

## **Workshop 7 – Enhancing the Role of Youth within the UNAOC National Plans and Regional Strategies to promote intercultural understanding**

**Sharing of best practices – from building on booming Youth Travel experiences to student exchanges and youth festivals**

### **Panelists:**

**Blerjana Bino**, Social Entrepreneur, Researcher, Coordinator for Youth and Social Inclusion at the UET Centre for Development and Research, Albania

**Ilja Sichrovsky**, Founder and Secretary General, Muslim-Jewish Conference, Austria

**Amr Abdel-Ghaffar**, Regional Director for the Middle East, UNWTO, Focal Point for the UNAOC, Egypt

**Laura Daly**, Special Advisor to Director General, Wyse Travel Confederation, Ireland

**Chiedza Taruvinga**, Member of the International Human Rights Exchange Program, Mozambique

**Frank Frederics**, Executive Director, World Faith, USA

### **Moderator:**

Daniel Cervan, UNAOC

### **Workshop Summary**

The workshop on the role of youth was divided in two sections. The first two speakers presented their institutions' data on youth tourism, highlighting the importance of developing youth travel globally. Amr Abdel-Ghaffar emphasized that youth travel is often an underestimated engine of growth and development while being the fastest growing tourism sector. It plays a key role in fostering tolerance and respect as well as building bridges for peace. Laura Daly reiterated this point by presenting a survey of her institution that showed the resilience of youth markets and the personal benefits of travelling.

Travelling as an essential starting point for youth-led initiatives was a key point made by Ilja Sichrovsky. She emphasized that by travelling prejudices and stereotypes could be broken down and instead new perspectives on cooperation developed.

Blerjana Bino raised the issue of youth marginalization being a fundamental problem to be addressed. It was essential to empower youth of marginalized communities in the society to create their own medium of expression.

Another significant topic was brought up by Frank Frederics who explained that it would be also important to focus on the assets of youth and their communities and ensure the humanization of

programs as a holistic approach in order to fight problems such as the narratives of violence and the underlying economic opportunity of violence.

However, the issue of funding continued to be a problem of many youth-led projects. The panelists shared their personal experiences of seed-funding initiatives, collaborative action of volunteers and finding alternatives to money. It was agreed that the education sector played a key role in inspiring and motivating youth, and that social media was essential to connect like-minded people.

### **Quotations**

Blerjana Bino

“Youth is not just a stage in life but a constructive process.”

Frank Frederics

“We do not need programs that target youth, we need programs led by youth.”