



United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

UNITY IN DIVERSITY FORUM



GLOBAL DIALOGUE FOUNDATION

10 OCTOBER
2010
GLOBAL DIALOGUE FORUM

Melbourne, Australia
OVERVIEW & OUTCOMES

Partners & Supporters



Global Dialogue Foundation would like to acknowledge and express gratitude to our partners and supporters for making this event possible.

Unity in Diversity-10.10.10 Bridging Cultures-Building Peace

Inaugural Global Dialogue Forum

Presented by Global Dialogue Foundation, together with partners and supporters under the auspices of United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the inaugural *Unity in Diversity* Forum engaged organisations working to promote understanding and cooperation among peoples, cultures and communities.

Building on the momentum of the 3rd Annual Forum of the Alliance (held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in May 2010), the Melbourne event illustrated how cultural diversity, an essential element of multicultural societies, plays out differently in different regions of the world. Furthermore, it confirmed the relevant role of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in raising the issue of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in a global perspective, encouraging policy-makers around the World to address it and facilitate the connection between Government's policy and innovative practices at grassroots level.

The Alliance of Civilizations is an initiative of the UN Secretary-General which aims to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions, and to help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. Working in partnership with governments, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations, and the private sector, the Alliance is supporting a range of projects and initiatives aimed at building bridges among a diversity of cultures and communities.

Global Dialogue Foundation aims to; initiate and promote dialogue and collaboration for increased understanding among cultures and civilizations; maintain the identity of original traditions, fostering their impact on the development of mainstream society; strengthen the voice of the Asia Pacific Region in the debate on dialogue and understanding among peoples and cultures; contribute in supporting the work of the UN Alliance of Civilizations in the Region.

The aims of the forum:

- ▶ To create a platform for the exchange of practical solutions that contribute to understanding and cooperation among peoples and cultures
- ▶ To learn from the experience of community leaders who are working successfully at the grassroots level to bring people of diverse cultures together for a common purpose
- ▶ To adopt a Plan of Action for 2010-2011 and come up with a list of pledges that individuals can implement in their daily lives, to contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation.



Focus 4: Intercultural-Interfaith Development - Religion Faith and Traditional Faith

Highlights:

The Forum opened with a *Welcome to Country*, followed by remarks from distinguished guests:

- ▶ **KK Bose** - Hon. Chairman, Global Dialogue Foundation
- ▶ **H.E. Jorge Sampaio** - High Representative, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Former President Portugal (by video)
- ▶ **Hon. Telmo Languiller** - MP Victoria
- ▶ **Sam Afra** - Chairperson, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
- ▶ **Wesa Chau** - Hon. President, Australian Federation of International Students, Young Victorian of the Year 2010.

[Watch opening session video](#)

The **keynote address** by **Jean-Christophe Bas** - Senior Adviser, Strategic Development and Partnerships, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, offered a global perspective on **Cultural Diversity and Inclusion**.

Mr. Bas articulated a compelling message, connecting the Asia Pacific region to the global debate on dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Highlighting that four of every five conflicts around the world have profound cultural roots and origin, Mr. Bas encouraged new international partnerships among civil society at all levels.

“Understanding and cooperation among peoples and cultures is indispensable to peace and development”, stated Mr. Bas, calling on Victoria to share its extraordinary innovation and experience in the field of promoting mutual understanding with other parts of the world.

[Watch keynote video](#)



Jean-Christophe Bas



K.K. Sarachandra Bose

Following a video message from the Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of Melbourne Robert Doyle, a **roundtable** discussion on **Cultural Diversity and Inclusion as seen from the Asia Pacific region**, was lead by the following speakers:

- ▶ **Prof. Fethi Mansouri** - Deakin University, Australia
- ▶ **Sam Sefuiva** - Human Rights Commission, New Zealand
- ▶ **Hon. John Pandazopolous MP** - State Member for Dandenong, Victoria
- ▶ **Vinod Mirchandani** - University of Melbourne, India
- ▶ **Dr. M. Syafi'i Anwar** - International Center for Islam and Pluralism, Indonesia
- ▶ Moderator: **Amy Lamoin**, Australian Human Rights Commission

The topics at the roundtable included:

- ▶ Australia and New Zealand as potential models for cultural diversity in the region
- ▶ the need for a multicultural approach at various levels of government
- ▶ supporting grassroots activism
- ▶ promoting interfaith dialogue and human rights
- ▶ global ethics- moral and human dignity
- ▶ embracing cultural diversity as vital for social and economic progress
- ▶ dialogue as a critical tool
- ▶ sustaining language, cultural identity and heritage; developing into mainstream society
- ▶ building trust
- ▶ measuring progress in terms of human rights outcomes
- ▶ students struggling with identity
- ▶ investment in Aboriginal culture and preserving endangered languages
- ▶ embedding global education in the educative system

Watch video- [Part 1 Speakers](#), [Part 2 Discussion](#)



Informal Welcome Session



Children's Drawings Display

SHOWCASING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS: THE MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

Civil society organisations were invited to submit a 300 word essay to outline their project and provide information on what they need to scale-up. Of sixty applications, twenty of the most innovative were invited to present at the Forum alongside academics and experts in their field. Two winners will be awarded with support from WIFI - World Intercultural Fund for Innovation - an initiative by United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to provide regular mentorship, access to international networks and media support. The program starts early 2011.

