



ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

Home

The Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations

On 6-7 April 2009, the second Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations was held in Istanbul, Turkey. The Forum is the world's premier event aimed at advancing intercultural understanding.



OVERVIEW

"The Alliance Forum is not only about dialogue. It is about dialogue that delivers. It is about concrete, practical projects that make a real difference to the lives of people on the ground"
-President Jorge Sampaio

The Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations mobilized the energy, imagination and ideas of a wide range of committed partners, from international organizations to media, from governments to civil society, and from religious leaders to youth. From 6-7 April 2009, over 1,000 participants – among them several Heads of Government, over 50 Ministers, as well as policy-makers, foundation, media and grassroots leaders from around the world – convened at the Ciragan Palace Hotel in Istanbul Turkey, to forge new partnerships and generate ideas aimed at building trust and cooperation among diverse communities. The Forum also served as an opportunity to take stock of initiatives developed by the Alliance of Civilizations and to launch practical projects in collaboration with civil society and corporate partners.

OUTCOMES



Group of Friends

THE GROUP OF FRIENDS AT THE ISTANBUL FORUM

The Alliance of Civilizations is supported by a growing community of over 100 countries and international organizations known as the [Group of Friends](#).

Since the first Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, this network has expanded by 20%, enriching the work of the Alliance by providing ideas, insights and financial support. Members of the Group of Friends have also created their own National Plans to advance the goals of the Alliance. A range of practical initiatives aimed at creating trust and promoting mutual understanding across cultures have already been launched.

In Istanbul, National Plans to advance the objectives of the Alliance were announced by the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Qatar and Slovenia. Bulgaria, New Zealand, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom have already adopted National Plans. [Click here to view the National Plans](#).

Regional Strategies for East-European countries, the Euro-Mediterranean region and the Ibero-American countries have also been announced.

In addition, the Alliance has signed agreements with seven international organizations, with a view to leverage networks and competitive advantage with its partners. The seven agreements have been signed with: the [International Organization of Migration](#), the [Organization of the Islamic Conference](#), the [Ibero-American General Secretariat](#), the [Anna Lindh Foundation](#), [l'Organisation de la Francophonie](#), the [Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries](#) and the [Union Latine](#).



Projects

PROJECTS AT THE ISTANBUL FORUM

A wide range of exciting Alliance projects, new and established, were launched or presented at the Istanbul Forum.

Alliance Fellowship Program

Launched at the Istanbul Forum, the Alliance Fellowship program facilitates mutual, substantive, and meaningful exposure for emerging leaders from North America, Europe, and Muslim-majority countries to media, culture, politics, institutions, civil society, and religion in each other's countries. It provides a unique opportunity for emerging leaders to learn about other societies, institutions, beliefs and people. It also aims to create an informal network of emerging and influential leaders who will bring fresh perspectives to relations between the different countries and regions and who will advocate for new approaches.

Silatech

Silatech is an initiative of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al- Missned, and addresses the critical and growing need to generate jobs and economic opportunities for young people. The initiative promotes large-scale job creation, entrepreneurship, and access to capital and markets for young people, initially in the Arab world, where the highest rate of youth unemployment exists globally. In Istanbul, details of Silatech's progress since becoming fully operational were announced, including the alliances that it has established with global, regional and international partners to promote job creation, enterprise development, and job placement. Finally, Silatech's 2009 Doha Summit, to be held on June 8th, 2009, was announced.

[Click here to visit the website of Silatech](#)

Dialogue Café

In collaboration with the Alliance of Civilizations, [CISCO](#) launched Dialogue Café at the Istanbul Forum. The project is based on a radical but simple idea: ordinary people have more in common than not and given the opportunity will explore their common interests even across radical geo-political divides. Dialogue Café links diverse groups of citizens from around the world through third generation video-conferencing technology, thereby creating a new space for social innovation and exponentially expanding our ability to solve problems and innovate as a global community. Dialogue Café's development is being supported by an international multi-sector consortium of partners, enabled by cutting-edge technology, and most importantly is driven by ordinary people. The Café proof of concept will commence with preparations for pilot cafes in New York, London, Istanbul and the Middle East.

Rapid Response Media Mechanism

The RRMM project concluded a number of partnerships in Istanbul with key organizations including the [Anna Lindh Foundation](#), the [European Commission](#), [Search for Common Ground](#), [Gallup](#), and the [International Center for Journalists](#). An announcement to collaboratively launch a Rapid Response Media Mechanism for the Euro-Mediterranean region with the European Commission and the Anna Lindh Foundation was made. In January 2009, following a bid the UNAOC submitted to the UK government for funding to support the development of RRMM, a letter stating a commitment to support RRMM for a major expansion over a period of three years was received.

