UNITY IN DIVERSITY WORLD CIVIL SOCIETY

Launch Event
Mumbai, India, 14-16 March 2016
OVERVIEW, OUTCOMES, HIGHLIGHTS

LAUNCHED BY

Global Dialogue Foundation
Unity in Diversity

SHAHANI GROUP
Education Empowered

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

UNAOC
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

NGO
DPI

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

Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society
Building Intercultural, Inter-Ethnic, Inclusive & Sustainable Societies

Background

It is evident, that in areas where there is no dialogue and no understanding of each other's insecurities, there is conflict. Therefore, a collaboration by Citizens with Governments and Religions, as three basic pillars of the new world order based on Unity in Diversity, will find its pathways for progress through dialogue and will build trust as the basis for respect and living as good neighbours.

Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society is the nucleus of a planetary citizens assembly, which aims to represent every culture, ethnicity and civilization at the local, regional and global (UN) levels, committed to increasing capacity in communities so that citizens may integrate while maintaining their cultural identity and heritage, and may better contribute to mainstream society. Not as citizens alone, but together and in collaboration with local, state, federal governments and international institutions this vision will become successful.

Since 2010, GDF and numerous civil society partners around the world have been working with the UN Alliance of Civilizations to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding. Currently, Unity in Diversity-World Civil Society is lead by a Global Presidency, representing 19 countries from; South Pacific, South Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. It is supported and guided by a Consortium-Global Consultative Advisory Body, which has a registered membership from over 45 countries.

The UN welcomes and requires these endeavours of bringing together governments, international organisations, private business sector, civil society organisations and individuals to enhance understanding through constructive dialogue and to boost the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The launch of Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society Indian Assembly builds on the work which began in India during the Unity in Diversity Forum, under the auspices of UN Alliance of Civilizations, in February 2011. The success of the 2016 launch of Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society India is a true reflection of the efforts and developments since 2011.

The aims of the launch:

- to form a "National Steering Committee" in India; which will coordinate continuous collaboration among civil society, private business sector, governments, religions, spiritual organisations, and work towards building inclusive societies

- to establish a grassroots "Community Leadership Team"; which will work with local communities in creating and implementing projects to strengthen civil society via dialogue and understanding

- to lay the foundation of the Policy of the Indian Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society Assembly and to create the first action plan based on this policy, and

- to establish collaboration between the UN Alliance of Civilizations India Focal Point, UN associated organisations and the India civil society; in order to contribute to reaching the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

Program:

14 March 2016	16 March 2016 (full day)
‣ **Pre-Launch Gathering**	‣ **Panel-Workshop Session**

15 March 2016	16 March 2016 (evening)
‣ **The Official Launch**	‣ **Unity in Diversity Peace Garden Inauguration**

Event outcomes:

A. Platforms Created

(i) **Thadomal Shahani Centre for Management – a space for regular meetings** of the Indian Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society Assembly, working sessions of the steering committee and workshop sessions on developing strategies and partnership programs.

NEXT STEPS: The steering committee will be settled on the next regular meeting of the Unity in Diversity Indian Assembly as well as a schedule of ongoing regular meetings will be set.

(ii) **Unity in Diversity Peace Garden – a space for dialogue events and festivals, talks, seminars**, that are geared towards unity in diversity - e.g., bringing faith groups together for dialogue events, Develop a "Gems of all faiths", bringing school groups together in the garden for education projects etc.

NEXT STEPS: Develop an action plan together with the Partner Brahma Kumaris Centre, Mumbai, for the year. To include; schedule, topics, special guests and audiences to be invited, etc.

Continued…

Outcomes (continued):

B. Supporting projects

(i) **Girl's football program: run by NGO "Parcham" and works with the help and support of the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) under the leadership of Manish Joshi, the TMC Deputy Commissioner** was identified as a project to scale up.

NEXT STEPS: To assist the NGO and Thane Municipal Corporation with inviting Muslim families to join the competition. Following action will be to assist developing new teams and tournament events.

C. Partnerships and followers programs in India

(i) **Unity in Diversity Companies Certification Program:** Several corporates will work together to develop a certification program that would recognise companies as a Unity in Diversity company. It requires the organisation to undertake a minimum set of practical initiatives that develop unity in diversity within the organisation and industry, which are measurable and will be required to report on annually in order, 1. to achieve the certification and then, 2. to maintain it.

