



United Nations Alliance of Civilizations



Achieving the goals of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) through shared initiatives

The Istanbul Forum on 31 May - 1 June 2012: a renewed global partnership

Preparing the UNAOC for a turning point

***“The Alliance can only deliver if you deliver with us.
You are the Alliance”***

High Representative President Sampaio, Doha Forum

The UN Alliance of Civilizations. An Introduction.

The Vision

Respect among human beings in all diversities of belief, culture and language as well as tolerance, are fundamental values at the core of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). It aspires to the ideal of a culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations on the assumption that “differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity” (UN Millennium Declaration).

The Mission

The primary mission of the UNAOC is to forge collective political will and to mobilize concerted action at institutional and civil society levels aimed at improving understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions and, in the process, helping to counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. The UNAOC particular focus is on improving relations within and among Western and Muslim societies and on addressing persistent tensions and divides.

Guiding Principles

By its own action, the UNAOC is committed to helping to achieve the following shared aims and principles:

- To promote democracy, implement its principles and practices and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including minority rights and the right to development;
- To fully respect and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and strive for the full protection and promotion in all countries of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all;
- To combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

- To take measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers and their families, to eliminate the increasing acts of racism and xenophobia in many societies and to promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies;
- To work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries; and
- To ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information.

What the Alliance is: our network

The Alliance of Civilizations is a United Nations' initiative of the Secretary General. It was launched in 2005 by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, with the co-sponsorship of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey. Based on the recommendations of a Report submitted 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 the latter is in charge of achieving the mission of the Alliance by setting up a functional framework for action, developing an agenda and building up a network of stakeholders.

Neither a UN body nor an agency, the Alliance occupies a unique niche within the UN family. It is an innovative, very flexible, results-oriented initiative based on partnerships and on commitments to action made by a wide range of stakeholders.

Therefore, the UNAOC is mainly a mobilizing force and a global match-maker. It brings together and acts through a *sui generis* platform of partners at both institutional (states, cities, international and regional organizations) and civil society (NGOs, corporations, foundations faith-inspired initiatives, youth movements, philanthropy, media) levels, committed to harnessing the resources of cultural and religious diversity for social inclusion, peace and development.

The community of members that make up its Group of Friends comprises over a hundred countries and thirty international and regional organizations and its global network of non-State players has been growing steadily over the past five years.

The Alliance's areas of activity

As an action-driven initiative, the Alliance promotes and/or supports innovative action that aims both at making cultural and religious diversity an asset and a source of potential and of economic, social, cultural and political advantage for building inclusive, tolerant and cohesive societies; and at developing new opportunities for intercultural exchanges in order to foster innovation, dialogue, understanding and trust among people that will help to avoid further deterioration of relations between communities and nations, in particular between Muslim and the so-called Western societies, which could threaten international stability, security, peace and development.

The UNAOC develops a multidisciplinary, multi-perspective approach on a number of cross-cutting issues but it works mainly in four priority areas:

- Education – is a basic tool to achieve the Alliance's goals. Education is fundamental in learning to live together. In increasingly multicultural contexts that shape our lives in the 21st century, education must enable citizens to acquire intercultural competences and skills that will enable us to think of cultural diversity as an asset as well as address ignorance and mistrust that generate fear and are the source of conflict.
- Youth – is a main target group of the Alliance. About one in five people, over 1.2 billion people, are between the ages of 15 and 24. Young people are a pool of talent, ideas and energy. They are a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic growth and technological innovation.
- Media and public opinion - media is another key field of action because of its impact in shaping collective views and attitudes, particularly the “new information technologies and social media” that have provided powerful means for vastly increased people-to-people communication to bridge cultural and religious divides.
- Migration – migration and mobility of populations are a source of potential and advantage but have also been posing global and local challenges to our increasingly complex multicultural societies that have to be addressed in order to develop a new narrative around diversity and create conditions for building inclusive societies.

What the Alliance does

The Alliance's action aims to achieve the following five objectives:

- To build bridges in order to promote dialogue and understanding among peoples, cultures, religions and beliefs, and foster a culture of peace throughout the world.
- To reinforce trust, tolerance and respect for diversity through cooperation, partnership and inclusion.
- To contribute to good governance and the rule of law with a view to protecting and respecting cultural diversity, religious freedom and pluralism;
- To combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance including discrimination against persons based on their religion or belief, and incitement to hate;
- To promote integration of legal migrants to further social cohesion and participatory societies and avert marginalization and exclusion of vulnerable migrant groups.

How the Alliance operates

In the discharge of its mission, the Alliance primarily operates as a platform, indeed as the Premier Global Platform for Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation. Alongside the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, with his specific advocacy and preventive diplomacy responsibilities, partners in the platform are the main actors of intercultural dialogue and cooperation, the Alliance being mainly a convener, a mobilizing force and a match-maker.

