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POLICY INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY

Summit of Religious Leaders in Alicante: “Religious Leaders: A Powerful Tool for Peace in the Middle East”

UNAOC sponsored the “Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East” organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain in Alicante on 15-16 November 2016. The initiative was launched to engage religious leaders representing the three Abrahamic faiths, particularly from the Palestinian territories and Israel, in interreligious dialogues in support of tolerance.



UNAOC High Representative, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser and the Spanish Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ignacio Ybanez inaugu-

rated the Summit at Casa Mediterraneo. In his opening remarks, the High Representative stated: (...)

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Meeting with His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain in Madrid

The High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz

Al-Nasser met with His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain on 17 January 2017 at Palacio de El Pardo in Madrid.



During the meeting, Mr. Al-Nasser extended his thanks to His Majesty and the Government of Spain for their political and financial support of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) since its inception. He also briefed King Felipe VI on the most recent work and activities of the Alliance. King Felipe VI and Mr. Al Nasser noted that pro-

moting tolerance, understanding, diversity and respect of the other is now more important than ever to achieve peace and security.

The meeting comes on the margins of a royal reception hosted by King Felipe VI for the dignitaries participating at UNWTO Official Opening of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development on January 18th. The Governments of Spain and Turkey are co-sponsors of UNAOC.



“Religious communities, leaders and people of faith have a special responsibility to confront hostility towards the “other” with tolerance, love and understanding” setting the tone for the panel discussion.

Twenty religious leaders, who participated in the panel discussion on “the responsibility of religious leaders in peace-building in the Middle

East”, discussed how to use inclusive dialogue to foster peace, build trust and mutual respect between people of all faiths.

Following two days of discussions, the Summit concluded with the adoption of the Declaration of Spain Summit for Religious Peace in the Middle East, through which religious leaders from the three faiths com-

mitted to increase their efforts in promoting a life of peaceful co-existence based on justice and safety amongst their communities, and called for the end of misrepresentation and distortion of the “other’s” image.

The Foreign Affairs Minister of Spain, Mr. Alfonso Dastis Quecedo, commended the religious leaders for the success of the Summit and assured the Spanish Government's commitment towards supporting this initiative. For his part, the High Representative concluded: “at a time when there is so much division and hatred, religious leaders with great influence can do a lot to promote universal values of tolerance, respect of the other and reconciliation.”

Global Dialogues Conference in Argentina: Is peaceful co-existence possible in age of polarization?

That was the question that participants tried to respond to at the conference organized by the Ministry of Culture of Argentina in Buenos Aires in October 2017. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations was represented by the Chief-of-Cabinet, Ms. Nihal Saad who highlighted in her intervention the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a tool for peaceful co-existence and development. Participants in the two-day conference which was held at Casa Rosada, agreed that our world is becoming multi-cultural and multi-religious every day bringing diversity to our societies. Such



diversity should be embraced as a source of richness rather than a threat. Hence, societies should be

open to learning from the “others” who are different through patterns of dialogue.

UNAOC and the Turkic Council co-organize an international conference on “The Role of Youth in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Holistic Approaches, from Education to De-radicalization” in Istanbul

UNAOC and the Turkic Council co-organized an international conference on “The Role of Youth in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Holistic Approaches, from Education to De-radicalization” in Istanbul on 20-21 October 2016. The Conference built on the provisions of UN SC Resolution 2250 (2015) recognizing the critical role young people play in building peace and the UN Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) served as a platform for young leaders to exchange experience and knowledge on PVE as well as countering violent extremism (CVE) and to build South-South and Triangular partnerships. In this context, UNAOC organized a panel discussion on the role of youth in preventing violent extremism through education.



Among the participants, Ministers, UN representatives, government officials, experts from international organizations including OSCE, representatives of NGOs and academicians,

as well as 200 young leaders coming from more than 30 countries discussed ways and means of strengthening the role of youth in P/CVE. UNDP, UN Office for South-South

Cooperation and International Center for Sport Security were among the partners of the Conference supported by the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). The outcomes of the Conference were presented at the Turkic Council Summit of Heads of States, themed “Youth and Sports” held on 18 November 2016 in Bishkek.

UNAOC High representative participates in the Conference on “Freedom for Religion or Belief: Promoting peaceful coexistence through Human Rights”

UNAOC took part in the Conference “Freedom of Religion or Belief: promoting peaceful coexistence through human rights” held in Rome on 8 November 2016, and co-organized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) and the International Development Law Organization (IDLO). During his remarks, the High Representative highlighted the power of religion to unify people of different cultures and recalled the resolution on the “Promotion of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace” adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 2015. Mr. Al-Nasser stressed the



responsibility of the International Community in promoting and ensuring the compliance of international law.

