



[www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org)

 [UNAOC](https://twitter.com/UNAOC)  [fb.com/unaoc.org](https://fb.com/unaoc.org)  [UNAOC](https://www.instagram.com/UNAOC)

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations  
FF Building, 304 E 45th St, 14th Floor,  
New York, New York 10017  
 Phone: +1-212-963-7209  
 Email: [contactaoc@unops.org](mailto:contactaoc@unops.org)

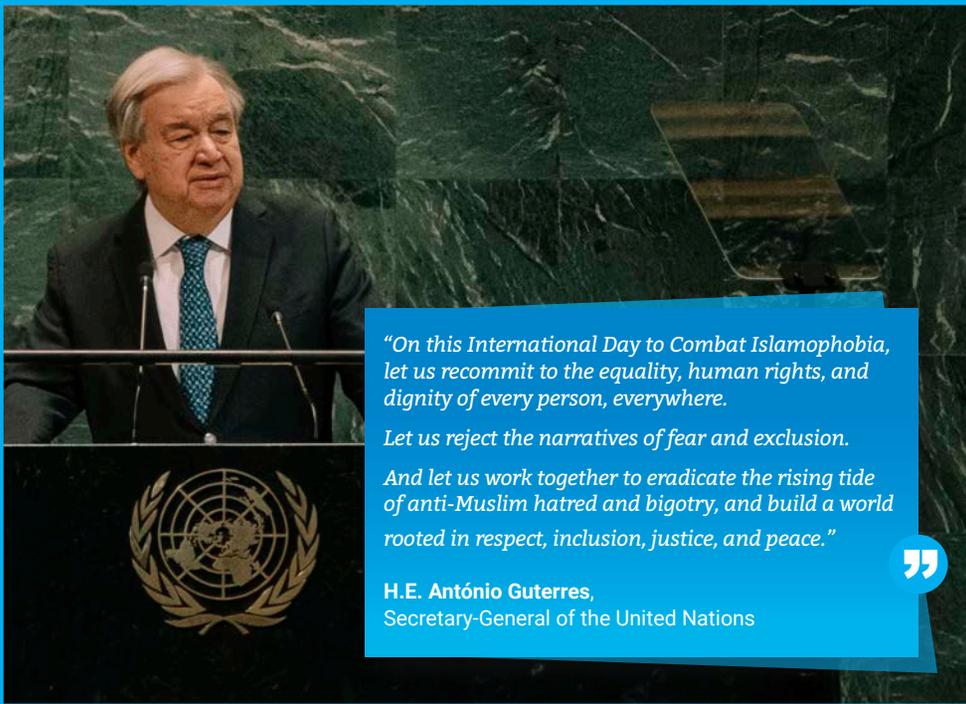


On 16 March 2026, the international community gathered at the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York for the **5th Commemorative Event of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia**, organized jointly by the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** and the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)**.

The high-level event was opened by **H.E. Mr. Ahmet Yildiz**, Permanent Representative of Türkiye to the UN and Chair of the OIC Group; followed by interventions from **H.E. Ms. Annalena Baerbock**, President of the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly; **H.E. Mr. António Guterres**, Secretary-General of the UN; **H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos**, High Representative for UNAOC and UN Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia; and **H.E. Mr. Hameed Opeloyeru**, Permanent Observer of OIC to the UN, who delivered a statement on behalf of **H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha**, Secretary-General of OIC.

The commemoration concluded with closing remarks by **H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad**, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations and Chair of the Core Group on Islamophobia, following interventions by Member States and Observers.

In his remarks, Mr. Moratinos emphasized that the International Day is more than a symbolic observance. "It is a reminder of our shared responsibility to stand firmly against hatred, discrimination, and exclusion in all their forms," he said. "Silence in the face of intolerance is not neutrality. It is complicity. Let us therefore renew—together—our commitment to a world where people of all faiths and backgrounds can live in dignity, security, and mutual respect." (16 March)



