



UNAOC Strategic Review and Plan

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1. UNAOC's Strategic Review and Plan identifies in broad terms the concepts that should define future planning for UNAOC. It was conducted at the instruction of the High Representative and in coordination with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General from March 2013 to June 2013. Crucially, the review included consultations with stakeholders (internal and external to the organization); its recommendations are informed by the views gleaned during these consultations.
2. UNAOC's first years have been characterized by the development of strong relationships with Member States and a growing list of partners. A series of National Plans and Regional Plans served to validate commitments to the values promoted by UNAOC. Project activity focused on the four core areas identified by the High-level Group (Youth, Education, Media, and Migration). While these areas of focus remain critical, a slight course correction is required to ensure long-term relevance for UNAOC.
3. The future of the Alliance must be characterized by consolidation and coherence. The organization will be re-organized to ensure that individual projects will be relevant to the agenda of the Alliance as well as the priorities of the UN Secretary-General. The High Representative's interest in using intercultural and

interreligious approaches to contribute to the conflict prevention/reconciliation efforts of the UN as well as advocating for the inclusion of cultural elements in post-2015 Development Planning will also be incorporated into our considerations. Core areas of programming (youth, media, migration, and education) will remain but will be oriented more consistently to address the High Representative's priorities. The reconfigured Alliance will include the following units:

- a. *Policy Coordination Unit.* This unit will ensure that UNAOC programming remains **disciplined**, adhering to the agenda of the Alliance and the UN Secretary-General.
 - b. *Program Coordination Unit.* This unit will oversee all individual projects. All projects will be subject to a **rigorous review process** prior to approval by the High Representative and throughout the project lifecycle.
 - c. *Special Events Unit.* This unit will oversee the planning of the Global Forum, new approaches to the Sports and Entertainment communities, and other ad-hoc events.
4. Due to the challenging fiscal position of UNAOC as reflected in diminishing unrestricted contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund, the reorganization will be undertaken adhering to a Zero Growth policy regarding the core staff. No expansion of staff size is being proposed given the current fiscal position of the Alliance. The expanded use of consultants will be necessary to accomplish a number of the priorities of the High Representative. Enhanced focus, structure, and discipline within the current resource base of the Alliance will be stressed. Best practices in monitoring and evaluation will be strictly enforced across all project and program areas. Finally major improvements in core functions such as fundraising, communications outreach, and governance are also envisaged.

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

Strategic Review and Plan

I. Introduction

1. At the direction of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the UNAOC is, some eight years after its formal establishment, undergoing a strategic review of its activities, goals, and general direction. The following document provides an assessment of the organization's evolution since its founding; it also puts forth recommendations on a course of action that accommodates the organizational vision of High Representative Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for the next 5 years. This strategic review was conducted at the instruction of the High Representative and in coordination with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General from March 2013 to June 2013. Crucially, the review included consultations with stakeholders (internal and external to the organization); its recommendations are informed by the views gleaned during these consultations.

II. Strategic Review and Planning Process

2. The process undertaken to prepare this review and narrative plan centered on an effort to absorb key lessons from past UNAOC activities and receive guidance from an array of institutions and individuals regarding forward leaning activities through a series of stakeholder input efforts.

Desk Review – the full library of documents relating to UNAOC, including the High-level Group Report, Annual Reports of the UNAOC, the statements of the Secretary-General and the High Representative, were considered.

Internal Review – UNAOC staff members were afforded the opportunity to provide input through multiple venues, both in writing, private one-on-one conversations, and a facilitated group discussion.

Group of Friends – members of the Group of Friends were contacted on an individual basis during March-May 2013, as well as through a facilitated group discussion on 29 April 2013. They were joined by a small group of representatives of civil society organizations that had worked with or alongside UNAOC in the past.

Foundations – representatives of several philanthropic foundations were contacted for input.

III. History

3. An Alliance of Civilizations was originally proposed by the former Prime Minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, in a speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2004. Thereafter, the initiative received co-sponsorship from the governments of Spain and Turkey under the leadership of Prime Minister Erdogan. It was launched by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in July 2005.
4. A High-level Group was formed by the Secretary-General to explore the roots of polarization between societies and to recommend a programme of action to address this issue¹.
5. During early meetings of the High-level Group, Secretary-General Kofi Annan outlined his vision for the Alliance of Civilizations, stating that the initiative was “intended to respond to the need for a committed effort by the international community—both at the institutional and civil society levels—to bridge divides and overcome prejudice,” and that it would “aim to address emerging threats emanating from hostile perceptions that foment violence.”
6. At the outset of his first term, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made clear his intention to ensure that his office continues to host and provide direct support to the UNAOC. At a meeting of foreign ministers following UNAOC’s 2008 inaugural forum in Madrid, he said, “Collectively, these projects [of the Alliance of Civilizations] are giving immeasurable boost to conflict prevention – one of my core priorities as Secretary-General.”
7. On 26 April 2007, Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, was appointed High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. As a UN initiative, the Alliance of Civilizations was to have a global scope guided by a universal perspective, while placing a priority on addressing tensions between Western and Muslim societies.
8. The Alliance of Civilizations was not to intrude on existing political channels, nor was it to duplicate efforts of other United Nations agencies and civil society

¹ The Report of the High-level Group, released on 13 November 2006, provides analysis and puts forward recommendations that form the basis for the implementation phase of the Alliance of Civilizations.

