

## Diversity



## Enhancing Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation

*Organized in association with the Foundation Culture of Peace*

**6 April 2013**

**11h00- 13h30**

**Meeting Room: Lacydon**

**Expert & Moderator:** Manuel Manonelles, Foundation Culture of Peace

### Speakers:

- Yahya Pallavicini, Institut for Advanced Islamic Studies – IHEI, Italy
- Teny Pirri-Simonian, European Project for Interreligious Learning
- Salah Bariki, Marseille Esperance, France
- Abe Radkin, The Aladdin Project, France

### Initial Remarks:

- Haidi Rautionmaa, Religions for Peace Women of Faith, Finland
- Emine Eul Dogan, ANTIGONE, Turkey

**Rapporteur:** Drago Zupanic-Iljic, Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, Croatia

*In association with:*



*With the support of:*



**Session Outline:** The importance of promoting interreligious and intercultural cooperation in our increasing diverse and plural societies is out of question. This is even more acute in the Mediterranean region, a place that historically has been space of encounter –as well as clashes– between religions and cultures. The challenges posed by religious pluralism, as well as the dialectics between religious minorities and those that are predominant in particular areas or countries, are subject of intense debate, more acute in the recent times. The complexity derived from the interaction between the secular and non-secular approaches to intercultural dialogue increases the rationale behind the need of fostering such a debate.

Therefore, the need to analyse the current socio-political context and identify cultural and religious trends is of central importance. To this we have to add the need to define historical, cultural and social links which highlight universal and common values, in order to strengthen a dialogue of life between different religious and cultural identities, particularly in the Euromed region. The role of education, the gender dimension and the link between the local and regional agendas are also of substantive interest in order to be able to establish the basis for a practicable agenda for action.

### Questions for Debate:

- Analyse the current socio-political context and identify cultural and religious trends, with special focus in the Euromed context.
- Highlight universal and common values to strengthen a dialogue of life between religions and cultures.
- The role of education, both formal and informal, in building intercultural and interreligious capabilities, with special focus on interreligious learning.
- Discuss the conceptual framework for a process, as well as the necessary actions, to build a Culture of Peace within the Euromed region, based on religious and cultural diversity.
- Present and compare good practices of interreligious and intercultural cooperation at the local and regional level, in order to define a set of strategic recommendations and ideas for programmes and action.



*In association with:*



*With the support of:*



## **Final recommendations for the Euro-Mediterranean Agenda on Intercultural Dialogue:**

- 1) The need to highlight the importance of interreligious cooperation in the EUROMED region. Cooperation that should not be based on mythologized examples of perfect coexistence of the past, but should be based on the rich Mediterranean heritage -from different geographical and historical axes of the region- of realities and experiences that, with their shortcomings, are practical basis to be improved, adapted and implemented.
- 2) In these times of shared crisis, both in the North and South shores of the Mediterranean, the promotion of human dignity, particularly in its economic and social dimension, become a common ground and a point of convergence between the different religions in the region. Therefore, a shared human rights dimension becomes a linkage in-between and within different religions based on their common actions of social assistance in times of crisis.
- 3) The dynamics of intra-religious dialogue should be also emphasized, in order to have a better understanding of the current framework. Moreover, the discussion on interreligious dialogue should be based on an Inter-disciplinary approach, in order to recognize each other as equal and to accept religious differences and fraternity in modern life. The importance of existential dialogue, as well as the need to foment our own deep introspection tackling our own motivations, beliefs and incentives as a potential for changing and transforming images of ourselves and of the other, becomes crucial in order to overcome our own deadlocks and obstacles for intercultural and interreligious cooperation.
- 4) The centrality of the educational dimension. Creating intercultural and interreligious capabilities should be part of the educational curricula, and should play a central role in non-formal education, with a particular focus on innovative approaches to the study a positive approach to diversity; for the purpose of building open and plural societies that acknowledge and respect diversity.

The centrality of the issue of minorities in order to ensure plural societies was a major issue of shared concern. The gender dimension, together with the importance of the role of responsible leadership vis-à-vis to the one of media, were other topics raised during the debate. The need to establish bridges for a stronger connection between the top-down practice of interreligious dialogue (practiced by the elites) and the grass-rooted and localized ones, was also a recurrent topic in the debate.

## **Final Ideas for Action:**

- 1) The need to promote interreligious educational programs and tools, with a particular focus on the Mediterranean dimension, in order to engage in intercultural and interreligious communal dialogue with purpose of (re)building communities, based on peace and justice. This could be done with the use of “soft approaches”, e.g. by using the history of arts –and particularly of religious art- as a way to portrait the deep history of mutual cultural nurturing within the Mediterranean basin.

*In association with:*



*With the support of:*



- 2) The centrality of the issue of minorities. The need to promote actions addressed to the protection of religious and national minorities, with a particular focus on the North Africa and the Middle East. This should be complemented with specific actions in order to address the problem of islamophobia in the European context; and tackling religious intolerance all over the region.
- 3) The need to create spaces for encounter between the grass-rooted experience of interreligious dialogue and action and the one exercised by religious leaders; as well as the need to provide spaces of debate –in the EUROMED context- between believers and non-believers in order to ensure and inclusive discussion. To this is could be added the proposal of specific trainings on intercultural and interreligious capabilities, specially directed to those with leadership within religious communities.
- 4) The need to enhance stronger cooperation and interaction with other similar initiatives in these domains, such as the UN Alliance of Civilizations initiative, in particular with what regards to its Mediterranean and South-East Europe strategies. Furthermore, ALF should strengthen its involvement bring religious leaders to Forum together for conversation instead of talking on behalf of them.



Palais du Pharo: Seat of the Anna Lindh Forum - 2013

*In association with:*



*With the support of:*