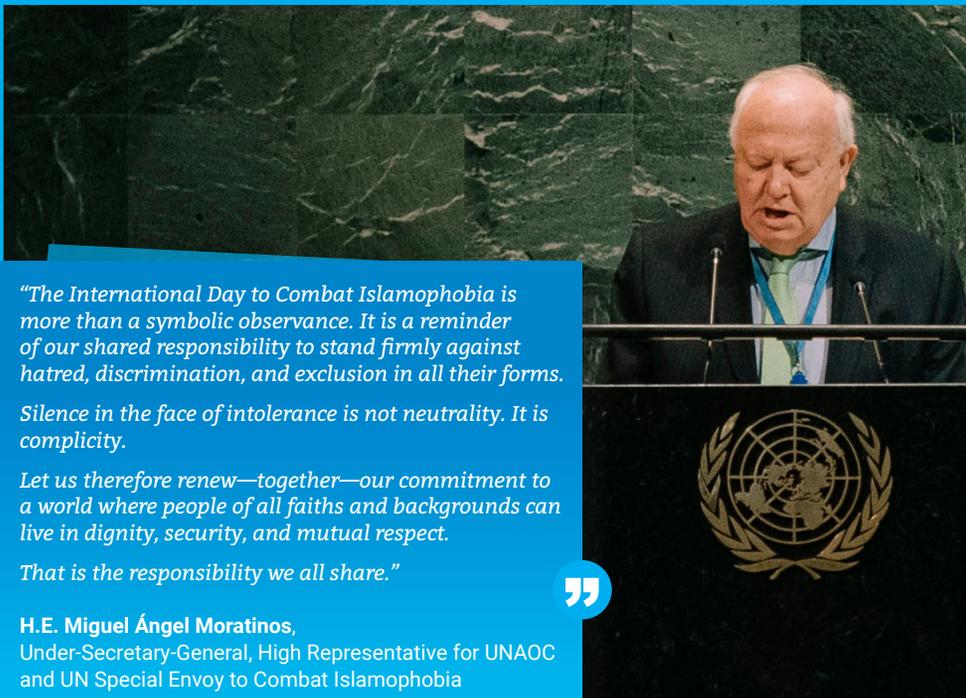
*“On this International Day to Combat Islamophobia, let us recommit to the equality, human rights, and dignity of every person, everywhere.*

*Let us reject the narratives of fear and exclusion.*

*And let us work together to eradicate the rising tide of anti-Muslim hatred and bigotry, and build a world rooted in respect, inclusion, justice, and peace.”*



**H.E. António Guterres,**  
Secretary-General of the United Nations



*“The International Day to Combat Islamophobia is more than a symbolic observance. It is a reminder of our shared responsibility to stand firmly against hatred, discrimination, and exclusion in all their forms.*

*Silence in the face of intolerance is not neutrality. It is complicity.*

*Let us therefore renew—together—our commitment to a world where people of all faiths and backgrounds can live in dignity, security, and mutual respect.*

*That is the responsibility we all share.”*



**H.E. Miguel Ángel Moratinos,**  
Under-Secretary-General, High Representative for UNAOC and UN Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia



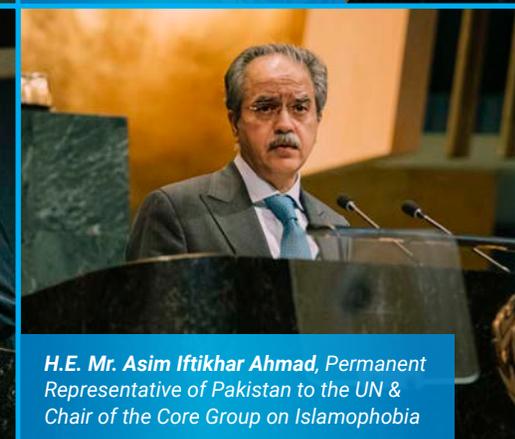
**H.E. Mr. Ahmet Yildiz,** Permanent Representative of Türkiye to the UN and Chair of the OIC Group



**H.E. Ms. Annalena Baerbock,** President of the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly



**H.E. Mr. Hameed Opeyoye,** Permanent Observer of OIC to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad,** Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN & Chair of the Core Group on Islamophobia

## 5th Commemorative Event of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia (continued)

The high-level opening of the 5th Commemorative Event of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia was followed by interventions from Member States and Observers:



