all different
all equal

Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Youth Work

Symposium Report
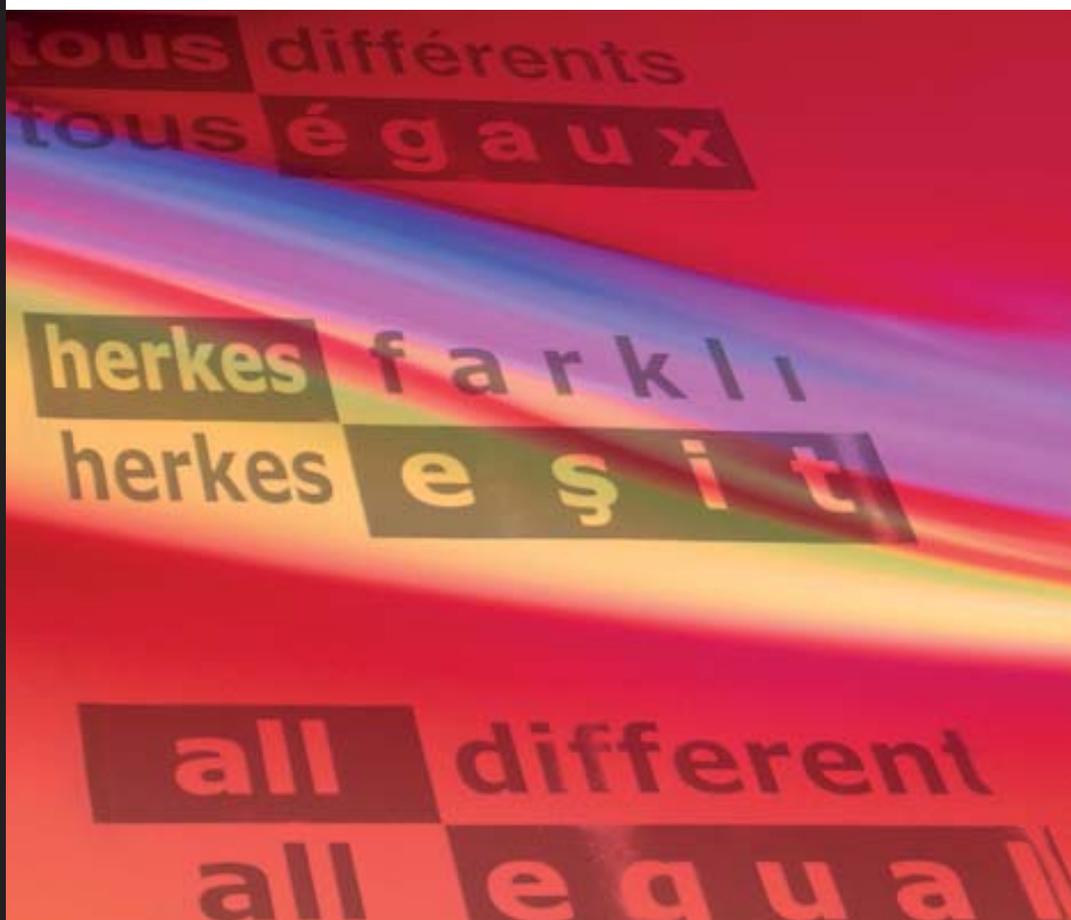
INTERRELIGIOUS AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN YOUTH WORK

Istanbul, 27 – 31 March 2007

Symposium Report

Edited by Silvia Volpi

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PREFACE

Intercultural dialogue is one of the key missions of the Council of Europe, along with fostering democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Young people are crucial actors in that process as the main stakeholders of societies who are freer from the prejudice, discrimination and segregation that have characterized most of Europe for the past decades.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe has been playing a key role in awareness raising and training on these matters, notably through the provision of intercultural education and training activities in the European Youth Centres of Strasbourg and Budapest, the funding of intercultural youth projects by the European Youth Foundation, and the development of youth policy strategies that take into account the multicultural realities of young people in Europe today.

A cornerstone of this work was the European youth campaign against racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and discrimination, 'All Different – All Equal', that was run in 1995. This campaign highlighted the importance of intercultural learning and intercultural dialogue for addressing discrimination and exclusion, together with public awareness and political action. It stressed the need for giving a positive dimension to cultural diversity while acknowledging the inherent equal value of all cultures. The Education Pack 'All Different – All Equal' and, later, 'Compass" – the manual on human rights education with young people – were only two of the long lasting results of that campaign. The Youth Programme of Human Rights Education and Intercultural Dialogue (2006-2008) has built on these experiences and extended them, notably in Euro-Mediterranean activities carried out within the framework of the Partnership on Youth with the European Commission.

The 'All Different – All Equal' European youth campaign for diversity, human rights and participation, run in 2006 and 2007, was part of the action plan adopted by the official Summit of heads of state and government in Warsaw (2005), which states the following: "(…) To promote diversity, inclusion and participation in society, we decide to launch a Europe-wide youth campaign, in the spirit of the 'European Youth Campaign against racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance' (1995)." The campaign was run in cooperation with the European Union and the European Youth Forum and was based on national campaign committees who mobilized the relevant partners and organised their own programme for the campaign in each member state.

The aim of the campaign has been to encourage and enable young people to participate in building peaceful societies based on diversity, human rights and inclusion, in a spirit of respect, tolerance and mutual understanding.

Diversity provides the key for developing common values in Europe, assuring its economic success and enriching its cultural landscape. The big diversity project which is Europe is found within each city and state and, obviously, between member states. Human rights provide the framework in which a plurality of cultural expressions, traditions and modernities co-exist. Religion is part of this landscape, so much so that it is often confused with culture. While serving the function of uniting people and communities, religion can, unfortunately, also be a factor of division, intolerance and hatred. The awareness of the diversity of religions and religious practices across the continent needs to be accompanied by a commitment to secure freedoms of religion and belief to everyone. Intercultural and interreligious dialogues are goals and approaches that can positively contribute to this.

The Symposium that this report documents was the main event in the 'All Different – All Equal' campaign dealing with intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The Symposium served to identify priority areas for policy and action with and by young people. The Istanbul Youth Declaration is the main outcome of the Symposium, but perhaps not the most important. The process experienced by the participants was certainly as valuable, however, as it is also multiplied by them in their organisations and communities.

Another process, the 'Istanbul Youth Process', was also initiated. This refers to the cooperation between youth organisations and institutions concerned with intercultural and interreligious dialogue, including the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport and the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation. It is an open process in which a vital role is to be played by national authorities, in the same way that the Turkish youth authorities made this Symposium possible. The process is first of all a commitment to work further on these matters and to include young people from all faiths, beliefs and cultures in this process to practise and experience dialogue and cooperation.

