

“Baku Process- contribution to the Global Multiculturalism” International photo and article contest

Terms of the contest:

- No more than 3 page article on the topic of the contest
- Photos should be no larger than 20MB at the time of entry
- Entries may originate in any format — including, but not limited to digital files, digital prints, color transparencies, color prints, or black and white prints — so long as they are submitted electronically in a .JPEG .jpg, or.png form
- Photos and articles should be submitted no later than September 1, 2016
- Photos and articles should be submitted to the following email: bakuprocess.contest@gmail.com

In the face of the year 2016 being named the “Year of Multiculturalism” by the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan is announcing an international photo and article contest dedicated to the Baku Process – “Baku Process- contribution to the Global Multiculturalism”.

Winners of the contest, namely 1st, 2nd and 3rd place holders will be invited to Baku, capital of Azerbaijan on a 5 day trip, fully covered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to be awarded with certificates and prizes.

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Abstract:

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, as well as the 7th Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations on April 25-27, 2016 in Baku. 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.

BAKU PROCESS

2008-2015

GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

BAKU PROCESS

GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

The ultimate goal for each nation-state is to build a safer and more secure and prosperous environment and world for its people where they will live in peace and harmony with each other and with other nation-states. And this has not always been a happy story; throughout history, the road leading to this goal has been challenged by clashes, conflicts and sometimes wars, ignited by negative ideologies, intolerance and even hatred.

Often this is made the more difficult because of a lack of mutual understanding of each other's culture, histories and traditions a lack of understanding that weakens all attempts to accommodate ideological differences and avert the animosity and intolerance. Despite the unprecedented progress reached in the most recent history of the humankind, the same threats are still placing obstacles to the peaceful co-existence of nations and between people of different culture, religion or ethnicity.

It is for this reality that we need to know more about what builds better understanding in the world and the role of intercultural dialogue. In this context Azerbaijan is an example of a country very much committed to the promotion of intercultural dialogue both at home and all around the world and has already proved by concrete acts its intention to play an active role in building bridges and trust among civilizations and cultures using its multicultural experience and historical heritage.

Azerbaijan is a special and unique place where different cultures and civilizations meet at a crossroad between the East and West, North and South. With a foot in both Asia and Europe, and concurrent membership of both Islamic and European international organizations, Azerbaijan absorbs the values of the different civilizations, thus enabling it to assume a role as a genuine bridge. Azerbaijan- a miraculous country of centuries-old culture, history and ancient communities, whose lifestyle presents a distinctive and harmonious combination of the traditions and ceremonies of different cultures and civilizations. The peculiarities of the historical development of Azerbaijan, its geographical position and the national composition of the population created favourable conditions for the spread of different religions and cultures in the country. Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and other religious and beliefs managed to spread over the country in different periods of time, interacted with one another and established the specific religious and cultural life in the country. Through this experience, Azerbaijan has built a culture of acceptance, tolerance, trust and confidence where people of difference of faith, be they Muslims, Jews and Christians enjoy peaceful coexistence and live with mutual respect for each other; and they have done so for centuries.

Azerbaijan was home to one of the earliest Christian communities in the world, a Christian community that helped to shape Azerbaijan's history through the ages. Today, this community remains an important and vibrant part of Azerbaijani culture and society.

Living along side the Christian and Muslim communities is a thriving Jewish community of about 30,000 which too has a long heritage in Azerbaijan dating back over two thousand years. When, over the centuries, Jews in the surrounding regions found themselves persecuted, they found Azerbaijan to be a haven. The Jewish community, though small, has been an integral part of Azerbaijan's economic, cultural and political life, and today synagogues and Jewish schools flourish in the country. The three major religions have prospered because of the age-old respect and tolerance of the Azerbaijani people, who pride themselves on peaceful coexistence. But as the experience in different parts of the world shows, social tolerance is a necessary but not sufficient condition; communities can achieve even more with the active support of state actors; government that promotes tolerance and resists sectarianism. In this way we can begin to see a vision of shared security in which all sections of society, both state and non-state actors commit themselves to create positive relations within and between communities. Traditionally the notion of security has been dominated by the discourse of peace and war –where the military overshadows personal security. Here one nation' s security is often at the expense of another. But we are interested in more than that –and our work has been focused on promoting dialogue, and as a result a stronger understanding of our common insecurities, our common vulnerabilities.

The Government of Azerbaijan has promoted this approach to *shared security* by creating an environment that nurtures and promotes the ancient traditions of tolerance, and rejects radicalism, extremism and hatred. Azerbaijan sees diversity as one of the country's great strengths and virtues, and has worked to ensure that this diversity continues to blossom. The Government has built and rebuilt synagogues, mosques, and churches; created new cultural centres for different faiths; and financially supported all three religions without discrimination.