Focus group 1: Integrating Migrants/ New Settlement

Presenters:

- ▶ Humanitarian Crisis Hub
- ▶ Western Bulldogs
- ▶ Victorian Arab Social Services
- ▶ Essendon Football Club
- ▶ Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- ▶ Sanctuary Australia Foundation



Focus 1: Integrating Migrants/New Settlement



Focus 3: Education, Culture, Developing Social Cohesion

Focus group 2: Shaping Perceptions, Challenging Stereotypes - The Role of the Media Today

Presenters:

- ▶ Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
- ▶ New Australia Media
- ▶ Special Broadcasting Service
- ▶ RMIT School of Media and Communication

Focus group 4: Intercultural and Interfaith Development - Religion, Faith & Traditional Faith

Presenters:

- ▶ InterAction
- ▶ Centre for Multicultural Youth
- ▶ Brahma Kumaris
- ▶ The Art of Living
- ▶ Service and Research Institute on Family and Children, Chennai, India
- ▶ RMIT University, Global Studies
- ▶ Diversity Connect International

Focus group 3: Education, Culture, Developing Social Cohesion

Presenters:

- ▶ Y-Gap
- ▶ The Children's Sanctuary
- ▶ Swinburne University, Faculty of Design
- ▶ OnSide Victoria



Focus 2: Challenging Stereotypes - The Role of The Media

A **children's drawing contest** involved primary school aged children responding to the title; *Me and the others*, illustrating visions of a future of cultural diversity and inclusion.

The winners presented their entries at the conference, explaining the motivation behind their designs in front of the audience and the live internet video stream.

[Watch video](#)



"Me & the Others" - Competition Winners

Below: By Ana Zidov from Ripponlea Primary School

"The colourful side of the drawing represents the world with happiness and peace. The other side is black, to show times of conflict, but I included the blue to show that there is still hope."



Ripponlea Primary School



Brighton Grammar #1

"They've done an incredible job. I would love to see this idea taken to an international level, incorporating artwork from children from all over the world."

Jean-Christophe Bas - UN Alliance of Civilizations

International student conversation

International students from India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka were invited to share perspectives and speak about their experiences while living and studying in Australia.

Some of the challenges presented:

- ▶ Unable to express culture in their own way
- ▶ Self doubt and feelings of failure resulting from rejection at job interviews
- ▶ Having little to no option but to accept undesirable positions and pay levels
- ▶ Feeling a heavy burden due to parent pressures and high expectations
- ▶ Very little time - either working or studying and almost nothing in between
- ▶ Problems are not addressed with family at home; feedback must be that everything is fine
- ▶ Students from villages who aren't proficient in English, often find themselves in difficult social situations
- ▶ At times, having to go extended periods unable to afford food
- ▶ Not knowing where the recourse is when going through problems



International Student Conversation

Among comments were:

- ▶ Misperceptions and prejudices in our own hearts contribute to our problems and rejections
- ▶ Being in Australia has taught us that things aren't meant to be so serious
- ▶ Australia has provided a different perspective on life. After coming here, seeing the laid back environment has made me a better person
- ▶ My parents don't add pressure by placing high expectations. They leave me here on my own. I haven't encountered such experiences, probably because I don't require work.
- ▶ Antagonism is often due to lack of understanding. From humankind history, when there is an influx of foreigners, it is common that there is threat among the locals.
- ▶ Our need is so great, we can easily misconstrue other's opinions or facts, e.g., Misunderstanding policies around not employing people who aren't permanent residents
- ▶ There has been a reduction in the quality of trainers at many RTO's, probably due to costs
- ▶ Australian Federation of International Students is due praise for their *student needs* consultative process
- ▶ Government, student bodies, organisations, are trying their best to make a connection between the students and communities. Yet, it seems the communication is missing and students are not receiving information
- ▶ We would like to receive financial assistance from the government for public transport
- ▶ We need an opportunity to mix with the local students and learn from each other.

