



THE UN ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS:

Building Intercultural Dialogue through Shared Initiatives



United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
Many cultures. One humanity.





WHY THE UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS (UNAOC)?

THE VISION

Respect and tolerance among human beings, in the diversity of their beliefs, cultures, and languages are fundamental values at the core of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). The Alliance aspires to the ideal of a culture of peace and dialogue, based on the conviction that “differences within and between societies be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity.” (UN Millennium Declaration, I-6)

THE MISSION

The primary mission of the UNAOC is to forge collective political will and to mobilize concerted action aimed at improving cross-cultural understanding and cooperation among countries, peoples and communities. The Alliance develops its actions at both governmental and civil society levels. It also works to counter forces that fuel polarization

and extremism. The UNAOC’s particular focus is on improving relations within and between Western and Muslim societies and addressing persistent tensions and divides.

WHAT IS THE UNAOC?

The Alliance of Civilizations is a United Nations political initiative of the Secretary-General. It was launched in 2005 by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, with the co-sponsorship of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey. Based on the recommendations of a report by a High-Level Group in November 2006, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, as his High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. Since May 2007, President Sampaio has been in charge of achieving the mission of the Alliance by developing a functional framework for action, setting an agenda and building a network of stakeholders.



HOW DOES THE UNAOC MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- **As a unique political initiative** of the United Nations seeking to build intercultural dialogue, trust and understanding across countries and communities, thereby counteracting forces that fuel polarization and extremism.
- **As a mobilizing force** that achieves results in partnership with governments, international organizations, religious and civil society groups, youth, foundations, universities, corporations and the media.
- **As an action-driven initiative** which implements and supports innovative projects on the ground, primarily in the fields of education, youth, media and migration.
- **As a global matchmaker**, connecting grassroots leaders with policy-makers and foundations to help bring their ideas to life.
- **As a powerful voice** that strives to reduce tensions and build trust among divided communities.
- **As a creative laboratory** within the UN system that seeks to foster innovative and impactful cross-cultural initiatives that can be used as soft power tools.

HOW DOES THE UNAOC OPERATE?

The UNAOC is now the premier global platform for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation. Neither a UN body nor an agency, the Alliance occupies a unique niche within the UN family.

It is an innovative, highly flexible, results-oriented initiative based on partnerships and commitments to action by a wide range of stakeholders. The Alliance is all at once a **matchmaker, convener, and catalyst**.

At the heart of the Alliance's operational work lies the notion of **partnership**. These partnerships with wide-ranging actors multiply and amplify the impact, relevance and anchorage of the Alliance's work. Such partners include the following:

Governments	Intergovernmental Organizations
Local authorities & cities	NGOs & Grassroots Organizations
Foundations	Media Professionals
Corporations	Religious Leaders
Academics & Educators	Private Sector Actors
Philanthropists	Citizens

UNAOC

WHAT ARE THE UNAOC'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY?

1. Education

2. Youth

3. Media

4. Migration

WHAT ARE THE UNAOC'S KEY OBJECTIVES?

1. Facilitating the global conversation

2. Promoting changes in policy frameworks and intercultural strategies

3. Preventing intercultural tensions and crises

4. Supporting innovative grassroots initiatives

5. Raising awareness and mobilizing public support

WHAT ARE THE UNAOC'S AREAS OF ACTIVITY?

While active on a number of crosscutting issues, the Alliance works mainly in four priority areas to which it brings a multidisciplinary and multi-perspective approach:

1. **Education** – In increasingly multicultural contexts that shape our lives in the 21st century, education is fundamental to address the ignorance and mistrust that are at the source of human conflict. Enabling citizens to acquire intercultural competencies and skills is key to fostering intercultural dialogue, overcoming cultural stereotypes and intolerance and winning the fight against a “clash of ignorance.”
2. **Youth** – Youth is a main target group of the Alliance. Roughly one in five individuals, over 1.2 billion people worldwide, is between the

ages of 15 and 24. A pool of talent, ideas and energy, young people are key agents for social change, economic growth, development and technological innovation.

3. **Media** – Traditional media, as well as social media and new information technologies, shape perceptions, narratives and attitudes. They hold the potential to bridge cultural and religious divides and to develop a positive narrative around diversity. Amplifying this constructive role is one of the core tasks of the UNAOC.
4. **Migration** – Migration and mobility of populations shape our multicultural societies. They bring potential for development and innovation which must be harnessed, but also create new challenges that need to be addressed in order to build inclusive and tolerant societies.

