

Baku Process: Responding to New Challenge for Global Intercultural Dialogue

27 April, 2016, 11:30

The promotion of dialogue between cultures is now confronted with new issues, actors, and voices that call for significant re-thinking and broadening of its ideas, methods, and evidence-base. This reflects the importance of global issues, the rise of strong battlegrounds for ideas and seemingly intractable conflicts, continued challenges for human rights, the subjugation of women and minorities, racism and the rise of hate-crime, financial meltdowns, forced migration, terrorism, disease, and climate change.

In 2008, we, in Baku, have succeeded to create opportunities for regular exchange of views and interactions between officials of Muslim and European countries by ensuring their constructive cooperation at the conference of culture ministers of Europe and adjacent regions. In 2010, we have put forward the initiative of World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue at the UN General Assembly, and have held that World Forum in our capital in 2011, 2013 and 2015. The support extended by various international organizations, particularly by the UN Alliance of Civilizations, UNESCO, World Tourism Organization, the Council of Europe and ISESCO to this dialogue has paved the way to build such a successful cooperative platform and ensured the development of a very promising international initiative called the “Baku Process”.

The Baku Process has become an established key international platform to enable and encourage people, countries and organizations from around the globe to commit to concrete actions to support diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding by raising awareness on the importance of intercultural dialogue worldwide.

The diversity evident throughout the world creates challenge for the promotion of intercultural dialogue –there can be no-one-way to apply dialogue in peacebuilding and conflict management. The Baku Process emphasises a more effective counter to the powerful forces of prejudice in our societies through the active promotion of a universal pluralism.

This Session will develop a greater understanding of the role of dialogue in the development of peaceful relations between countries or groups of people who have been enemies. Through the lens of the established Baku process, such rapprochement is shown as a slow, gradual and patient process and showcases why cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and responsive democratic governance are vital for the development and peace, especially in time of global crisis. The Session will draw on casework progress in four key priority areas in the work of the Baku Process:

- The role of non-state actors, private sector and broad definitions of ‘culture’ to include faith and belief, tourism and the arts’
- The role of education and the particular challenges of radicalisation and countering extremist narratives.
- Recognition of the economic and structural conditions that have influence for social cohesion
- Mobilising young people as both key audiences and as resources.

And, moving forwards, provide opportunity for discussion in key topics including:

- How can we make intercultural dialogue more inclusive and more reflective of diversity in our world? What role world history, classical traditions, cultural practices, foreign policy approaches, writings of scholars.
- How do we build a framework for commonly shared values which fosters social cohesion;
- How do we promote mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity as well as supporting reconciliation efforts;
- How do we test and promote the principles and tools of intercultural dialogue through quality education and the media
- How do ensure that dialogue delivers sustainable change and cares about the ethical, social and cultural dimensions