(ii) **Unity in Diversity Campuses:** this is a major outcome. 23 campuses accepted awards for their commitment to build and develop Unity in Diversity. The next step is to determine which programs will be developed, based on what each campus would like to inculcate.

(iii) **Partnership with V Citizens Action Network** to work on the web portal platform that bring people together in one room and also online at the same time, in order to address various community needs.

(iv) **Received indication from partner in South Africa, for the next Unity in Diversity launch.**

Highlights:

Pre-Launch Gathering

The pre-launch gathering was held at Maya Shahani's residence with distinguished guests invited from various walks of life and fields of influence in Mumbai society. The gathering focussed on the formation of the National Steering Committee, which will coordinate collaboration among civil society, private business sector, religions and spiritual organisations, and governments across India, in the overall implementation and collaboration with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.
Pre-launch event photo gallery

Launch event

The official launch event of Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society, India, was held on 16 March 2016.

Receiving a warm welcome from Mrs. Maya Shahani, Chairperson of Shahani Group and Vice Chairperson Global Dialogue Foundation, over 400 attendees came together to celebrate the launch of Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society India and the efforts to use dialogue for promoting understanding, maintaining cultural identity and heritage and strengthening communities.

"Today, we are celebrating the launch of something that will have far-reaching results", said Mrs. Shahani who heads the Unity in Diversity-World Civil Society India Assembly.

Watch Mrs. Shahani's opening speech

In his welcome speech, Global Dialogue Foundation's Co-Founder & CEO Peter (Pece) Gorgievski said, "Perhaps the commitment is the place to start, and that is, to empowering communities, empowering citizens, empowering individuals and civil society organisations. Ultimately, the project aims to establish a planetary citizens assembly at the international (UN) level. Just like there is today, the United Nations, tomorrow or the sooner we can get there the better, we have a United Civilizations."

Watch Mr. Gorgievski's speech

Mr. Mike Handcock - Senior Director of GDF's Administrative Board, couldn't attend and sent his song for peace - "One People One Voice".
Watch video

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

Special guest Dr. Hanifa D. Mezoui travelled from New York for the event. Dr. Mezoui delivered a speech by H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.

The High Representatives said, "We are happy to work with Global Dialogue Foundation because you have developed a clear strategy. You have invested into an Action Plan with the creation of NINETEEN partnering organisations, known as chapters, from 19 countries. This investment shows that you understand the authority of "communities" to educate, engage and empower.

The High Representative encouraged all participants when he pointed out, "The international community is often thought of as a gathering of states and high-level political figures. In reality, it comprises a set of relevant and vital actors. They include the individuals at the heart of civil society organisations. Civil society organisations are the lungs of our societies. They are the channels through which we are able to implement and successfully monitor both challenges and progresses that touch every aspects of human life. Above all, they are central to our contemporary discourse on sustainability, peace, respect and security.

Watch Dr. Mezoui presenting the High Representative's speech

Presented by video, were messages from:

⭐ **Mr. Bruce Knotts - Chair of NGO DPI Executive Committee**

⭐ **Mr. Patrick Sciarratta - Special Adviser Sao Tome and Principe Mission to the United Nations**

(click names above to watch the videos)

Taking Unity in Diversity forward - Panel discussion

Speakers:
⭐ Dr. Mukund Rajan, Member of the Group Executive Council at Tata Sons, Tata Brand Custodian and Group Spokesperson
⭐ Dr. Zeenat Shaukat Ali, Founder Director-General, Wisdom Foundation & Islamic Research Scholar
⭐ Dr. Shankar Vasudeo Abhyankar : Chief Editor of The Great 'ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF DEVOTION', Founder of Aditya Pratishthan, A Renowned Charitable Trust & Founder, President of Vaishwik Sant Vidya-Peeth
⭐ Fr. Errol D'Lima
⭐ Mr. Akhil Shahani, Managing Director, Shahani Group
⭐ Mr. Ameya Dabli – Director Swades Foundation and affiliated to The Art of Living
⭐ Iliana Schmatelka - V.P. Unity in Diversity-World Civil Society, Business & Corporate & International Leadership Initiative

Moderator: Samyak Chakraborty

Each panelist reinforced the importance of working on Unity in Diversity. It was underlined that India is a country, which for centuries has promoted the ideals of coexistence and living in harmony among all religions and ethnic groups. The discussion highlighted that all sectors of society, regardless of whether representing faith, corporate, civil society, each have an integral role.