It is based on this that today's young generation can probably embrace the first realistic vision of a planet in which the common concerns and aspirations are more important than domination and racism. But this vision will not be realised without commitment, motivation and hard work: *all different, all equal*, and *all committed* too. In a very modest way, this report is another contribution and support to this commitment.

INTRODUCTION

To have been invited, as general rapporteur, to the symposium on interreligious and intercultural dialogue in youth work, is a real privilege.

It has been a pleasure to accept the invitation, to take the challenge of reporting the conclusions and outcomes of the symposium, and to try to represent the diversity of the participants attending the symposium itself in term of opinions, personal histories, lifestyles, ethnic origins, religions and belief, cultures and nationalities, and from countries such as Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Spain and the United Kingdom.

It has also been a great opportunity to listen to the challenging and enriching speeches and reflections, the emotional debates on controversial issues, and the reports on relevant experiences within the framework of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in youth work.

Furthermore, I feel privileged to have had the chance to meet more than 250 people willing to demonstrate, with their presence at the Symposium, that dialogue among people is a mission we can accomplish.

In the report, I have tried to summarize the process and results of the Symposium, looking for a balance between objectivity and personal remarks and conclusions on the issues debated during three days in Istanbul.

I would like to thank the organisers for the great opportunity they gave me, the preparatory team who supported my work in Istanbul, and all the participants who produced reports and complemented my reflections with their opinions and comments.

I very much hope that the report will serve its purpose, reminding us that dialogue among people is the pre-requisite to living together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural society.

Background information: facts and figures about the symposium

This chapter aims to provide the reader with all the information necessary to identify the framework in which the symposium on interreligious and intercultural dialogue in youth work has been developed, and to have an overview of the main facts, actors, activities and outcomes. The final section of the introduction also serves to present the rationale and the structure of the report.

The symposium presentation letter addressed to the participants, as well as the synthesis of the participants' post evaluation, both prepared by the Secretariat of the EYC Budapest – Council of Europe, are the reference documents from which most information related to the symposium has been drawn.

The framework: the 'All Different – All Equal' campaign…

The symposium on interreligious and intercultural dialogue in youth work was organised within the framework of the 'All Different – All Equal' Youth Campaign for diversity[1], human rights and participation.

This European youth campaign was one of the main proposals of the youth organisations' 'Youth Summit' that preceded the Council of Europe's Summit in Warsaw in May 2005. The campaign became part of the action plan adopted by the official Summit of heads of state and government in Warsaw. The action plan states as follows: "… To promote diversity, inclusion and participation in society, we decide to launch a Europe-wide youth campaign, in the spirit of the European Youth Campaign against racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance" (1995).

The action plan also considers other Council of Europe measures which can be related to the campaign, such as the intensification of the "the fight against racism, discrimination and every form of intolerance, as well as attempts to vindicate Nazism".

The European Youth Campaign 'All Different – All Equal', run by the Council of Europe and its member states in 1995, was a milestone in reinforcing the fight against racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and intolerance. Now, from June 2006 to September 2007, the Council of Europe, with the support of the European Union and other partners, is running a new campaign on the themes of Diversity, Human

Rights and Participation, based upon the slogan 'All Different – All Equal'. Looking at the realities of racism, antisemitism, islamophobia, discrimination and all forms of intolerance today, the new Campaign must go further than the 1995 experience and must fully reflect the concerns of all citizens, but particularly those of young people. Thus, the Campaign represents the embodiment of the issues and principles of the Council of Europe's youth policy, namely accession and inclusion, solidarity and social cohesion.

The campaign is based on national campaign committees, whose responsibility is to mobilize the partners concerned and organize the programme of the campaign in each member state. The European activities aim at exploring common issues, exchanging practices and challenges, and coordinating action between the various national and European partners of the campaign.

The symposium is also linked with other initiatives in the Council of Europe, especially the process of the 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue', the Youth Programme on Human Rights and Intercultural Dialogue, and the Euro-Mediterranean activities in the framework of the Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission; in addition it is linked to other global initiatives, such as 'Youth for the Alliance of Civilizations', proposed by the Islamic Conference Youth Forum in cooperation with the Council of Europe and other international stake-holders.

The symposium has been supported by the European Commission, one major partner of the 'All Different – All Equal' European youth campaign, and its results will contribute positively to the European Union's 'Year of Intercultural Dialogue' in 2008.

The dates and venue…

Organising the symposium in Turkey, while dealing with interreligious and intercultural dialogue issues, was more than just symbolic. Indeed, holding the symposium in Turkey corresponded to the approach of decentralising the activities of the 'All Different – All Equal' European Youth campaign and aimed to support the campaign itself in Turkey. Furthermore, Turkey, one of the first Member States of the Council of Europe, a secular republic with a predominantly Muslim population, was also chosen for the central role it played and still plays in Europe, bridging cultures, religions and civilisations.

The organisers…

The event was co-organised by Council of Europe – Directorate of Youth and Sport, with the support of the European Commission and in cooperation with the Office of the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic – Directorate General of Youth and Sports. Co-partners in the organisation of the Symposium were the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, an international umbrella youth organisation affiliated to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, as well as the Turkish National Campaign Committee.

The purpose…

The main aim of the symposium was to exchange practices of interreligious dialogue by young people, their organisations and local, national and international authorities, and to propose ways through which interreligious and intercultural dialogue can be further sustained, through and as a result of the 'All Different – All Equal' campaign and other relevant initiatives.

The specific objectives of the symposium were:
- To exchange practices, methodologies and approaches of youth work on intercultural and interreligious dialogue;
- To identify follow-up projects and priorities in intercultural and interreligious dialogue with young people;
- To identify concrete steps to be taken within the campaign to improve intercultural and interreligious youth work;
- To discuss and formulate key principles and guidelines for intercultural and interreligious dialogue in youth work and youth policy;
- To address and identify the main issues and challenges faced by young people in a Europe marked by religious and cultural diversity;
- To support the 'All Different – All Equal' youth campaign in Turkey;
- To value, acknowledge and learn from the experiences of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in Turkey;
- To deepen the understanding and relevance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in relation to Human Rights, Participation and Diversity;
- To strengthen existing connections, and lay ground for widening the prospects of cooperation between the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe and the OIC Youth Forum in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

The main actors...

More than 250 young people, involved or concerned with the 'All Different – All Equal' European Youth Campaign, especially those working more closely with minorities and with religious groups, were the main actors of the symposium. Representatives of the European Institutions, promoting and supporting the event, as well as those representing some Governments, such as the Turkish and Azeri, were also actively involved in the meeting.

The diversity of the participants, as well as of the government representatives in terms of geographical provenance, cultural background, ethnic origins, religion and belief, lifestyles, and personal histories, reflected well today's multicultural societies and communities.