[Watch student discussion video](#)

Building Private-Public Partnerships

This session brought community, NGO and corporate leaders to a panel to share perspective on building private-public partnerships. The speakers:

- ▶ Dr. Rohitas Batta, Chair, Education Chapter & Vice Chair, Ethnic Communities Council NSW
- ▶ Graziella Thake, Founder and CEO, FOSrR Foundation for Social Responsibility, New Zealand
- ▶ Don Carroll, Director, Gujarat Coaking Coal, former BHP Billiton Executive

Among topics discussed were:

- ▶ Identifying organisations committed to helping forge further partnerships
- ▶ The need to clearly articulate goals and criteria
- ▶ Large companies have a vision for their contribution to the community. They may not often have knowledge on how to get it started. This is where NGO's have a key role.
- ▶ The need for cooperation among the various ethnic communities
- ▶ Being clear on shared values and your mandate for forming partnerships
- ▶ Foreign companies often have a need to participate in community engagement
- ▶ Using NGO capacity to enrich the private sector

[Watch partnership discussion video](#)



Roundtable: Building Public-Private Partnerships

Announcing India Forum

Adding to the momentum for intercultural understanding and cooperation in the region, the following *Unity in Diversity* Forum will take place in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala- India, on 6-8 February 2011.

The event aims to support opening new pathways for increased understanding and collaboration and to offer an innovative platform for government representatives together with civil society leaders, religious groups, private sector representatives, academics, local authorities and youth, to discuss vital issues related to the following topics:

- ▶ The role of religions and beliefs in promoting peace and development: How to combine religion and secularism in Indian society in the 21st Century? How is Indian secularism different or similar to other models (i.e., USA, France, Turkey)?
- ▶ Shaping perceptions, challenging stereotypes: What is the role of the media today?
- ▶ Education for intercultural citizenship: What will be the cultural and societal impact of the *demographic divide*? How to capitalize on the *Youth wave*?
- ▶ Maintaining and developing cultural identity and heritage in mainstream society: What are the defining factors of being Indian today? Is it India as a nation rather than religion? How is the concept of Indian family changing?
- ▶ India's intercultural relations with its immediate neighborhood in South Asia and its wider regional environment: How to build trust and cooperation? What is the societal support to the civil society, artistic groups at the grassroots level that are working on building trust and cooperation between the south Asian countries?

The India Forum will also feature a "Marketplace of Ideas", showcasing some of the most innovative *grassroots* experiences and solutions from the South Asia region.

You are invited!



*"In India today,
we have a lady born a Catholic of
Italian origin (Sonia Gandhi)
stepping aside so that a Sikh
(Manmohan Singh)
could be sworn in by a Muslim
President (Abdul Kalam)
to lead a nation that's 82% Hindu"*

Unity in Diversity Forum, 6 - 8 February 2011

[CLICK AND REGISTER](#)

Venue: Mascot Hotel, [click here](#)



What's next?

The process of preparing this event and previous experience, leads us to position Global Dialogue Foundation as a regional partner for United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

The key aims of the partnership are:

- ▶ To promote worldwide experiences of multiculturalism and integration in Asia Pacific countries
- ▶ To bring United Nations Alliance of Civilizations together with local organisations to share lessons learned, exchange experience; reduce duplication
- ▶ To bridge the gap between local civil society organisations and the global intercultural agenda at UN level
- ▶ To create a movement throughout the Asia Pacific region that raises awareness for intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and cooperation
- ▶ To maintain and preserve cultural identities and heritage
- ▶ To support capacity building within cultures and communities for their self-sustaining progress
- ▶ To develop a new approach on cultural diversity for Indigenous peoples
- ▶ To create opportunities for local organisations to present their innovative products at international forums
- ▶ To support the creation of new international partnerships
- ▶ To add content and reality in the work of the Alliance
- ▶ To develop an aligned global network of *intercultural* organisations working at the community level

Recommendations:

To help realise the outlined goals, the Organising Committee together with several partners and key stakeholders, make the following recommendations:

- ▶ Endow Global Dialogue Foundation to establish a regional coordination office in Melbourne and employ 2-3 staff + CEO
- ▶ Establish an annual *Unity in Diversity* Forum in Australia
- ▶ Over the next three years, work with partners to establish a similar annual Forum in India, New Zealand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines
- ▶ Establish a Pacific consortium to develop a community approach on cultural diversity and rights of Indigenous peoples of Australia, New Zealand and the small Pacific islands
- ▶ Develop an initiative that promotes commitment to cultural diversity at the individual level and roll out a global program in the frame of United Nations Alliance of Civilizations within two to three years
- ▶ Facilitate quarterly mentor workshops for Marketplace of Ideas entrants. (The first workshop is taking place in Melbourne on 8 December 2010)
- ▶ Establish a native fashion festival in Australia during 2011, potentially as an annual event held in various countries.

Investors and benefactors are invited!

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