WHAT ARE THE UNAOC'S KEY OBJECTIVES?

The Alliance's activities can be regrouped in clusters around the following five key objectives:

1. **Facilitating the global conversation** on challenges and opportunities for living at ease in a landscape of diversities in our age of global communication and exchanges.
2. **Promoting changes in policy frameworks and intercultural strategies** built upon a broad vision, where economic and social inclusion policies and policies for cultural diversity are integrated and push each other forward.

3. **Preventing intercultural tensions and crises;** combating stereotypes, misperceptions, discrimination and xenophobia.
4. **Supporting innovative grassroots initiatives** that contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding, mutual respect and cooperation across divides.
5. **Raising awareness and mobilizing public support** for cultural diversity, tolerance and inclusion.

1. Facilitating the global conversation on challenges and opportunities for living at ease in a landscape of diversities in our age of global communication and exchanges.

The Alliance has become a unique platform for dialogue and interaction among peoples, organizations, officials and non-officials from different cultures and parts of the world. This has resulted in a whole range of programs and events.

Dialogue Café (dialoguecafe.org) is emblematic of such an approach. Developed in cooperation with Cisco and including a platform of local private-public partnerships (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Waag Society, Cândido Mendes University, City of Ramallah, the Business Women's Forum in Palestine and Paltel Group), Dialogue Café uses state of the art video-conferencing technology to enable face-to-face conversations between diverse groups of people around the world so that they can share experiences; learn from each other; collaborate on new ways of tackling social and cultural problems; and work together to make the world a better place. It is a platform for social innovation and cross-cultural dialogue. Six Dialogue Cafés are now open in Amsterdam, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Cleveland, Ramallah and Lisbon.

UNAOC Annual Forum held since 2008 in Madrid, Istanbul, Rio and Doha has become the premier forum in the world for governmental and non-state actors to converge and engage in a global conversation on intercultural understanding, exchange innovative experiences and develop joint actions. It is a unique platform for world leaders and heads of state to advocate publicly the importance of the intercultural dialogue agenda.

The UNAOC Fellowship Program aims to contribute to a better mutual knowledge and understanding between peoples and societies from Muslim-majority countries from the Arab world, and from Europe and North America. The program allows emerging leaders from each of these societies to get acquainted with the diverse realities and cultural, political and religious environments of others through firsthand experience of institutions and societies in their counterpart regions. It is developed with the support of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the Guerrand Hermes Foundation for Peace and in partnership with the League of Arab States, ISESCO, the governments of Qatar and Jordan, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the British Council and the Institute of International Education.



“I think that these days are very important to have Dialogue Café in Cairo because we need to listen to others as much as we need our voices as Egyptian youth to be heard.”

- Ahmed Maher, who participated in co-creating democracy from Cairo, on a talk on Dialogue Café Amsterdam

“If I had to choose one word to describe my experience as a UNAOC fellow, this would be: inspiration.”

- Amanda Figueras, journalist, El Mundo, Spain

“The Global Experts network is an invaluable resource for journalists working to inform the public on the events that shape our world.”

- Dalia Mogahed, Executive Director, Senior Analyst, Gallup Center for Muslim Studies

2. Promoting changes in policy framework and intercultural strategies built upon a broad vision, where economic and social inclusion policies and policies for cultural diversity are integrated and push each other forward.

The Alliance is also playing a key role in the field of policy orientation, by raising intercultural dialogue and understanding in the policy agenda, and by mobilizing public awareness and support in favor of cultural diversity:

National Plans and initiatives for Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation – through them, the UNAOC aims at generating national ownership of the Alliance’s goals at country level, shaping policies conducive to better cooperation and developing capacity building with respect to dealing with cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. National Plans are a keytool of the Alliance aimed at promoting national agendas for addressing a number of cross-cutting issues, ranging from education to migration, media and youth, as well as smoothly introducing a new overall approach to social policies and attitudes, since cultural diversity has become the main feature of life in the 21st century.

Regional Strategies for Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation – they help set a framework for joint action addressing shared challenges. Regional Strategies provide new opportunities and new impetus for projects on the ground, linking innovative initiatives within and across regions, and promoting people-to-people contacts and intercultural dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders. The priorities identified in the Regional Strategies are implemented through Action Plans that are revised on a regular basis. So far, two regional strategies have been adopted and are being implemented – the Regional Strategy for South East Europe (adopted in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2009) and the Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean (adopted in Malta in 2010). Others are in the pipeline (namely a Regional Strategy for Latin America).

