

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/news/unity-in-diversity-initiative-to-be-launched/article8354748.ece>

THE HINDU

MUMBAI, March 15, 2016

Unity in Diversity initiative to be launched

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT



Maya Shahani (centre), Hanifa Mezoui and Peter Gorgievski in Mumbai on Monday—Photo: Prashant Nakwe

The initiative is in collaboration with the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations

People from various walks of life with the common desire for an inclusive society will come together on Tuesday to launch the India chapter of the ‘Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society’ in Mumbai.

The initiative has been launched in 19 countries over the last few years in collaboration with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Thadomal Shahani Centre for Management and Global Dialogue Foundation. Speaking to The Hindu on the eve of the launch, Hanifa Mezoui,

senior advisor, humanitarian affairs and civil society, UNAOC, said India was by and large a peaceful country. “This is a country of less conflict. It is a peaceful country,” she said, adding that while there are differences in culture and religion, they haven’t escalated like they have in other countries.

“People here are interested in doing business. They don’t stop. They are very busy making a living,” she said, adding that India is not on the global map of conflict.

Revolving around advocacy, the Unity in Diversity move will bring together communities, the government, academic institutions, NGOs, corporates and even spiritual groups.

Peter Gorgievski, CEO and Director-General of Global Dialogue Foundation, said, “The work we undertake is in communities and it is with people, rather than sitting in offices. We help create a setting for dialogue for so that communities can come together, get to know each other and work collaboratively.

“The collaboration begins to flow on from people from across cultures meeting and discussing each other’s needs, the walls begin to come down and people start uniting to realise their needs.”

He said an initiative such as this assumed further importance in the present day, given the mobility of people across the world and would help them integrate into mainstream society even as they retain cultural identity.

Maya Shahani, chairperson, Shahani group, said people to represent each vertical have been selected and they will be discussing ways to take the initiative forward. These include prominent figures from Mumbai’s civil society, community and corporate leaders and NGOs will help the movement with their diverse experiences and knowledge. Of these, education would be a critical and powerful vertical to reach a large number of youth and spread the message not just within India but also globally, Ms Shahani said.

The initiative will be launched at KC College on Tuesday. As part of the launch, a Unity in Diversity Peace Garden will be inaugurated in Bandra on March 16, Wednesday.

Move will bring communities, the govt, academic institutions and NGOs together