actors. Its focus was to improve cross-cultural understanding and relations, and to counter forces that fuel polarization and extremism. Its functions were to be:

- **A bridge builder and convener**, connecting people and organizations devoted to promoting trust and understanding across communities;
 - **A catalyst and facilitator** giving impetus to innovative projects aimed at reducing polarization through mutually beneficial partnerships;
 - **An advocate for building respect** and understanding that would amplify voices of moderation and decrease cultural and religious tensions;
 - **A platform to increase visibility**, enhance the work and highlight the profile of initiatives devoted to building bridges between cultures; and
 - **A resource providing access to information** and materials drawn from successful cooperative initiatives to similar processes or projects.
9. Since inception, UNAOC has become a leading UN platform for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation. It has connected governments, lawmakers², local authorities, civil society organizations, the media, and individuals devoted to promoting understanding across diverse communities. Through resolution 64/14 of 22 December 2009, the United Nations General Assembly expressed its support for the Alliance and acknowledged it as such a platform.
10. President Sampaio established a network of supporters, among Member States, International Organizations and Regional Organizations. These relationships were often strengthened through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)³. Those that have been completed provide the backbone for UNAOC's networks.

² The Alliance previously engaged with the Inter-Parliamentary Union on raising the cross-cultural dialogue agenda with lawmakers in different parts of the world.

³ Agreements and MoUs have been signed with African Union (AU), Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), European Union (EU), Council of Europe (CoE), Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP), Iberoamerican General Secretariat (SEGIB), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Research Center For Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), Latin Union (LU), League of Arab States (LAS), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

11. The UNAOC now has the support of the majority of Member States of the UN and several international organizations in its Group of Friends, which currently has 137 members. It boasts programming in the areas of media, youth, education, and migration. Some programs engage more than one area. The Alliance's current range of activities can be put into three categories: National/Regional Strategies, Programs, and Special Projects and Events.
12. This time of transition provides an opportunity to review the progress of the various project activities of UNAOC. Many have been successful but have reached a point in their lifecycle where a formal pivot towards new activity is warranted⁴.
13. On funding, despite efforts to establish a replenishment mechanism to provide adequate and predictable levels of financial resources for the Voluntary Trust Fund, non-earmarked, core funding continues to trend downward; earmarked, project-based funding, has increased but provides no spending flexibility. Overall revenue grew from approximately US\$ 1.7 million in 2006 to an all-time high of US\$4.6 million in 2011. However, during that same time frame, the percentage of unrestricted funding dropped from approximately 83% to 54%.
14. Overall revenue has dropped off considerably since then. In 2012, overall revenue was approximately US\$2.9 million, of which approximately 50% was unrestricted. For 2013, the figure of pledges made (not all yet received) has been further reduced to approximately US\$2.2 million. The reduction in unrestricted funds results in an inability to plan or think strategically, engage in exploratory efforts to identify new project activities, and leaves UNAOC in a reactive posture dependent on the immediate, sometimes fleeting, interests of individual donors.

National and Regional Strategies

15. National Strategies reflect a commitment by countries to generate an internal process of ownership of the UN Alliance of Civilizations' goals. More, they are a mechanism to exchange lessons learned regarding challenges of cultural diversity, including identity based tensions.
16. To date, 27 Member States have submitted National Strategies. While these remain important expressions of commitment to the principles of the Alliance, they are inconsistent in their application. Some simply detail past achievements; others set aspirational goals; few mention any mechanism for implementation.

⁴ President Sampaio previously indicated his own frustration at gaining traction for UNAOC programming and understood the need to continue pursuing the best available options to engage in impactful programming.

Some contain dated information, with no process in place for annual revisions or updates. Addressing these challenges and grounding the plans in concrete actions is something only Member States can do at their own initiative.

17. The Alliance has also called upon groups of countries facing shared challenges to generate common actions in cooperation with civil society through the creation of Regional Strategies. The first formal initiative along these lines was the adoption of *the Alliance of Civilizations Regional Strategy for South-East Europe* in Sarajevo in December 2009, followed in summer 2010 by the plan of action for its implementation.
18. Regional strategies have continued to gain traction, as growing numbers of Member States express interest in regional coordinating mechanisms. Regional Strategies have now been drafted also for the Mediterranean Region, the Black Sea Region, and Latin America. New strategies are planned for Africa, the Asia Pacific region, the Middle East, and possibly, Central Asia. Interestingly, regional multilateral organizations, such as the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, are taking the lead in their respective areas.⁵
19. Both national and regional strategies retain their importance as evidence of national commitment to the values of the UNAOC; in the case of regional strategies, they represent shared commitments across borders. They are an important part of the legacy of the Alliance's early years. In that regard, UNAOC staff needs to continue to develop cost-efficient ways to track their progress.

Programs

Youth

20. The Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF) provides seed funding to youth-led initiatives that promote long-term constructive relationships between people from diverse backgrounds. Hundreds of thousands of young people have benefitted from this international small grants programme. YSF is now in its third round of grant making and enjoys support from a number of Member States.⁶

⁵ Action Plans have also been drafted that outline potential project activities supporting these strategies including potential civil society implementing partners.