**H.E. Mr. Edil Baisalov**, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic



**H.E. Rt. Hon. Rukia Nakadema Isanga**, Third Deputy Prime Minister & Minister without Portfolio of Uganda



**H.E. Mr. Issa Konfourou**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mali to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Ihab Moustafa Awad Moustafa**, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Nabil Ammar**, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Walid Obeidat**, Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Tareq M. A. M. Albanai**, Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury**, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Lukman Abdullaheem Al Faily**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to the UN



**H.E. Mr. James Martin Larsen**, Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Harish Parvathaneni**, Permanent Representative of India to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Jaime Hermida Castillo**, Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz**, Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Amir Saeid Irvani**, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Abdulaziz M. Alwasil**, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Tofiq Musayev**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN



**H.E. Ms. Pengiran Hairani Pengiran Haji Tajuddin**, Permanent Representative of Brunei Darussalam to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Ahmad Faisal Muhamad**, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the UN



**H.E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia**, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale**, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN



**H.E. Mrs. Hedda Samson**, Ambassador, Deputy Head of Delegation of the European Union to the UN



**Mr. Mohammed Khalifa H. Alnasr**, First Secretary, Deputy Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN



**H.E. Mr. Sun Lei**, Deputy Permanent Representative of People's Republic of China to the UN



**H.E. Ms. Maria Zabolotskaya**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN



**H.E. Ms. Nancy Abdulla Jamal Abdulla**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the UN



**Mrs. Bola Asaju**, Minister, Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the UN



**Ms. Fatema Yousuf Ibrahim Mohammad**, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the UN



**Mr. Adnane Salem Amar**, First Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the UN

## From Norms to Action: Addressing Islamophobia and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief – The Nexus to Human Rights



Marking the **International Day to Combat Islamophobia**, the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)**, in partnership with the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**, convened a high-level side event to provide a balanced and inclusive platform for dialogue among Member States, the United Nations system, and non-state stakeholders, grounded in existing international human rights norms and standards. The event was held at the United Nations ECOSOC Chamber in New York.

The Opening Segment featured remarks by **H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos**, High Representative for the UNAOC and UN Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia; **H.E. Mr. Ahmet Yıldız**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Türkiye to the UN; **H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad**, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN; and **H.E. Mr. Mehmet Paçacı**, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the OIC on Combating Islamophobia. The event concluded with closing remarks by USG Moratinos and **H.E. Mr. Hameed Opeloyeru**, Permanent Observer of OIC to the UN.

Following the Opening Segment, two panel discussions brought together prestigious panellists and experts to explore the following timely themes: “Striking the Balance: Freedom of Expression and the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred”, and “From Policy to Practice: Deep Dive into Existing Institutional Frameworks and National Strategies Addressing Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, Including Islamophobia and anti-Muslim Hatred”. (16 March)



## From Norms to Action: Addressing Islamophobia and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief – The Nexus to Human Rights (continued)



The first thematic panel at the UNAOC-OIC high-level event marking the International Day to Combat Islamophobia focused on “**Striking a Balance: Freedom of Expression and the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred**”.

Distinguished speakers included **H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN; **Mr. Maher Nasser**, Director of the Outreach Division, United Nations Department of Global Communications; **Mr. Ignacio García Lumbreras**, Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations; and **Ms. Simona Cruciani**, Political Affairs Officer and Head of Programmes at the UN Office on the Prevention of Genocide. The session was moderated by **Ms. Hanaa Bouchikhi**, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN.

As emphasized by Ambassador Hilale in his remarks, "The persistence of Islamophobia around the world is not only an attack on Muslims; it is a challenge to our shared humanity. When prejudice becomes normalized, the moral balance that protects us all begins to erode."



The discussions continued with a thematic panel titled, “**From Policy to Practice: Deep Dive into Existing Institutional Frameworks and National Strategies Addressing Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, Including Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hatred**”.

Global experts who shared their insights included **Mr. Rio Hada**, Chief of Section, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York; **Ms. Irene Kitsou-Milonas**, Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe (COE) on antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of religious intolerance; **H.E. Ms. Evren Dağdelen Akgün**, Personal Representative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims; **H.E. Mr. Christian Kamill**, Special Envoy for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden; **Mr. Aftab Malik**, Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia of Australia. **Ms. Nihal Saad**, Director of UNAOC, moderated the session.