[Click here for more information about the Rapid Response Media Mechanism](#)

Restore Trust, Rebuild Bridges

This cluster of projects was jointly developed by the Alliance and partner organizations in the wake of the war in Gaza. This initiative followed a meeting co-organized by the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Alliance of Civilizations in February 2009, aimed at assessing the impact of the war in Gaza on relations among and within societies in the Euro-Mediterranean region. A series of joint actions were agreed upon in order to help restore trust in Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and rebuild human and cultural bridges among societies in the region. In addition to the creation of a regional strategy, this initiative will provide a cluster of projects, including a media-oriented rapid response mechanism to intercultural crises in the Euro-Mediterranean region (AoC, Anna Lindh Foundation and the European Commission); a series of international seminars on the dialogue among civilizations of the Mediterranean presented by the [Mediterranean Universities Union](#) (UNIMED); a workshop on conflict transformation for intercultural dialogue and overcoming hatred, as well as a peace camp (Council of Europe); a seminar on Jerusalem as a city of coexistence between monotheistic religions with participants coming from both shores of the Mediterranean (OIC); a training activity in capacity building addressed to Palestinian civil society institutions working in the fields of youth and culture (OIC); and an Intercultural Vade-mecum (UNESCO).

PLURAL +

In Istanbul, the Alliance, in collaboration with the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM), launched PLURAL +, a youth-produced video festival on migration, inclusiveness, identity and diversity. PLURAL + will invite young people from across the world are invited to participate by sending videos expressing their opinions and visions relevant to these themes. PLURAL + is being developed with the support of a number of organizations, among them the BaKa Forum, [Chinh India](#) and the Anna Lindh Foundation. A selection committee composed of youth and experts from the media, migration and development sectors would identify the top finalists for each of the awards categories and age groups, with final winners in each of the categories being reviewed and identified by a special jury from the youth, media, migration, and development sectors.

[Click here for more information about Plural +](#)

Education about Religions and Beliefs

Launched in Istanbul, the Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) Clearinghouse chronicles resources for learning about the world's diverse religions and beliefs as also ethics education, tolerance education, and civic education. The clearinghouse will feature resources including best practices and learning and teaching materials, links to relevant organizations, a journal, events listings, a forum and news.

[Click here for more information about the ERB Clearinghouse](#)

Alliance Research Network

The Alliance Research Network is a group of institutions that will serve as a collective think-tank for the Alliance and be the leaders of a movement to encourage cross-cultural educational exchange. The network was launched at the Istanbul forum and brings together institutions from around the world who have interests in the Alliance's four focus areas of education, media, migration, and

youth, along with other topics such as cross-cultural understanding, good governance of cultural diversity, and conflict resolution such as women and peacemaking, and city diplomacy. The Research Network will also provide a base of experts to form the “communities of knowledge” in different areas of interest to the Alliance.

International Network of Foundations

The International Network of Foundations is a group of international foundation focusing on four areas intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, education and translation, arts and media, and the engagement of religious leaders in peace building efforts. During the Istanbul Forum, a special session on the network of foundations was used to outline its priority activities moving forward, including knowledge exchange, information sharing and dissemination in the four focus areas; operational support with a view to developing tools that help identify projects and partners and build capacity; identification of collaborative opportunities; and advocacy and contributing to public policy.

Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund

The Alliance Media Fund expands the production of entertaining film, television, and new media content that challenges common stereotypes and exposes audiences to more-balanced representations of regions and cultures that are often ignored or negatively portrayed in mass media. In Istanbul, the Media Fund unveiled its three part strategy, which includes conducting research to increase understanding of the impact of media on attitudes and behavior through a research project at Harvard University, MIT, and the New School University; raising awareness on the research findings through a global media-industry-targeted campaign to garner additional support of media industry leaders for the Media Fund; and producing and distributing content in film, television, and new media that promote greater cross-cultural understanding.

[Click here to visit the website of the Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund](#)

Mapping Media Education Policies in the World: Visions, Programmes and Challenges

The Alliance of Civilizations launched a unique publication to help create a generation of informed media consumers capable of navigating their way in the complex and often polarized world of news and current affairs. Developed in partnership with [UNESCO](#), [Grupo Comunicar](#) and the European Commission, 'Mapping Media Education Policies in the World: Visions, Programmes and Challenges' offers the insights of eighteen international experts who, through their in-depth analysis, can help shape policies on media literacy and provide citizens with the tools they need to make sense of the sometimes overwhelming flow of daily news and information. “The purpose of this collection is to map some of the most relevant practices that exist at regional level and to highlight the underlying educational and media cultures that support them”, writes Divina Frau-Meigs, co-editor of the book.