⁶ The Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF) awards grants of USD\$25,000 to youth-led intercultural projects. In Pilot Year 2008/2009, 6 projects were funded at a total of about \$110,000. These 6 projects benefitted, directly and indirectly, 10,000 young people; this represents an investment of about \$10 per person. In Year 2010/2011, 18 projects were funded at a total cost of \$481,100. A total of 141,593 benefitted either participated in these projects or benefitted indirectly, at a \$3.40 per person cost. The current cycle Year 2012/2013 will provide grants to 16 projects at a total cost of \$450,000.

21. The Alliance's Fellowship Programme exposes emerging leaders from North America, Europe and Arab countries to media, culture, politics, institutions, civil society and religion in one another's regions. The programme is currently working on developing an alumni network and plans for increasing engagement across geographical lines. A review of the curriculum will also be taking place to identify ways to increase impact.
22. Other youth oriented project activity has included the Alliance's youth website, which enables users to obtain, post, and exchange information about youth organizations, opportunities, and tools to engage on cross-cultural issues. Another example was the launch of a Global Youth Movement to further mainstream youth representation on cross-cultural issues.

Education

23. The Alliance of Civilizations Summer School brings together young people to build mutual relationships and share experiences. Following earlier summer schools in Portugal and Malta, the UNAOC is currently working with a private sector partner that focuses on international education, Education First to organize its next summer school. This public-private model is worthy of further study.
24. The Alliance of Civilizations Education about Religions and Beliefs Online Learning Community is an aggregation of resources for learning about diverse religions and beliefs. Use of the resource by relevant actors is limited⁷. The Alliance also created a research network of think tanks and universities to engage in research on political issues relevant to the objectives of the Alliance⁸.

Media

25. The Alliance's Media Program focuses on amplifying the role of media in furthering public understanding of cross-cultural issues. The Program engages with journalists, editors and media owners to promote best practices and build skills across the profession, with a specific view toward ensuring ever-improving quality of coverage on sensitive issues with a broad diversity of voices.
26. Global Experts is an online database of nearly 400 experts who provide free analysis to journalists on cross-cultural news stories. It has assumed much of the

⁷ A network of just 18 academic and civil society partners around the world exists to feed content to the site. Many of these are now dormant and do little work on the site, and only agreed to in the first place because of the perceived prestige of engaging with a UN project.

⁸ To date, only 20 members have joined the network. Its dedicated web page focuses on informing visitors of upcoming conferences and research grants opportunities.

role of the original Rapid Response Media Mechanism (RRMM). Web metrics show that the site attracts 500 visitors per week on average. Discussions are underway to determine a better way to focus this resource as it can be an important tool for adding to public understanding.

27. 'Create UNAOC' is a global competition in partnerships with the Learning Games Network and the MIT Education Arcade in search of mobile apps and games that can open new avenues for intercultural dialogue.⁹

28. The Media Program also facilitates trainings of journalists with the aim of also improving cross-cultural reporting. These trainings have been extremely well received; they have resulted in emerging partnerships with the Jordan Media Institute and Google.

Media literacy

29. The Alliance continues to develop its various media literacy initiatives¹⁰, including an online media literacy clearinghouse to provide young people with tools to become discerning and critical media users and producers.

Migration

30. In partnership with the Media Program, the Migration Program has also held a number of trainings for journalists on covering migration.

31. In partnership with IOM, the Alliance has developed PLURAL+, a youth video festival on migration, diversity and social inclusion. Award-winning videos are distributed on DVD, broadcast on television stations and the Internet, and screened at video and film festivals and conferences around the world. In addition, the website "Integration: building inclusive societies" has aimed to provide information on good practices of integration of migrant populations and highlight successful models of integration to counter stereotypes¹¹.

Special Projects and Events

32. The UNAOC's Global Forum is the highest-profile event of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, bringing together civil society, governments, media, the private

⁹ Five winners are awarded \$5,000 each to support the development of their apps/games into full-fledged applications for mobile and tablet devices. This initiative is unique in its use of technology and its engagement of the tech and gaming community on advancing cross-cultural dialogue.

¹⁰ With support from UNESCO and the European Commission, a publication "Mapping Media Education Policies in the World" has been widely distributed.

¹¹ Other sites more comprehensively catalogue substantive best practices in migration and integration, but they are not global in their geographical coverage.

sector, religious leaders and current and potential partners. Forums in the past have been held in Madrid, Spain, Istanbul, Turkey, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Doha, Qatar, and Vienna, Austria. Billed as the premier global event on cross-cultural dialogue, UNAOC's fora generate a lot of interest from governments and civil society. Media coverage from hometown sources is significant.

33. The Intercultural Innovation Award, in partnership with the BMW Group, is given to ten innovative not-for-profit projects¹² around the world that are encouraging dialogue and cooperation across identities on shared challenges. The Award draws widespread attention from civil society around the world, and is seen among UNAOC stakeholders as a model for partnership with the private sector.
34. The Do One Thing for Diversity and Inclusion public relations campaign aims to raise awareness about intercultural dialogue. The annual campaign takes place in the lead up to May 21, World Day for Cultural Diversity.
35. Across all areas, project activity has been generally been successful, and in some cases, ground-breaking. This does not mean that the projects all represent elements of programming that will be of indefinite length or core activities for UNAOC. In some cases, over the past two years, some projects have seen their operational tempo decline.¹³ In other cases, responsibility for project activity has been moved to other organizations.¹⁴ This is a natural occurrence that we should embrace. Without a project management culture where project lifecycles are formally designed, this naturally occurring phenomenon is a realistic way to identify when projects must be evaluated.