Panellists highlighted national experiences, institutional responses, and multilateral cooperation in tackling Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. The discussion underscored the importance of translating international commitments into concrete action to advance inclusion, protect human rights, and foster mutual respect and understanding worldwide.

# From Norms to Action: Addressing Islamophobia and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief – The Nexus to Human Rights (continued)

The thematic discussions were followed by interventions from Member States and Observers:



*H.E. Mr. Abdulaziz M. Alwasil,  
Permanent Representative of the  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the UN*



*H.E. Mr. James Martin Larsen,  
Permanent Representative of Australia  
to the UN*



*H.E. Mr. Tofiq Musayev, Permanent Rep-  
resentative of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
to the UN*



*H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Olabi, Permanent Rep-  
resentative of the Syrian Arab Republic  
to the UN*



*Mr. Faisal GH A. T. M. Alenezi, Deputy  
Permanent Representative of the State  
of Kuwait to the UN*



*Mr. Mohammed Khalifa H. Alnasr, First  
Secretary, Deputy Permanent Representa-  
tive of the State of Qatar to the UN*



*Mr. Azamat Kairoida, Minister Counsellor,  
Deputy Permanent Representative of  
Kazakhstan to the UN*



*Mr. Yassine Salah, Counsellor,  
Deputy Permanent Representative of  
Tunisia to the UN*



*Mrs. Bhavika Mangalanandan, First  
Secretary, Permanent Mission of India  
to the UN*



*H.E. Mr. Qazi Shaukat Fareed,  
Permanent Observer for the  
Parliamentary Assembly  
of the Mediterranean to the UN*



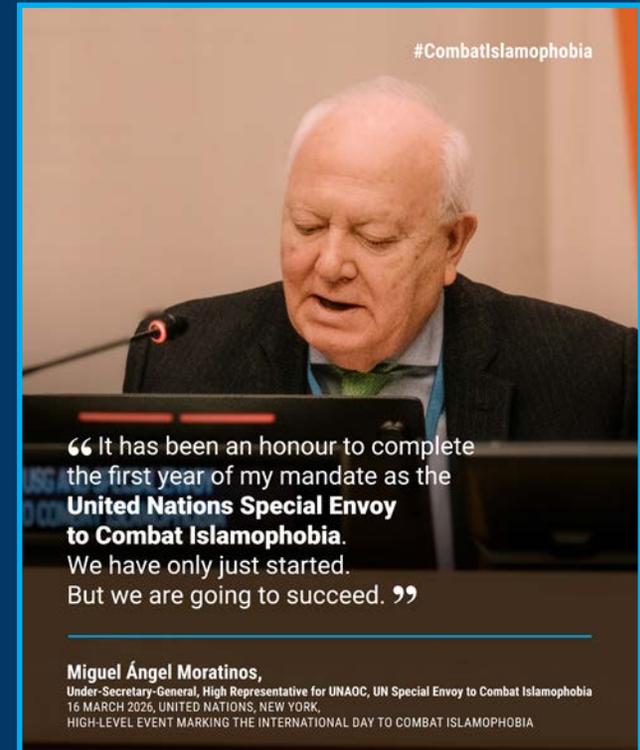
*Ms. Patricia Ann Torsney,  
Permanent Observer for the  
Inter-Parliamentary Union to  
the UN*



*Mr. Licinio Antonio Tilman  
Miranda Branco, Counsellor,  
Permanent Mission of Timor-  
Leste to the UN*



*Mrs. Laeba Khan, Senior  
Policy Analyst at Global  
Affairs Canada*



Concluding the high-level event titled **"From Nexus to Action: Addressing Islamophobia Based on Religion or Belief – the Nexus to Human Rights"**, Under-Secretary-General Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative for UNAOC and UN Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, reflected on a full day of dialogue, reflection, and renewed commitment to action.