The programme and activities...

The programme of the symposium, which alternated plenary sessions and working groups, had as its foundations the above mentioned aims and objectives, also taking into consideration the following issues:
- the need to give visibility to discrimination issues and how they affect young people today;
- concrete and diverse examples of youth work practice in addressing discrimination and dealing with challenges posed to diversity on a regular basis;
- the possibility to take advantage of the cultural and religious patrimony of Istanbul;
- the need to address general matters, while deepening discussion into specific issues and concerns.

The programme relied on the experiences of the participants, shared and discussed initially in 17 working groups in which the participants had the opportunity to get to know each other, and to express their expectations and concerns about the symposium and the topics of the meeting. In 12 thematic working groups, they dealt more specifically with the following issues:
- Armed conflicts and intercultural youth work for conflict transformation
- Faith-based youth work
- Intercultural learning and education for interreligious and intercultural dialogue

- Migration
- Racism and discrimination
- Religion, Human Rights and Human Rights Education
- Religion, Culture and Gender
- Religious-based discrimination
- The 'Alliance of Civilisations' initiative
- The consequences of terrorism on interreligious and intercultural dialogue
- The role of, and working with the media
- The role of local authorities in working on interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Plenary sessions served to communicate results and feedback from the groups, as well as to present guest speakers' reflections and proposals, especially on culture and on religion. The opening and the closing sessions were attended by Turkish and international representatives from the institutions co-operating in this event that set up the framework for the meeting.

Main issues tackled during the event...

The symposium, as the different titles of the above mentioned working groups suggest, aimed at addressing issues related to interreligious and intercultural dialogue and youth work, such as diversity and social cohesion, human rights, multiculturalism, participation, education, migration phenomenon, discrimination, terrorism and the role of the media.

Most of the speeches and feedback from the working groups reflected the fact that, in today's societies, situations of discrimination remain problematic to many societies, sometimes being expressed in violent forms, from hate speech to armed conflict. Young people, especially those from minority groups and those living in highly multicultural environments, can be found among the victims and among the perpetrators; they are, in any case, important actors in promoting social change In this area.

Unfortunately, it was pointed out several times that in our communities cultural difference and religious difference are the 'real' problems or factors for discrimination, exclusion and hatred, although they may simply be the new terms for the deeper and older forms of racism and domination. The ignorance that is

often attributed to be at the root of different forms of xenophobias would probably mean that religious discrimination is less based on religion, as such, than on xenophobia, and that religion oftern exacerbates it adds to it. In our realities, in which migration is increasing as a result of globalisation, we clearly perceive that people are insecure of their own identities and afraid of those who are different from them.

As already highlighted in the invitation letter, the symposium reflected on the consequences of the terrorism attacks since 11 September 2001 and the consequences of the 'war on terror'. The rise of islamophobia in most European societies is among the most serious consequences of this, and an example of the combination of religious, ethnic, cultural and political phobias, often identified with religion only (in this case, Islam). The unfortunate examples of this nature abound, and they are not restricted to islamophobia: the resurgence of antisemitism and the intolerance towards Christians in non-Christian societies, as well the intolerance phenomena towards non-believers in religious communities, would indicate that the phenomenon is widespread and cuts across different cultures, religions and civilisations.

The symposium also showed that other ways of living together are possible, not merely coexisting together. It was underlined several times that to be able to live together peacefully and constructively, we need to know each other better, and avoid ignorance. Education has a central role in this process, as does the media and institutions. All of them need to represent the diversity in and of our societies and communities, avoiding manipulation and miscommunication.

Living with diversity and putting into practice and improving the Human Rights that proclaim and defend the freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion and belief, may positively influence interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and, as a result, how we live together. A real interreligious and intercultural dialogue in our multicultural societies, one which overcomes prejudices and barriers, can only be reached if all the actors are involved, committed and focused on genuine objectives.

In this context, the central role of young people and their engagement and work both at local and international level in transferring the results of the symposium to their own organisations and communities was also emphasized by all the actors, further stressing the importance of transforming meaningful reflections and recommendations into actions, in order to have a positive affect on our realities.

The main outcomes...

At the end of the event, the participants succeeded in elaborating the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration' which recommends the active participation and interaction of different stakeholders, such as young people, local, national and international authorities, the media, religious communities and educational Institutions, to sustain interreligious and intercultural dialogue process. More specifically, the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration'[2] foresees a set of guidelines to foster interreligious and intercultural dialogue in today's societies, indicating the roles and functions of each of the above-mentioned stakeholders.

Besides this, the participants also had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on key issues related to interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and to share their experiences and ideas for future projects dealing with interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

The participants evaluation...

The evaluation forms were filled in online, in one of three languages: English, French and Turkish. The analysis of the responses allows for the following conclusions:
- The symposium broadly achieved its aims and objectives, especially in relation to bringing together different partners and experiences with intercultural and interreligious dialogue in youth work, and mobilizing them for the campaign;
- For the vast majority of the participants' expectations were met;
- The programme was relevant, but more youth voices in plenary sessions would have been welcome, together with better time management of these sessions (especially the final session);
- The working groups were the most important and relevant part of the programme for the participants;
- The final declaration was considered important and useful for the Council and for the participants and their organisations. Dissatisfaction was expressed about the process of preparing and adopting it in plenary;
- The group of participants was considered sufficiently diverse, and the presence of participants from outside the member states of the Council of Europe was considered very important. Some participants regretted that the number of secular Muslims was lower than they had expected;
- There is an expectation for the Council of Europe to follow up the symposium (e.g. follow-up activities, newsletter, creation of a network, etc).
- The informal programme was considered insufficient and the venue was considered adequate but too sumptuous for a youth meeting.

The report: rationale and structure

The general report on the Symposium on interreligious and intercultural dialogue aims to fix such event in the memories of all the participants and to provide information and food for thought to all those who could not attend the meeting but who are still curious to discover what the symposium was about.

The report was conceived in three main sessions.
The first contains the Istanbul Youth Declaration and the conclusions of the rapporteur on the issues raised at the Symposium during formal and informal events. The conclusions are preented in nine interrelated and interdependent paragraphs, including:
- Turkey in Europe: still an open question?
- 'Diversity': danger or opportunity?
- The 'renaissance' of spirituality in our societies
- Human Rights – the religion of the new millennium?
- The role of education in building the basis for dialogue
- The role of the media in promoting dialogue
- The role of the institutions in the interreligious and intercultural dialogue
- The role of the young people and youth workers in the interreligious and intercultural dialogue
- Dialogue: a challenging exercise but still a possible mission.

The second session contains the documentation of the speeches of the keynote speakers, the reports of the working groups in chronological order.

