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

Breakout Session "Reporting in Times of Crisis: Telling Migrant Tales through Creative Storytelling"

Background

In the wake of the migration crisis and a string of violent events across the world, some communities have fallen victims to hostility. The rising far right in several European countries, and anti-Islam messages by some politicians in the United States are just a few examples of this phenomenon. Extreme voices have increasingly been striking a chord with citizens by voicing fears that alien communities are threatening their cultures and economies.

Too often, in times of crisis – terrorist attacks, migration crisis – the media tend to mix together important terms and concepts, such as extremists and Muslims, immigrants and refugees, etc. Those amalgams, along with sensationalist images, alarmist headlines and commentary, have contributed to feed people's anxieties.

A number of international organizations, politicians and media organizations have called for the need to build a "counter narrative" in order to combat and counter hateful and extremist messages that are sent around against certain communities. For journalists, formulating and communicating effective counter-narratives consists in debunking certain myths, and responding to misrepresentations of facts. But beyond doing accurate reporting and careful research, it is sometimes unclear how impactful this media counter narrative can be against hateful propaganda.

The breakout session on Media and Migration during the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in Baku, Azerbaijan, will look at various creative initiatives that are used to efficiently combat extremist and hateful language. At a time when journalists have to constantly reinvent themselves and find new ways to create appealing content, this session will discuss the value of transversal and multidisciplinary approaches in order to build strong counter narratives that can reach a large number of people.

Points of Discussion

- What are recent examples of amalgams in the media about certain communities? How should we analyze them? What do they tell us about the current state of the media?
- What are innovative ways of countering hateful and inaccurate narratives?
- How can the media help avoid amalgams?
- How can the media contribute to foster inclusive societies?
- What are creative ways to build an impactful counter narrative?