The conference served as an opportunity for IDLO to launch its report on “Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Law: current dilemmas and lessons learned”. The report, which

is the result of a project funded by the MAECI’s Directorate for Development Cooperation, is IDLO’s contribution to the international debate on the principles of religious tolerance and equality, bedrock of freedom of religion or belief in different national legal orders.

Concert in Geneva: UNAOC celebrates Human Rights Day with Music

UNAOC High Representative inaugurated with Mr. Miguel Moratinos, President of ONUART Foundation a concert marking Human Rights Day at the Alliance of Civilizations & Human Rights Chamber at the UN office in Geneva. The musical performance was conducted by Maestro Daniel Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. The orchestra was designated last year by the UNSG as a Global Advocate for Cultural Understanding.



In 2014, the first concert for Peace and Human Rights was held in the same room. The success of the first concert led to the staging of a second one in 2015 dedicated for the Understanding of Civilizations and Human Rights. The ONUART Foundation and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations have much in common. Both our organizations

have the conviction that art is a vehicle for the promotion of peaceful dialogue between cultures and societies. We believe that art inspires tolerance and understanding between people and cultures. All forms of arts and specially music can build bridges between people

who cannot understand each other languages, cannot speak to each other, come from different religious and ethnic backgrounds but can come close together because of the emotional impact that music has outside of the world of words.

First ever Global Business and Interfaith Peace Awards

UNAOC joined the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation as well as the Business for Peace Association in the first ever Global Business and Interfaith Peace Awards on 6 September 2016, the day before the start of the 2016 Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony, in Rio de Janeiro.

Gold, Silver and Bronze medals were awarded to recipients selected by a jury of high-level experts including UNAOC High Representative, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. The jury honored the awardees' commitment to interfaith for their contributions

to the UN Sustainable Development Goal on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16).

In his remarks, delivered by Dr. Hanifa Mezoui, UNAOC Senior Advisor on Humanitarian Affairs and Civil Society, the High Representative welcomed the President of Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, Mr. Brian Grim's collaboration with UNAOC and Global Compact in implementing SDG 17 on Partnerships for the Goals. The High Repre-



sentative stressed that, along with the four core pillars of the UNAOC, sport is a foundation of peace that has the power to promote education, understanding and respect across cultures.

UNAOC Participates in 9th Summit of the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) in Dhaka, Bangladesh

As an official observer of the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD), UNAOC participated in Roundtable 2.1 on “Migration, diversity, and harmonious society” at the 9th GFMD Summit held in Dhaka (Bangladesh) on 10-12 December 2016. Chaired by Morocco and Greece, the panel included speakers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, the UN Human Security Unit, the UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMIDI), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Through out the discussions, UNAOC promoted its



#SpreadNoHate initiative, a global platform enabling media experts, journalists and other stakeholders to explore ways to combat hate speech

against migrants and refugees in the media, and to promote positive narratives.

UNAOC takes part in the UNESCO-Quebec International Conference on Internet and Youth Radicalization

UNAOC participated in the International Conference on “Internet and the Radicalization of Youth: Preventing, Acting and Living Together” organized by UNESCO in partnership with the Government of Quebec and with the support of the Government of Canada. Held from 30 October to 1 November 2016, the Conference brought together researchers, ex-

perts, civil society representatives, the private sector, and Governments representatives to identify collaborative projects at the national and international level to prevent youth radicalization leading to violent extremism.

UNAOC participated in the panel discussion on “Hate Speech, Extrem-

ist Propaganda, Freedom of Expression, Internet and Media” during which the #SpreadNoHate initiative was showcased. The panel included representatives from UNESCO, the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF), the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI) and the Council of Europe.

The Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM) 2016 Conference in Macau

The Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM) held a conference on “the Multiple Modernities-Vision for Common Progress” on 4 November 2016. The event was convened to determine the way Good Society, Good Governance and Human Security could enable us to discover commonalities or differences that define plural modernities.

On behalf of the High Representative, Dr. Hanifa Mezoui participated as a speaker in the session on “The Good Society and Multiple Modernities”, explaining how UNAOC contributes to building inclusive societies in close partnership with civil society, representatives of communities, religious leaders, the private sector, academia and institutions.



PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

#SpreadNoHate Symposium in Brussels with the EU



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 (EU) jointly organized a one-day Symposium to address “Hate Speech against Migrants and Refugees in the Media” under

the framework of the UNAOC #SpreadNoHate initiative.

The EU/UNAOC #SpreadNoHate symposium took place in Brussels (Belgium) on 26 January 2017, and gathered over 100 participants from the media sector, civil society, international organizations, and tech companies such as Facebook and Google. 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, and Mr. David Kaye, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

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 U.S.