The last session contains the appendices, such as the programme of the symposium and the list of participants.

Such an extensive report has been possible thanks to the support of the organisers and of all the participants of the symposium, who provided the general rapporteur with preparation documents, written reports, considerations and personal notes, comments and remarks.

Notes:

[1] As stated in the presentation letter of the symposium: 'Diversity is to be understood in a Human Rights framework (Diversity with Equality in dignity and rights) and in relation to Participation (Participation as a way to promote the values of Diversity).'

[2] See the integral text of Istanbul Youth Declaration, p. 15

ISTANBUL YOUTH DECLARATION

"We, the participants of the Symposium on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Youth Work, met in Istanbul from 28 to 31 March 2007 within the framework of the 'All Different – All Equal' European youth campaign for diversity, human rights, and participation.

The 'All Different – All Equal' campaign is an integral part of the Action Plan of the Council of Europe's Summit of Heads of States and Governments in Warsaw 2005, which states, "… to promote diversity, inclusion and participation in society, we decide a Europe-wide youth campaign….".

The campaign is run by the co-managed youth sector of the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Youth Forum, and is supported by the European Commission. It is based on the work of the National Campaign Committees in the member states of the Council of Europe to ensure wide synergies and mobilisation for the campaign at the local, national and regional levels.

Our campaign is firmly anchored within the framework of indivisible, inalienable and universal human rights. Every human being has a fundamental right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, which includes the freedom 'to manifest one's religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance', as outlined in the European Convention on Human Rights. Young people and policy makers, realising the importance of religions, beliefs and cultural freedoms, initiated the idea of a symposium on interreligious and intercultural dialogue in Istanbul.

We, young people from member states of the Council of Europe and the Organisation of Islamic Conference, gathered here to discuss and promote mutual respect and social inclusion, to propose ways in which interreligious and intercultural dialogue can be further developed, to exchange ideas and to share practices.

We have developed the following recommendations:

- Governments and other decision makers should introduce intercultural and interreligious education and dialogue in educational institutions in order to foster more tolerant, understanding and participative values in society, creating an adjustment to multicultural environments.

- In order to overcome religious-based discrimination and phobias, national governments, institutions and non-governmental organisations should promote diversity in educational programmes and school systems starting at early age, and devise their programmes in a diverse way. School policies should be more inclusive and promote trust, dialogue and knowledge about diversity. This should be ensured through curriculum and teacher training, both in formal and non-formal education, by proposing different viewpoints representative of all groups, ethnicities and religions.

- Active participation of youth organisations from all religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in public debates and policy making should be stimulated and facilitated, and their visibility in the public sphere should be raised.

- Decision makers should support civil society in recognising the existence of faith-based youth organisations that respect the universal human rights and democratic values. They should accept them and take their views into consideration.

- We recommend supporting the creation of international youth media networks to promote co-operation and exchange of knowledge, experiences and views. We call upon national governments and international institutions to support the creation of online youth media news sources. Under the banner of respect for human rights and democracy, these networks would provide the possibility for an interactive and non-partisan exchange of news and views. We encourage all governments to provide the necessary infrastructure to enable access to these networks for everyone.

- Taking into account that, as actors of change, we, young people, can influence society on a long-term basis, we demand that local, national and international institutions support youth activities dealing with conflict transformation in order to prevent new conflicts. We insist that international and national non-governmental organisations specialised in conflict and post-conflict transformation, dialogue, peace and human rights education, take a more active role in supporting youth work.

- We urge and demand all stakeholders, including authorities, civil society, religious communities and the media, to increase their focus on and sensitivity towards the importance of dialogue, especially intercultural and interreligious dialogue, to prevent all forms of discrimination and violence, rather than to fuel them. Governmental institutions should guarantee, and non-governmental organisations should promote equal access to all social services and active participation of young people by addressing the root causes of discrimination based on, for example, gender, ethnic background, religion, culture, age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities.

- Racism and discrimination remain worrying realities that have an impact on people of all ages, and spread under different guises. Abstract language, selective hearing, historical relationships, cultural hegemony and denial of problems create parallel realities that are only forced together by extraordinary events. This creates institutional double standards and apathy. Institutions need to strengthen their relevance by meeting the practical needs of diverse communities.

- Diverse societies and the benefits they bring should be appreciated rather than feared and rejected. Innovative formal and non-formal educational activities that encourage direct communication between different cultural groups need to be developed and supported on a long-term basis. This work needs to be strengthened by multidisciplinary critical perspectives that can inform the work of minority communities. This can only happen in a context where states and societies respect and apply human rights and where their violations are effectively sanctioned.

- The Council of Europe, the European Union, the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Conference should encourage their member states to include media education (especially the development of critical approaches) in formal school curricula, and, in the context of lifelong learning, to encourage the use of non-formal education and peer-to-peer education on media.

- The Council of Europe and the European Union should develop educational resources and projects aiming at respecting religious, cultural and ethnic diversity suitable for formal and non-formal education. This process should be similar to the one on revision of history books.

- We support the United Nations' 'Alliance of Civilizations' Initiative and we appreciate its focus on youth as a priority area. We also support the 'Youth for the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative' proposed by the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, the Council of Europe and the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation. We call upon the organisers to ensure the participation of youth from different backgrounds in all activities under these initiatives, including the centrepiece inter-generational conference.

- We call for greater publicity and dissemination of information about the objectives of the 'Alliance of Civilizations Initiative' through the media, the Internet, entertainment and sports activities. A focus on academic and educational fields, in particular the development of research on the 'Alliance of Civilizations', is needed.

- We stress the necessity of following up the 'Youth for the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative' and we recommend that it should be integrated with the follow-up of this Symposium and be called the 'Istanbul Youth Process for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue'.

- Local authorities should raise awareness of the diversity within their communities, in order to develop local policies which support the intercultural and interreligious initiatives of non-governmental organisations.

- Local authorities should be encouraged to develop structures to bring together representatives of different religious and cultural communities, developing programmes and activities at the local level.

- Local authorities should take all necessary measures to enable the participation of all groups (based on gender, ethnic background, religion, age, socio-economical status, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, etc) in local decisions, as a fundamental principle of participative democracy. Local authorities should be supported in terms of budget and information to be able to fulfil these measures.

- As potential agents of change in interfaith dialogue, faith-based youth organisations (religious and non-religious) should promote respect for each other and facilitate the process of living in diversity, both at local and international levels, and foster their interaction with other kinds of youth organisations and activities.

- Non-governmental organisations and religious communities should cooperate with schools, media and governmental institutions to motivate non-organised young people to engage in community-based intercultural and interreligious dialogue, with the aim of promoting diversity and, specifically, fighting the rise of religious based discriminations (islamophobia, antisemitism, christianophobia, etc).

