



MELBOURNE CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS THE POWER OF DIVERSITY

From 10-12 October, political leaders, civil society activists, private sector and media representatives came together from Australia and throughout the Asia-Pacific region for the inaugural 'Unity in Diversity-10.10.10 Global Dialogue Forum' in Melbourne.



PHOTO: The Lord Mayor of Melbourne speaks via video connection during the Roundtable on Cultural Diversity and Inclusion (seated L-R: Dr. M. Syafi'i Anwar, Sam Sefuiva, Vinod Mirchandani, Fethi Mansouri, Hon. John Pandazopoulos MP)

Hosted by the Global Dialogue Foundation and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the event highlighted successful examples of collaboration across cultures and provided a unique platform for new partnerships aimed at building cross-cultural understanding in the region.

Participants heard the views of the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Robert Doyle; the High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, President Jorge Sampaio; as well as Human Rights

Commissioners, Members of Parliament, SBS news representatives, RMIT and Swinburne and Deakin Universities.

Participants representing the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, local councils, corporate-business, community leaders, policy makers, students and media outlets expressed a common desire for finding new solutions and upscaling currently successful programmes in the field of cross-cultural understanding.

A key feature of the forum was the Marketplace of Ideas, which showcased innovative and groundbreaking civil society initiatives designed to develop intercultural understanding and dialogue in the Asia Pacific region. These projects were presented to an audience of potential partners – among them, representatives of international organizations, foundations and academia.

Among the organizations that participated in the Marketplace of Ideas were: The Western Bulldogs, Essendon Football Club, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Victorian Arab Social Services, Y-Gap, the Centre for Multicultural Youth, Brahma Kumaris, The Art of Living and New Australia Media.

Other highlights included "Me and the Others", a presentation of primary school children's artworks organized by the UNESCO Observatory of the University of Melbourne [[link](#)].

Global Dialogue Foundation's Hon. Chairperson KK Bose highlighted the significance of this event: "With fifty percent of Australians having a parent who was born overseas, this country has an invaluable role in setting an example to the rest of the world for promoting greater tolerance, understanding and co-operation of people from various cultural backgrounds."

"This Forum illustrates how the issue of cultural diversity, central to multicultural societies around the world, plays out differently in different regions of the world. It also confirms the relevant role of the UN Alliance of Civilizations in globalizing the cultural diversity agenda, ensuring that it becomes a priority for decision-makers worldwide and helping to connect government policies with the groundswell of innovative practices created at grassroots level" said Jean-Christophe Bas, Senior Advisor, Strategic Development and Partnerships at the UNAOC.

The event has greatly contributed to the visibility of the UNAOC in Australia and in the region. A development plan involving several key stakeholders is beginning to take shape, with clear objectives for building the capacity of civil society in terms of preserving cultural identity and heritage and building cohesive communities.

Forum links: [Video gallery](#) [Photo gallery](#)



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