The Symposium resulted in a set of recommendations formulated by the participants. A policy report, including key findings and recommendations on promoting positive narratives towards migrants and refugees in the media will be issued and circulated shortly.



UNAOC holds the pilot edition of its Young Peacebuilders programme in West Africa, increasing the organization's programming in Africa



UNAOC “Young Peacebuilders in West Africa” workshop took place in Abuja (Nigeria) from 20 to 26 November 2016. It brought together 20 inspiring young leaders aged 18-

25 years old who are in the beginning stages of their peacebuilding practice. Implemented in collaboration with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), the

programme aims to increase young people’s knowledge about peacebuilding.

UNAOC organizes side event on xenophobia during UN General Assembly

In the framework of UNAOC #SpreadNoHate initiative and in the margins of the 71st session of the UN General Assembly, the Alliance organized a 4th Symposium on “Combating xenophobic language in the media and fostering inclusive integration of migrants and refugees” on 15 September 2016 at the UN Headquarters in New York. The side event was co-sponsored by the European Union (EU), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Malta to the United Nations.

In line with the UN global initiative against racism and xenophobia “Together: respect, safety and dignity



for all,” the side event provided a platform for discussions in preparation of the UNGA High Level Summit on refugees and migrants held on 19 September 2016. It served as an opportunity for media experts, UN Officials, and NGOs representatives to address hate speech towards migrants and refugees in the media

and come up with concrete recommendations to provide positive narratives. Over 120 people, including Governments and civil society representatives, attended the side event. The discussion was also broadcast live on UN Web TV and reached close to 500,000 people globally online with the hashtag #SpreadNoHate.

The 2016 Fellowship Program takes participants across seven countries to discuss the role of education in the prevention of radicalization and xenophobia

For the 2016 edition of the Fellowship Program, UNAOC Fellows traveled to the United States, Germany, France, Spain, Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar, where they met with a wide range of local actors from international institutions to grassroots organizations. Besides focusing on fostering intercultural collaboration between the West and the Arab World, the Fellowship Program also gave specific attention to education and its role in preventing radicalization and xenophobia.



After their trip, Fellows wrote final reports on issues related to these themes basing their conclusions on knowledge acquired during their Fellowship Program. In their reports, they addressed crucial topics such as the link between unemployment,

social marginalization and radicalization, as well as the development of alternative narratives to prevent youth radicalization. This exercise was also a useful way to assess the insights gained by Fellows through their experience. Prior and after the Pro-

gram, UNAOC conducted surveys among the Fellows to measure its impact on them. The results showed a very encouraging evolution of their perceptions and confirmed the influence of the Program in deconstructing stereotypes.

UNAOC and the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations organize a Fellowship Alumni Event on Preventing radicalization and xenophobia through education at grassroots level

UNAOC and the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations invited 15 Fellowship Alumni from Europe, North America, the Middle East, and North Africa to share recommendations on the prevention of radicalization and xenophobia, as well as good practices at grassroots level through education on 15 December 2016. The recommendations that were shared strongly coincide with the objectives of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) and of UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015).

During the event, Alumni focused on the role of education in promoting diversity, tolerance, and intercultural understanding. Through their experience, they explained how it enabled children to develop a sense of community. They also discussed current challenges and emerging practices on PVE in the media, recommending partnerships between teachers, civil society and decision-makers in order to promote peaceful coexistence within and between communities.



PLURAL+: the Youth video festival continues to expand

The successful PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival, a UNAOC project in partnership with the International Organization of Migration (IOM), continues to grow with increasing global distribution during 2016. Over the last three months, PLURAL+ award winning videos have been screened in several locations around the world as part of IOM's Global Migrant Film Festival.

In partnership with the Royal Film Commission of Jordan and IOM Office in Jordan, the Alliance organized a screening of PLURAL+ award winning videos at Amman's Rainbow Theater in October 2016. The participation of young Syrian refugee girls, who traveled from the Zaatari Refugee Camp and Irbid to screen and discuss their videos with the audience, was of particular significance. An enthusiastic audience welcomed the videos and



engaged in insightful discussions after the screening.

In addition, the Hamptons International Film Festival invited PLURAL+ award winning young

media makers to showcase their videos for the second year in a row. This event served as another opportunity for these young filmmakers to expand their professional networks.

UNAOC organizes a capacity-building workshop for Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF) recipients

A capacity-building workshop for UNAOC Youth Solidarity Fund recipients was held at the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, from 24 to 28 October 2016. The diverse group of participants from Asia and Africa represented the organizations that received funding under the 2015-2016 edition of the Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF).