Also, that each individual should put his or her efforts forward to help change the mindset, and that this does not require being part of an organisation or group. Every individual has the ability to make a difference.

Continued…

Taking Unity in Diversity forward - Panel discussion (Continued)

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 parental 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

Watch the panel discussion

Mr. Dave Rogers

Leading Asia Business Coach and Entrepreneur, Author and Speaker Mr. Dave Rogers, shared his experience in traveling 33 countries to deliver the X-Factor Entrepreneur training program.

"What's your X-Factor", asked Mr. Rogers, prompting participants to explore their uniqueness, but also to help others find and celebrate their 'X-Factor' and to use it for making a difference in the world.

Mr. Rogers' message was profoundly clear, and that is to support each other in spreading magic, working with youth, and using social media to spread wonderful projects throughout the world.

Watch Mr Rogers' speech

Painting Unity in Diversity

A group of 22 students from Aatman Academy, Thane, which is a specialized instruction school for children with learning disabilities, difficulties and differences, performed "their take" on stage of Unity in Diversity. Ms. Manjushree Patil, Founder and Director of Aatman Academy said, "This take starts with the idea that charity begins at home. So when we talk about diversity, diversity begins within us. We as individuals are so diverse and the one thing that we, as learning facilitators of Aatman Academy have to do a lot with our children, is to make them believe in the beauty of the diversity that they all hold within themselves. Today we are going to present in front of you, the diversity within me that helps me accept the diversity in the world around me… "

Watch the video of the Children from Aatman Academy

Colleges taking Unity in Diversity forward

Principals from 23 colleges were felicitated on stage for their commitment to drive the Unity in Diversity mission forward. "I am too emotional… thank you, all of you. I think you have proven to all of us, in half an afternoon, the quality of your education through the creativity of your students," stated Dr. Hanifa Mezoui during the presentation.

Mrs. Shahani pointed to education as the biggest pillar for bringing people together and for unity in diversity. The very fact we have so many different colleges, all working together with us, shows our strength. It is education that brings children together, communities together. It's the child that educated the man. So its very important to start with educating the child. Thank you to all of you, for being together with us."

Watch the presentation video,

Unity in Diversity Coffee Table Book

The Coffee Table Book marks the launch of a global project driven by the students of Thadomal Shahani Centre For Management. They intend to contact students in 50 other cities around the world and ask them to take photos of street life in their respective cities.

The collection of images will be published online and offline to celebrate unity in diversity, to showcase that even though we all hail from different cultures, there is much more that binds us than divides us.

[Watch the video presentation](#)

Rahul Puri

Mr. Puri presented the Indian film industry's contribution to unity in diversity and the power of cinema as a unifying language. Watch Mr. Puri's presentation

Cultural performance

Watch the grand finale performed by Jai Ho

The Panel - Workgroup Session, Business for Building Unity in Diversity

On the day following the official launch event, supporters of Unity in Diversity-World Civil Society, filled the room at host Thadomal Shahani Centre for Management, for a panel-workgroup session.

The session was moderated by Ms Iliana Schmatelka, VP Unity in Diversity-World Civil Society Business & Corporate and Founder International Leadership Institute.

Ms. Schmatelka welcomed panellists and started with the question; "How can we collectively help the United Nations to encourage Unity in Diversity?"

The special guest speakers were each asked to share some thoughts and ideas connected to the initiatives presented.

Following the panel, the participants were asked to work in small groups and brainstorm concrete collaboration between business and UN for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Watch video introduction

Dr. Hanifa D. Mezoui, Senior Advisor, Humanitarian Affairs & Civil Society, UNAOC

Dr. Hanifa Mezoui addressed the connection between Civil Society and Business and put forth the UN's aim of opening its door for working together towards peace, security and sustainability. Dr. Mezoui explained the idea behind the initiative as focused on:

- Shared objectives: that is strengthening partnerships, trust and ethical systems.
- Shared challenges: even within the UN, the 59 internal agencies compete causing lack of coordination.
- Dr. Mezoui introduces the Business 4 Peace model that addresses the Role of Business in Contributing to Peace and promotes the implementation of responsible business practices, aligned with the principles of UN Global Compact.
- The outcome of this would be to meet and cooperate, promote an inclusive environment at the workplace, enable a globally interconnected world to empower and enhance coming up with projects such as CSR activities with commitment.
- However, it is not enough to just understand. There is always one major issue of 'Inequality'.
- It may seem that business and UN have different perspectives, where businesses focus on growth and profit and UN works for security, peace, poverty reduction and human rights.

