**UNAOC and KAICIID International Dialogue Centre**
*"Strengthening Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue through Knowledge Sharing:*
*Opportunities and Challenges"*
Tuesday 10 July 2018, 10:00 – 13:00, ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York

## CONCEPT NOTE

### I. Background

In face of the global scourges of violent extremism, xenophobia and discrimination, the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue at the local, national, and international levels has become more than ever crucial to the security and well-being of our societies. Teaching the values of reconciliation, tolerance and respect between cultures, religions and beliefs, should be a priority for educators and curriculum developers, disregarding whether they target diplomats, politicians, media experts or young children.

As one of the leading entities in the United Nations system for the promotion of interfaith and intercultural dialogue, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) has been working for more than a decade on building bridges between people and communities from different cultures and religions. Over the years, UNAOC has developed a solid expertise in the field of interreligious/intercultural dialogue (IRD/ICD). With the support of a variety of partners, UNAOC has implemented a wide portfolio of activities with the aim to foster cross-cultural understanding and respect for diversity. As a result, the Alliance has established a growing network of Alumni involved all over the globe in different fields of work and areas of expertise, but all strongly committed to UNAOC mission. Through its activities, UNAOC has contributed to empower innovative civil society leaders and organizations, working on harnessing the power of online platforms to strengthen IRD/ICD.

Meanwhile, the beginning of the third millennium was marked by the world entering into a new digital age. The rapid advancement of communication technology followed by the mass production of new communication tools has dramatically changed, and continues to change, our lives. This new "IT life style" is not only redefining our self-perception, but it is also re-shaping our relationship with others and our interaction with the environment. It allows us to think and connect in new, unconventional ways. The Internet, in particular, has greatly accelerated the process of change in the field of knowledge-production and transmission in various disciplines. By working in this new IT environment and utilizing some of the latest communication tools, international actors have created new online spaces, which serve as tools for bridging divides among individuals. In this context, KAICIID International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) has built a new interactive and interdisciplinary virtual space, which seeks to integrate existing and new knowledge on IRD/ICD online. The aim of the KAICIID Dialogue Knowledge Hub is to strengthen the links between research, policy and practice in order to enhance the process of learning, educating and networking on Interreligious Dialogue for Peace and Reconciliation, thus contributing to the implementation of the Agenda 2030, and more specifically SDG 4 "Insuring Inclusive and Quality Education for All and Promote Life Long Learning" and SDG 16 "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions".

**II. The Organizers**

UNAOC and KAICIID have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in April 2017, agreeing to collaborate towards the enhancement of peace through the promotion of IRD/ICD.

UNAOC is a political initiative of the United Nations Secretary General and aims to build bridges between societies and to promote dialogue and understanding across religions and cultures. In that regard, the Alliance has developed a series of programmes and activities designed to empower key actors such as civil society organizations, religious leaders, youth, educators, media professionals and more, with tools and opportunities to harness the power of IRD/ICD.

KAICIID, as an intergovernmental organisation promotes IRD/ICD, to enhance cooperation and strengthen mutual understanding at individual, national, and international levels. KAICIID and UNAOC acknowledge that promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and creating platforms conducive thereto are essential steps to building sustainable peace and fostering mutual understanding and respect. Both organizations have developed different yet complimentary approaches to work towards this goal. Having identified the area of knowledge-generation on IRD/ICD as a mutual interest, UNAOC and KAICIID are organizing a thematic debate to exchange ideas on the use of online educational platforms and multimedia tools to share knowledge on IRD/ICD. The event will focus on methods developed to mobilize the knowledge available in this field. Participants will also exchange good practices used to share their expertise with a variety of stakeholders – from international institutions to grassroots organizations.

About UNAOC Programmes

While active on a number of cross-cutting issues, UNAOC works mainly in four priority areas to which it brings a multidisciplinary and multi-perspective approach: Education, Media, Migration, and Youth. The main objectives of UNAOC's programme activities are to facilitate the global conversation on the challenges and opportunities for living in a landscape of diversity in our age of global communication and exchanges; prevent intercultural tensions and crises, combating stereotypes, misperceptions, discrimination and xenophobia; and support innovative grassroots initiatives that contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding, mutual respect and cooperation across divides.

About KAICIID's Dialogue Knowledge Hub

The Dialogue Knowledge Hub, as a one-stop-shop, aspires to provide a virtual learning environment, for individuals and institutions, in order to increase the transmission of IRD/ICD knowledge and skills through capacity-building. The Dialogue Knowledge Hub provides users with theoretical knowledge and recommendations on how to engage in IRD/ICD practically. It offers updated information on IRD/ICD through a set of diverse databases and up-to-date research on practical aspects of IRD/ICD. The Hub increases accessibility to knowledge on interreligious dialogue for peace and reconciliation, through the development and management of online platforms such as the Peace Mapping Programme. Users are served through different resources (e.g. directories, databases, virtual platforms, e-learning products, etc.) to be informed about and updated on IRD/ICD.

**III. The Event**

Objective

The event will bring together key experts in e-learning and IRD/ICD, as well as practitioners and users of virtual IRD/ICD knowledge platforms. During the discussion, organizers and panellists will present tools and good practices they developed and used to share knowledge on IRD/ICD. They will discuss opportunities for utilizing these tools in the context of social cohesion, focusing on the networking possibilities at local, national and international levels.

Speakers will also address the challenges they face when using online tools, and will exchange on possible ways to overcome them. Together they will try to identify potential mechanisms that can support the continued exchange of lessons learned and good practices.

Participants

*Speakers:*
- KAICIID and UNAOC Representatives (senior leadership and experts)
- Experts and practitioners of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and online dialogue platforms

*Audience:*
- Representatives of Permanent Missions to the UN
- Staff of UN entities UN affiliates with an interest in field of Knowledge on Interreligious and Intercultural dialogue
- Invited experts and representatives of civil society active in the field of interreligious dialogue