THE ACADEMIC FORUM OF UNESCO CHAIRS ON INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

19-20 May 2015
Baku, Azerbaijan
THE ACADEMIC FORUM OF UNESCO CHAIRS ON INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

19-20 MAY 2015

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE 3RD WORLD FORUM ON INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE
“Shared Cultures for Shared Security”

Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan
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Concept Note

Significance


Today, globalization and rapid social transformations offer new opportunities as well as challenges, which call for a better articulation between cultural diversity and universal values. This is particularly evident in an international context marked by a rise in intolerant behaviour, radicalization, and extremism, leading to conflicts often fuelled by the misapprehension or misuse of cultural and religious identities or beliefs.

More than ever before, there is a need to reaffirm the importance of intercultural dialogue, including interreligious dialogue, with a view to bridging divisions and bringing humanity closer together as one. This lies at the core of UNESCO’s mandate, which is to building peace in the minds of men and women and which is celebrated this year of the 70th anniversary of the Organization.

In this context, the relevance of the WFID and of the Baku Process as a whole cannot be overemphasized, as it offers a platform for enriching and innovative academic debates, while providing new ideas for policy-making, which can lead to actions for a more effective dialogue to take place in our multicultural societies.

The Academic Forum of UNESCO Chairs during this 3rd WFID is a timely initiative to address several issues of importance. As a think tank and bridge builder between academia, civil society, local communities, research and policy-making, UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs specialized in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue have a key contribution to make, building on their practical experience from different regions of the world.

Goals

A major aim of the Academic Forum is to launch a state-of-the-art assessment of ongoing research in the area of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The Forum will seek to establish closer linkages between research and policy-making and, in particular, develop mechanisms for a dynamic and effective articulation between the UNESCO Chairs/Network and the Baku WFID.
The Academic Forum is intended to strengthen the coordination and cooperation for intercultural understanding and sustainable development. It will discuss key steps and actions to build an effective contribution of UNESCO Chairs to the implementation of the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022).

Format and Audience

The Academic Forum will include two Thematic Discussions with the participation of the UNESCO Chair holders and experts in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, including the UNESCO/UNITWIN Network on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding, and with involvement of other specialists from all over the world.

The thematic sessions will take place in the format of the round-table discussions with 3 key speakers’ presentations and further collective discussions. The intense and result-oriented debates with respective contributions from all of the participants are foreseen to be developed in line with the key questions of the Agenda.

In addition to the thematic sessions, there will be a Working Session of the UNESCO/UNITWIN Network experts to discuss a joint action plan for 2015-2017, in particular with consideration of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). Attendance and participation of other UNESCO Chairs in this UNITWIN meeting is greatly encouraged.

The UNITWIN Network on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding is operational since 2006 and includes some 20 UNESCO Chairs worldwide. The Network has well-developed capacities and extensive experience of implementing projects in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue for better understanding of the complexity of a globalized and interconnected world, including issues such as human rights, and social and ethical matters.

Expected Results

- The Academic Forum will contribute to the WFID outcomes in advancing the initiatives and undertaking concrete actions to support diversity and intercultural dialogue;
- The links between research and policy-making in relation to cultural pluralism for inclusive social development and peaceful coexistence will be strengthened;
- The recommendations for the wider involvement of educational and cultural institutions, media agencies as well as social groups, especially youth and women, to foster intercultural and interreligious dialogue will be elaborated;
• The partnership of UNESCO and KAICIID in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue will be strengthened for joint efforts towards sustainable development, peace and security, in particular with consideration of the post-2015 development agenda;
• The capacities of the UNESCO Chairs through the experience and knowledge sharing will be developed as well as networking and collaboration will be reinforced;
• The UNESCO Chairs in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue will consider joining the UNITWIN Network on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding;
• The training, educational and awareness-raising activities of the UNESCO Chairs towards promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue will be advanced;
• A joint action plan of the UNESCO/UNITWIN Network on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding for 2015-2017 will be developed, in particular with consideration of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022).
## Agenda of the Academic Forum

### Sunday, 17 May, 2015

- Arrival and transfer to the hotel in Baku
  - *City tour will be organized at 16.00-18.00*