Dr. Mezoui concludes that businesses and the UN meet, banking and corporates provide the support, strong economics and thereby increase opportunities.

Download Dr. Mezoui's powerpoint presentation
Watch presentation video

Peter (Pece) Gorgievski

Pece mentioned, today (16th March) is an action day. He further mentioned the connections of Global Dialogue Foundation to India before it started 7-8 years back, and its founder working to address inequality.

The Global Dialogue Foundation believes that the sun shines for everybody and he is working for everyone's day in the sun.

Pece also added that, the Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society initiative is represented by a Global Presidency from 19 countries and these are striving to create United Civilizations and launch the country assemblies.

Watch video presentation

Maya Shahani

Maya pointed to the launch of the "VOICE" magazine, which is one of the previous outcomes of GDF in collaboration with SAGE Foundation, as a very powerful initiative as it is a global magazine and a great platform for all communities to express their views.

Visit "VOICE" magazine online

Dave Rogers

Iliana invited Dave to explain what partnerships mean to him and concretise the concept:

Dave offered six questions to consider for the basis on which one can form strong partnerships:

- Are our values aligned?

- Can we leverage something together?

- Does this partnership steer me or sink me?

- Does the specific learning in the project motivate me?

- What is the Return on Investment?

Dave concludes with; the answers to these questions enable one to recognise potential partnerships and collaborations.

Watch video presentation

Iliana Schmatelka

Iliana explains what needs to be done based on the matrix model in business practices. Using a chart, she demonstrated how the society is divided; socially, economically and as governing bodies, and explained that these function together. She also explains how, as individuals, we have identities, belief systems and mindsets which are changeable, but what we don't have is a place for united action.

Iliana said that a platform is needed to solve problems, which does not necessarily need money, but requires communication and dialogue. This is what UNITY IN DIVERSITY is about.

What we stand for:

Unite differences for mind transformation and mutual voluntary support of all ethnic and religious groups, via understanding and appreciation. We create a new World Citizens Assembly, for dialogue and mutual actions.

What are we doing:

1. We unite in creation of the SPACE where we meet, express oneself and our own work, touch, rethink and act.

2. We unite in supporting existing projects.

3. We unite in creation and implementation of new projects.

Who are we:

Individuals from all ethnic and religious groups, engaged in all social, economic or government bodies, who bring differences in the society. We engage on voluntary basis for peace, security and poverty reduction.

Watch Iliana's video presentation
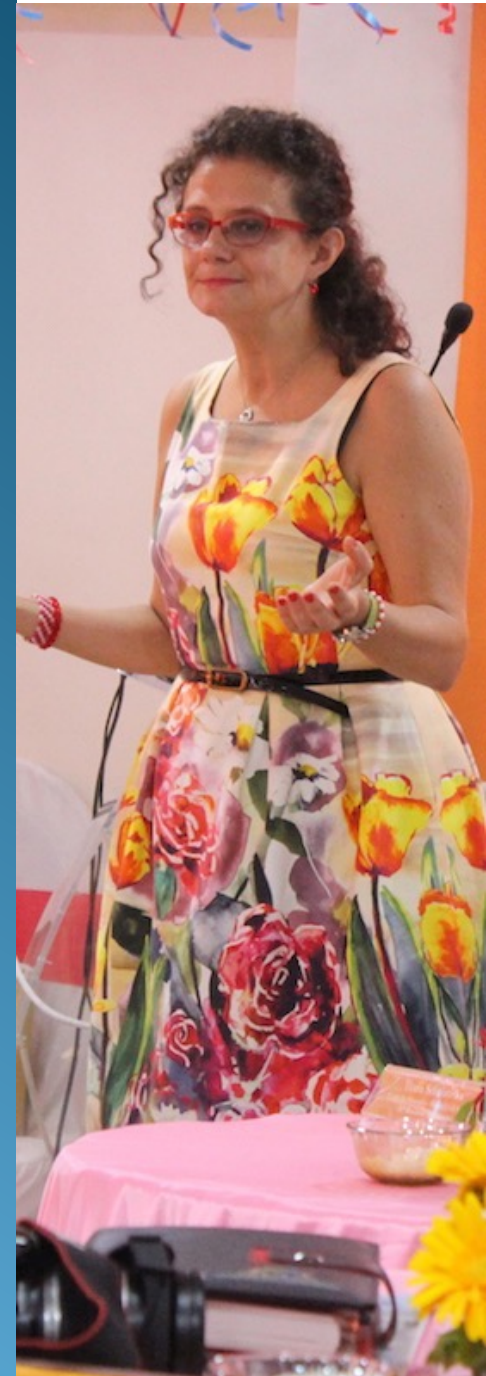
Panel / Workshop

