



7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Baku, Azerbaijan, 25-27 April, 2016

Breakout Session “Alumni Showcase: Impact Across UNAOC Pillars”

Background

The United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations has stated that the organization’s activities and programming should not merely focus on promoting dialogue between diverse cultures, but rather emphasize concrete action in UNAOC’s pillars of education, media, migration and youth. At the forefront of this directive is the alumni of UNAOC’s programmes, which are on the ground of today’s increasingly diverse societies, facing challenges and working towards the goal of inclusive living.

Through initiatives within the pillar of education, UNAOC builds knowledge about diverse cultures, enhances understanding across religions and develops intercultural competence. UNAOC’s Summer School brings together a group of over 75 participants aged between 18 and 35 years old, to live together and participate in sessions focused on understanding and fostering global citizenship, reducing stereotypes, promoting intercultural harmony and building alliances. Alumni of the Summer School gain applicable tools for growing and sustaining their impact as activists, journalists, change-makers and leaders in their communities.

Alumni working in media have a critical role to play in increasing public understanding of conflicts and issues that polarize communities. PLURAL+ is a youth video festival, where competitors submit videos focusing on the themes of migration, diversity and social inclusion. With the support of PLURAL+ partners, the winning videos are distributed across the world on multiple platforms, from TV broadcasts to screenings at festivals and on the internet.

Migration and mobility shape our diverse societies, bringing the potential for development and innovation, but also creating new challenges that need to be addressed in order to build inclusive and tolerant societies. Several alumni of the Intercultural Innovation Award programme are organizations active in the area of migration and integration. With support provided by the partnership of UNAOC and the BMW Group, they are working to replicate their projects in other contexts.

PEACEapp, another UNAOC programme in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with the support of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, also encourages innovative action by inviting developers to create apps or mobile games designed to generate new opportunities for intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention.

Finally, UNAOC acknowledges that young people are key agents for social change. Many alumni are outstanding youth leaders who contribute to the development of peaceful and inclusive societies. The UNAOC Fellowship Programme in particular, fosters intercultural exchange and interfaith understanding by engaging with emerging leaders and young professionals between the ages of 25 and 38 years old. Fellows are selected for their potential in shaping opinion and taking strong initiatives within their community. Another UNAOC programme, the Youth Solidarity Fund, provides seed funding to outstanding youth-led initiatives that promote long-term constructive relationships between people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

In order to demonstrate the impact of UNAOC's programmes, alumni will have the opportunity to present their work at a showcase within the context of the Global Forum. The showcase will follow an innovative, TED-talk format, with alumni to be grouped by the four UNAOC pillars. Close to 30 alumni will present during the showcase, with each alumni speaking for no more than two minutes.

Points of Discussion

- How are alumni working within the UNAOC's pillars of education, media, migration and youth?
- What impact have alumni had within the four pillars?
- How has UNAOC programming impacted the alumni?