### Monday, 18 May, 2015

- **Participation at the 3rd World Forum of Intercultural Dialogue (WFID)**
  - 08.00-09.00 Departure from the Hotel and transfer to the WFID venue
  - 10.00-11.30 Opening Ceremony of the 3rd WFID at the Heydar Aliyev Center
    - **Group Photo**
    - 11.30-12.00 *Book launch: “Agree to Differ” a landmark publication on the International Decade of the Rapprochement of Cultures: published by UNESCO and Tudor Rose*
      - The book will be launched at a high-level side event, with UNESCO’s Director-General Irina Bokova, and officials from contributing countries present.
  - 12.00-13.00 Plenary 1 Dialogue in a post-2015 world
    - “Sharing Culture for Shared Security: Soft Power and Diversity in the Modern Age”
  - 13.00 Departure to the JW Marriott Hotel
  - 13.30-15.00 Lunch
  - 15.00-16.30 Plenary 2 Dialogue as Transformation
    - “Countering Violent Extremism: the Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Religious Pluralism and Advancing Shared Well-Being”
  - 16.30-16.45 Coffee break
  - 16.45-18.15 Parallel Workshop Groups of the 3rd WIFD
  - 18.15-18.30 Free time
  - 18.30-20.00 Dinner at the JW Marriott Hotel
  - 20.00-20.30 Departure from the meeting venue to the cultural programme
  - 21.00-22.00 Cultural programme
Tuesday, 19 May, 2015
JW Marriott Absheron Hotel, Hovsan Room

09.00-09.30  Opening of the Academic Forum of UNESCO Chairs on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue

Opening Remarks:

Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO
Ms. Gunay Afandiyeva, Secretary General of the National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO
Prof. Steven Shankman, UNITWIN Network Coordinator, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair for Transcultural Studies, Interreligious Dialogue, and Peace at the University of Oregon
Prof. Patrice Brodeur, Director of Research, KAIICID Dialogue Centre

09.30-13.00  Thematic discussion 1: “World Religions in the Context of Contemporary Culture: New Perspectives of Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”

(11.00-11.30  Coffee break)

Co-moderators: Prof. Basilius Jacobus Groen, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue in South-Eastern Europe at the University of Graz, Austria & Prof. Liubava Moreva, Programme Specialist for Culture, UNESCO Moscow Office

Key speakers:

Prof. Steven Shankman, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair for Transcultural Studies, Interreligious Dialogue, and Peace at the University of Oregon, USA

Prof. Priyankar Upadhyaya, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair for Peace and Intercultural Understanding at the Banaras Hindu University, India

Prof. Hassan Nadhem, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on the Development of Inter-Religious Dialogue Studies in the Islamic World, the University of Kufa, Iraq

Guiding questions:

(i) What is the comparative advantage of UNESCO Chairs for promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue through the traditional and the new media, including capacity-building activities for media professionals?
(ii) How can UNESCO Chairs contribute to encourage the participation of young people in programmes fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue?
(iii) How can intercultural and interreligious understanding be promoted through education? How can UNESCO Chairs contribute to enrich the public policy debate on this issue? Which capacity building modalities and learning tools could be used in this regard?
(iv) How can the social and educational role of museums and arts centres as vectors for intercultural dialogue and interreligious understanding be strengthened?
(v) What are the key messages to better empower women as agents for interreligious and intercultural dialogue?
(vi) How can transdisciplinary research for better understanding of the multi-religious collaboration for the common good be mobilized?
13.00-14.00 Lunch


Co-moderators: Prof. Paul Morris, Chairholder, UNESCO Chair in Inter-Religious Understanding and Relations in New Zealand and the Pacific & Dr. Selin Şenocak, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Diplomacy, Governance and Education, Director, Occidental Studies Applied Research Centre Political Sciences and International Relations Faculty Member, Istanbul Aydin University, Turkey

Key speakers:

Prof. Gary Bouma, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Intercultural Relations – Asia Pacific, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Prof. Alberto Melloni, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in Religious Pluralism and Peace at the Bologna University, John XXIII Foundation for the Religious Studies, Italy

Prof. Roger Koussetogue Koude, UNESCO Chair for Memory, Cultures and Interculturality, Vice-Dean, Faculty of Law, Catholic University of Lyon, France

Guiding questions:

(i) What is the role of UNESCO Chairs on intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the fight against the misapprehension and/or misuse of cultural identities and religious beliefs? How can social sustainability and social cohesion, including in the context of discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, be fostered?

(ii) How can the network of UNESCO Chairs be mobilized to provide governments, religious leaders, and the civil society with links between research and policy-making for a more effective approach to diversity for harmonious and peaceful coexistence?