- Learning programmes for youth that address the phenomena of radicalism, terrorism, extremism and the economy of fear should be developed.

- The media has a trigger effect on islamophobia, antisemitism, christianophobia and other forms of discrimination. In this respect it is crucial to include the media in intercultural and interreligious dialogue processes, and to raise awareness of sensitive and responsible journalism, which avoids enflaming hatred against belief, faith or human dignity, while upholding the freedom of speech.

As young people, who are convinced that diversity, human rights and participation need to be continuously reinforced, we are committed to the aims of the European youth campaign 'All Different – All Equal'. Therefore, we will contribute with creative action, outreach activities and youth projects in our countries, and we will devote our motivation, energy, skills, competences and strong beliefs to promote the universal human rights and values.

Hence, we call on all decision makers and international institutions, governmental and non-governmental organisations to join these efforts and provide support to make this campaign successful in changing mentalities, attitudes and policies.

We recognise that addressing the issues above is a process that requires commitment both by young people and the respective authorities. Therefore we call on local, national, European and international institutions to support the process of dialogue initiated with this symposium in Istanbul organised by the Council of Europe, supported by the European Commission, the Directorate General of Youth and Sports of Turkey, and the Turkish Folk Dancing Federation, and co-organised with the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation."

CONCLUSIONS BY THE GENERAL RAPPORTEUR

Religions, beliefs, faiths, secularism, atheism, human rights, culture, multiculturalism, pluralism, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, ethno-relativism, postmodernism, spirituality, education, traditions and modernity, gender, phobias, values, ethics, moral conduct, moral code, manipulation, domination, similarities and differences, diversity, multiple identities, people, human beings, dignity, respect, tolerance, peace, rights and responsibilities, young people, policies, power, media, information, migration, terrorism, active citizens…

A torrent of words, bringing with them several meanings and possible interpretations, flew through the Symposium. The speeches, the presentations of projects and experiences, the discussions and sharing moments in the working groups as well as the debates in plenary and in the informal meetings, clearly expressed the richness of thoughts and reflections, the meaningful questions and concerns about our lives and our roles in societies in relation to the topic of the Symposium.

The above mentioned words and another thousand were used in different languages, with different purposes, in different contexts and with different approaches and styles, but with the common aim of building an alternative way to live together to prevent discrimination, racism and exclusion, and look for a key to open the doors of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

The symposium was structured in a way as to alternate plenary sessions and debates, working groups on specific issues, presentations of experiences and tools related to interreligious and intercultural dialogue, as well as many informal moments facilitating the encounters of people and a deeper exchange of points of view.

All the participants seemed genuinely animated by a strong will to contribute to the debate on interreligious and intercultural dialogue and its relevance in youth work. Everyone brought energy, experiences, contradictions and stereotypes, commitment, thoughts and concerns, emotions and motivation.

I believe that, at the end of the symposium, everyone took back home heavier luggage with multiple energies and personal enrichment but also some questions about themselves and their roles, their responsibilities to transfer into their lives and into their daily work the principles and values that animated the discussions.

I hope that everyone will use the memory of the Symposium not as a pleasant picture of the past but rather as a milestone for building a better future, acting as multipliers and promoters of dialogue in their organisations, communities and societies.

My conclusions are organised into nine interdependent paragraphs, inspired by the main issues raised by the participants and the keynote speakers during the Symposium during both formal and informal events.

Turkey in Europe: still an open question?

In the presentation document, it was pointed out that to hold the Symposium in Turkey was more than just symbolic. Turkey was elected, as we were reminded by Mehet Ali Sahin and Ralf-René Weingärtner, as a suitable location for such an event, not only for its beauty and richness in term of history and culture, but also because of its highly multicultural and multi-religious society.

If Turkey was central in the Symposium discourses, Europe was also a key notion that marked the meeting, as Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni pointed out during her closing speech. Sometimes Europe implied the European Union, the Europe of the 27 member states of which Turkey is not yet a member. Sometimes, however, Europe was the Europe of the 47 Member States, the Europe of the Council of Europe, to whom Turkey has belonged since August 1949, only few months after the Treaty of London was signed.

Turkey, despite the fact that is is not yet a member of the European Union, had and still has, in fact, a central role in Europe, being a European country and having been among the first Member States of the Council of Europe after the Second World War, bridging cultures, religions and civilisations. During the Symposium, on formal and informal occasions, the issue of the role of Turkey in Europe was tackled and debated.

For some of the Turkish participants, it was and it is clear that Turkey is geographically in Europe as well as in Asia, and also that Turkey is one of the Member States of the Council of Europe but not yet of the European Union. For them and also for some Europeans, it was not clear why they should feel and act as European citizens. "Why should we feel European? For what reasons? On the basis of which principles and values?" Among many of the participants, there was also a slight feeling of distrust and discomfort towards the European Institutions

gently pushing the entrance of Turkey into Europe as a bridge for commercial and political affairs with Asia and North Africa for the 27 European Member States. The unclear aims of the European Institutions did not totally convince all the participants that it is a good idea to cover the road which leads Turkey to unconditionally belonging to the European Union.

At the same time, there were and there are still many participants who do not perceive Europe as a Christian fortress, eternally defending itself against Muslims' invasions. As summarised by Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, they positively perceive Europe as a modern, multi-polar and multicultural group of societies, bound together by clear rules and the common commitment to human rights, democracy and rule of law, in which Turkey definitively has its place and role.

The wish is that, continuing to question the accession of Turkey to the European Union, we may be able to influence the decisions of the Institutions and our politicians in order to guarantee a fair process and mutual recognition among people. Turkey and Europe have to adjust to each other, to learn from each other, and to develop new patterns of social cohesion. Quoting Ibrahim Kalin, it is desirable that integration will happen through participation. Constitutional citizenship and democratic representation need to be allowed to foster a new culture of equality and diversity.

'Diversity': danger or opportunity?

The richness of European societies was emphasised by most of the speakers at various points during the Symposium. In doing so, it was also confirmed that this richness comes from cultural diversity expressed by the number of religious, ethnic and cultural groups and communities present across the continent. However, diversity, as it appears in our daily reality, is still very often the basis on which to build and reinforce the fear of the other (which can be different for religion, culture and ethnic origin), supporting the closure of communities and groups, ultimately creating a real cultural isolation that very often brings to life and creates exclusion, denial of others (as opposed to the self), and discrimination expressed in various forms, from hate speech to armed conflict.

