



5th Global Forum - UN Alliance of Civilizations, Vienna 2013

“Promoting Responsible Leadership in Diversity and Dialogue”

Concept paper¹

Inspired by the vision that respect and tolerance among human beings in all their diversity of belief, culture and language are fundamental values for building inclusive societies as well as boosting peace and sustainable development, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations operates in a field in which choices and attitudes of a wide range of actors from all walks of life matter to turn its goals into achievements.

Politics, business, civil society, religious communities as well as academic circles, professional organizations, youth, and the media are all jointly in a position to shape a new agenda for living together in diversity and dialogue. At a time of global changes when our world is more interdependent than ever, it is crucial that such actors become further aware of their shared responsibility in forging consensus in an environment where economies are interconnected, power is diffuse, politics diversifying and various worldviews and conceptions of domestic and international order compete.

Therefore, responsible leadership in all spheres and at all levels is needed. A leadership that understands the complexity of the world we live in and integrates value-based and ethical decision-making as well as the cross-cultural bridge-building is imperative in a medium/long-term perspective. This is the specific angle or perspective that the Vienna Forum will take.

More specifically, the Vienna Forum will focus on how responsible leadership can make a difference in the following three major issues:

- promotion, protection and full enjoyment of the right to religious freedom in a context of religious pluralism which consists not only of greater diversity, but also of perceptions of that diversity and new patterns of interaction among religious groups;
- media pluralism and diversity of media content and their contribution to fostering public debate, democracy and awareness of diverse opinions;

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- shaping a new narrative for migration, integration and mobility in the global economy.

In addition, the Vienna Forum will focus on the regional dimension of the Alliance of Civilizations as integral to its mission since it has to translate general prescriptions into local, regional settings and different cultures in order to deliver action on the ground. Apart from looking at existing regional initiatives within the UNAOC, the Vienna Forum will further explore the possibilities of enhanced cross-cultural cooperation in the Danube and Black Sea region, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia.

Whenever appropriate, panel discussions will be supplemented with small group discussions, offering participants an opportunity to focus on more specific topics or to work together to take action on specific challenges.

I - Addressing the universal right to religious freedom and promoting a new religious pluralism through education

The present-day relevance of the topic of religion is anchored in various different contexts. Some are political in nature and are related to main contemporary events that have marked world politics. Other factors are less obvious and are linked to the crisis or even the end of secularization theory, according to which the process of modernization is said to be weakening religion at all levels. Another important factor is associated to an entire range of new demands confronting the traditional concept of freedom of religion, namely new emerging trends in religious intolerance, rising restrictions on religions and growing interaction of a wide variety of cultures, religions and values.

In any case, recent research into religious change has suggested that “modernization brings growing levels of cultural diversity, and that cultural diversity in turn yields increasing levels of religious involvement and more positive views of religion impacting on politics” (World Values Survey).

More than half of the world population are strongly connected to religions and thereby share some strong moral common ground. Thus one would expect that ensuring protection of the right of freedom of religion or belief and promoting an atmosphere of respect and tolerance for religious and cultural diversity as well as multiculturalism would be less of a challenge.

Yet, the reality leaves ample room for reflection and collective action at national, regional and international level in order to overcome the obstacles to full enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion, remedy intolerance, discrimination and social hostilities involving religion, and anchor harmony, respect, tolerance and non-violent coexistence in a positive and sound foundation whenever there is a need to counter those who oppose pluralism.

The Vienna Forum informed debates on this topical issue will build upon the discussions held in the 4th UNAOC Global Forum, in Doha in December 2011, about the Survey published by the Pew Research Center's Forum in December 2009 on rising restrictions on religion as well as on a new Survey by the Pew Research Centre on "Improvements of legislations to foster the freedom of religion or belief" to be launched before the Vienna Forum.

Furthermore, they will take into consideration the work of the UN Human Rights Council as well as the reports of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief which offer a more in-depth understanding of religious conflict, violation and problems at large.

Based on a pragmatic approach, two main breakout sessions will be organized addressing the challenges ahead, sharing best practices and providing conclusions and recommendations for future action by States and by non-State actors that the UNAOC may want to promote in order to enhance religious pluralism in democratic societies.