Over the course of one week, they completed modules on organizational development, monitoring and

evaluation, gender mainstreaming, fundraising and communicating about results. The modules were designed to stimulate reflection on

each of the projects from different angles and to think of each organization's sustainability.

PEACEapp: Syrian refugee girls in Jordan producing their own narratives

UNAOC is supporting the media arts organization “Another Kind of Girl Collective” with the implementation of workshops on media production engaging young Syrian refugee girls in Jordan. Two workshops are currently being developed: one at Zaatari Refugee Camp, and the second one designed for urban refugee girls with the support of the Rescue Committee’s Women Center in Irbid.

For the participating girls, the experience of narrating their worlds through video production and digital photography transforms the foreign environment of the refugee camp



and their urban communities into a new field for exploration, self-discovery, self-expression, and empowerment. Each individual girl is encouraged to follow the personal and artistic voice that she is discovering, and experiment the different artistic and narrative approaches to digital

storytelling.

“Another Kind of Girl Collective” workshops in Jordan have resulted in a series of short videos showcased at many international festivals including Sundance, Cannes, South by Southwest (SXSW) and PLURAL+.

Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Middle East and North Africa

UNAOC, UNESCO, and the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (NORDICOM), with the support of the Jordan Media Institute, presented the publication “Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa” in Amman on October. It served as an opportunity to explore the state of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the MENA region. The book was prepared by experts from 10 countries of the region and published both in English and Arabic. It constitutes a resource for policy makers and



educators from the region, and a real tool for the development of critical thinking, including about preventing violent extremism. The

book can be downloaded in both languages at UNAOC-UNESCO MIL clearinghouse: milunesco.unaoc.org

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UNAOC holds its annual Ministerial Group of Friends meeting in the margins of the 71st session of the UN General Assembly on 23 September 2016

Under the theme “Countering Xenophobia Through Fostering Inclusive Dialogue”, the discussions were built on the outcome of the high-level summit on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants and served as an opportunity to explore the best means to foster inclusive dialogue to prevent and counter xenophobia.

The High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, chaired the meeting in which the UNSG, President of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly and the Foreign



Ministers of Spain and Turkey the cosponsors of UNAOC participated. The meeting was open to civil society representatives, media,

UNAOC partners, as well Member States that are not members of the Group of Friends.

UNAOC participates in the UN High-Level Summit to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants

The United Nations General Assembly hosted a high-level summit to address large movements of refugees and migrants on 19 September 2016 at United Nations Headquarters, with the aim of bringing countries together behind a more humane and coordinated approach. For the first time, the General Assembly called for a summit at the Heads of State and Government level in order to develop a stronger international response through two Global Compacts on refugees and migrants.



UNAOC was actively involved in the Summit's discussions and preparations, including the communication campaign. The Alliance also participated in round

table 4 on “Global Compact for responsibility sharing for refugees and respect for international law”.



OPPORTUNITIES AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS

February 2017

UNAOC's Media and Information Literacy program and United Nations Academic Impact's "Unlearning Intolerance" program organized an event entitled "Media and Information Literacy: Educational Strategies for the Prevention of Violent Extremism", as part of UNAI's "Prevention Forum" discussion series. The event was also an occasion for the presentation of the most recent UNAOC-UNESCO-NORDICOM publication "Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa".

March 2017

UNAOC will launch its report on "#SpreadNoHate: Hate Speech against Migrants and Refugees in the Media", a symposium co-organized with the European Union (EU) in Brussels last 26 January 2017. The report will include a set of key findings and recommendations on promoting positive narratives towards migrants and refugees in the media.

April 2017

The next UNAOC Group of Friends Meeting, ambassadors level, will take place on April 2017 at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

More details about the forthcoming meeting will be published on UNAOC's website.

May 2017

UNAOC is participating in the 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue: "Advancing Intercultural Dialogue: New Avenues for Human Security, Peace and Sustainable Development" in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue will focus primarily on the role of faith, religions, migration, human security, sport, education, art, sustainable development, violent extremism, business in building trust and cooperation among cultures and civilizations

June 2017

The deadline for submission of entries for the 2017 edition of the PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival on Migration, Diversity, and Social Inclusion is June 4, 2017. The PLURAL+ Awards Ceremony is scheduled for fall 2017 in New York.

A joint initiative of UNAOC and IOM, PLURAL+ is a youth-produced video festival which encourages young people to explore migration, diversity and social inclusion, and to share their creative vision with the world. For more information, visit pluralplus.unaoc.org.

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Secretariat

730 Third Avenue, 20th Floor
New York, New York 10017

Phone: +1-929-274-6217

Fax: +1-929-274-6233

Email: contactaoc@unops.org

www.unaoc.org

@UNAOC |
 facebook.com/unaoc.org