

GDF PRESENTATION

World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue

Baku, Azerbaijan, 9 April 2011

Presented by Co-Founder & CEO - Peter (Pece) Gorgievski

We wish to fully acknowledge H.E. President Aliyev for pursuing this mission.

Thank you to the Government of Azerbaijan and organizers for inviting me to attend and speak briefly about our experiences and our initiatives to translate momentum from important events like this into action at the grassroots level.

Together with our valued partners and under the auspices of United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, we recently held 2 Forums themed “Bridging Cultures, Building Peace and Development.

A key goal has been to connect the Alliance to local civil society organizations, share best practices and begin to assemble a global network of aligned organizations working at the grassroots or community level, including the “non-converted” to the mission we share.

The inaugural Unity in Diversity Forum was held in Melbourne in October last year.

Inspired by the 3rd Forum of the Alliance in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in particular, the Marketplace of Ideas in which Global Dialogue Foundation was a partner alongside several distinguished organizations... we invited organizations from Asia Pacific that work actively to contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding, to present their initiative, including objectives and needs in order to scale up.

Over 60 responses were received. The most innovative were invited to attend the forum and present to an audience with common interests, to develop new initiatives and partnerships.

Alongside roundtables and speakers from all key sectors - public & private, academia, students & youth, media, religion & faith, the most innovative entrants to the Marketplace of Ideas, presented concrete examples to address four key areas at the community level:

1. Integrant Migrants - New settlements
2. Challenging Stereotypes - The Role of the Media Today
3. Education for Intercultural Citizenship
4. The Role of Religion, Faith & Traditional Faith in Peace and Human Development

Being the first opportunity for NGO's in Australia to speak at an event under the auspices of one of the worlds leading bodies on intercultural development, participation was

enthusiastic and a catalyst for several new partnerships and a solid interest in the mission of the Alliance within the country.

Following the success in Melbourne, the 2nd Unity in Diversity Forum under the auspices of the Alliance was held in Thiruvananthapuram, India in February this year.

It received participants from across India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand Japan and Australia.

Slightly different format, workshops/open dialogue sessions were conducted this time to identify projects of common interest and to align people to take them up and develop in teams.

In our preparations of both events, we found although many organizations promote culture and events, there is much room to activate citizens, the non-converted, to advance “intercultural” understanding and cooperation and that we are really just scraping the surface.

Acknowledging Jean-Christophe Bas from the Alliance and the support of our partners, a call went out to students and youth inviting a short piece with reflections, ideas and experience about dialogue among peoples, cultures and religions, including suggestions and initiatives for progress.

Over 50 essays were received from around the world. They came from Russia, North and South America, Africa, all over India and South Asia.

Two winners were selected from India and invited to the Forum, and two international winners who were invited to send their video message.

Success has been in creating small teams to pursue the outcomes of the workshops, which include:

- * Establishing an initiative to promote individual actions promote intercultural understanding
- * Establishing a Unity in Diversity blog on the topic for youth around the world
- * Creating Unity in Diversity Gardens to bring people together across cultures at a place to relax, the first effort is now underway in Mumbai
- * Diversity Forum Kashmir; an event tabled at this stage for early 2012
- * And perhaps with some momentum and some time, we can look towards branding Unity in Diversity Cities;

We’re all aware of the severity and potential consequences of the global challenges, which The Hon’ble First Lady articulated so well this morning.

Elevating the intercultural dialogue to the highest levels and connecting its momentum to the goals of the MDG's is extremely positive...

There are good people in this field of culture to support the human progress required at unprecedented levels

One message received shortly after the India event read like this:

When Wokhardt Foundation heard about our village development programme, they promised to gift us with a medical van. I would not have got in touch with Wokhardt if it was not for our Kerala Forum. So this is how thoughts, ideas and connections get pollinated. Maya Shahani, Chairperson SAGE Foundation

What drives me personally is realizing Universal brother and sisterhood of humankind. I believe it is not a utopian dream... but a goal worth living and working for.

In closing, I'd like to invite you to contact me to discuss your participation in any of the programs mentioned.

Thank you for your attention.