(iii) What would be the criteria for a longer-term contribution of the UNESCO Chairs on intercultural and interreligious dialogue to the WFID?

16.30-17.00 Coffee break

17.00-18.00 WFID Closing ceremony

18.00-19.00 Free time

20.00 Reception at Fairmont Baku Hotel, Nizami Ganjavi Ballroom
Wednesday, 20 May, 2015
Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA)


Co-moderators: Prof. Steven Shankman, UNITWIN Network Coordinator, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair for Transcultural Studies, Interreligious Dialogue, and Peace, University of Oregon, USA & Prof. Dimitri Spivak, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair for Comparative Studies of Spiritual Traditions, their Specific Cultures, and Interreligious Dialogue, the North-Western Affiliation of the Russian Institute for Cultural and Natural Heritage named after D.S. Likhachev, St. Petersburg, the Russian Federation

Introduction:
- Prof. Steven Shankman, UNITWIN Network Coordinator.
- Mr. Hugue Ngandeu Ngatta, Focal Point for UNESCO Chairs on intercultural dialogue.
- Ms. Rosa Guerreiro, international expert in intercultural and interreligious dialogue, remarks on the mission of the UNESCO Chairs networking.

Discussion on the development of strategic partnerships:
- KAICIID Dialogue Centre: key activities and future perspectives, presented by: Prof. Patrice Brodeur, Director of Research & Dr. Shahram Nahidi, Head of Humanities and Education, KAICIID Dialogue Centre.
- Reflections on mechanisms for a dynamic and effective articulation between the UNESCO Chairs/Network and the Baku WFID.
- Expanding the UNITWIN Network: inviting the other UNESCO Chairs in intercultural dialogue to join the UNITWIN Network.


13.00-14.30 Lunch
15.00-17.00 City tour
18.30-20.00 Dinner

Thursday, 21 May, 2015

Departures
UNITWIN / UNESCO Chairs Programme

Launched in 1992, the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme promotes international inter-university cooperation and networking to enhance institutional capacities through knowledge sharing and collaborative work.

The Programme supports the establishment of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in key priority areas related to UNESCO’s fields of competence – i.e. in education, the natural and social sciences, culture and communication.

Through this network, higher education and research institutions all over the globe pool their resources, both human and material, to address pressing challenges and contribute to the development of their societies. In many instances, the Networks and Chairs serve as think tanks and as bridge builders between academia, civil society, local communities, research and policy-making. They have proven useful in informing policy decisions, establishing new teaching initiatives, generating innovation through research and contributing to the enrichment of existing university programmes while promoting cultural diversity. In areas suffering from a dearth of expertise, Chairs and Networks have evolved into poles of excellence and innovation at the regional or sub-regional levels. They also contribute to strengthening North-South-South cooperation.

Today, the Programme involves over 650 institutions in 124 countries:
http://en.unesco.org/unitwin-unesco-chairs-programme

The UNESCO’s longstanding commitments to the development of education and sciences, the enrichment of cultural creativity, heritage and cultural futures, including a vibrant and peace-oriented global media structure, can in fact be seen as UNESCO’s contribution to world peace as active, flourishing and sustainable:
https://en.unesco.org/themes/intercultural-dialogue

UNESCO’s Interreligious Dialogue programme, an essential component of Intercultural Dialogue, aims to promote dialogue among different religions, spiritual and humanistic traditions in a world where conflicts are increasingly associated with religious belonging.

Learning the art of dialogue is both a personal and social process. Dialogue concerns us all: from decision-makers and leaders to individuals within each community. Alongside relevant international conferences to raise awareness, UNESCO strives to promote grass-root activities, particularly in sensitive geo-strategical areas that reach target-populations such as women, youth and marginalized populations.
On 31 March 2006, an Agreement launching the Network "UNESCO Chairs of Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding" was signed. The network is a partnership between international academic centres recognized for their expertise in this field and brings together professors, researchers and specialists of the history of religions who are personally committed to the achievement of Interreligious Dialogue. This network allows students, researchers and professors to benefit from a broad range of teaching which is at once secular, multireligious and intercultural: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialogue/intercultural-dialogue/interreligious-dialogue/

UNESCO Chairs in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue play a crucial role in contributing to the effective implementation of the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (IDRC).