Breakout Session 1 – Addressing rising restrictions on religion: law matters

As Special Rapporteur Heiner Bielefeldt recalls in a recent Report, the concept of human dignity has a long history and strongly resonates within most different religious, philosophical and cultural traditions. For the concept of human dignity to function as a normative reference in international human rights law however, it is crucial to make sure that the notion of dignity is not claimed as a monopoly by any of those traditions, but rather remains open for a wide diversity of religious or philosophical readings. This openness does not mean emptiness, though. For all the different interpretations of what human dignity may signify, this concept at the time has the precise and indispensable function of reminding us of the universal nature of those basic rights to which all human beings have a claim simply because they are human beings.

The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights furthermore links the "inherent dignity" of all human beings to their "equal and inalienable rights". Respect for human dignity thus receives institutional backing in terms of internationally binding rights. At the same time, it is this very focus on human dignity that accounts for the specific qualification of human rights as "equal and inalienable rights". The principle of equality ultimately follows on from the axiomatic status of human dignity which does not depend on any particular qualities, talents or societal status positions that an individual may happen to have or not.

As a universal human right, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief must be interpreted strictly in keeping with the opening sentence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and similar provisions. Hence it is not that the State could "grant" certain individuals or groups of individuals this right. Rather, it is the other way around: the State has to respect everyone's freedom of religion or belief as an inalienable – and thus non-negotiable – entitlement of human beings, all of whom have the status of rights holders in international law by virtue of their inherent dignity.

Therefore, the starting point for defining the application of freedom of religion or belief must be the self-understanding of human beings – all of them – in the field of religion or belief. Such self-understandings obviously can be very diverse. That is why freedom of religion or belief should be broadly construed so as to protect “theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief”.

In this Session this wide understanding of the status of all human beings as rights holders by virtue of their human dignity will be discussed as the basis for outlining the appropriate scope of freedom of religion or belief. While some States seem to limit it to a given list of religious options, it should include followers of traditional and non-traditional religions or beliefs, members of large or small communities, minorities and minorities within minorities, refugees, migrant workers, converts or re-converts and dissenters or other critical voices. One must also not forget the rights of women, who continue to have only marginalized positions within many religious traditions.

Furthermore the session will also focus on the various dimensions covered by the right to manifest one’s religion or belief, as well as discrimination on the basis of religion or belief and inter-religious discriminations and tolerance issues.

Building upon the Human rights Council Resolution 16/13 of April 2011 on Freedom of religion or belief and based on studies of the Pew Center, which show some relationship between constitutional protections for religious freedom and overall changes in government restrictions on religion, at a time when many countries are undergoing major political changes and reforming their legal framework, including the Constitutional Law, this break-out session will share best practices on upholding freedom of religion in a context of growing diversity and pluralism.

Breakout Session 2 - Living together at ease in a landscape of religious diversity and differences: education matters

Not only broad minds but also open hearts capable of compassion and imagination, that is the real challenge in tackling the root causes of religious hatred. It is no coincidence that cultural and religious literacy, cross-cultural dialogue and skills as well as education for tolerance and respect play a key role in achieving this change.

This session builds upon the Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 of March 2011 on Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief, which “calls for strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels” through, inter alia, “education and awareness-building”. Moreover, it takes into consideration the practical recommendations of a series of four expert workshops for Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial and religious hatred.

In all four regions, participants highlighted that Incitement to hatred in society should be countered by effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices, hostility or violence and to promoting understanding and tolerance. This broad conclusion is also validated by the experience gathered by UNAOC over the past five years in the many activities, conferences and debates held with a wide range of stakeholders all around the world.

This Session takes into consideration existing principles and guidelines, like the “Toledo principles on teaching religions and belief in public schools” (OSCE), as well as the “UNESCO Guidelines on teaching Intercultural Education” and the fundamental cultural and religious rights of the child that are proclaimed in the “Human-Rights based Approach to Education for All”.

In this regard, experts and participants tend to unanimously endorse the following recommendations for action, inter alia:

- To nurture dialogue, starting at a young age, and to create public space for inclusive cross-cultural, interreligious and intra-religious interaction.
- To encourage increased knowledge, mindset-building, awareness-raising and social mobilization and skills to effectively counter hate speech and to employ creative methods for mobilizing public opinion.
- To raise media representatives’, teachers’ and religious/community leaders’ awareness of their social and moral responsibilities and their roles.
- To conduct human rights education and training, also addressed to law enforcement officials and members of the judiciary.

This breakout session will be an opportunity to share best practices, discuss how to take bold action in order to implement these recommendations and agree on a pilot agenda to boost formal, non-formal and informal education for respect and tolerance.

