



United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

Many cultures. One humanity.



FIRST UN ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS -THEMED FORUM IN INDIA ON “UNITY IN DIVERSITY”

The first United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) themed-forum in South Asia will take place in Kerala, India, from February 6-8, 2011. Organized by the Global Dialogue Foundation (GDF) in collaboration with SAGE Foundation, PeaceWorks and PNCA, the forum will take place in the city of Thiruvananthapuram around the theme Unity in Diversity: Bridging Cultures, Building Peace and Development.

The forum will shed light on new ways for improving understanding and collaboration among people, cultures and communities. It will offer innovative platforms for governments, civil society organizations, and community leaders to discuss and begin breaking the walls of intolerance in different societies.

"This forum in India represents a major development for the UNAOC's work", says Jean Christophe Bas, Senior Advisor Strategic Development and Partnerships. "The mobilization of a wide range of actors, from government officials to civil society organizations and religious leaders shows that dialogue and cooperation among peoples and cultures are also a major concern and objective to achieve peace and development in this part of the world."

Kerala was chosen to host this event, as "it is the most religiously diverse state in India. Religious diversity has been a defining trait of India's population" explains Hon. Vice Chairperson of Global Dialogue Foundation Maya Shahani.

The Forum, which will be inaugurated by Honorable Chief Minister of the Government of Kerala Sri. V.S. Achuthanandan, will focus on a number of issues, including the role of religion and beliefs in promoting peace and development. The roundtable discussions at the forum will lead to an action plan of concrete and practical steps that can be taken to bridge cultural gaps.

The [opening session](#) of the forum will feature an interfaith celebration in honor of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, which will be observed for the first time between February 1 and 7, 2011.

The forum will also provide a platform for youth and the young leaders of tomorrow to express their views. Youth Ambassadors chosen from the popular Youth Essay Competition will present their work and share their thoughts on shaping perceptions and challenging stereotypes.

This is the second Unity in Diversity forum staged by GDF, following its successful Melbourne forum in 2010. As Global Dialogue Foundation co-founder and CEO Peter Gorgievski explains "the Forum's aim is to bring the UNAOC together with local civil society organizations, promote worldwide experiences of multiculturalism and integration and understand the importance of combating intolerance at the grass-roots level."

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