[Click here to read a digital copy of 'Mapping Media Education Policies in the World: Visions, Programmes and Challenges'](#)

Doing Business in a Multicultural World: Challenges and Opportunities

The Alliance launched a publication on the innovative role played by the business sector in managing cross-cultural diversity issues in the workplace, and across communities. Developed jointly with the [UN Global Compact](#), the report, entitled 'Doing Business in a Multicultural World: Challenges and Opportunities', explores the cross-cultural challenges companies are facing, highlights good practices and lessons learned and illustrates why and how business can play a vital role in fostering intercultural understanding.



Youth

YOUTH AT THE ISTANBUL FORUM

Reflecting the status of youth issues as a core area of focus for the Alliance of Civilizations, a number of major sessions at the Istanbul Forum were dedicated to young people and substantive debates about the challenges facing them in promoting intercultural dialogue.

Youth Event

With a view to ensuring that youth participation into the second Alliance of Civilizations Forum had a strong impact on discussions and outcomes, close to 100 youth from all over the world gathered in Istanbul for two days in preparation for this event. Delegates taking part in the Youth Event:

- Provided input on the AoC Youth Strategy which includes several AoC-led initiatives aiming to mainstream the voice of youth into policies, programs and initiatives seeking to foster understanding among people from different cultures and religions. More precisely, the Youth Strategy focuses on 3 mutually-reinforcing objectives, i.e. raising awareness, strengthening capacity and sharing information.
- Built a Global Youth Movement for the Alliance of Civilizations supporting the efforts of the AoC and its youth partners. The objective of this movement is to mobilize youth organizations and individuals in order to strengthen commitment to the AoC principles, foster dialogue as well as highlight concrete actions advancing cross-cultural understanding.
- Developed framework for the Youth Advisory Committee which will work with the AoC on the implementation and evaluation of its Youth Strategy and help coordinate the Global Youth Movement for the Alliance of Civilizations along with the regional youth platforms.
- Prepared concrete recommendations for all Forum participants. These concrete recommendations were delivered as part of the Forum Opening Ceremony. [Click here to view these recommendations now.](#)

Working Session: Youth: Key Actors and Stakeholders in Advancing Cross-Cultural Understanding and Dialogue

This Working Session focused on the rationale and methods for youth participation in advancing cross-cultural understanding. It was recognized that supporting young peoples' participation in decision-making regarding cross-cultural understanding benefits society as a whole. Panelists explained that young people are active agents of positive change, especially with regard to shaping a society's response to cultural and religious diversity.

However, it was felt that much remained to be done in order to reach systematic and meaningful participation from a critical mass of diverse youth. To that end, panelists shared various methods and approaches (e.g. co-management, youth caucus, etc) available to international organizations, governments and civil society for them to fully leverage and harness the role that young people play in leading social change.

Breakfast Session: The Youth Solidarity Fund: Celebrating Young Bridge-Builders

The Youth Solidarity Fund provides seed funding to outstanding youth-led initiatives that promote long-term constructive relationships between young people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

This Breakfast Session provided the following youth organizations with the opportunity to present an overview of the results achieved as part of their YSF-supported projects:

- The Role of Youth as Citizens in the Construction of an Intercultural Society (Argentinean Youth Organization for the United Nations, Argentina)
- God and Me (No Ghetto / Respect, France)
- Capacity Building for Youth Leaders of Religious and Traditional Groups on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity for Sustained Peace and Development (Federation of Youth Clubs, Ghana)
- Capacity Building for Youth Leaders and Strengthening Youth Networking for Peace Building (Generation Peace Youth Network, Philippines)
- Interethnic Youth Alliance (Cultural Center DamaD, Serbia)
- Speaking and Listening with Respect: Students, Faith, and Dialogue (International Movement of Catholic Students, International)



Marketplace of Ideas

THE MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

On 6 April 2009, one of the most exciting sessions at the Istanbul Forum took place. This was the Marketplace of Ideas.

In 90 minutes of presentations, some of the world's most exciting and innovative but lesser known civil society projects advancing intercultural understanding were featured. A high-level audience of leaders from government, international organizations, business, religion, civil society and academia attended this session, where they heard about grassroots initiatives that are unique, but also have the potential to be scaled up and replicated in other diverse communities around the world.

Applications from around the world were sought in advance of the Forum from projects that met the following criteria:

1. The outputs and/or activities of the project must be innovative in the way that they promote intercultural dialogue, or engage in action at the grassroots level of society.
2. The project model should have the potential to be replicable in other contexts, as well as to be scaled-up to exert greater impact on target societies.
3. A project which has the potential to achieve global scale will be viewed favorably, although this is not an essential requirement.
4. The project must have the potential to benefit from participation in partnerships. There should be a clear justification for why the project bears profiling in front of a high-level audience of policymakers and funders.

Ultimately, the goal was to showcase projects which do not already have firmly established links with the UN system, or have yet to be truly 'discovered' by the international community. Almost 100 applications were received, from which 18 projects were selected via a comprehensive and thorough review process by the UNAOC Secretariat.