IV. SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis

36. A SWOT analysis is a commonly used business tool to align an institution's goals, activities, and capacities to the environment in which it works. In the present

¹² Winners become members of the "World Intercultural Facility for Innovation" (WIFI), and the top five draw one-year of support and consulting from the UNAOC and the BMW Group.

¹³ City-to-city cooperation: The Alliance has previously participated in events involving local governments, municipalities and mayors that focused on multicultural issues. In the last 12 months, little activity has taken place in this area.

¹⁴ Launched in partnership with and using technology from CISCO, Dialogue Café is a videoconferencing network for civil society. Dialogue Cafés are physical spaces that enable civil society organisations to learn, share and collaborate with each other. Dialogue Café spaces currently exist in London, Ramallah, Paris, Northampton, Cleveland, Melbourne, Amsterdam, Rio de Janeiro, Florence, Lisbon, and Wroclaw. Dialogue Café is now an independent initiative on which the UNAOC has little influence or control. In October 2009, Soliya, an international non-profit that uses new media technologies to advance cross-cultural dialogue among young people merged with the Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund, a UNAOC vehicle for producing media content that advanced cross-cultural relations, and became an implementing partner of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

context a review of current programming against previous implementation plans, along with facilitated meetings with internal and external stakeholders, provided references to the considerations identified below.

Strengths

- The UNAOC can be a high level convening power: from its inception, the UNAOC has included high-level political processes that can attract heads of state and foreign ministers to its global fora and other events. The UNAOC forums are considered by many stakeholders as one of the world's premier platforms for intercultural dialogue.
- The UNSG attaches great importance to the Alliance and grants his time, attention and leadership to the UNAOC's events and programmes.
- The UNAOC is a flexible and 'light', a comparatively apolitical initiative in the UN system, where much can be done off-the-record on sensitive issues (as opposed to other UN departments).
- The UNAOC occupies a special position; it is independent of any United Nations agency but has a direct access to the UNSG. As an interface between the UN, civil society, and governments, the Alliance is ideally positioned to work in a bridging capacity among these actors.
- The UNAOC is recognized as one of pioneers in engaging youth in the UN system.
- Despite its small team of 15 professional and administrative staff and a great volume of work to be done, the staff are very passionate and engaged, possessing knowledge base in specific fields of the UNAOC's operation.

Weaknesses

- The initiative's mandate is considered to be too broad for the Member States to understand. Many stakeholders note that the Alliance has a pro-European focus, whereas few activities are done in Asia and in Africa, compared to other regions.
- There is limited mapping of the field of cross-cultural tensions and conflict prevention and how the UNAOC fits within it, particularly as it relates to other official or unofficial actors in the field. This is necessary to identify

the spaces within which UNAOC's work does not duplicate the effective efforts of others.

- There is no culture of Monitoring and Evaluation in UNAOC programming. This is reflected in little baseline data and research done on substantive issues pertaining to the UNAOC's programme activities. This, in turn, leads to inadequate monitoring and evaluation practices within the team.
- Internal management issues within the UNAOC Secretariat must be addressed.
 - A loosely managed arrangement of personal silos has resulted in weak teamwork, undisciplined planning and implementation. Weak management of the UNAOC activities programmes due to under-staffing and a too ambitious range of activities at a time compromises the quality of work.
 - There is lack of potential substantive policy experience in the staff and many required specialty positions in communications and fundraising have not been authorized.
 - UNAOC staffers receive no training to advance and to increase professional skills and expertise.
- The UNAOC's fiscal position is poor - voluntary nature of its Trust Fund results in inability to have a long-term planning of work. The failure to effectively develop relationships with foundations or the private sector exacerbates this problem. This weakness is sufficiently fundamental that it is addressed separately later in this document.
- There is an insufficient communication flow and no systematic reporting and exchanges between the UNAOC and capitals of the Group of Friends.
- Systematic review process of the UNAOC's activities and consultations with external stakeholders and partners is not done.

Opportunities

- The UNAOC can implement more 'Track 1.5' work in closer coordination with the UN DPA as well as unofficial actors as conflict prevention becomes more central within the UN system. The UNAOC comparatively low-key nature is able to do more quiet, backchannel work.

- The UNAOC increasingly receives interest from the UN Secretariat substantive departments, most recently from Department of Political Affairs, to work on joint projects.
- Building on various past activities, the UNAOC could create a database of best practices and lessons learned identified through the process of developing the National and Regional Plans as a means of guiding replication of good ideas elsewhere.
- The UNAOC can publish more analytical reports or case studies on intercultural or interreligious approaches to conflict prevention. This can serve to give its concepts visibility, positioning the UNAOC as a ‘thought leader’ on the topic within the UN system, partnering with guest authors from DPA, civil society, and academia.
- The UNAOC can become field-driven in the assessment of its priorities and approaches for projects across sectors, through direct engagement with local offices of UNDP, UNESCO, or partner NGO offices in the field.
- The new leadership of the Alliance brings more expansive ideas on substantive areas. The statements issued by the UNAOC High Representative on various ad-hoc and urgent issues can be better utilized. Follow up articles and op-eds prepared by UNAOC leadership or supporters could be useful as well.
- The Alliance can pursue other Member States to join its Group of Friends, increasing outreach and potential funding support.
- The Alliance can contribute to the post-2015 development agenda by advancing cross-cultural issues as an element in the planning process, an element increasingly recognized as an important part of achieving development goals.
- The UNAOC could establish substantive bilateral relations with foundations, the private sector and development agencies that could result in an expansion of its funding base.
- The UNAOC’s activities have many beneficiaries and their potential to bring greater visibility and expansion for the initiative is great. This, in particular, is relevant for the Fellowship, YSF, and award programmes.