▸ Mr. Akhil Shahani, Managing Director, Shahani Group

▸ Ms. Meera Chadha Borwankar, Special Inspector General of Police, CID State Crime Branch, Pune

▸ AP Parigi, Advisor to Chairman, Network 18 and Member, Business Advisory Council, Said Business School, Oxford University, UK

▸ Mr. Ratan Kumar Kesh - Senior President & Country Head, Yes Bank

▸ Mr. Manish Joshi, Deputy Municipal Commissioner of the Thane Municipal Corporation

The panellists were asked to answer three questions:

1. What are your thoughts about Unity in Diversity-World Civil Society?

2. Are there already actions in your organisations connected to the Unity in Diversity idea?

3. What are your suggestions for new possibilities?

A.P. Parigi mentioned the gathering as one of the most ambitious sessions that he has attended. His first observation is that there have been debates about tolerance and intolerance, but everyone ultimately wants peace. Educational institutes teach that tolerance is part of the value system.

Secondly, he said he strongly believes that businesses can play an important role.

He goes on to say that can we can, in an articulated way, stop tolerating but start celebrating our differences. He also said that we need to find an opportunity to ignite minds to celebrate differences.

Mr. Parigi said that with respect to the media industry, media generally captures debates, projects and perceptions. He mentions an initiative of Amazing Indian, where the media empower the difference one individual can bring to the society. He considers this as a vehicle that can suggest Unity in Diversity.

Lastly, he said that we are dealing with a generation of digital narratives. One area to be sensitive to for steering conflict, is social media.

Mr. Parigi notes that he can imagine publishing on a regularly basis, articles about Unity in Diversity-World Civil Society work and achievements.

Meera Borwankar said for her personally, Unity in Diversity is of Indian ethos. However, this is difficult to see in reality because of divisions caused by vested interests.

With respect to entities, Meera shared that the police have been instrumental in creating 'Mohalla Communities', where people from different backgrounds come together and interact to express their problems. Law officers take their help to address conflicts.

For new possibilities, Meera said that a special section in the police training programs can focus on communal harmony and unity in diversity.

Ratan Kesh said that he has been associated with Thadomal Shahani Centre For Management and to organise such a gathering about Unity in Diversity speaks for itself.

He mentions financial literacy as a great regulator in the banking industry. He also adds that when a bank opens a branch in the urban area, they have to be in the rural area, as well. Such initiatives create job opportunities, credit, and thus ecosystems start developing. So, partnering with community to build unity in diversity makes sense.

For new possibilities, he mentions an initiative called Udaan, which he was a part of where natives of Jammu and Kashmir were given the opportunity to work outside the state. He further added that for him, the creation of jobs itself is an integral part of Unity in Diversity. It helped in changing mind-sets by allowing people to interact with others from various parts of the country.

Iliana added that platforms such as the Unity in Diversity - World Civil Society can be a place where ideas, efforts and finance can come together to create results.

The guests then divided into random groups, to brainstorm and to formulate possibilities for businesses to support and promote Unity in Diversity.

The following points were covered by each group:

Group 1:

- Businesses can use their 'core competencies' to create employment and opportunities.