II - Media pluralism and diversity of media content as key factors to fostering public debate, democracy and awareness of diverse opinions

As Manuel Castells points out, the technological revolution that began in the late 70s in Silicon Valley has had a profound impact on all aspects of society, creating new relationships and identities among people across the world. Because of this huge economic, social, political and cultural shift caused by the spread of new information technologies such as the internet, television and computers, Castells argues that we live in a Network Society.

In our information age, the predominance of digital technology and communication media is a reality that challenges the socio-cultural dimensions of the nation-state and national cultures as well as information flows and commercial activity.

This global broadcast communication changed the way we looked on the “other”, because we were finally able to see “ourselves” through the eyes of the “other” on a global scale. With satellite television we all became someone else’s “other”. In doing so, we have grown as individuals and as societies, because we have reached a point where the “other” is no longer just a product of our imagination, but a “real image” that can no longer be ignored in our thoughts.

It is true that we can always choose to hate the “other”, but it is increasingly difficult to do so, when the other “enters” our living room through our television screens – and particularly if the broadcasts reach us through the values of free speech.

The values of free speech are a key issue on which the Vienna Forum will reflect – on how to make them the cornerstone of journalists and media outlets, in particular in regions where this seems less than obvious; on how to help build media capacity at local level; on how to ensure the safety of journalists; on how to reinforce the role of media by empowering people to use new technology to participate and actively engage in a new civil society; helping people acquire skills and build institutions to manage their different and sometimes conflicting interests in a peaceful manner.

It is worth pointing out that media has the potential to build consensus and resolve differences through dialogue. Thus, the strengthening of media literacy can be a tool of peaceful conflict resolution and fostering plural societies.

The Vienna Forum will also focus on media pluralism and diversity of media content. Globalisation in itself does not necessarily imply the homogenisation of contents which threatens cultural diversity. But at the same time, neither pluralism of information nor diversity of media content is automatically guaranteed by the multiplication of the means of communication offered to the public. Therefore, it is crucial that media corporations and cultural industries are encouraged to invest in and support cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

Based on a pragmatic approach, two main breakout sessions will be organized addressing the challenges ahead, sharing best practices and providing conclusions and recommendations for future action by States and by non-State actors that the UNAOC may want to incorporate in its future work to in a pro-active way promote media pluralism and diversity of media content, the corollaries of the fundamental right to freedom of expression, as well as intercultural dialogue and the diversity of cultural expressions.

Breakout session 3 - Back to the basics: freedom of the media matters

People must be able to reach out to each other and engage constructively within and across communities/societies, receive and impart information, express themselves and exchange ideas: these are key conditions that must be achieved. Citizens cannot be boxed into their communities, with rarefied and homogeneous information and opinions. The availability of

information contributes to economic, social and political development and has the potential to contribute to conflict resolution and dialogue, if people are allowed to effectively exercise the human right to freedom of opinion and expression.

This panel will build upon Human Rights Council Resolution 12/16 of 12 October 2009 on Freedom of opinion and expression as well as on the work achieved by the UNAOC in this key field of its action, notably on lessons learned through the use of the media mechanism called “Global Experts Finder” (www.globalexpertsfinder.org), which provides high quality analysis to journalists and the broader public, as well as on findings and conclusions drawn from journalists training sessions organized all around the world over the last years.

Debates will focus on concrete cases featured by experts and practitioners and experiences on the ground related to:

- Defending everyone’s right to the exercise of the freedom of expression and information, including the issue of the safety of journalists;
- Promoting the effective exercise of freedom of expression and information through teaching and education;
- Promoting further the free flow of information, contributing to international understanding, a better knowledge of worldviews, cultures, religions, beliefs and traditions, respect for the diversity of opinions and the mutual enrichment of cultures;
- Ensuring that new information and communication techniques and services, where available, are effectively used to broaden the scope of freedom of expression and information.

This Session will lead to the adoption of further joint action to achieve the above mentioned objectives.

Breakout session 4 – Diversity of media content

The aim of this session is to raise awareness of the particular role of the media industry to protect and promote cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and diversity of cultural expressions. The media and cultural industries have enormous responsibility in promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue by shaping the mind and the capacity of present and future generations to fulfil their need to communicate, their capacity to navigate an increasingly complex world, to nourish their curiosity, develop their talent and encourage intercultural dialogue.

