

## WORKSHOP 6:

### Social media: how a new ethics of communication will help to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization

#### **PANELLISTS:**

##### **Omur Orhun,**

Advisor to the Secretary General, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Turkey

##### **Islam Muhammad,**

Advisor, Young Arab Voices, Anna Lindh Foundation, Egypt

##### **Susan Moeller,**

Director, International Center for Media and Public Agenda, University of Maryland, United States

##### **Alfonso Molina,**

Director, Fondazione Mondo Digitale, Italy

#### **MODERATOR:**

##### **Daniela Krautsack,**

Founder of Cows in Jackets, author, speaker, film director and journalist, Austria

The workshop focused on the emerging role of social media and the balance between regulation policies, ethics of communication and freedom of expression. Panellists discussed how, on the one hand, social media can provide platforms for the exercise of free speech while, on the other hand, it may also facilitate practices that could incite violent confrontations. They asked: what should we do if the possibilities of social media are misused? Is censorship the answer?

The panel agreed that censorship was not a valid answer. Direct censorship often exacerbates tensions and confrontations more than providing peaceful ways for better understanding. Several practices were presented as examples for discussion: the UNAOC supported a media research case study on the Park51 Project, also misrepresented as the “Ground Zero Mosque”, which clearly signalled the correlation between social media and main street media; while the “Young Arab Voices” initiative demonstrated how to better integrate in digital platforms dissenting voices that otherwise might develop into deeper polarizations.

The panel also indicated that, in most cases, although hate speech may emerge from social media platforms, traditional media sources (television, radio and print) are the platforms that facilitate its widest dissemination. Emphasis was made that social media providers should not censor speech that might be insulting to others but instead promote educational campaigns and mechanisms for collective examination of their respective social media content. This would in turn favour collective ethical participation and work to isolate material promoting intolerance and negative stereotyping.

The panellists also highlighted the necessity to implement fully UNHRC resolution 16/18, which clearly criminalizes hate speech. It was agreed that educational efforts, from governments and from social media industries, should be a main component to isolate and inoculate possible hate speech aiming at creating polarization between individuals of different religions or cultures.