The government has repeatedly and proactively, over the course of the last decade, brought together political, cultural, religious leaders from the region and around the world to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue — an example which is sorely needed in today's world.

Azerbaijan's historical, cultural and economic distinctiveness has developed the mentality of Azerbaijan people and the entire population of the country has been forming during the centuries in the spirit of tolerance and respect to different cultures and nationalities. Azerbaijan mentality embodies Eurasian idea of intercultural and interreligious dialogue with eastern ideas of harmony and identity with and through diversity.

With this commitment and with Azerbaijan at the crossroads of different cultures and civilizations, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan initiated the "*Baku Process*" for the promotion of intercultural dialogue in 2008. The Baku Process comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage living on different continents, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.

"Baku Process" was launched at the Conference of Ministers responsible for Culture which was held in Baku on December 2-3, 2008 on the theme of "Intercultural dialogue as a

basis for peace and sustainable development in Europe and its neighbouring regions". The Conference was organized in partnership with the Council of Europe and was a very substantive initiative which placed emphasis on the importance of dialogue among cultures and civilizations as a reality of today's world and one of its important aspects. This event was the first of its kind, brought together the ministers of culture of the Council of Europe and the ministers of culture of number of Muslim countries which makes this Conference another major step in the development of dialogue and mutual understanding in the globalized world.

The conference highlighted the vital role of cultural policy and action in promoting understanding among different regions and cultures and provided a great opportunity to launch a Baku process as a sustainable process that will sponsor future high-level and practice-oriented meetings between key policy makers and practitioners in Europe and its neighbouring regions on initiatives related with intercultural dialogue.

Representatives of the 49 member states of the European Cultural Convention and of the Council of Europe bodies, representatives from selected mainly Mediterranean ALECSO/ ISESCO member states, senior officials from the Council of Europe, the European Commission, UNESCO, GUAM, TURKSOY, IRSICA, ICOMOS, ICCROM and other international organisations and foundations, European NGOs took part in the events in Baku. They were joined by leading international experts in the area of cultural policy, intercultural dialogue, heritage, and prominent figures from the arts/ cultural community. As the result of the conference *Baku Declaration for the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue* has been adopted and "*Artists for dialogue*" project was launched.

As a continuation of the "Baku Process", Government of Azerbaijan invited more than 10 states from Europe to participate at the Sixth Conference of Ministers of Culture of Islamic countries held in Baku on 13-15 October, 2009. According to the initiative of the Government of Azerbaijan, a Ministerial Roundtable on "Fostering Dialogue and Cultural Diversity – Baku Process: New Challenge for Dialogue between Civilizations" was organized among the member states of ISESCO and invited states from Europe in the first day of this conference, 13 October, 2009. On the same occasion, the rest of speakers in this roundtable stressed the vital need to continue holding such meetings between the Islamic community and the European Community, to involve governments, peoples, states and cultures in this dialogue, to make the youth as the main target group of cooperation projects of the two blocs, and to focus the international efforts in this regard. At the end of this ministerial roundtable, a Communiqué was adopted in which the participants reiterated their support for the joint efforts aimed at spreading the culture of cooperation, fair dialogue and mutual respect.

After the Islamic and European conferences Government of Azerbaijan decided to organize World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue on 7-9 April, 2011 in Baku under patronage of H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This initiative was declared by the President Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (23 September 2010, New-York).

The Forum supported by prestigious international organizations as UNESCO, UN Alliance of Civilizations, World Tourism Organization, Council of Europe, North-South Center of the Council of Europe, ISESCO was held in this format for the first time ever, was to advance the initiatives, realized by Azerbaijan in the sphere of intercultural dialogue, from regional context into the global level, and to establish a fully-functioning International Forum in the country. For the media, Euronews was an official media partner of the Forum.

Building on previous events held in the Azerbaijani capital on this theme and on the work developed by the stakeholder organisations in recent years, the Forum marked a strong recognition that intercultural dialogue is one of the most pressing challenges of our world and, indeed, one that increasingly manifests itself on a global scale. Baku, as a crossroads of religions, histories and civilizations and traditions where intercultural dialogue is a de facto aspect of everyday life, and where a relationship between Islam and modernity is in evidence, seemed a particularly appropriate place to ask difficult questions and look for promising answers. 500 representatives from 102 countries from all continents of the World - global public figures, heads of international organisations, heads of state or governments, ministers of culture and cultural ambassadors, parliamentarians and diplomats, mayors and other local-authority figures, representatives of non-governmental organisations and enterprises, media representatives and journalists, cultural experts and practitioners, prominent intellectuals and activists participated at the forum. This synergy between political leaders and officials, experts and practitioners was encouraged by informal networking around the event. Euronews as a media partner promoted the forum through its broadcasting networks.