In order to meet its objectives, the Alliance develops and creates a wide range of opportunities at various levels, such as:

- On the occasion of its **Annual Forums** (Madrid, 2008; Istanbul, 2009; Rio de Janeiro, 2012; Doha, 2011; Vienna, in 2013), the UNAOC facilitates a **global conversation** on the challenges and opportunities of living together in diversity; building inclusive, tolerant and democratic societies; and addressing divides. The annual Global Forum of the Alliance, bringing together hundreds of representatives of our various institutional and civil society constituencies throughout the world, provides a unique opportunity to show the large tapestry of initiatives and programs, hold informed debates about hot topics and open up new avenues for cooperation between partners.
- Through encouraging country members to devise and implement **National Plans and initiatives for Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation**, it helps to generate ownership of the Alliance's goals at country level, shape policies that are conducive to better living together and to develop capacity building with regard to dealing with cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue issues. National Plans are a key-tool 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 our lives in the 21st century.
- Through propping up regional approaches conducive to **Regional Strategies for Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation**, it helps set a framework for joint action and shape a common strategy to tackle common challenges. Regional Strategies provide new opportunities for and a new impetus to projects on the ground, linking innovative initiatives within and across regions, promoting people-to-people contacts and intercultural dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders. The priority aims 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 Eastern Europe (adopted in Sarajevo, in 2009) and the Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean (adopted in Malta in 2010) – others are in the pipeline (namely a Regional Strategy for the Americas).

- Through supporting and providing guidance and auspices for a number of **innovative projects of global relevance**, which branch out of the platform, the UNAOC reaches out to a wider public and stimulates global activism, advocacy and leadership in diversity, as well as further engagement in community organization for social change. Leaders of these projects are invited to make a commitment to action. The UNAOC supports the development of commitments by facilitating dialogue, providing opportunities to identify projects and commitment partners, showcasing the actions taken and communicating results.
- Through developing or leading **a number of UNAOC flagship initiatives**, it aims to contribute towards the ongoing efforts, expanding or enhancing them and/or filling in some existing gaps. These initiatives are designed to stimulate innovation and engagement, to develop pilot initiatives, to engage a wider public or to mobilize and channel resources that would otherwise not be available. In this regard, the Alliance can be seen here as a **creative lab** within the UN system that fosters innovative and impactful cross-cultural projects.

Our Projects' Selection Criteria

All projects developed or supported by the Alliance shall comply with the following criteria and shall:

- Be related to one of our areas of activities
- Focus on countries or groups of countries, notably members of the Alliance
- Target a significant number of beneficiaries or priority groups
- Be innovative and specific, combining an expected outcome, a well defined approach to address a specific problem and pursue feasible objectives within a certain period of time
- Allow for direct and active monitoring by the Alliance team or partners/correspondents
- Evaluate results using Key Output Indicators

Key Output Indicators

To maximize the efficiency of our activity, we have defined a procedural model for the selection of new projects and to assess ongoing ones. This model is based on two key Outcomes Indicators.

The first indicator represents the number of beneficiaries and allows us to give priority to actions with the broadest effect on communities.

The second one is a project score, each project being defined according to its compliance with the following:

- Carried out after formalizing a “Commitment to Action” to ensure project quality, monitoring and compliance;
- Be based on the principle “acting through partnerships”, encouraging other stakeholders to engage in project activities
- Clearly defined “Commitment to Action Plan” with objective information about context, objectives, beneficiaries, partners, process, timeline, expected outcomes and budgeting.
- Regular reporting to keep the Alliance updated about activities implemented and project status as well as providing a final report after completion of the project.
- Potential for scaling-up, replication and sustainability.

What has been achieved over the past 5 years?



Over the past five year the UNAOC went global – in terms of membership of its Group of Friends; in terms of networks; in terms of partnerships; in terms of action; in terms of outreach. It was a period of growth and global impact.

The next five years have to be a time for consolidation, sustainability and delivery.

Get involved and support the UNAOC

Your support is vital to the UNAOC’s work. There are lots of ways that you can support the UNAOC - directly and indirectly:

- Make a financial donation, which will go straight to helping our ongoing initiatives around the world. It's an easy process and you can give whatever amount you want - it all helps.
- Directly support a UNAOC programme upon your choice or support an organization that runs a UNAOC branded programme.
- For corporate and foundation Partners, you can also play a constructive role in finding collective solutions for some of the problems the UNAOC tackles. This means engaging in a collective effort to achieve common goals in a specific region or regarding a specific topic through a partnership that puts your action together with others.
- Make an in-kind donation or a commitment to a UNAOC action, such as the organization of a UNAOC action or hosting a UNAOC Forum, meeting or seminar or supporting the UNAOC’s work in any other way. This may specifically include holding awareness and fund-raising events in

your communities, marking the World Interfaith Harmony week (each first week of February) and the World Day for Dialogue, Diversity and Development (21st May).

- For those who want to play a more direct role, there are several ways in which you can get involved. We welcome interns in our headquarters throughout the year. You could work for UNAOC events as a Volunteer, keeping up to date on our activities and joining in an online dialogue on popular social networking sites about our work and those with whom we work.

The Istanbul Forum (31 May- 1 June 2012)

This is the opportunity not to be missed! The Partners Forum will bring together governments, intergovernmental organizations as well as businesses, private foundations and individuals who have a strong commitment to realizing the vision of a world free from the burden of intercultural fault-lines, conflicts and divides, where cultural diversity is an asset and not a liability.

This Partners Forum, hosted by H.E. the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, co-chaired by H.E. the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, will consist of a Pledging Session on 31 May and an Informed Debate Session on 1 June 2012. This is the right context and moment to announce your further engagement with the Alliance and therefore become a member of the UNAOC Partners' Assembly.

This new platform to be announced and set up in Istanbul is aimed at further engaging the private sector in the governance of the Alliance.

This is why Istanbul is a turning point for the UNAOC and a unique opportunity for renewing the UNAOC global partnership.

Looking for more information? Please consult our website (www.unaoc.org) or contact:

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