Clearinghouses: With the creation of clearinghouses on various items related to intercultural understanding, the Alliance is providing governments, journalists, educational institutions and civil society groups with a unique databank, which includes best and innovative practices that they may use to develop new policies and initiatives in their countries. The clearinghouse on Media Literacy Education, Media Education Policy and Youth Media was the first created. It brings together thousands of practitioners in the crucial new discipline of helping youth in its relationship with media. Another clearinghouse, Building Inclusive Societies (IBIS) (unaoc.org/ibis), features innovative projects, highlighting successful models of integration and inspiring new initiatives. It also illustrates the positive impact of migration and the benefits of the migrants’ economic, cultural and social contributions to their new, adopted countries. The third clearinghouse, Education about Religions and Beliefs, provides a comparative analysis of best practices on curricula regarding diverse religions and beliefs, including civic education, ethics education, and tolerance education.

Capacity-building media programs: This broad array of programs is designed to support journalists and opinion-makers in their efforts to increase public understanding on divisive issues, bring nuance to complex debates, and foster greater engagement between diverse communities.



“As the first East Asian nation to submit a national plan, the Republic of Korea is looking forward to proactive contributions from countries with successfully implemented plans. Sept 13, 2011.”

- HE. Kim Bong-hyun, Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs, South Korea

“With the UNAOC Media Literacy program, children, educators, academia and NGOs started to develop more effective media literacy initiatives and programs, focusing especially on primary education.”

- Nezih Orhon, Anadolu University, Turkey

“The NGO Committee on Migration shares the UNAOC’s priorities in the sphere of migration to meet the challenges of a world on the move.”

- Eva Sandis, Chair, NGO Committee on Migration

“The UNAOC Migration and Integration program enables us to better understand the processes of integration and allows us to grow as human beings aspiring to live in a society of full harmony.”

-Manuel Cardenas, El Migrante Ecuatoriano, Ecuador

“The UNAOC is truly extraordinary in its ability to bring together leading thinkers from across the globe and to provide innovative approaches to professional development and collaboration in journalism.”

- Felice Nudelman, Director of the New York Times Knowledge Network, USA

3. Preventing intercultural tensions and crises; combating stereotypes, misperceptions, discrimination and xenophobia.

Intercultural dialogue and understanding are often difficult to achieve, and they are indispensable in preventing crises and combating misperceptions. Media and education play a tremendous role in this respect, and that is why the Alliance has developed programs in this area:

UNAOC Summer Schools: They gather close to 100 youth aged between 18 and 35, ensuring geographical, cultural, and gender balance. All participants are key multipliers, playing an active role within a youth organization, network or service at local, national or regional levels, and plan to continue this work in the near future. The UNAOC Summer School is based on the conviction that youth are a driving force for change. Also, a central principle behind it is that people share more commonalities than divisive differences, and when given the opportunity, they will explore these common interests, sparking collaborations and stimulating ideas that address the major issues around the world. Two Summer Schools were organized in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, two new Summer Schools are planned in Portugal and Jordan, as well as two Winter Schools in the Fall.

Global Experts (theglobalexperts.org): Global Experts is an online resource that connects journalists to a wide range of opinion leaders worldwide to provide quick reactions and analyses on breaking political, social and religious issues. Experts also write articles and op-eds, which we help publish in some of the most prominent newspapers around the world. This initiative promotes a diversity of experts and opinions and introduces a “third voice” of sound analysis in divisive debates.

Plural+ (unaoc.org/pluralplus): The UN Alliance of Civilizations developed a Youth Video Festival on migration, social inclusion and diversity called PLURAL+. This initiative, created in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and in collaboration with other organizations worldwide, recognizes youth as powerful agents of social change in a world often characterized by intolerance and cultural and religious divisions.



“I understood the true meaning of ‘diversity and intercultural dialogue’ after meeting together with participants from 44 countries at the UNAOC summer school. It was the best experience of my life.”

- Ganeswar Sahoo, India

“It is amazing to see how these young film makers create these videos. I learned a lot from different cultures and social issues in various nations.”

- Renzo Devia, PLURAL+ 2011 International Jury, Colombia

“We are living in an age when people are urgently needed to be heard and are finding new ways to be heard. And the UNAOC projects represent that, in the highest achievement and the highest ingenuity using technologies and specially using the heart and the mind. They are exceptional and inspiring initiatives.”

- Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, USA

4. Supporting innovative grassroots initiatives that contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding, mutual respect and cooperation across divides.

Some of the most innovative responses to cross-cultural tensions come from the people most affected by them at a grassroots level. These “intercultural entrepreneurs” often lack resources and connections to develop their initiatives, and that is why the Alliance has been active in this field:

Developed in partnership with the BMW Group, **the Intercultural Innovation Award (interculturalinnovation.org)** connects innovative grassroots initiatives fostering intercultural understanding with key partners (media, governments, donors) to help increase and expand their impact. Winners of the Award are provided with long-term support and mentorship.

The **Youth Solidarity Fund (unaocyouth.org)** provides grants of up to 30,000 USD to youth organizations advancing cross-cultural understanding at local, regional, national and/or international levels. Projects funded under this program are developed and implemented by youth organizations and applied primarily for the benefit of youth. These projects, which last 6-12 months on average, have impacts on both individual (youth) and institutional (youth organizations) levels.

“We are ecstatic about being a winner of the Intercultural Innovation Award. We hope to work with the UNAOC and the BMW Group to replicate the project in other cities and countries.”

- Catherine Winter, program manager of DiverseCity onBoard, Maytree Foundation, Canada

“At a time of conflict and with low moral of Somali youth, the UNAOC youth project helped us reaffirm the fact that a different reality was possible for Somalia.”

- Mina Abdi, The Somali Youth Leadership Forum, Somalia/Kenya



5. Raising awareness and mobilizing public support for cultural diversity, tolerance and inclusion.

In order to create a real impact, the Alliance must reach out to the general public to increase knowledge and awareness regarding diversity, tolerance and inclusion.

This helps build grassroots momentum around issues of diversity:

World Campaign Do One Thing for Diversity and

Inclusion: The UNAOC has prompted the creation of a unique coalition with major worldwide corporations (including Yahoo, CISCO, Microsoft, American Airlines, Kellogg's, Intel, Intuit, and Vivendi) and civil society partners to advocate for cultural diversity and inclusion. The "Do One Thing for Diversity" Campaign invites individuals from around the world to take concrete action in support of diversity. It was launched with UNESCO on May 21st, 2011, which marks World Day for Diversity.

World Interfaith Harmony Week: Each year the UNAOC invites its partners to celebrate Interfaith Harmony Week as they so choose. This helps people of different creeds, faiths and convictions overcome their divisions and learn to respect each other's differences while recognizing their shared humanity.

"Never in our lifetime has there been a greater need for constructive and committed dialogue, among individuals, among communities, among cultures, among and between nations."

- H.E. Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General

"Together with the UNAOC & UNESCO, the World Day for Cultural Diversity not only celebrates worldwide diversity, but also creates a movement that encourages everyone to do one thing for diversity & inclusion."

- Terilyn Monroe, Director of Global Employee Engagement at Intuit, USA

"Wide-ranging partnerships are essential to the efforts of the UN Alliance of Civilizations to engage governments, civil society, and educational institutions in bridging gaps between cultures and launching practical projects that bring people together."

- H.E. President Jorge Sampaio, United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations



HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

The Alliance gives you a unique opportunity to support major initiatives that promote dialogue, understanding and cooperation among peoples and cultures. You can support the UNAOC in many ways:

- Make a **financial contribution to the UNAOC** to help ongoing initiatives around the world. It's an easy process and you can give whatever amount you choose. It will make a difference.
- **Support a UNAOC program of your choice** or support an organization that runs a UNAOC branded program.
- **Partner with us. Corporate and foundation partners** can play a constructive role in finding collective solutions for some of the problems tackled by the UNAOC either in a specific region or on a specific topic.

- Make an **in-kind donation or a commitment to a UNAOC action**, such as organizing a UNAOC action or hosting a UNAOC Forum, meeting or seminar, or supporting the UNAOC's work in any other way. This may include holding awareness and fund-raising events in your communities or, for instance, seconding staff **to the UNAOC Secretariat to increase our team's human resources capacity.**
- **For those who want to play a more personal role: volunteer.** There are several ways to get involved: the UNAOC welcomes interns in its headquarters throughout the year. You can also work for the UNAOC's events as a volunteer or join in an online dialogue on popular social networking sites about the UNAOC's work.





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