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UNAOC Promotes Diversity As Key Factor To Create World Unity

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Nusa Dua, Bali (Antara) - The Sixth Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC), in Bali, on Friday, highlighted the role of diversity that plays a key factor in uniting rather than dividing people across the globe.

The forum was inaugurated on Friday by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Marty Natalegawa, and High Representative of UNAOC Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, among several others.

In his opening remark, UNAOC High Representative Al-Nasser stated that the crisis in some Middle Eastern, Asian, and African countries clearly demonstrated that societies were grappling with identity-based tension.

"At the same time, we are seeing that identity is being used to divide people rather than unite them towards a common purpose," Al-Nasser noted.

"Who has the right to issue verdicts to end the lives of innocent people because of their different backgrounds? Are these massive atrocities not shameful acts in the 21st century?" he objected.

The 6th UNAOC Global Forum is focusing on the overarching theme "Unity in Diversity" and reaffirming the significance of common and shared values as the unifying factor in a multi-divergent world.

Meanwhile, Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Marty Natalegawa noted that by accepting, embracing, and celebrating diversity, people can promote mutual tolerance and respect towards each other.

"Diversity is the source of strength and not of weakness," he stated.

Minister Natalegawa also highlighted that the challenges faced while promoting "Unity in Diversity" involved the willingness to respect the voices, votes, and aspirations of the people, including the minorities.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his opening remark noted that several of worlds worst crises were driven by those who exploited fear for gaining power. Too many societies were being divided along cultural, religious, and ethnic lines.

"War begins in peoples minds, and the way to peace is through peoples hearts," Ban Ki-moon asserted.

The alliance was created to reach out to the hearts and minds of the people and

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build bridges for peace, Ban Ki-moon noted.

"We cannot allow communities to be threatened by criminal atrocities because of whom they are and because of what they believe in," he pointed out.

Meanwhile, President Yudhoyono underlined that the human race had since long been paying a price for intolerance.

"You would think that after more than 180 million deaths and so much hunger, disease, and pain endured as a result of armed conflicts in the 20th century, mankind would renounce war forever. But no, we have not escaped its grip," Yudhoyono emphasized in his opening remark.

UNAOC project activities are fashioned around four areas: Education, Youth, Migration, and Media, which can play a critical role in helping to reduce cross-cultural tensions and to build bridges between communities.

"If we can substantively advance the four pillars of our cooperation such as youth, media, migration, and education then our alliance will make a difference in fighting prejudice, ignorance, extremism, and injustice worldwide," stated the president.

The UNAOC was established by the United Nations on July 14 2015, at the political initiative of Kofi Anan, former UN secretary general and co-sponsored by former prime minister of Spain Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan with the aim to promote "Harmony among Civilization."

The alliance maintains a global network of partners including states, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations, and the private sector to improve cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities.

As many as 106 countries representatives and international organizations and around 1.3 thousand participants attended the forum held on August 29-30, in Nusa Dua, Bali.

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