



Istanbul Forum: Concrete Progress Made In Building Bridges, Connecting People Across Borders

Youth, Business Leaders Spearhead Efforts at Intercultural Understanding;
New Initiatives Use Technology to Break Down Cultural, Religious Barriers

(Istanbul) – Concrete progress toward a global agenda for intercultural dialogue was made at the Istanbul Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, held 6-7 April 2009, as grassroots advocates joined forces with heads of state and high-ranking religious and cultural leaders.

“The Alliance Forum is not only about dialogue. It is about dialogue that delivers. It is about concrete, practical projects that make a real difference to the lives of people” said High Representative President Jorge Sampaio.

“The world will not be able to pull out of the current global crisis through economic measures alone. For those measures to be effective in the long term, they need to be complemented by efforts to strengthen the social fabric and build trust and understanding among communities and nations,” said President Sampaio.

The key outcomes of the Forum include the launch of a number of new initiatives:

1. A Global Youth Movement for the Alliance of Civilizations composed of youth organizations and individuals who make the objectives of the Alliance a central part of their daily lives through concrete projects and personal commitments.
2. Dialogue Café, a highly innovative technological project aimed at creating a global collective of ordinary citizens, who will explore common interests across divides, and will be encouraged to collaborate on common projects. The project, led by CISCO, will be the first example of a true global public-private partnership, involving the business sector, foundations, universities and, we hope, local public authorities as well.
3. “Restore Trust, Rebuild Bridges”, a cluster of Euro-Mediterranean projects, led by the Alliance and the Anna Lindh Foundation, to be developed by a number of partners, aimed at restoring trust and rebuilding bridges in that region in the wake of the Gaza crisis.
4. An initial showcasing of the Alliance Fellowship Program to facilitate meaningful exchanges of young leaders from a number of countries and establish working relationships between them.
5. Plural +, a youth film festival focused on migration themes to be launched in partnership with the International Organization for Migration.
6. Doing Business in a Multi-cultural World – Challenges and Opportunities, a joint report of the Alliance of Civilizations and the UN Global Compact showcasing a range of best

practices and case studies for companies to use in responding to the diversity of today's business environments.

7. The launch of Mapping Media Education Policies around the World, a joint publication by the Alliance and UNESCO on media education policies.

8. A joint rapid response media framework developed with the Anna Lindh Foundation and the European Commission to serve the needs of journalists working across the Mediterranean region. This initiative will provide user-friendly access to information and expertise in the context of crises with cultural dimensions as well as a support mechanism to bring together international journalists, editors and relevant experts for media dialogue.

9. The Alliance Research Network, which was launched with 12 universities from across the world.

10. The launch of the Education about Religions and Beliefs Clearinghouse with 12 partners from around the world.

In addition, the Forum featured:

- Announcement of new National Plans and regional strategies for intercultural dialogue by governments and multilateral organizations to advance AoC objectives in their respective countries and region – this is the case of several countries including Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Qatar and Slovenia. Regional Strategies for East-European countries, the Euro-Mediterranean region and the Ibero-American countries have also been announced. With regards to the East-European Strategy, an International Conference in Sarajevo to take place in the second half of this year has been announced. Concerning the Euro-Mediterranean Regional Strategy, a set of initiatives will be carried out in order to prepare its adoption in a meeting to be hosted by Egypt.
- Establishment of a new set of partnership agreements which will enable the AoC to leverage networks and competitive advantages of partners in the implementation of its programs. We have signed 7 agreements – with the International Organization of Migration, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Ibero-American General Secretariat, the Anna Lindh Foundation, l'Organisation de la Francophonie, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries and the Union Latine.

The Alliance Forum is unique in several ways:

1. It is the one global event that brings together the key players who are involved in promoting intercultural cooperation to galvanize them into action.

2. The Alliance Forum is not only about dialogue. It is about dialogue that delivers. It is about concrete, practical projects that make a real difference to the lives of people on the ground.

3. The Alliance Forum is also about innovation. The event will showcase the most original, inspiring and imaginative projects aimed at building understanding and trust among diverse communities and cultures. These projects will be showcased in a special session, the Marketplace of Ideas, in which a number of grassroots organizations will have the opportunity to present the results of their work and provide inspiration to others.

4. Finally, the Forum highlights the role of the Alliance as a global matchmaker. It connects innovative, groundbreaking grassroots initiatives with policy makers and potential funders who can help scale up these projects and give them global prominence.