

NEWS FLASH 📅 May 2020
#OneHumanity amid COVID-19



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*One humanity.
Many cultures.*

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UNAOC, the Office of the Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, hosted their first virtual consultation in response to the UN Secretary-General's appeals for solidarity and unity in regards to the UN Global Pledge for Action.

The closed consultation included representatives of more than **forty (40) faith-based organizations and religious leaders from across the faith spectrum.**

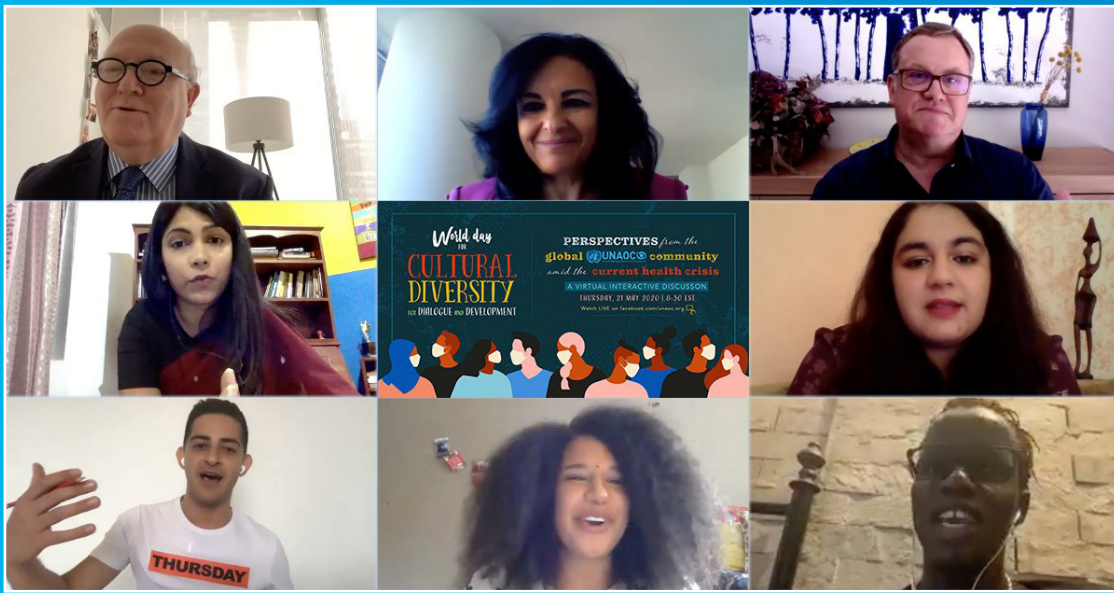
The productive discussions concluded with a set of recommendations on building resilience, solidarity, and inclusion and means of supporting and strengthening the response and recovery plans to the pandemic. Participants touched upon concrete initiatives their institutions have been taking, or are planning to take, that could serve as components of the Global Pledge of Action. The meeting concluded with a minute of silence for the victims of Covid-19. (May 28)

With the participation of the UN Secretary-General and prominent religious leaders, the High-Representative addressed a **virtual High-Level Meeting on the Role of Religious Leaders in Addressing the Multiple Challenges of COVID-19**, organized by the **Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN.**

In his remarks, Mr. Moratinos noted that the pandemic is *"triggering debates among faith communities around religious rights."*

"Passover, Easter, and Ramadan, the three holy occasions which crisscrossed each other in April were marked differently this year in the context of social distancing," he added. (May 12)





Marking the **World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (A/RES/57/249)**, UNAOC invited programmes partners and alumni working in the field of intercultural dialogue to participate in a virtual discussion.

Moderated by UNAOC Chef de Cabinet Ms. Nihal Saad, the panel featured Ms. Afaf Lamkoutar (Morocco), Legal Representative of the Hijra Legal Clinic and UNAOC Young Peacebuilder; Ms. Yamini Ravindran (Sri Lanka), Director for Legal and Advocacy at the Alliance Development Trust, and recipient of the Intercultural Innovation Award, a joint initiative of UNAOC and BMW Group; Ms. Nicole Banister, Founder and Commissioner of My Basketball Team, and UNAOC Fellow; and Author and Reporter Mr. Chaker Khazaal. It also included representatives of the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) and Beach Soccer Worldwide.

Speakers shared experiences and lessons learned amid the pandemic, especially in the context of bridging the gap between various cultures. In his closing remarks, Mr. Moratinos stated, *“Culture is the best antibody for mental health during the Covid-19 crisis.” (May 21)*

The Buddhist Response to COVID19: In Observance of Vesak Day 2020



The High Representative for UNAOC participated in a virtual event on **“The Buddhist Response to COVID-19: In observance of Vesak Day 2020”** to celebrate Lord Buddha’s wisdom and legacy.