The Forum examined the barriers to dialogue and tackled, as concretely as possible, the issue of how dialogue can best be pursued in diverse contexts under the motto - "United Through Common Values, Enriched by Cultural Diversity". Plenary sessions and workshops on the topics of the role of culture and cultural diversity, education, faith and religious, journalism and social media, science, women, youth, heritage and cities were held in the framework of the Forum.

The now-named *5 A - Intercultural Cooperation Platform* was established at the Forum. which attracted wide attention for its scope of discussion items. Bearing in mind the Azerbaijani language acronym of the first letters of the five continents, represented with large delegations at the event - "Avropa, Asiya, Amerika, Afrika, Avstraliya", the new platform was symbolically named the "5 A's". After this successful first Forum, the Government of Azerbaijan decided to organize World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue once every two years according to the decree signed by Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in May, 2011.

From May 29 to June 01, in 2013 Government of Azerbaijan in cooperation with UNESCO, UN Alliance of Civilizations, UN World Tourism Organization, Council of Europe, ISESCO, North-South Center of the Council of Europe organized 2nd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku. 600 representatives from 115 countries from all continents, head of governments, former presidents, ministers, mayors, representative of many

international organization, NGOs, media representatives, scholars, experts and etc. participated in the Forum

The 2nd World Forum has used its convening power to create space for effective and meaningful dialogue on cultural diversity and intercultural cooperation. By working within the existing global context, the Forum has positioned itself alongside its partners, each of whom is responding to the challenges and opportunities that cultural diversity brings to communities and for social cohesion.

The Forum brought together significant local/national and global stakeholders. It combined plenary discussions on the overarching theme of the Forum – *Living together peacefully in a diverse world* - with sector-specific workshops promoting agendas of the partner organisations. - "How to build the world future together?", "How to build the popular support for cultural diversity?", "The New Era of Globalization: Hybridity of cultures in changing world", "Supporting Intercultural Actions" and side events prepared and led by partner organizations, including *Intercultural Innovation Award* ceremony for Central Asia, Black Sea and Mediterranean regions, conference of "Global intercultural cities learning community", the workshop "Intercultural Dialogue through History Teaching: Best Practices and Challenges", the sessions of "Tourism as a key driver of mutual understanding and tolerance among cultures", intercultural dialogue through faith and science" etc.

Side events at the Forum included the first summit of the Alumni Network of the UNAOC Fellowship; the UNAOC "Do One Thing for Diversity and Inclusion" campaign; UNESCO "Writing Peace" exhibition and etc.

The "Living Together Peacefully in a Diverse World" competition prizes as a joint project of Azerbaijan and UN Alliance of Civilizations were also awarded during the Forum, to outstanding projects run by not-for-profit organisations in Arab and Central Asian countries that have proven positive results and are protecting and enhancing cultural diversity.

For the first time the Conference of Ministers responsible for both fields - culture and tourism was held in the framework of the 2nd World Forum.

International cultural events namely, "Presentation of films about world nations ethnic and traditional music" in the National Seaside Park (Baku Boulevard), "Multicultural music exchange" composition, "Colors of life" - exhibition by an outstanding German artist Inga Smith, "Dance in Yanardagh" - performance by best known Japan Butoh artists Ko Murobushi were held.

Ballet of "Gobustan shadows" has been developed on the occasion of the 2nd World Forum as a special open- air show on the backdrop of the Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape where was inscribed in the UNESCO List of World Cultural Heritage in 2007. This piece of art reflects the building-up of a human collective able not only to learn about nature and make better living conditions, but also to transcend the utilitarian needs for warmth and food through creativity and memory.

Under patronage of H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in cooperation with UN Alliance of Civilizations, UNESCO, UN World Tourism Organization, Council of Europe (including the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe) and ISESCO, the 3rd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue was held on May 18-19, 2015 in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan.

The 3rd World Forum under the motto of "Sharing Culture for Shared Security" focused on the theme: "Culture and sustainable development in the post-2015 development agenda", with a view to mark the celebration of the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (21st May). The role of culture, heritage, religions, faiths or beliefs, migration, sport, education, art, business, among others, were addressed in this regard to address new trends and challenges for intercultural dialogue, using the timely framework offered by the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), proclaimed by the United Nations.

In support of these celebrations, the three plenary sessions sponsored discussion on: *"Sharing Culture for Shared Security: Cultural rights in the modern age"*, *"Countering Violent Extremism: the Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Religious Pluralism and Advancing Shared Well-being"* and *"Shaping common global agenda: Role of International organizations in building trust and understanding between cultures"*.

The theme of the 3rd World Forum reflects the significance of global security in 2015 and the global attention placed on the security of vulnerable people at a time of significant human insecurity.