In follow-up to the Decade and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence as well as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, the Action Plan for the IDRC is a vibrant call for engagement in four main areas of action as follows:

i. promoting mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity as well as supporting reconciliation efforts;

ii. building a framework for commonly shared values which fosters social cohesion;

iii. disseminating the principles and tools of intercultural dialogue through quality education and the media and

iv. fostering dialogue for sustainable development and its ethical, social and cultural dimensions.
UNESCO and KAICIID: synergies for promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue

On 28 May 2014, the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, and the Secretary General of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), H.E. Dr. Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muammar, signed a Memorandum of Understanding, reaffirming their commitment to promoting dialogue among people of different cultures and religions.

The Director-General underscored UNESCO’s leadership of the United Nations Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) and welcomed the opportunity provided by the Decade to advance new forms of global citizenship based on the sharing of knowledge, respect for human rights, and the promotion of cultural and religious diversity as fundamental principles, to foster social inclusion, the prevention of conflicts and build lasting peace.

The agreement aims at developing joint programmes and outreach initiatives to strengthen mutual understanding, tolerance, peaceful coexistence, cooperation across and between societies, contributing to a culture of peace respectful of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

The agreement engages both parties to join forces for four years in order to promote the importance of dialogue in formal and non-formal education, to advance knowledge on intercultural and interreligious dialogue for peace, to support institutional cooperation through youth-targeted initiatives and to use the media as a tool for fostering dialogue and mutual understanding.

The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) is an independent and autonomous intergovernmental organization founded in 2011 on the idea that dialogue among people of different faiths and cultures will bridge differences, reduce fear and instill mutual respect.

KAICIID implements programmes to overcome stereotypes in a long-term process that leads to a culture of dialogue that enables greater understanding of people of other cultures and followers of other religions.
KAICIID research aims both to contribute to a better understanding of the nature, spread, and impact of interreligious dialogue (IRD) worldwide, as well as to provide support for KAICIID projects, programmes, and events. The KAICIID Research Department (RD) leads those efforts, which also include developing tools for monitoring, assessing, and evaluating challenges and achievements of the myriad of IRD activities in local, national, regional, and transnational contexts. In all its interdisciplinary work, the RD seeks to integrate various theoretical and methodological approaches, with emphases as different as empirical, applied or action-based research depending on the focus and nature of each research project/programme. The most important ones include:

- **Peace Mapping Project**: PMP aims a) to understand how interreligious dialogue (IRD) contributes to various aspects of peacebuilding; b) in its first phase, to display and analyse the breadth of the IRD movement from an international organizations perspective; c) to develop a rich directory with a detailed typology; d) to contextualize IRD in relations to both vulnerability and resiliency factors; e) to enhance networking among IRD practitioners, and f) to make its results accessible to the local Vienna public through a Dialogue Experience interactive exhibition.

- **KAICIID Online Course**: KOCID is a three credit bachelor’s degree course that will also be taught as a MOOC shortly. It aims to a) increase students’ awareness of both the conflictual and the cooperative religious contexts that have existed in human history and glocal contemporary dynamics; b) teach students how to analyse these contexts in order to learn both how to turn threats into opportunities as well as how to learn from successful stories and role models; c) offer basic IRD knowledge on both conceptual and practical levels, as well as some basic contemporary cases studies, and d) basic knowledge on some dialogical techniques adaptable to a variety of contexts.

- **Comparative Diversity Commissions**: CDC analyses comparatively the recommendations emerging from various national commissions. It aims to share those results synthetically so as to be hopefully useful to other national contexts in enhancing their capacity-building for both policy makers and bureaucrats involved in the management of religious and cultural plurality as a part of daily life especially at local and national levels.

- **KAICIID Intra-Muslim Dialogue Initiatives**: KIMDI is a programme with four components: a) KAICIID Online Course on Intra-Muslim Dialogue; b) Illustrated manual on intra-Muslim dialogue and co-existence entitled One Umma: Different Voices; c) short video-clip on intra-Muslim co-existence entitled One Umma: Different Faces; and d) a global symposium on Intra-Muslim Dialogue entitled One Islam: Different Muslims.

- **Talking Dialogue**: TD aims to examine anew, in a comparative sociological approach using original archival research, the major interreligious encounters that led to the founding of many of the major IRD international organizations shaping our modern history.

- **Dialogue beyond Dialogue Conference**: DbeD (a) brought together theoreticians and practitioners in the field of interreligious dialogue (b) from various regions around the world, (c) who used different theories and methods in their work (d) in order to study further the phenomenon of dialogue from different disciplinary perspectives (e) so as to be able to trigger new learning processes, and (f) to translate them into applied knowledge to be disseminated broadly later on.
## List of Participants

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