## Official Opening Ceremony

The High Representative for UNAOC participated in the **XIII Global Baku Forum**, organized by the **Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC)**, in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Addressing the high-level Opening Ceremony alongside **H.E. Ilham Aliyev**, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as NGIC Co-Chairs **H.E. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga**, former President of Latvia, and **H.E. Ismail Serageldin**, former Vice President of the World Bank, among other distinguished speakers, the High Representative emphasized the urgent need to strengthen dialogue and multilateral cooperation at a time of mounting geopolitical tensions and overlapping global crises.

“It is not the idea of multilateralism that has failed us. It is our collective inability – or unwillingness – to empower and modernize it,” he said. “We face a deficit not of structure, but of solidarity and political solidarity. We need a reinvigorated multilateralism – one that is inclusive, representative, and effective. One that is anchored not in power politics, but in shared principles and mutual accountability.”

“Humanity still has a choice. But choosing wisely requires the courage to return to dialogue, negotiation, and the rule of law. Only diplomacy—patient, principled, and persistent—can steer us away from the abyss,” he concluded. (12 March)



## Side Event

USG Moratinos took part in a side event focused on the Middle East held in the framework of the **XIII Global Baku Forum**, organized by the Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC).

The High Representative joined a prestigious panel of prominent leaders, including: **H.E. Mr. Werner Fasslabend**, Former Minister of Defense of Austria and President of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy; **H.E. Mr. Amre Moussa**, Former Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt; **Mr. Mohammed Amersi**, Chairman of the Amersi Foundation; **Ms. Tulia Ackson**, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; and **Mr. William F. Wechsler**, Senior Director of the Rafik Hariri Center and Middle East Programs at the Atlantic Council. The discussion was moderated by **H.E. Mr. Zlatko Lagumdžija**, Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UN and former Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (14 March)



On the margins of the **XIII Global Baku Forum** in Baku, Azerbaijan, Under-Secretary-General Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative for UNAOC and UN Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, held high-level meetings with:



**H.E. Mr. Nazir Ceyhun Bayramov**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan



**H.E. Mr. Adil Karimli**, Minister of Culture of Azerbaijan



**Mr. Mukhtar Babayev**, Representative of the President of Azerbaijan for Climate Issues and President of COP29



**Mr. Ramin Mammadov**, Chairman of the State Committee on Affairs with Religious Associations in Azerbaijan



While in Baku, Mr. Moratinos attended an Iftar hosted by **His Virtue Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh**, Chairman of the Caucasus Muslims Board.

Also present were high-level guests that included, among others: **H.E. Boris Tadić**, Former President of Serbia; **H.E. Ivo Josipović**, Former President of Croatia; **H.E. Vladimir Norov**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan; **H.E. Sameh Shoukry**, Former Foreign Minister of Egypt; **Dr. Akkan Suver**, President of the Marmara Group Foundation; and **Mr. Sezgin Bilgiç**, Secretary General of the Marmara Group Foundation. (12 March)

## HIGHLIGHTS



In a conversation hosted by **UNAOC** and the **UN Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect (UNOSAPG)**, **Mr. Alex Ryvchin**, Co-CEO of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, discussed his insights on how hate speech and extremist rhetoric can escalate into violence, key lessons learned on prevention, and practical strategies to counter antisemitism and extremist narratives.

Held at the United Nations in New York and attended by UN staff, representatives of Member States, and Jewish organizations, the event was organized by UNAOC and UNOSAPG as part of the implementation of the **UN Action Plan to Enhance Monitoring and Response to antisemitism**, and the **UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech**. (3 March)



**Ms. Nihal Saad**, Director of UNAOC, participated in the **Director-level Steering Committee Meeting** organized in the framework of the **United Nations Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets**, held at the United Nations in New York. The Global Programme is implemented jointly by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), in consultation with INTERPOL. It seeks to strengthen Member States' capacity to prevent, protect, mitigate, investigate, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks against vulnerable targets at the national, regional, and global levels. (17 March)



In a video message, **USG Moratinos** emphasized the urgent need for dialogue at the **First Forum Against Hate**, organized in Madrid by Spain's Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration. The high-level event, inaugurated by **Spanish Prime Minister H.E. Mr. Pedro Sánchez**, brought together senior representatives of major social media platforms, national and international experts, civil society leaders, and media figures to discuss current measures to moderate online content, combat hate speech targeting vulnerable communities, and leverage AI tools to safeguard democracy and human dignity. The forum concluded with closing remarks by **H.E. Ms. Elma Saiz**, Minister of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration. (11 March)

## HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS

The High Representative and UN Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, Under-Secretary-General Miguel Ángel Moratinos, held productive discussions with the following officials and partners at the UNAOC Office in New York:



A delegation from the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)**, led by its Chair, **Ms. Vicky Hartzle**, and Vice Chair, **Mr. Asif Mahmood**, with Commissioners **Mr. Mohamed Elsanousi**, **Ms. Rachel Laser**, and **Mr. Stephen Schneck**. (18 March)



A delegation from Angola, led by **H.E. Mr. Dionisio da Fonseca**, Minister of State and Chief of the Civil House of the President of the Angolan Republic, accompanied by **H.E. Mr. Francisco Jose da Cruz**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Angola to the UN, to discuss preparations for the upcoming "Call for Peace" event to be held in Luanda, Angola, in June. (23 March)



**Mr. Aftab Malik**, Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia. (18 March)



**H.E. Ms. Katalin Bogyay**, President of the UN Association of Hungary, Former Permanent Representative of Hungary to the UN. (23 March)



**H.E. Mr. Ahmad Faisal Muhamad**, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations. (26 March)



**Mr. Ibrahim Negm**, Senior Advisor to the Grand Mufti of Egypt. (18 March)

## Call for Applications: Intercultural Innovation Hub



The 10th edition of the **Intercultural Innovation Hub (IIH)** is now accepting applications. A partnership between UNAOC and the BMW Group, with the support of Accenture, IIH continues to connect people and cultures, empower non-profit organizations, and elevate and scale up their approaches to tackling complex intercultural challenges through the development and implementation of impactful social innovations. The Intercultural Innovation Hub will select up to 10 projects focused on addressing xenophobia and hate speech; preventing violent extremism; promoting gender equality; using sport, art, and culture as tools to drive social change and foster social inclusion; building inclusive and cohesive communities; and using AI and new technologies at the service of humanity. The deadline to apply is 15 April 2026.

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/about-iih>

Apply online: <https://bit.ly/apply-iih>

# PLURAL+

## Coming soon: 2026 PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival

**Young media makers and content creators:** get ready to tell your story and make your voice heard! Preparations are now underway for the 2026 edition of the **PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival**, inviting youth from around the world to submit original and creative short videos on pressing social issues.

PLURAL+ is a United Nations youth video festival that empowers young people to explore themes such as migration, diversity, and social inclusion, among others. Open to participants up to 25-years-old, the festival offers a unique global platform for young creators to express perspectives, spark conversations, and inspire positive social change.

The 2026 edition will continue to highlight these core themes, while also featuring special categories on cross-cutting issues that encourage meaningful youth engagement. For updates, visit <https://pluralplus.unaoc.org/> or follow #PLURALplus26 on social media.



UNAOC and the **World Karate Federation (WKF)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** to strengthen collaboration in promoting inclusion, respect, and peaceful coexistence through sport. The agreement was signed by H.E. Miguel Ángel Moratinos and **Mr. Antonio Espinós**, WKF President, in Madrid, Spain. Through this partnership, the WKF joins **UNAOC's Sport for #OneHumanity Campaign**, reinforcing its

commitment to leveraging karate's core values – respect, discipline, and equality – to foster social cohesion and mutual understanding. The collaboration will focus on awareness raising, outreach activities, and engagement around international competitions, building on previous collaboration between UNAOC and WKF at the 2023 World Senior Karate Championships in Cairo, Egypt. (9 March)



As part of its monthly capacity-building series, UNAOC held the 32nd workshop of its **Women's Alliance for Peace (WA4P)** initiative, bringing together women leaders and peacebuilders from across Africa. During this session, participants explored conflict resolution mechanisms and conflict management, and reflected on first-hand challenges in mediation, drawing from their respective field experiences. (26 March)



[www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org) @UNAOC

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

FF Building, 304 E 45th St, 14th Floor  
New York, New York 10017

Phone: +1-212-963-7209

Email: [contactaoc@unops.org](mailto:contactaoc@unops.org)

*#OneHumanity*