If we eliminate rhetoric from our thoughts and remarks and we observe our societies, we may perceive that Individual and collective identities are destabilised. Individuals are more and more concerned with having a suitable livelihood. In the

last few decades, people have had to face increasing globalisation and its consequences. Among these are the transformation of a secure and fixed job into a flexible, short-term occupation, the fragility of family and community unit, the disappearance of significant ideologies and the increase in the immigration phenomenon. All these elements have generated anxiety and a strong feeling of insecurity, better defined in German, to quote Zigmunt Bauman, as 'Unsicherheit', indicating the complex combination of uncertainty, insecurity and lack of safety in which most people live. Instead of addressing directly the issues that are causing the feeling of insecurity at an individual level, most of the European policies include the problem within a collective dimension, reinforcing the fear of a new enemy, called 'immigration'. To quote *Ms Bettina Schwarzmayr,* "increasingly, and mostly in trying to manage the immigration phenomenon, most of the European policies chosen offer the shortest route to finding a solution, limiting access to a country and increasing the expenses for internal security". Unfortunately, however, this choice confirmed and re-affirmed the feeling of insecurity in people who face changes and diversity.

Despite those who are preaching that in Europe we are all equals and willing to live together in a country, Europe has in its destiny the real potential to remain a pluralistic society in which cultural diversity is in the process of increasing rather than diminishing.

Can we foresee other ways of dealing with diversity, than fighting with imaginary enemies?

Ms Nazila Ghanea reminded us that each person in our societies risks discrimination. One way to solve the problem is to reject particularities and differences in the name of neutrality and tolerance. In this case, the risk is that tolerance may be intended and interpreted as indifference, or indifferent tolerance and neutrality as platitude and artificial equality. An artificial equality is one in which selfish interests, privileges and powers are more important than those of others, and in which very soon the contraposition between dominant and dominated people emerges.

The real alternative for European societies and its citizens seems to be the one that safeguards diversity as a pre-condition for social cohesion and real democracy. The role of each of us is then to deconstruct our fears and prejudices, to open up to develop abilities and motivation to overcome external obstacles, and to live with cultural diversity, treating it as a real opportunity that facilitates the creation of a common ground for a peaceful and secure society.

The 'renaissance' of spirituality in our societies

In recent years and in our global societies, while facing uncertainty, insecurity and lack of safety, people often feel destabilised, with few solid and fixed references to identity and belonging.

It seems to be a matter of fact that living in a complex society is the reality for the majority of people. To then be able to perceive complexity as an opportunity and not as an obstacle is something completely different!

Most people, in fact, were and are not yet able to enjoy diversity and continuous changes, to face globalisation with local action, and to establish the conditions for a constructive dialogue with all those who, at least apparently, are different or incomprehensible to them.

Unfortunately, neither ideologies nor politics are helping people to find new paradigms to interpret realities. Rational responses and scientific discourses are not any more valid when dealing with the fast changes taking place in our societies. Most people felt and still feel isolated and unarmed towards 'their human destiny'. In this uncertain and very changeable situation, a resurgence of spirituality seems to appear as a new phenomenon, but also a 'normal' one.

Thinking about this subject, a question came to mind: Was spirituality really a natural answer to materialism, consumer society and to all the critical situations people were unable to deal with? Or is it an artificial construct of political and economical powers?

If we tend to affirm that spirituality is a natural answer to the difficulties people face, we can intend spirituality as the natural re-discovery of the spirit and also of the self, very often overwhelmed by consumer society, the fast rhythms of our lives, and the overload of information and stimuli that our brain cannot register or decode at once.

Spirituality can be often perceived as either opposed to religion or as part of religion. Spirituality opposed to religion implies a refusal of the existence of an ultimate and only truth, and affirms the existence of many spiritual paths to be followed to live in peace. Most of the new age adherents tend to perceive spirituality as an active and vital connection with energy, and spirit of the deep self.

Spirituality in religion very often represents more a matter of personal faith. In this context, it is seen as a way to be open to new ideas and influences, and to a pluralistic and interreligious society.

In both cases, spirituality represents a possible answer to the psychological sufferance generated by the incompetence to live together and to the materialistic world of today's societies, reinforcing individual and group identities without the need to find an imaginary enemy.

If we opt for a more pessimistic view, we may affirm that spirituality is the artificial construct of political and economic powers, providing people with new needs and shifting their focus from collective and individual problems and difficulties to a selfish realisation. In this case, spirituality apparently helps people to find answers to their doubts and questions, and to their daily problems. Furthermore, they are stimulated to look for selfish happiness and glory in the supermarkets of spirituality.

Despite the means that each of us may choose, what is needed in today's realities is to rediscover our inner life, our conscience, thus leading towards a sense of responsibility towards the self and others. It is important to start finding out about ourselves in order to enter into a relationship with others better. A real dialogical comparison with the other is the only way to understand and create our identity.

Human Rights – the religion of the new Millennium?

Whilst trying to read between the lines of the reports of the thematic working groups and also revising the speeches of the guest speakers, I have to admit that sometimes human rights were considered in opposition to, or in conflict with religions. Human rights tend to be defined by the majority of religious people, especially those living on the eastern side of the globe, as the religion of the non-believers, as the religion of the western citizens who try to fill in the spiritual emptiness of our era. In this case, human rights seem to protect only the rights of part of humanity, whilst pretending to be universal and creating a real challenge in our societies.

In reality, if we go through article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we discover the following: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought,

conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom either alone or in a community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance." Each one of us has, indeed, a belief (religious or not religious), and all of us have equal dignity in professing it. So, no matter where we live and what we believe in, the most important thing is that every single human being has the right to stand for, practise and manifest any thought or religion without disrespecting other human beings.

At this stage, it is also important to point out that human rights, having been produced by human beings, do not pretend to express the absolute truth or a new credo, but to set norms that guarantee that every human being is equal in dignity. Human rights are not imposed, but subject to changes and improvement facing old and new issues that can appear in society and that are relevant for mankind and for safeguarding peace. Human rights create a framework in which everyone has the opportunity to discover, recognise and value the 'other' as different from the 'self' and, as a consequence, discover and value the self. Thus, diversity of religions and cultures can complement and enrich human rights, inspiring us all to a deep commitment to develop a peaceful and trustful society. Human rights should not only be statements but also represent a process, the commitment of all of us, and the starting point for dialogue.

As Nazila Ghanea reminded us, what we should seek is to make universal human rights a cooperative enterprise to which religion imparts its energies and inspiration. Religions will hopefully give human rights law 'their spirit – the sanctity and authority they need to command obedience and respect ... its structural fairness, its 'inner morality', If one goes so far as to recognise the translation of human rights into a universal 'culture' as a necessary prerequisite for its effective continuity, one may even go so far as to conclude that 'human rights needs religion to survive'.

Ralf-Réné Weingertner stated that it is not human rights that pose a challenge to our societies: it is the persistence of their violations that worry us.

Finally, Bettina Schwarzmayr explained that we should not question human tights as such, blaming them as a western creation and a new religion, but rather the trend that sees the fight against terrorism as a legitimate reason to commit Human Rights violations.

