

Global Dialogue Foundation
30 November 2011
Keynote speech - Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
Peter (Pece) Gorgievski - CEO

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends,

Many thanks to Noemi, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services and members, for inviting me to speak with you tonight. It's a privilege to be here and to have this opportunity.

My name is Peter Gorgievski. I was born in Australia in the early 70's to parents from Macedonia, near the city 'Bitola'.

I grew up in the northern suburbs of Melbourne among people of different cultures, including Italians, Greeks, Turkish, Lebanese, Maltese, Croatian, Macedonian, Spanish, Anglo Saxons. There were others, but not so many.

Today, in less than just 40 years, in this warm and welcoming country that is Australia, which has done an incredible amount to help people from different countries improve their livelihoods and which system needs to be respected - we are living among a truly global world.

This cultural diversification, which we can now see taking place all over the world, is not without its issues. So, I believe the work done by organisations such as Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services among others, to be extremely important.

I'll offer some information about my professional background. Then I will speak about Global Dialogue Foundation and the work we do under the auspices of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

For almost 20 years prior to Global Dialogue Foundation, I was in the international freight forwarding and logistics business.

I was a young State Manager in Victoria and went on to a senior international role based in Hong Kong, then in Singapore around the time I was 30. I covered 9 countries, traveled from one city to the next almost every other day and have handled a merger of 3 group companies, who were once the largest three competitors in one market.

More recently, for about 7 years, I was a Managing Director and international partner directly involved in establishing grassroots businesses in six countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

My work which was in consolidating freight, became about consolidating or uniting companies. I would never had known it at the time, but certainly a fitting experience for my role with Global Dialogue Foundation.

Tonight, I would like to speak with you on what this rapid cultural diversification means from the perspective of the work Global Dialogue Foundation has been doing, is aiming to do, and to extend an opportunity to you as members and Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services as the peak body, to actively participate.

Global Dialogue Foundation was founded in 2008. I'm one of the co-founders and CEO. We work in the field of citizen diplomacy.

Over the last couple of years, together with partners, Global Dialogue Foundation has been working under the auspices of the UN Alliance of Civilizations in Australia and India, pioneering a civil society movement, to initiate dialogue, promote understanding and collaboration among people of different cultures.

The name of the project is Unity in Diversity. It connects grassroots organisations and communities just like yours, to the UN Alliance of Civilizations, its mission and its partners.

We all know that many issues are confronting our time, including cultural diversity. The Unity in Diversity project aims to bring cultures together to collaborate on one international UN platform.

I wish tonight, to leave with you as much encouragement as possible, to join this movement.

In Australia, we can say that decades of multicultural development and the good work of the peak bodies, including organisations like Victorian Multicultural Commission, ECCV, FECCA and hundreds of others, gives Australia a kind of edge in comparison to other countries now experiencing rapid cultural diversification and the emerging of minority groups.

As more and more people are traveling, communicating among one another and in which cultures and religions are at every step of the way, beginning to create true Unity in Diversity - it is somewhat unorganised.

Unfortunately, this means that past issues, many of which are unspoken about and probably even yet to take form, create a burden. Too often, these issues involve sharp language and they are spreading everywhere - being transported from the old to new homelands and vice versa.

Therefore, the civil society participation and building Unity in Diversity through dialogue and in collaboration with nation states in the UN system, through the Alliance of Civilizations, is a very important task, and one which belongs to all of us.

This is at the heart of what I'd like to share with you and to call on your partnership and support for moving it forward, not just in Bendigo, but as a movement around the world.

Even though civil society has always been involved in the work of the Alliance, the first meeting between Civil Society Organizations and the Alliance to discuss how to cooperate took place in May 2011 at the occasion of the Pre Forum in Doha.

Almost 200 heads and representatives of civil society organisations from around the world participated in a vibrant exchange and discussed with the High Representative how best to engage in order to promote together, intercultural understanding and diversity.

The Alliance position is that, and I quote: "Civil society organisations are indeed indispensable to reach this goal and to connect with people at the grassroots level."

Regarding the work of the Global Dialogue Foundation and how it connects.

Last year in October, Global Dialogue Foundation and partners presented a three-day inaugural Unity in Diversity Forum in Melbourne, under the auspices of the Alliance of Civilizations. It was the first event for the Alliance in Australia.