Threats

- If UNAOC Forums do not have more substantive discussions and concrete outcomes, high-level presence and support could significantly decrease over time.
- If the UNAOC fails to consolidate its work, and fails to emphasize quality over quantity, it could lose support from Member States.
- If UNAOC does not develop a compelling communications strategy (including greater use of social media) and does not learn to tell its 'story' more effectively, the UNAOC would lose support. In this, it must recognize that intelligent marketing will lead to flexibility in how it accomplishes this task: some will want to see a story told through numbers, others through anecdotes, while others through PowerPoint and videos. The UNAOC must learn to tell its story based on whom it is telling it to.
- If Member States are unable to replenish the Voluntary Trust Fund on a regular basis and the UNAOC does not develop a fundraising strategy to augment Member State support, it will end up in a permanent fiscal crisis. As part of this process, it must thoroughly examine priorities in the foundations and private sectors, as well as governments and international organizations. The continuing global financial crisis makes replenishment of the UNAOC Trust Fund very difficult.
- After the UN leadership changes in a few years (current SG is in his second term), the UNAOC may potentially lose UN leadership's attention and support. The UNAOC's lack of connection to the UN must also be addressed for the same reason.
- Team culture within the organization must be addressed, otherwise, it will fail to deliver and dedicated staff may leave the organization. The chain of command needs to be clear and straightforward.

V. Vision Statement

37. Guided by the principles of the UN Charter, the report of its High Level Group, and the priorities of the Secretary-General, the UN Alliance of Civilizations will, over the next 5 years, work toward a more peaceful, more socially inclusive,

world by building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities, highlighting the will of the world's majority to reject extremism and embrace diversity. UNAOC will seek to operate in situations where it can contribute to broader efforts to ameliorate identity based crises and promote culturally sensitive development policies.

VI. Mission Statement

38. UNAOC is a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General initially proposed and co-sponsored by the Governments of Spain and Turkey. The High-level Group described UNAOC as an entity that would assist in diminishing hostility and promoting harmony among the nations. The Secretary-General has described it as a soft power tool for bridging divides and promoting understanding between countries or identity groups, all with a view toward preventing conflict and promoting social cohesion. UNAOC pursues its objectives through a variety of activities:

- Contacts and dialogues with stakeholders (governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental);
- Development of targeted projects;
- Advocacy, including direct public statements or appearances by the High Representative or UNAOC staff;
- Interventions to defuse religious and cultural tensions by mobilizing groups that can act as forces of moderation and understanding.

39. Project activities will feature the original priority areas for action identified in the High Level Group Report of 2006 (Youth, Education, Media, and Migration). Project development, and all related activities, will be tightly controlled and subject to a rigorous and disciplined process of vetting, implementation, completion and evaluation. Even with regular replenishment of the Voluntary Trust Fund, project-based funding will be sought from Member States, Foundations and private sector sources. Consultation with members of the Group of Friends and other relevant stakeholders will be prioritized and sought on a regular basis.

VII. Priorities of the High Representative

40. The High Representative has, on several occasions since formally assuming office, laid out with clarity his priorities for the Alliance of Civilizations. He has

designated six priorities, both substantive and operational in nature. They include:

- a. Building on previous achievements and moving further to accomplish additional goals in the areas of Youth, education, Media and Migration.
- b. Strengthening partnerships and cooperation in the multilateral system.
- c. Adding complementary concepts and tools to the conflict prevention tool box.
- d. Linking relevant UNAOC project activities to the post 2015 development agenda.
- e. Strengthening the financing and the structure of the Alliance.
- f. Increasing interaction of UNAOC with media, civil society and the business sector.

41. Those priorities must be central to any strategic plan and must be reflected in any organizational structure. The High Representative appreciates the remarkable flexibility and adaptability of UNAOC and will look to retain those qualities. But he also understands that improving the focus and discipline of UNAOC project activity will establish the strong base that will allow even greater freedom of action in the future.

42. The High Representative has been explicit about his plans to operate in situations impacted by tensions based on identity issues¹⁵.

“Under my leadership, the support of Member States and the SG, the Alliance will seek to defuse tensions in communities wherever possible. We will do so by reaching out to religious leaders, grassroots organizations and youth groups. In fact, the Alliance can use mediation as a tool of preventive diplomacy. The UN Secretary General last year said in Istanbul that the Alliance could have an important mediating role in the many conflicts where culture or religion comes to play”.¹⁶

43. He has also made clear that as we approach 2015, increased attention needs to be paid to addressing inequalities as a development problem in and of itself but also as a threat to global security. This commitment mirrors the sentiment of the Secretary-General on receipt of the Report

¹⁵ In this regard, the Alliance will work toward advancing the principles of HRC Resolution 16/18, combating stereotypes, including Islamophobia.