Besides this consideration, we should also remember that we, as human beings, have resources and also limitations in terms of our knowledge, capacities and abilities, (however much we may ignore those of others) which are a part of our humanity. To stand for human rights and to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue should force us to act not as preachers, as if we have discovered and monopolised the truth, and are trying to convert new adepts to a new philosophy or religion, but rather just as people who are ready to change and support social transformation, with the aim of constructing a peaceful and multicultural world in which everyone finds his or her own place.

The role of education in building the basis for dialogue

During the whole Symposium, education was mentioned as one of the key tools for facilitating dialogue among people. Education has great potential in all those processes which aim to create the basis for dialogue and wish to lay the foundations for a pluralistic society. Education is a global process that includes the acquisition of information and the development of a civic conscience, recognising the equality in dignity of every human being, as well as the strong interdependence of all people, their groups and communities in our societies.

Unfortunately, education remains an opportunity only for some people. A large number of others, however, still do not have access to information and education. Young people or women in some countries, for instance, have restricted access to schools or educational programmes. The efforts of civil society and the political system should be to break the barriers that prevent everyone from having full access to information and education.

Furthermore, several participants and working groups underlined in their reports that it is also important to revise the contents of educational programmes and especially some educational materials, such as history books, rephrasing those parts which can be found offensive by certain cultural, religious or ethnic groups or communities. The need to revise history books in particular was emphasized, since they record the value and belief system of a certain point in time, which in turn influences a person's point of view today. Minorities should take a key role in these revisions in order to guarantee that everyone feels adequately represented.

If the content is revised, educators should use appropriate methodologies in line with the objectives and appropriate to the contents being delivered in a

multicultural context. No educator, teacher, trainer, youth worker or any actor involved in education is exempt from having stereotypes and prejudices towards other cultures and religions. Due to the specific role these people play, they often easily transfer their stereotypes and prejudices on to children and young people. If it is impossible that they know all the languages, cultures and religions of their students and participants, it is, nevertheless, important that they learn the complexity of the cultural differences and develop the abilities and attitudes to be able to value, accordingly, diversities and similarities and to analyse the intercultural dynamics specific to every meeting of people.

If, as Azad Rahimov claimed, the economic progress of any country directly depends on high levels of youth education, mastering the fundamentals of science and technology, I believe also that the progress of every country depends on the effectiveness of its educational programmes in developing open-minded young people, ready to listen attentively to each other's opinions and cultures, eager to learn and ready to take challenges.

Education can only play an effective role in interreligious and intercultural dialogue if all people, and especially the most vulnerable, such as minority groups, have a specific opportunity to participate in formal and non-formal educational activities and programmes. Public Institutions at local, national and international level are required to revise educational programmes and to take into consideration the realities of young people, their needs, and their suggestions and requirements.

In 2007, the European Union, based on experiences of the last decades, launched a new generation of programmes to improve the quality of educational activities and programmes and to increase the number of all those who can benefit from such experiences. Among other programmes, 'Youth in Action', as introduced by Pierre Mairesse, has great potential in promoting young people's active citizenship, developing solidarity and tolerance, reinforcing social cohesion, fostering mutual understanding and, as a consequence, intercultural dialogue. The challenge is to organise a system that finally facilitates the participation of all those who have fewer opportunities. It is time to stop working only with and for those who have easier access to the information and are already full members of the 'consumer participants list'.

Through local and international internships, training courses, seminars and exchanges, young people may have the chance to question their points of view and to develop an intercultural sensitivity towards others, one that differs for religion,

culture, ethnic origins, lifestyle and so on. If it is, in fact, important to develop local and international experiences, it is also important to recognise the importance of the contamination between formal and non-formal education systems and methodologies. An integrated educational system, in which formal and non-formal education have equal dignity, is desirable because the richness of educational proposals and programmes and their methodologies and approaches could be elaborated in coherence with the real needs of children and young people, in different milieu, contexts and realities.

The role of the media in promoting dialogue

The role of the media in the context of interreligious and intercultural dialogue was discussed both in plenary and particularly during the approval session of the 'Istanbul declarations', as well as in some of the thematic working groups.

The discussions focused mainly on the following issues:
- the power of the media in our societies
- freedom of expression: rights and responsibilities
- the importance of educating the media.

The results of the discussions were that the media are, nowadays, very often perceived as entertainment more than sources of information and learning tools about our and others' realities. Most of the newspapers, TV and radio channels prefer to increase their audiences by creating and selling 'low price reality shows', rather than conceiving programmes or articles in which the reality as such, accompanied by critical reflections and challenging analyses of the facts, is presented.

Due to the fact that, in order to survive, the media increasingly accept economic and political interference from their governments or from some political parties, the information we receive is more and more filtered according to the fantasy of journalists and the result of manipulative processes. As a result, the media loose credibility and trust, misrepresenting realities and people, and especially those who belong to minority groups.

The media should be aware of the power they exert in today's societies, in which one of the few solutions for fighting against discrimination, phobias, violence and conflicts is dialogue. To promote dialogue among people, information needs to be

clear, transparent and faithful to reality. This requires that journalists take their power and responsibilities towards people and institutions seriously, using their tools to fight ignorance and not to reinforce stereotypes and prejudices.

On the other hand, as mentioned in the report of the thematic working group on the media, citizens may also lead actions such as boycotting certain media and demonstrations, and putting pressure on editors and journalists to change the actual situation. Another alternative may be the creation or the better use of new media, for instance, cross-border media, as a means of promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding. A further solution would be to regulate further freedom of speech. However, the limits of the to the freedom of speech and its regulations are problematic and dealt with very differently across Europe.

During the Symposium, and especially during the final session in which the Istanbul Youth Declaration was analysed and approved by the participants, the concept of freedom of speech was challenged with the still fresh example of the caricatures of the prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers"; this, however, was felt insufficient for guaranteeing a fair use and enjoyment of this right.

To ensure that the freedom of expression will not be interpreted and used as freedom to offend and/or broadcast propaganda, there is no need for additional limitations or universal rules which tend to standardize our values and moral codes. Maybe, at the risk of being simplistic, it is more and more necessary that the media are aware of their role, power and responsibilities in society, and that they freely express their opinions, points of view, criticisms and facts as a means of respecting the diversity of the public they address.

Moreover, in order to guarantee a fair representation of realities, it is important that the media are led by a diversity of people and not only by elitist and homogeneous groups, which represent minorities inadequately. It is important that minority groups are an integral part of the media. In fact, the alternative solution of creating media to represent only youth, ethnic and religious minorities, and disabled

people, is very challenging. It may easily lead to having a second-class media which represents voiceless groups, working in the shadows and hardly gaining recognition and a listening public. To avoid creating a discriminatory process, it is necessary that civil society and public institutions take action to guarantee equity and the equal opportunities for everyone to express their opinions and share information.