In his remarks, Mr. Moratinos said, *“Let us renew our commitment to stand together as One Humanity, show kindness and compassion to the most vulnerable and truly leave no one behind as we face those turbulent and difficult times together.” (May 7)*



UNAOC and **Mujeres Por Africa** co-hosted a virtual meeting with leading African women, members of the **Women’s Alliance for Peace Advisory Council**, to discuss the crucial role of women as peace mediators in religious and cultural-based settings. Mr. Moratinos weighed on the many reasons why women should be included in the decision-making process and around the negotiating table, noting that it is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable peace. He reiterated that **Women As Peace Mediators** is a fifth pillar to UNAOC’s work plan 2019-2023. (May 14)



The High Representative for UNAOC participated in the virtual **Interfaith Ramadan Gathering** organized by the **Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the UN** to mark the holy month of Ramadan.

During this Interfaith Iftar, Mr. Moratinos shared his empathy for the Muslim community in these trying times and reiterated his allegiance in promoting mutual respect and understanding among all people regardless of culture, religion, race, or gender. (May 13)



Mr. Moratinos participated as a keynote speaker in the **Annual Helsinki Virtual Iftar** organized by **Finn Church Aid** and the **Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers**, entitled **“Solidarity, Courage & Fellowship during the time of Covid-19”**. In his remarks, he emphasized the role of religious leaders and faith-based organizations in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic. (May 19)



Mr. Moratinos participated in a virtual concert entitled **“Hope through music and literature”** to reflect on the universal message of the Jewish holiday of Passover. Organized by the Forum for Cultural Diplomacy, the event featured classical music by acclaimed violinist Mr. Renaud Capuçon and readings of literary texts on the theme of Passover by the European Commission Coordinator to fight anti-Semitism, Ms. Katharina von Schnurbein. (May 19)



Convened by UN Under-secretary-General for Counterterrorism (UNOCT) **Mr. Vladimir Voronkov**, Mr. Moratinos participated in the first **2020 Quarterly Briefing of the Global Compact Coordination Committee to Member States**. The High Representative shared his concern on the rise of populist rhetoric. He also announced the launch of UNAOC's **#OneHumanity** website, which features stories of solidarity from the global UNAOC community. (May 21)



The High Representative expressed his warmest wishes to Muslims around the world celebrating Eid-Al-Fitr during a **virtual Eid Celebration** hosted by the **Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi**. (May 23)



The High Representative expressed support for the **“Pray For Humanity”** call made by the **Higher Committee of Human Fraternity**, designating 14 May as a day for fasting, prayers, and supplications for the good of all humanity. *“I wholeheartedly support the call to #PrayForHumanity and will pray for unity and fraternity,”* Mr. Moratinos announced on Twitter. His Holiness, Pope Francis, Head of the Catholic Church, and His Eminence Dr. Ahmed el-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, also welcomed the call. The Prayer for Humanity was also supported by the UN Secretary-General. (May 14)



As a continuation to the capacity-building webinar on “Fundraising in the age of Covid-19: Donor Networking to Build Lasting Relationships”, the recipients of the Intercultural Innovation Award – a joint initiative of UNAOC and BMW Group – had the opportunity to participate in one-on-one coaching sessions with professionals to further their competencies in this area and strengthen their intercultural projects around the world.



UNAOC and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are still accepting video submissions for their joint initiative, the **PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival**. To mark the twelfth anniversary of PLURAL+, UNAOC and IOM created two new award categories: “The Future We Want” Award, which commemorates the 75th anniversary of the UN, and the Award “#forSafeWorship,” which invites young filmmakers to submit videos focusing on interreligious dialogue. This year, the **deadline to submit videos is 19 June**.



UNAOC is currently interviewing top applicants for the 2020 edition of its **Fellowship Programme**. This year, the programme focuses on the theme, “**Building Peace in the Age of New Media.**” The names of the selected candidates from the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and North America will be announced in June.



UNAOC has been featuring stories of solidarity, compassion, and hope amid the health crisis from its global community of programme participants, alumni, and partners worldwide. Their essays, videos, and photos can be found on the **#OneHumanity** microsite of UNAOC at solidarity.unaoc.org.



Statements and comments of the High Representative for UNAOC on the necessity of forging solidarity and unity as well as combating stigma and hate speech amid Covid-19 have been featured in numerous media outlets, including *The New York Times*, *Fox News*, *UN News*, *Le Magazine de l’Afrique*, *El Universal*, *MAP express*, *The Star Tribune*, *Indepth News*, and *Green Report*.