Featured projects at the Marketplace of Ideas

[The 99](#) – a comic based on the 99 attributes of Allah; each of 99 comic book characters is based on one of the 99 attributes. The religion of the characters is not specified, and the positive value or attribute each character represents are inclusive and relevant to every society.

[Ramadan Festival](#) – a series of cultural events during Ramadan that is organized in multiple cities around Europe. The festival is aimed at fostering social cohesion and building bridges between Muslims and Non-Muslims.

[Be Seen Be Heard Be Known](#) – an initiative to highlight and feature positive stories of young people between the ages to 13 and 29 in national newspapers and magazines with the aim of changing national perceptions of young people in the Caribbean.

[Respect Magazine](#) – a magazine produced by young people, in particular from marginalized communities in France, to promote diversity, point out stereotypes, create a space dialogue and build bridges across communities.

[Qantara](#) – an online portal that fosters greater understanding between Europe and the Middle East through showcasing arts and culture and current affairs. The word 'Qantara' means 'bridge' in Arabic.

[One Voice](#) – a project that develop, in partnership with negotiations experts, a methodology that addresses taboo areas where agreement between Israelis and Palestinians is most difficult – from refugees to Jerusalem – through an iterative polling process and a series of town hall meetings.

[Connecting Cultures](#) – a project that promotes face to face interaction between young people from the Western and Arab World via short wilderness journeys to celebrate cultural diversity, promote understanding, and help reduce the polarization of cultures.

[Amahoro Youth Club](#) – a project which aims to connect youth from different ethnicities in Burundi in a post-conflict environment to create a space for exchange among them and to enable them to participate in peace building and sustainable development in a qualified manner.

[Tool 4 Trialogue](#) – a project that gives young British students an exciting and topical encounter with religious texts from within their own faith and then facilitates discussion with students from other faiths.

[Soliya](#) – a project that links students from universities around the world via a customized videoconferencing application, providing them with skills and experience to build more constructive relationships between different cultures.

[Intercultural Study Trips](#) – a project that brings together students from a diverse group of countries (Uganda, Ruanda, Japan, Nepal, Thailand, European Union, Syria, Lebanon, USA, Israel and Palestine, Switzerland) and facilitates mutual exchanges between them.

[IMC Weekend School](#) – a project that convenes volunteer professionals who teach their jobs to children aged 10-14 in under-resourced, largely immigrant neighborhoods, in order to foster connection with mainstream Dutch society.

[Pakistan Madrasa Project](#) – a project aiming to reform curricula, improve infrastructure and offer teacher training at religious schools all over Pakistan to enhance global security in a meaningful way.

[Achieving Youth Potential](#) – a project that seeks to increase the employability of young adults in the Middle East and North Africa by offering skill-building trainings that have been designed with specific input and consultation from employers in the region.

[Rafi.ki](#) - a large, accessible and user-led online learning community where pupils and teachers from around the world work collaboratively develop their understanding of global issues through communication and joint participation in educational projects.

[The Intercultural Communication and Leadership School](#) – a project that aims to bolster civic youth leadership for inclusive and informed governance of urban diversity – piloting on 5 continents and in the Middle East.

[Tomorrow's Youth Organization](#) - a project which offers community outreach programs in Palestine to empower children, youth and parents.

[Istanbul 2010, European Capital of Culture](#) - a project seeking to promote Istanbul's status as an open-air museum, and a city dedicated to peace, understanding and culture.

Ghida Fakhry, presenter of the Marketplace of Ideas

The Marketplace of Ideas was presented by Ghida Fakhry, co-anchor of [Al Jazeera English](#) since April 2006. Prior to taking up this position, she served as New York Bureau Chief of the London-based Arabic language daily Asharq Al-Awsat. From 2002-2004, she served as the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation-Al Hayat lead evening news anchor from London, and was the New York Bureau Chief from 2000 to late 2001 for Al Jazeera. Previous to that, she was a New York Correspondent of Abu Dhabi Television.

Fakhry has conducted numerous in-depth interviews with high-profile world leaders including former United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, former Chairman of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat, and former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell.

For more information about the Marketplace of Ideas at the Istanbul Forum, contact [Dex Torricke-Barton](#), Media Consultant for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.



Speeches

SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS

Speeches from the Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, 6-7 April 2009.

Opening Plenary

HE President of the Government of Spain José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero

[English](#)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

[English](#)

[Arabic](#)

[Chinese](#)

[French](#)

[Spanish](#)

[Russian](#)

UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Jorge Sampaio

[English](#)

Statements

[Youth Recommendations](#) - delivered at the Forum Opening Ceremony

20/04/09: This section will be updated with more speeches as they become available.