

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING


BETWEEN

**THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

AND

**THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION /
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**

Madrid, 15 January 2008



**Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations
Organization / Alliance of Civilizations**

The United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

AND

The United Nations Organization /
Alliance of Civilizations

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hereinafter referred to as "UNESCO"

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Represented by its
Director-General

Represented by
the High Representative of
the Secretary-General of
the United Nations

Mr Koïchiro Matsuura

Mr Jorge Sampaio

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereafter
"UNESCO") and
the Alliance of Civilizations (hereafter "AoC")
are hereinafter referred to together as "the Parties"
to this Memorandum of Understanding.

Article I – Introduction

The Director-General of UNESCO and the High Representative of AoC, meeting on 15 and 16 January 2008 in Madrid, Spain, on the occasion of the First Annual Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, convinced that the current global challenges to ensure a harmonious coexistence and interaction among peoples of different cultural backgrounds, through the promotion of dialogue among cultures, requires urgent attention and action, hereby agree to enter into the present Memorandum of Understanding (hereafter “MoU”).

Article II – Context

Whereas UNESCO, as a specialized agency of the United Nations entrusted with the mandate to build “the defences of peace in the minds of men”, promotes exchange and dialogue among cultures for social cohesion, interfaith dialogue, reconciliation and peace, with multi-stakeholder involvement, at the international, regional and even national levels;

Whereas AoC, as an initiative of the United Nations, aims to build bridges between societies, promote dialogue and understanding, forge collective political will to address growing divisions between societies and restore mutual respect between peoples of differing cultures, traditions and religions, inspiring them to mobilize behind concrete measures to achieve these goals;

Whereas UNESCO and AoC consider that encouraging intercultural dialogue and creating conditions conducive thereto are essential responsibilities belonging to all levels of public authority, civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and each citizen;

Whereas UNESCO and AoC are particularly determined to undertake special joint efforts with a view to improving relations between peoples of differing cultures, religions and traditions so as to counter emerging tendencies of extremism, favor mutual understanding and respect, increase confidence, and, more broadly, help resolve issues that may divide peoples;

The Parties hereby agree to the following:

Article III – Overarching Objectives

By the present MoU, the Parties confirm their commitment to promote jointly dialogue among cultures and civilizations, with a view to strengthening mutual understanding, tolerance, respect, peaceful coexistence, co-operation and development. In doing so, the Parties agree to:

1. Promote and reinforce their cooperation, based on partnership and complementarities, through the exchange of information as well as the

- implementation and evaluation of projects and activities jointly elaborated and undertaken by them pursuant to this MoU;
2. Build into their joint projects and activities a multi-stakeholder approach that includes, *inter alia*, other international or regional organisations, public authorities at all levels, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector as essential actors in the dialogue among cultures and civilizations;
 3. Respect the principles enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, giving priority to the pursuit of gender equality and the involvement of youth in all actions undertaken.

Article IV – Areas of Joint Action

With a view to achieving the objectives of this MoU, the Parties shall devise, develop and implement joint projects and activities, *inter alia*, in the following areas:

IV. 1. Developing educational, cultural and scientific contents that foster dialogue and mutual understanding

Contemporary multicultural societies benefit from the sharing of knowledge and values, and in some respects are a challenge of today's increasingly globalized world. Formal and non-formal education, exchange, and dialogue are important means to counteract ethnic, cultural and religious prejudices, to foster tolerance and respect, especially in multi-ethnic and multi-religious contexts, and to fight against all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia. New educational, cultural, and scientific contents should foster the acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity. They should promote the development of regional and national plans of action within the framework of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, and also via National Plans for inter-cultural dialogue, as encouraged by the AoC.

Initiatives considered under this area may include the following:

- (i) Revision of school textbooks and production of educational materials with a view to preventing school violence, promoting peace, understanding, and learning to live together, based, *inter alia*, on the UNESCO General and Regional Histories series. Dissemination of UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education, including through the effective use of ICTs. Establishment of inter-regional observatories on textbook policies, practices and research activities;
- (ii) Development of teacher training on intercultural capacities to address challenges raised by the diversity of cultures, religions, faiths, and traditions;

- (iii) Establishment of “centers of excellence” including the expansion of UNESCO Chairs on human rights education, intercultural peace education, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as well as the development of exchange programmes between universities and research institutions, involving students, professors, and scientists from different cultural backgrounds;
- (iv) Promotion of a collaborative advancement of global scientific knowledge, through, *inter alia*, the development of pedagogical materials and exhibitions that demonstrate that contemporary knowledge is constructed through a cross-cultural exchange of ideas and experiences;
- (v) Elaboration of culturally-sensitive pedagogical materials that introduce local/traditional knowledge and vernacular languages into education curricula;
- (vi) Development of awareness-raising material based on UNESCO’s “Routes” programmes (e.g. the Slave Route) in cooperation with the appropriate networks and partners established in the framework of these programmes. This may include best practices collected through clearing houses, databases and specific regional mappings related to intercultural and/or interfaith dialogue;
- (vii) Development of clearing houses on best practices in the above-mentioned areas.

