

## Regional Session 1: Danube/Black Sea/South Caucasus/Central Asian Regions

### Panelists:

**Marton Mehes**, Director Balassi Institute - Collegium Hungaricum Vienna, Initiator of Danube Culture Cluster, Member of the Steering Group of Priority Area 3 of the EU Danube Strategy

**Victor Tvircun**, Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

**Adil Akhmetov**, Senator, Member of Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan

**Snežana Samardžić-Marković**, Director General Democracy Head of Delegation of Council of Europe

**Floriane Hohenberg**, Head of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, OSCE - ODHIR

**Vasif Eyvazzade**, Director for International Relations, Ministry of Culture, Azerbaijan

### Moderator:

**Martin Eichtinger**, Director-General for Cultural Policy, Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Austria

### Session Summary

Moderator Martin Eichtinger opened the session by recalling the diversity of the Danube, Black Sea, South Caucasus and Central Asian region including 26 states and a total population of 640 million people. Following the major political and economic transitions in those countries in the last decades, the strategy of enforcement of intercultural and interreligious dialogue has to be focused on.

In this context Adil Akhmetov outlined the importance of the UNAOC and its contribution to build new relations between different cultures. He assured Kazakhstan's support of new UNAOC initiatives and its willingness to develop further effective cooperation in order to maintain peace and harmony.

The contribution to an intercultural dialogue is also on the agenda of the OSCE. Floriane Hohenberg mentioned that the OSCE has fostered a number of grass root initiatives and trainings so that a common language of dialogue could be established.

Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General Democracy Head of Delegation of Council of Europe, outlined the Council of Europe's work that is adapted to the various needs in the different regions concerned by the strategy. She then emphasized on the need to support gender issues not only on a regional level, but in every strategy. Therefore the Council of Europe is aiming for contributing to the UNAOC's work on a long-time basis.

Victor Tvircun stressed the importance of his organization BSEC, which serves as a unique and permanent platform of dialogue on the regional scope. He could imagine a cooperation with UNAOC on topics like culture and education as well as the importance of including women's equality in new strategies.

Vasif Eyvazzade stressed the good links between Azerbaijan and European States, especially within the BSCE and the Council of Europe, which makes Azerbaijan a bridge builder within the region. He further outlined the use of analyzing previous co-operations and their outcomes which could also be transferred to the new strategy of an enforcement of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Marton Mehes focused on the Danube region itself and emphasized that the region is a good example for building bridges between different cultures in a very diverse region. He further stated the importance of the river Danube and its emotional component in the dialogue within the region.

### Quotations

#### Snežana Samardžić-Marković

“Diversity should be seen as an advantage to boost society in cultural, economic and many other ways.”

#### Floriane Hohenberg

“Women are extraordinary agents of change.”

#### Martin Eichtinger

“The Alliance is a good motivator.”

#### Iliana Schmatelka

“We have all the instruments. [...] We should look on what we have and start to combine it.”