¹⁶ Statement of H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, The UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations on Social Harmony and Religious Identities, Delivered by Ambassador Tariq Al-Ansari, Chief of Cabinet to the High Representative May 1, 2013

of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.¹⁷

“At the United Nations, we believe that security, peace, development and human rights are all principles that are interrelated and affect each other. In that context, the dialogue between diverse cultures is already an integral part of the means to achieve sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals.”¹⁸

44. Additionally, the High Representative has made clear his intention to engage the world of sports and entertainment as a vehicle to promote his efforts in these substantive areas.¹⁹

45. Principles for New Organizational Structure

46. The existing structure of an Office of the High Representative supported by a UN Secretariat will remain in place. The High Representative will be assisted by a Chef de Cabinet and Personal Advisers at his discretion. The UN Secretariat will support the efforts of the High Representative and will be headed by the Director. The Secretariat will include staff to provide both substantive and operational support to the High Representative and engage in the programmatic activities of UNAOC. Pursuant to instructions of the High Representative, these characteristics have been included in a set of operational Guidelines promulgated by the High Representative.

Policy Coherence

47. A Policy Coordination Unit will be established to ensure that this coherence is maintained. The primary areas of expertise for individuals assigned to this unit will be conflict prevention and reconciliation and development planning. The Policy Coordination Unit will be responsible for ensuring coherence between UNAOC activities and broader UN political and policy positions. It will serve as the primary conduit of information regarding policy positions of UN bodies to the

¹⁷ Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the Report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, New York, 30 May 2013

¹⁸ Statement by H. E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser The UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Before The Doha Forum on the Millennium Development Goals, 29 April 2013

¹⁹ “Let me also call the attention of this Forum to the role of sports, arts, music and other forms of collective expressions of human values. These celebrations of humanity noble yearnings can foster the culture of peace, and the Alliance of Civilizations should make every effort to use them to that end.” Statement by H. E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser The UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations At the Fifth Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, Vienna, February 27, 2013

rest of the UNAOC staff. The Unit will be led by a Coordinator assisted one or two staff members depending on the availability of funds.

48. For UNAOC to accomplish its original mission of “building bridges between societies, promoting dialogue and understanding and forging political will to address the world’s imbalances”²⁰ and to meet the challenges identified by the High Representative, it will have to ensure that its efforts are focused and that this focus is faithfully enforced. During conversations with members of the Group of Friends, this requirement was outlined on several occasions. To do that UNAOC will need to ensure that staff members have a higher level of political and international relations expertise than currently on hand²¹.

i. Dialogue Processes

UNAOC will add to the conflict prevention and reconciliation toolbox through dialogue processes. Facilitated intercultural dialogue and interreligious dialogue²² will feature prominently in project preferences within this area of practice. A pool of consultants will be formed that can be called upon to professionally facilitate dialogue processes.²³ UNAOC will ensure that its efforts complement and augment the efforts of relevant offices and departments within the Secretariat and Specialized Agencies. UNAOC will not engage in any conflict related activities unless they are coordinated with the relevant UN offices or agencies (Department of Political Affairs, UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and the Peacebuilding Support Office) and, where appropriate, host countries. UNAOC will not replicate the effective efforts of others. Mainstreaming UNAOC efforts with the UN Secretariat, through the establishment of working relationships, has begun with Department of Political Affairs, particularly with Policy and Mediation Division, and UNDP Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

ii. Culture as an Element in Development Planning

²⁰ Report of the High-level Group, 13 November 2006, page 3, paragraph 1.4

²¹ The staff listing only identifies 1 individual with a clearly discernible policy development or political background.

²² This builds on previous interfaith initiatives the Alliance has taken part in, including the Tripartite Forum and World Interfaith Harmony Week. In addition, on the directive of the UN Secretary-General, the Alliance is pursuing a robust partnership with non-governmental organizations working in this area, including the King Abdullah International Centre for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue.

²³ The Standby Mediation Team of the Mediation Unit of Department of Political Affairs provides a guide to how that pool could be constructed.

Facilitated intercultural dialogue and interreligious dialogue will feature prominently in this area as well. The General Assembly has already held a Thematic Debate on Culture and Development, noting the importance of the nexus between these issues.²⁴ One regional organization has already approached UNAOC about the potential to jointly hold a series of conferences to expand on this discussion within its geographical sphere. Coordination with UNDP and Department of Economic and Social Affairs will be undertaken to ensure full coordination within this substantive field.

iii. Building on Previous Achievements

UNAOC will continue to build on domestic and regional efforts to achieve progress on the issues of cultural diversity and social inclusion. Consultations with Member States and regional multilateral institutions will inform UNAOC as we continue to monitor the progress of National and Regional Strategies and promote best practices relating to cultural diversity and social inclusion at the national and regional levels. If requested by Member States, UNAOC will advise them in the creation of new National/Regional Strategies or Action Plans.

The original High-level Group Report remains a cornerstone document that guides UNAOC programming, even as we adjust to account for the dynamic changes in the world since its introduction. The areas of focus identified there - Youth, Education, Media and Migration – are still at the core of our programming. We will continue to work in these areas, but we will do so with a view toward orienting project activity in each of those areas toward the High Representative’s preferred substantive focus areas. This can be done by adding criteria to selection processes that force us to identify the linkages between proposals and those core issues. The members of the High-level Group continue to be identified as UNAOC Ambassadors. We will continue to reach out to them as opportunities present themselves.