IV.2. Intensifying intercultural exchanges among youth

Exchanges between youth constitute one of the most effective ways to overcome cultural barriers and to emphasize the value of intercultural awareness in order to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. Thus, it is essential to increase opportunities of youth exchange. Programmes promoting student exchanges, sports, cultural and artistic activities, as well as civic commitment are conducive to the promotion of intercultural understanding and respect for diversity.

Initiatives considered under this area may include the following:

- (i) Expansion of youth networks, to mobilize new participants and audiences in order to supplement existing knowledge and practice in promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue;
- (ii) Expansion of education networks, development of student exchanges at all levels, and sharing of best practices that foster inter-personal understanding;
- (iii) Creation of discussion forums for intercultural dialogue among youth that use the media and Internet in particular, with a view to achieving a better understanding of diverse cultural expressions. The active participation of

public authorities, non-governmental organizations, religious communities and other opinion makers, as well as the civil society, is indispensable and should be boosted at the national and international levels.

IV.3. Highlighting the role of the media in fostering dialogue and mutual understanding

Dialogue, founded on mutual respect and understanding, constitutes the best way to overcome ignorance and promote tolerance and peace. The media are in an eminent position to promote such dialogue when they have the necessary freedom and independence to do so. A State must foster an enabling environment that allows critical views to be broadcast and published, including those generated by minorities and other marginalized segments of society. At the same time, the media have a vital role to play in shaping our perception of other cultures and religions, and therefore carry a unique responsibility in the promotion of tolerance around the world. The inclusion of a broad spectrum of opinions within society becomes a priority and a journalistic duty for media around the world.

Initiatives considered under this area may include the following:

- (i) Promotion of an Internet-based dialogue where diverse cultural and linguistic practices can be expressed and shared through, *inter alia*, the "UNESCO Power of Peace Network". The "UNESCO Power of Peace Network" will be deliberately open-ended, participatory and inclusive, building upon a multi-stakeholder approach, upholding and promoting fundamental principles of freedom of expression, and including capacity building for youth;
- (ii) Exchange of and joint production programs for media professionals from different cultures and religions;
- (iii) Expansion of activities building journalistic professionalism, especially with regard to conflict-sensitive reporting and deconstructing media stereotypes;
- (iv) Expansion of media production in countries experiencing open and/or post conflict situations with a view to contributing to reconciliation and peace-building;
- (v) Promotion of diverse, balanced and constructive views and opinions on intercultural issues, through, *inter alia*, the development of an online resource of experts, analysts and opinion makers.

IV.4. Establishing new multi-stakeholders partnerships in order to reach out to new audiences

It is imperative to include new players/partners from the cross-sections of society that are not yet taking part in dialogue and exchange. Working together around common projects, the learning of languages and the practice of multilingualism, the sharing of diverse ways of knowing, the dispelling of ignorance and the mutual appreciation of other ways of life and beliefs are key channels to new inclusive partnerships.

Initiatives considered under this area may include the following:

- (i) Promotion of multilingualism – based on multi-stakeholders partnership – with particular attention paid to local and indigenous languages, to enhance communication capacities for intercultural dialogue;
- (ii) Identification and linking of partners across cultural divides that separate urban and rural populations, scientists of different cultural backgrounds, or scientific and traditional knowledge holders, as well as religious leaders, to enhance the flow of ideas, meanings and values. This may include the network of cities or urban areas for mediation between migrants and city institutions, and the coalition of cities against racism and discrimination launched by UNESCO. Parliamentarians, UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network members, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups (especially faith-based), UNESCO Chairs and Clubs as well as UNESCO National Commissions, inter alia, may be involved;
- (iii) Exchange of best practices in promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue, in the context of an increased human mobility, particular attention being paid to those best practices related to migration and/or tourism.

Article V – Conditions and Modalities

- V.1.** AoC shall not use the name and/or emblem of UNESCO without the prior written permission of UNESCO; and in all circumstances AoC shall refrain from using the UNESCO name and/or emblem in a way that implies that AoC is part of, or under the patronage or affiliation of, UNESCO. The same provisions apply to UNESCO in relation to the use of the name and/or emblem of AoC.
- V.2.** The Parties will consult with relevant governmental authorities as appropriate in implementing the cooperation foreseen under the present MoU.
- V.3.** The present MoU may be amended, at any time, upon the formal written request by one party and written confirmation of the other party.



- V.4. Each party's obligations under the present MoU shall be subject to: a) the application of its respective rules and policies and b) the availability of the appropriate financial and other resources.

Article VI – Duration and Termination

- VI.1. The present MoU shall take effect upon its signature by the Parties, and shall expire two years after the date of signature. It can be extended or amended in accordance with Article V.3.
- VI.2. Either party may terminate the present MoU by giving two months written notice to the other party.


Done in Madrid on 15 January 2008, in two original copies in English.

For UNESCO:



Koichiro Matsuura
Director-General

For the United Nations Organization /
Alliance of Civilizations:



Jorge Sampaio
UN AoC High Representative