Two main questions will be discussed:

- The role of governments in ensuring that a sufficient variety of information, opinions and programmes disseminated by the media is available to the public. Participants will share best practices regarding in particular two specific issues: how the media should be encouraged to supply the public with a diversity of media content capable of promoting

critical debate and broader participation in public life of persons belonging to all communities and generations; how it can be stimulated to contribute to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue so as to promote mutual respect and tolerance and prevent potential conflicts through discussions. Both seem extremely important.

- Best practices developed by the media industry towards boosting support for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, namely as part of their corporate social responsibility effort. While petroleum companies, for example, are more concerned with pollution and their environmental footprint, cultural industries have to define their intellectual footprint: how do they impact their clients' brains? A few pioneer companies have identified the promotion of cultural diversity as one of the specific issues/challenges of their sustainable development policy. Indeed, such promotion is a source of economic performance for the company and spurs its societal responsibility. Offering a rich diversity of high quality content provides companies with a competitive advantage over their competitors and meets consumers' needs.

The promotion of cultural diversity is prompted by the societal responsibility of cultural industries: how best to nourish the creative skills of present and future generations? How to ensure that we do not encourage a "mono-culture", source of intellectual obesity and an obstacle to intercultural dialogue, to open-mindedness? To avoid these traps, a few leaders in the media and cultural industry are committed to encouraging creation in all its diversity, strengthening production capacities in developing countries and promoting cultural heritage. Some have even defined indicators aimed at measuring progress in the different business units' offerings: breakdown of revenues from sales by music genre, number of languages sung by artists; share of non-national movie co-productions; percentage of investments dedicated to leveraging heritage...

This Session is expected to lead to a number of recommendations on how diversity and cultural diversity indicators or targets can be included as an objective in the charters of media organizations, in codes of ethic adopted by media professionals or in priority-targets for media companies. It may also lead to the recommendation to pay added attention to the effect of media concentration on diversity media content, on the balance between entertainment programmes, and information and programmes fostering public debate, on the one hand, and on the contribution of the media to intercultural dialogue, on the other.

III - Shaping a new narrative for migration, integration and mobility in the global economy

International migration is a global phenomenon. In 2010 some 214 million people or 3 percent of the world's population are believed to be international migrants. More than 9 out of 10 international migrants move for economic reasons. But violent conflict, political persecution and trafficking are also important causes for international mobility.

The number of migrants moving from South to North is estimated to be as large as the number of migrants between developing countries. By 2010, the developing countries were hosting 86

million international migrants, including 14 million refugees. Thus the development implications of migrants and the need to manage migration are as relevant to the South as they are to the North.

In any case, migration is a key aspect of today's global economy. By and large, migration has a positive economic impact on the migrant household, the sending country as well as the receiving country. It is widely accepted that migration has poverty-alleviating effects in migrants' countries of origin. But the economic benefits of migration for host countries are much less understood and at times of economic downturn even disputed. However, research has consistently shown that migration contributes to economic growth in destination countries and even fears about the increased job competition for native-born unskilled workers during recessions are premised on wrong assumptions.

A full overview of the economic, social and cultural aspects of the impact of immigration is informative for policy but also much needed to develop a positive narrative of immigration, rectify misperceptions and address public concerns.

On top of that, policies that promote the integration of migrants hold the greatest promise for maximising the economic benefits of migration and minimizing tensions, in particular during an economic crisis. Charting a course for successful intervention with respect to integration is indeed especially challenging as it depends on a broad range of factors and conditions. However, it seems crystal clear that immigrants can only become, and be seen as, long-term contributors to the community through collaborative integration efforts that engage governments, local authorities, the private sector, civil society and the media. Based on a pragmatic approach, two main breakout sessions will be organized addressing challenges ahead, sharing best practices and providing conclusions and recommendations for future action by States and by non-State actors that the UNAOC may want to incorporate in its future work in order to promote a positive narrative about migration and uphold innovative approaches to address integration challenges and develop integration policies and practices.

Breakout session 5 - Communicating better by drawing on the evidence about immigration – contributing to a new narrative on migration

The need to promote a better understanding and a data-driven dialogue concerned with the economic, social and cultural impact of immigration in order to address properly widespread public concerns over migration issues will be at the centre of this panel.

