOC, together with Fundacion ONUART and UN office, will convene **The Human Rights Concert** at Palais des Nations, United Nations headquarters, Geneva.

Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF) Capacity Building Workshop

YSF capacity building workshop for 7 recipients of the 2017 edition will convene in Istanbul, Turkey, on 10-16 December. Recipients will work with alumni and trainers, as well as conduct youth dialogue exchanges with the Turkic Council network of young leaders and activists.

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