Dozens of school students in Victoria participated through an art competition, illustrating Unity. The Marketplace of Ideas program provided a platform for over 20 grassroots organisations to present their work at the event. Since then, new partnerships have been formed by Australian organisations with the Alliance, and it has opened up direct access for communities to the UN.

In February this year, a similar three-day Unity in Diversity Forum was presented in Kerala, India. The program engaged several countries throughout the region. A youth and student essay contest received entries from all over the world on new initiatives to increase levels of intercultural collaboration.

The Australian and Indian events also engaged Members of Parliament, Ministers, Government agencies, academics, NGO's and business, and contributed very much in strengthening ties between the two countries.

In creating opportunities for collaborating among different cultures, we can truly learn about one another and open new pathways for positively addressing development issues and contributing to mainstream society.

Earlier this year, Global Dialogue Foundation had the privilege to present Unity in Diversity as an innovative solution at the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku, Azerbaijan, and at the Alliance Pre-Forum in Doha.

During July in Mumbai, a Lecture was presented on Doing Business in a Multicultural Environment.

And last month, Global Dialogue Foundation hosted with several partners, and some of you attended, an event with UN High Representative President Sampaio at the Northcote Town Hall, which brought together over 130 different cultures and communities around the topic of strengthening civil society participation.

Very recently Global Dialogue Foundation was graced with a prominent mention by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his official report to the UN General Assembly, (August 2011).

I quote from the report:

"...the regional forums in Australia and India, organized by the Global Dialogue Foundation and local partners under the auspices of the Alliance, allowed the Alliance to expand its outreach and significantly develop its footing at grass-roots level."

So, it seems that citizen diplomacy and the civil society movement is becoming increasingly accepted as vital in support of official diplomacy and it offers hope and promise for dialogue and for understanding among different cultures, faiths and beliefs.

Next month, I will be traveling to Doha for the major UN Alliance of Civilization annual Forum. Global Dialogue Foundation with several partners, will present a session called: Towards a UNAOC civil society movement.

The learnings and experiences from Australia and India will be presented. The aim is to encourage leaders of NGO's to pioneer the civil society movement under the umbrella of the Alliance of Civilizations in their own countries.

So, to bring all this back home and what it means...

The goal is for citizens - as the descendants of each culture, to represent their communities, their issues and concerns, and to find themselves among a group of like-minded organisations with whom to collaborate and develop solutions.

All the while, developing this under the umbrella of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. Since the UN is the one and only body positioned to support strengthening capacity for global governance of our ever-so interdependent world, understanding among

different cultures in this domain provides all cultures with the right opportunity for their own representation.

So Global Dialogue Foundation, is like a broker. The Unity in Diversity project is about helping communities connect with this international platform.

Particularly in the initial period, it involves and it requires, communities and organisations such as yours, to join the march and be part of the growing momentum.

The project focuses on bringing all under one global umbrella not only to promote dialogue and understanding among different cultures, but to strengthen and modernise their communities, and to contribute even more positively to the development of mainstream societies.

That's why, all bodies and institutions - government and non-government in Australia, are of enormous importance for all this. Collaboration among everyone needs to take place and to be expanded upon. There is little time, if any, for competition to stand in the way of the global collaboration needed.

Some have understood this and have given and give their unconditional support. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Though, since Australia is home to many ethnicities and cultural communities, it is a good sign and a positive contribution by the communities and the Australian society for building a true coexistence and Unity in Diversity.

Hopefully, intensifying collaboration will mean increased acquaintanceship and familiarity among cultures, faiths and ethnicities at the local and regional and through that, at global level, and will result in new contacts that facilitate development in all areas; in business, culture, education, science, and all other industries such as food & health, alternative medicine, pharmacology and that it brings progress, new ideas and new possibilities for development in an open multicultural society like Australia, which needs to benefit further from its capacity, and to go forward representing itself and in all fairness, steadily becoming what it needs to be - a leader in this area and example for how to build a modern multicultural world, society of and for all.

In this way, the cultures may themselves be grateful to the Government which empowers them and actually facilitates that they develop freely so that they can address their own needs and for their future generations.

On behalf of Global Dialogue Foundation, I am very pleased to extend this invitation for Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services to join the UN Alliance of Civilizations

civil society chapter here in Australia and support this movement. I would be very pleased to work with Noemi and your representatives on the details.

Thank you!