

## Live UN Debate on Cross-Cultural Issues

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The General Assembly and The UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) are hosting a thematic debate on cross-cultural understanding today at UN Headquarters. Opening with a high-level panel, the day-long thematic debate is bringing together young people, academics and public intellectuals, activists, and representatives of UN member states for a series of panels on the issues of diversity and relations across different societies and cultures.

The Deputy Secretary-General Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro inaugurated the debate this morning, followed by remarks by the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Besir Atalay, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. Gonzalo de Benito, and former Portuguese President and UNAOC High Representative, Mr. Jorge Sampaio. The President of the General Assembly and Ambassador of Qatar to the UN, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser moderated the opening session.

The role of youth in particular is a major centerpiece of the conversations taking place today. Dr. Migiro, the Deputy Secretary-General, in particular emphasized this point stating:

“The older generation needs to follow the lead of young people and leave their stereotypes behind, open their minds to difference and accept the others for all they have to bring. Today’s emerging generation is paving the way toward cross-cultural understanding; they are creating the conditions for the global community to go far beyond respect and understanding to engagement and real collaboration on common challenges.”

Dr. Migrio went on to talk about how young people are at the forefront of a new global dynamic that is transforming relations between governments and citizens: one in which governments are being held accountable in a much more meaningful way for their actions and policies. The UN, in her view, needs to encourage this as an institution and at a global level. Crucially, this approach also falls in line with one of the key strategic objectives of the UNAOC, which is to mainstream young people, an underrepresented majority, in political processes and decision making.

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