Program and Project Discipline

²⁴ General Assembly President Vuk Jeremic said, “Fully embracing the potential of this nexus will also help promote a greater sense of indivisibility and mutual belonging—a feeling that no community or nation can fulfill its potential until it is accompanied by the advancement of the entire mankind.” He went on to describe intercultural dialogue within the framework of the post-2015 agenda as the surest way to guard against the erasing hand of uniformity, which some fear could be a consequence of globalization. “

49. A Program Management Unit will be established to ensure that appropriate management processes are applied to each project, activity, or event. This Unit will be responsible for ensuring that projects/activities/events, from inception, to development, to implementation and ultimately their conclusion, will be properly organized, produced, managed and evaluated. The Unit will be led by a Coordinator with two assistants. Staff members assigned to this Unit should have experience in one or more of the original four areas identified by the High-level Group and should be fully capable of adhering to the highest levels of project management standards and an internal review process (described below).
50. Diffusion will be a danger that must be confronted on a regular basis. Opportunities will present themselves that may look appealing but will, in fact, prevent UNAOC from meeting the standard established by the High Representative by causing human resources to be deviated from core tasks. During the review process representatives of Group of Friends Member States, members of civil society organizations, and representatives of foundations, all identified this issue as one that needed to be addressed.
51. In order to counteract this danger, an internal review process for Project Management is being developed consistent with the best practices in the not-for-profit community that will ensure clear criteria for project acceptability, implementation and evaluation. No activities will be undertaken that do not comply with this process. The process will guarantee that a rigorous analysis precedes any project activity to avoid the possibility of duplication and promote the highest level of impact.
52. UNAOC efforts currently are spread across a variety of subjects and multiple platforms with widely varying impacts. This situation can be rectified over time through the elimination of inactive projects, the transfer of those better served by outsourcing, and the reorganization of those that will remain into more easily identifiable elements. The result will be a leaner portfolio with similar range but lower per-project commitments of time, human resources, and funding.

Special Events Unit

53. It should be noted that the planning of Global Forum events, even if we are able to maintain a schedule of one event every other year, is a daunting task that requires special consideration. The preservation of a number of prize competitions that have emerged over time, with considerable resource allocation attached, must be addressed. Even if they are reconfigured, they represent an important means of expanding the recognition of UNAOC. A

dedicated Special Events Unit must be organized to cover these activities, led by an experienced Coordinator who can manage the organizational tasks as well as the external relations demands inherent in this work. This Unit will provide clear guidance on event planning as well as special attention to the application of the High Representative's intent to engage the sports and entertainment community as supporters of UNAOC will be organized.

54. The benefits of a more tightly organized operational structure include:

i. Focus and Balance

A disciplined UNAOC will focus on quality over quantity. This emphasis has been highlighted by members of the Group of Friends as a key consideration as we move forward. Focus and Balance will keep the schedule of the High Representative concentrated on high level and high impact events and public appearances. It will ensure an emphasis on substantive programming, as it is the reputation we build through that programming that will make the UNAOC brand increasingly recognized, thus providing greater value to its use when attached to prize competitions or public relations events. Increased emphasis on seeking best practices to reducing polarization and radicalization, whether through research, conferences, advocacy or other programming will help – these goals can be pursued through programming aimed at any of the original four areas of focus (Youth, Education, Media, Migration).

ii. Perspective and Context

A disciplined UNAOC will understand how its programming fits within the broader objectives of the United Nations and the purposes behind the UN Charter. It will ensure that project proposals meet rigorous scrutiny for policy coherence and relevance and that the suggested devotion of funds and human resources are appropriate for the level of engagement under consideration.

iii. Order

A disciplined UNAOC will understand and use the best practices available in project management. It will understand the concept of project lifecycles and will design projects with the clear knowledge that the vast majority projects come to an end. The end may come through the natural completion of the tasks identified, or through the passing off to a better suited partner who can manage the project in

the long term (possibly with on-going intellectual support from UNAOC), or it may convert to a long term element of UNAOC programming. A well-structured, enforceable process of vetting will ensure that ideas are carefully considered before being presented to the High Representative for approval at the concept stage and further review prior to the submission of a formal project proposal to the High Representative for approval.

Accountability

55. Accountability must be an on-going process characterized by a continuous loop of assessment, learning, and application.

i. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is an essential element of the overall Project management process; donors and the UN leadership are applying ever-increasing levels of scrutiny as funding is becoming increasingly competitive. A variety of tools are available for us to use in crafting plans for monitoring and evaluating the results of our activities. In the end, donor preferences will control but we can proactively design processes that will provide evidence of our responsibility to prospective donors. This is an element of the intellectual rigor that must be applied if we are to present a persuasive case to prospective donors.

Most examples of best practices will include some combination of the following factors:

- A set of objectives that are linked to a broader theory of change.
- A set of evaluation questions that addresses the results of the program or project at both the output and outcome level.
- A set of indicators and a data collection strategy to assess those indicators.
- A credible research methodology for assessing the data and providing evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions.

- A strategy for using and, if appropriate, disseminating the evaluation findings.²⁵

ii. Accountability and Learning

Monitoring and evaluation ensures that we will be accountable to the constituencies we serve, our partners, funders, and ourselves. It also serves as a learning tool. With limited human and financial resources we must constantly reflect on how we can improve on our performance. This learning then informs future program design and implementation (how we work) as well as our strategic decisions (what we do and where).