The Forum also hosted the second Ministerial Conference on *"Culture and sustainable development in the post-2015 development agenda"*, the first meeting of the new Academic Forum of UNESCO Chairs on intercultural and interreligious dialogue and a book launch of the UNESCO-Tudor Rose publication entitled "Agree to Differ" were among the important side events.

The outcomes of the Baku Forum will feed back into UNESCO's work on intercultural dialogue and support the development of future strategic and programmatic action lines, including in the context of the UN Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022)

The World Forums organized so far have created new opportunities for stakeholders to meet, exchange and share experience and to reinforce the 'strong will' called for in President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev's opening remarks at the 2015 Forum.

"Today, representatives of all the religions, ethnic groups live in Azerbaijan and contribute to the successful development of our country. I think this is one of our biggest assets. And we are proud of that. Therefore we organize numerous international events to promote the values of multiculturalism, values of peaceful cooperation, mutual understanding. I think the world needs this kind of events, needs open discussions, exchange of views in order to strengthen the positive tendencies."

World Forums on Intercultural Dialogue were not the only international platforms created by the Government of Azerbaijan for promoting dialogue between diverse cultures; on April 25-27, 2016, Azerbaijan hosted the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of

Civilizations with the overarching theme of the *“Living Together In Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal”*. By stressing the “inclusive” aspect of “living together,” the UNAOC 7th Global Forum has bound together multiple perspectives of various sectors to meet the challenge of, and progress towards, inclusive living in today’s increasingly diverse societies.

Azerbaijan, as the host country for this Forum, serves as a model of a country where people have been living inclusively together for centuries. The historical tolerance of Azerbaijan’s people, the political leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, and Azerbaijan’s location between Eastern Europe and Western Asia has combined to foster an environment where people of various religions and ethnicities have lived together in mutual respect and harmony for national development. Azerbaijan’s experience, despite challenges, is an example of a country moving forward to substantive progress through inclusion.

Living together in inclusive societies also converges with the three major pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights, and development and UNAOC activities are focused specifically on migration, education, media and youth. The promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies requires overcoming challenges in the areas of migration and education. Youth and media are particularly key actors in moving forward to the goal of an inclusive society.

Consistent with its emphasis on youth, the UNAOC Youth Event has preceded the Forum and provide youth participants the opportunity to shape the global narrative on social inclusion and offer suggestions on preventing violent extremism.

The 2 plenaries organized during the Forum focused on “ Platforms and Partnerships for the Prevention of Violent extremism” and the “Good practices in social inclusion”. Both plenaries provided a platform for sharing ideas and good practices as well as effective measures for preventing violent extremism and building inclusive societies through overcoming many challenges in the area of dialogue, integration, education, youth, migration, media and etc.

The results of the projects organized by UNAOC, its partners and other stakeholders were showcased during the sixteen breakouts sessions where the participants discussed best practices in various relevant areas.

UNAOC and its various partners, namely the Baku International Multiculturalism Center, Education Above All (EAA), the Research Center for Islamic History, Art and culture (IRCICA), The National Coordination Council of the Alliance of civilizations of Turkey, the International Organization for Migration in collaboration with Plural+, the Government of Italy and the Association Nexox-Alianza, have also organized seven networking sessions.

All of the above sessions provided an opportunity for fostering new partnerships and strengthening the existing ones.

One of the main outcomes of the Forum was the adoption of the "Baku Declaration" during the Group of Friends High level meeting. "Baku Declaration" has stressed the role of Azerbaijan, namely the Baku process and the year of 2016 being named the "Year of Multiculturalism" towards the respect and understanding for cultural and religious diversity, of moderation as a value within societies; and encouraging tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures, civilizations and peoples to expand their activities promoting a culture of peace, and to ensure that peace and non-violence are fostered at the national, subregional, regional and international levels.

The cultural aspect of the 7th Global Forum included the UNAOC-BMW International Innovation Award Ceremony organized on the 26th of April together with the Azerbaijan Children Orchestra Concert "Children for Peace". The Forum was officially closed on April 27, with the "Musical Alliance of Civilizations" concert, dedicated to the 7th Global Forum of the UNAOC.

By bringing together heads of governments, ministers, heads of various international organizations, senior policy makers, cultural professionals, goodwill ambassadors, experts, journalists, practitioners, prominent intellectuals and activists, 7th Global Forum of UNAOC and the World Forums have become an international platform to enable and encourage people, countries and organisations around the globe to take concrete actions to support diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding among nations by raising awareness on the importance of intercultural dialogue worldwide.

Therefore the Baku Process has made a noteworthy contribution to contemporary challenges of living together peacefully by stressing the importance of intercultural dialogue. The Baku Process creates opportunity for global conversations between state and non-state actors and stresses the importance, above all, of practical actions and collaborations.

As the continuation, the next edition of the Baku Process will be the 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue to be held in Baku in October 2017.