- Adopting sections of rural areas/schools/villages

- Create literature that can be shared in schools to change mindset at grassroots level

- Diversity in hiring policies

Group 2:

- Using social media effectively

- Mentioned the Peace Garden initiative as an example that shows physical leverage

- Involving the youth in awareness raising by first giving underprivileged youngsters opportunities to study and work

- Debates and discussions instead of only reacting

- Rural areas need to have representation at all such platforms

- Policies enforcing diversity in corporate culture

Group 3:

- Greenery for All initiative, involving everyone from the community working for a single cause

- Spiritual education for strengthening unity

Group 4:

- Aligning ideas and execution

- Addressing the problem of measuring impact

- Corporates should come on ground to witness the change

- Transparency and accountability policies

Group 5:

- Using technology to connect various verticals

- Increasing awareness and consciousness using education as a tool

Group 6:

- Recognise celebrities as role models

- Education as a vital key

- Language to build dialogue

- Donation in kind

- Power of media

- Creating win-win sustainable development policies

Group 7:

- Addressing the role of local bodies, corporates and social groups in creating inclusive societies

- Thane Municipal Corporation introducing a Girl's Football League

- (Suggestions to have the next gathering at one such match)

Download flip charts

Roshani Shenazz Nadirshah, Wholistic Living Empowerist, points out how Unity in Diversity can be seen in the health sector, where doctors see a life to be saved irrespective of the person's background. If we create health as a common ground, it will serve the community and bring people together.

She calls upon Sapna Bhavnani, celebrity hairstylist, to share her story.

Sapna mentions how she enabled her own self to reach out to the world. She also said that her initiative to teach hair styling to women from Kamathipura was supported greatly by the community, via Facebook. Sapna added that if one builds a dream for them, they can build a future for themselves.

Rani, Sapna's student, shared how she did not have the amenities to learn hair styling, but Sapna made her dream a reality and she will always be grateful.

Kiran Bali, Chairperson of United Religions Initiative:

Kiran said that we need to move from tolerance to acceptance and build a global family extended to all creations and the environment. She urged everyone to pledge to create a domino effect for sustaining peace and unity.

Sunil Parekh, CEO and Managing Director, RISE Development Academy Pvt. Ltd:

Sunil shared his vision of reaching out to billion people and teach what 'the mind' is capable of. He also stressed upon the need of changing mindsets.

Dr. Zeenat Shaukat Ali, Wisdom Foundation:

Zeenat said that the first thing done at Wisdom Foundation was to get religious leaders together and talk of commonalities between their religions. She also talked of their publication called "Celebrating India". Zeenat mentioned how religious leaders promote harmony and also participated in a friendly cricket match.

Post lunch discussion:

Iliana invites Dave Rogers to explain the I-CHING model, based on the Book of Changes.

Dave shows the flow of execution starting from **Why**-that is finding the purpose, to **What**-that is what it constitutes, to **Who**-that is which people are a part of it and then to **When**-that is finalising appropriate time frames.

He explains that asking **How** before time can complicate and slow down the process.

Iliana takes the discussion forward, by addressing each of these questions:

- The purpose (What):
- Address current challenges
- Share support for existing projects
- Formulate resource directory
- Skill set evaluation
- Financial support
- Create new projects

Pece said that the level of engagement in the previous day's event, especially by the young students, acted as reinforcement for him. He also mentioned that we all need to stand by our commitment and support their actions.

The next topic suggested by Iliana was to align ideas to map this platform's agenda.

The gathering decided upon meeting once a month, preferably at the TSCFM campus.

Meanwhile, it was mutually agreed that the executive committee needs to comprise experienced professionals, to be responsible for the following roles:

- country representation

- organisational development

- finance

- fundraising

- public relations

- marketing

- international communication

- event organisation, and

- administration

Young people, who will be mentored by the steering committee members, will be involved in each role to support the operation progress.

On a concluding mark, it was discussed that the executive committee would be built on the basis of the members and their interests, so that it ensures deliverance.

Indrani Malkani, Managing Trustee V Citizens Action Network, was nominated as the next moderator/facilitator.

Unity in Diversity - Peace Garden Inauguration

Following the Panel-Workgroup session and working in partnership with the Brahma Kumaris Centre, the Unity in Diversity-Peace Garden, Mumbai, was inaugurated. The garden is identified as a meeting place for dialogue and projects that contribute to building Unity in Diversity - intercultural, inter-ethnic, inclusive and sustainable societies.