Effective Support Elements

56. In order to carry out the intentions of the High Representative, basic functions of the office must improve. Identified gaps in the following areas must be addressed.

i. Finance

The absence of a strategic fundraising plan has hampered UNAOC activities, especially during the past two years. Due to the global financial crisis, many Member States have applied austerity measures that directly impact on their discretionary spending on projects such as UNAOC. For at least the last two years funding levels of the core budget of the UNAOC have declined, restricting the freedom of action for UNAOC leadership; meanwhile, overall contributions have increased for earmarked purposes. Responses to pleas from the current and former High Representatives have not led to higher levels, or more regular, replenishment of the Trust Fund. Additional efforts at raising funds through other sources (private sector or philanthropic) have been disjointed and ineffective. The need to invest in a formal strategic fundraising plan is more essential than ever.

Voluntary Trust Fund and Project Funding

The Voluntary Trust Fund must be replenished to a level that provides secure funding for salaries, rent and office expenses as well as sufficient funding for exploratory activity for future projects. President Sampaio's original idea for a replenishment mechanism remains the preferred way forward. Unfortunately, member state

²⁵ United States Institute of Peace Evaluation Policy, Washington, December 10, 2012

response has been inadequate to date. Project funding, while appreciated, is not sufficient to provide a stable, predictable platform from which to operate. The High Representative, perhaps with the direct assistance of the Secretary-General, will need to address members of the Group of Friends to secure adequate funding for the Trust Fund. The Partners' Assembly, an Advisory Group constructed by President Sampaio within the framework of the voluntary replenishment mechanism of the Trust Fund, has met as recently as in Vienna in February 2013 and this group will continue to serve as a means of increasing financial support and seeking advice from Member States.

Private Sector

The High Representative is currently studying the possibility of developing a new strategy to engage the private sector and wealthy individuals. This could include the creation of a UNAOC Foundation which, under United States Federal Tax Code, could provide a conduit for such entities to contribute funds to UNAOC under favourable conditions.

Philanthropic Foundations

We are currently re-establishing contact with Foundations here in the US and Europe to develop substantive relationships and leverage their expertise and contacts.

ii. Communications/Outreach

We will build a new communications structure based on the existing website but with enhanced, interactive features that allow for greater connectivity with users. Elevating the profile of UNAOC and the High Representative will be the responsibility of the Communications staff and the High Representative's Spokeswoman. Similarly, an organized process of highlighting UNAOC activities at HQ and in the field will have to be developed. The use of social media must be further studied. UNAOC has aggressively pursued the opportunity to use Twitter and Facebook as platforms; their speed and volume is too impressive to ignore. However, issues of quality control and access have yet to be resolved in a way that allows for relatively free flowing information exchange while avoiding misstatements that could embarrass UNAOC of the United Nations.

iii. Administration and Management

A more formalized unit that covers administration, human resources management, budget and financial management will need to be established to ensure smooth coordination with UNOPS and EOSG.

iv. Governance

Members States have previously questioned the UNAOC's exact position within the UN system because of its hybrid nature. In this regard, the leadership of the UNAOC may consider suggesting a General Assembly resolution clarifying these issues in the future.

Current Structure

- **Group of Friends**

The Alliance benefits from a political support of the Group of Friends, a community of currently 137 countries and international organizations which actively promotes the Alliance's objectives and work at the global, regional and local levels, as well as worldwide. The Alliance is continuously looking for more Member States to join its Group of Friends, and will continue to actively encourage this through its interactions with missions and governments. The Partners' Assembly was envisaged by President Sampaio as an element of the voluntary replenishment mechanism of the Trust Fund where current and potential donors can exchange views on the strategic direction of the Alliance. While an informal meeting was held in Vienna in February 2013, the structure and potential role of the Partners' Assembly has yet to be finalized.

- **Focal Points**

Members of the Group of Friends have appointed Focal Points for the Alliance in their capitals and headquarters. The Focal Points are officials mandated to facilitate, coordinate or keep abreast of activities related to the Alliance within their governments and headquarters. The Focal Points act as a liaison between a country or an organization, and the Alliance's Secretariat in New York. The Alliance also maintains strong relationships with representatives of various missions to the United Nations in New York. It will continue to do so. Member States are concerned about ensuring appropriate frequency of engagement with the Focal Points, an issue that must be addressed in a structural, sustainable manner.

External Bodies

- The International Network of Foundations aimed to encourage information exchange and increase collaboration by providing a space for foundations to share information about their respective areas of work; share best practices in grant-making; hear from experts; address common challenges; and identify knowledge gaps that require additional research. Conversations with representatives of foundations confirm that UNAOC needs to rebuild this asset.
- The Business Coalition for Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation was initially launched in 2009 in partnership with the United Nations Global Compact Office. The coalition was supposed to engage the business community in recognizing the crucial role that business can play in establishing dialogue and improving understanding and cooperative relations across cultures and religions. Inadequate levels of activity and deliverable results indicate that a significant investment of time and effort will be needed to develop this initiative.

Table of Organization

57. The attached Table of Organization reflects the concept of Zero Growth regarding the overall size of the UNAOC staff. Under each of the substantive areas, multi-tasking may be required to cover the work demanded. Such multi-tasking has taken place before but not in any organized fashion. Coordinators will also engage in direct activity. The existence of an organizational structure will also ensure that the Coordinators must work together when a project or activity is proposed in order to ensure it has been thoroughly vetted before presentation to the High Representative for approval.