Three main questions will be raised and thoroughly discussed:

1. Getting a comprehensive overview of the benefits and costs of immigration for host countries in order to develop better, accurate and straightforward public information as well as better public debate. The need for a broad approach that includes economic data on the impact on the labour market, international trade, innovation, technological change and productivity, consumption patterns, tax revenue and social security payments, but also social and cultural

issues. Immigration may indeed affect social cohesion and, in turn, social cohesion impact on the level and distribution of well-being in society. Thus, we should not overlook issues such as inequality, social mobility across generations, cultural diversity and cross-cultural relations, and social attitudes towards immigrants, including discrimination and prejudices. Practical projects such as expanding the use of successful tools, namely to map out social cohesion, may be considered.

2. Using policy interventions as well as civil society action to create expectations and construct a positive narrative around migration. Debates will focus on sharing best practices about ongoing experiences in various countries aiming at depoliticising immigration, presenting it in data-driven, rational terms and also liberating the word integration from ideological debates such as those that surround multiculturalism and/or assimilation debates about integration.

3. On the basis of the central role played by media - including social media and entertainment media - at large as an important driver of public opinion on immigration, discussion of positive examples of cooperation with media, for example between local authorities and local media or through government-sponsored training for journalists on understanding immigration. Furthermore, the need to challenge discriminatory descriptions and incorrect statements in the media through an early response mechanism will be discussed.

Breakout Session 6 - Diversity, multiple identities and social inclusion. Best practices in integration

Policies that promote the integration of migrants hold the greatest promise to maximise the economic benefits of migration and minimising tensions, in particular during an economic crisis. These policies range from the promotion of diversity in the workplace and in schools to education and urban planning. As pointed out in a study presented by OECD (Gaining from Migration – towards a new mobility system), today integration is viewed as the totality of policies and practices that allow societies to close the gap between the performance of natives and immigrants and their descendants. Whether in the realm of education, the job market, housing, health, social services, language learning, or political and civil participation, integration efforts should aim to close persistent opportunity and outcome gaps that marginalise immigrants and undermine social cohesion.

Of course there is still much discussion about how to achieve this goal. Charting a course for successful intervention with respect to integration is indeed especially challenging as it depends on a broad range of factors and conditions. Legal rights are a prerequisite of integration but an insufficient condition for attainment. Migrants face a range of barriers to integration, including prejudices and hostile public attitudes and discrimination.

However, it seems crystal clear that immigrants can only become, and be seen as, long-term contributors to the community through collaborative integration efforts that engage governments, local authorities, the private sector, civil society and the media. Secondly, it appears that in successful stories of integration it has always been seen as a two-way

adaptation which makes the onus of integration/adaption a burden shared by immigrants and by all residents of society, including its major institutions.

Based on a very pragmatic approach, this session will focus on innovative approaches to address challenges and develop policies and practices enabling integration, in particular in the following fields:

- Education, language and adult learning as an important pathway to integration for children and adults.
- Fair, equal and early access to labour markets as employment remains the single most effective prerequisite to integration.
- Recognition of degrees and qualifications held by immigrants.
- Civic participation, training civil leaders from among immigrant ranks and fostering community engagement.

This panel will present aspects and tools of successful integration policies in a diversity of situations worldwide. Partners from civil society organizations, governments and international organizations will showcase initiatives that can be replicated. The panellists will also discuss the challenges and the difficulties when implementing such initiatives. This panel aims at creating a marketplace where various actors in the migration field or at government level can share expertise, learn from each other and potentially engage in lasting collaboration.

Regional Perspectives

The Vienna Forum will dedicate two special sessions to regional perspectives.

One session will look at the regional developments of the work carried out by the UNAOC over the past year. This session will bring together representatives from a wide range of stakeholders engaged in regional action promoted by the UNAOC in order to achieve its goals. Participants will address some cross-cutting issues – such as education, youth, media and migration and/or minorities – and will discuss them from a regional perspective. They will share best practices and discuss further possibilities of cooperation. Some of the projects developed in South-East Europe, the Euro-Mediterranean Region, Latin America, Asia and the South Pacific will be presented and new commitments to action announced.

Another special session will be devoted to the Danube and Black Sea region, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. For centuries, peoples in these neighbouring regions have witnessed growing cultural diversity. Building upon existing regional strategies the following questions will be discussed: Where are the needs for more intercultural and interreligious dialogue in these regions? Which existing cross-cultural projects in these regions dealing with the themes of the Vienna Forum can be shared as best practice examples? Where are possibilities for new cross-cultural initiatives bringing the citizens and peoples of the regions closer to each other?