Most of the participants also pointed out that another way to avoid manipulation and miscommunication is to plan specific educational programmes for media workers and about the media. It is, in fact, necessary that all those who are working in the field of media have the chance to improve their competences on intercultural issues, and to develop abilities and attitudes to deal with sensitive subjects such as religion, ethics, moral codes and values.

On the other hand, it is also important that everyone is educated to develop a critical attitude towards the information overload we face on a daily basis. One working group proposed running discussion classes on current affairs as an integral part of the school curriculum and youth programmes. Teachers and youth workers should be trained in discussing the news with youth in such a way as to stimulate critical self-reflection from a variety of perspectives. Additionally, it was suggested that young people should be familiar with the ways in which they can use the media to voice their own opinions.

Furthermore, many working groups highlighted that it is also important to remember that too often most of those journalists who act in the name of fair information, breaking stereotypes and prejudices, and fighting against discrimination and manipulation, are victims of violence, kidnapping and killings in conflict areas.

If, as discussed during the Symposium, other ways of living together are possible, we should all avoid other human lives being wasted as a result of economic power, intolerance and hatred.

The role of the Institutions in interreligious and intercultural dialogue

The Symposium was, to use an expression from Astrid Utterström, a shining example of the possible cooperation between youth, institutions and organisations. The event brought together young delegates, parliamentarians, representatives of European Institutions, NGOs, local authorities, and experts. This multi-faceted

dimension was very symbolic, and, in a way, the ideal encounter for learning from each other, exchanging knowledge, know-how and methods and listening to good examples of youth work within the frame of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, carried out by organisations and also local authorities.

In just a few days, programmes, tools, strategies and priorities related to interreligious and intercultural dialogue were presented and discussed.

Pierre Mairesse and Karina Lopatta-Loibl pointed out the role of the European Union in sustaining interreligious and intercultural dialogue. It was said that, in order to have a critical dialogue, not only is adequate knowledge of the self and others important, but also having the opportunity to experience where others live, how they live, what they do and think, and what their concerns are. Mobility was mentioned as a strong factor in preparing and enabling people to discover otherness, and engage in sincere and critical dialogue.

However, mobility is for many young people still a 'utopia' in term of accessibility, bureaucratic procedures and frontiers. One of the challenges of the new European programmes, especially the 'Youth in Action' and the 'Lifelong Learning' programmes, is to ensure that each young person or young adult has the same opportunity to participate, be it for those who are well-educated, or those who drop out of the school system early, for workers or academics, for those belonging to minorities, or coming from different marginalised and segregated groups, including people with different abilities.

The 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue' of the Council of Europe, introduced by Ulrich Bunjes, was defined as a real and concrete tool for intercultural dialogue, including its interreligious dimension. The 'White Paper' was presented as the result of an open and inclusive Europe-wide consultation process. The experiences and the needs of the various 'stakeholders' of intercultural dialogue – governments, parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, civil society, immigrants and national minorities, religious communities, journalists – should be fully reflected in the document.

During the Symposium, other tools that can serve towards a constructive dialogue were presented to the participants. The 'Alliance of Civilisations' youth initiative, presented by Elshad Iskandarov, and the programme of initiatives and activities for 2008, in the frame of the 'Year of Intercultural Dialogue' presented by Karin

Lopatta-Loibl, were both inspiring and well-described. The experiences in Belgium and in United Kingdom portrayed respectively by Sohret Yildirin and Kanchan Jadeja stimulated the participants, and demonstrated that the cooperation between stakeholders, NGOs and young people is possible, and needed more than ever.

Despite the good intentions and the sincere commitment of all the guest-speakers, it has to be said that the cooperation between institutions and young people is not a reality everywhere, nor is it always simple, transparent and immune from manipulative intentions. Much still has to be done, and the results achieved with the Symposium can only be the starting point from which to move forward, especially in the context of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

In order to do this, it is very important that the promises will remain not only a good souvenir in this report, but that the institutions will act in order to:
- more accessible;
- listen to the real needs of young people, not invent them;
- create real learning opportunities for every single young person, and not only for an elitist group of university students, finding a way to overcome obstacles such as bureaucracy;
- be transparent and coherent in their decisions and proposals;
- be open-minded in order to provoke a real change in societies;
- be ready to experiment with real cooperation with young people and their organisations on interreligious and intercultural dialogue;
- be ready to support the initiatives promoted not only at international level but also those at grassroots level which involve the whole community.

The role of the young people and youth workers in the interreligious and intercultural dialogue

During the Symposium, it was pointed out that to recognise we are all different but at the same time all equal, does not answer any of the problems we are facing nowadays. This is a process, and it should be accompanied by a transformation of our debates, thoughts and feelings in specific, strategic and structured actions in society. Not only do politicians have a role in this transformation; young people and youth workers have the power, the right and the responsibility to demonstrate with facts, actions, projects, campaigns and educational activities that interreligious and

intercultural dialogue is not only a fashionable issue promoted by the European Institutions, but that it corresponds with a possible, real and concrete answer to discrimination, xenophobia and every phobia based upon religion and cultural diversity.

As stated by the working group on Armed conflicts and intercultural youth work for conflict transformation, all kinds of interreligious and intercultural dialogue have to be secured, and by the participation of all stakeholders involved, otherwise there is a risk of creating an oligarchy representing the middle class intellectual young people.

One of the results of the discussions in the thematic working group on Religion, Culture and Gender was that informal groups, unorganised and disadvantaged young people, and minority groups should be better reached and motivated to raise their voice and to contribute to the dialogue.

There are, in fact, still many young people who have not yet had the chance to benefit from a good education and adequate information on the opportunities for young people at global and local level. Very often they are frustrated and sometimes disengaged from and disappointed with a political system that seems to be so keen on promising advantages to improve mobility for young people, rather than creating opportunities to listen to what all young people wish and propose for their future.

Educators, and more specifically youth workers, are asked not only to acclaim and proclaim common values and principles such as equality in dignity, but to express them in their daily actions.

If it is true that young people need more ideologies than ideas to be motivated to act in their societies and communities, it is also true that they need to see practical examples more than promises for the future.

Youth work still remains very relevant in our societies, whilst providing tools and opportunities to develop every young person's full potential and also developing strategies and policies for inclusion and participation of all young people, as René-Ralf Weingärtner pointed out. Youth work, in cooperation with the other stakeholders at local and global level, can create opportunities for encounters and meetings between young people of different origins and backgrounds.

Youth work should facilitate dialogue among young people, always taking care to guarantee equal opportunities for everyone and using modesty when facing unknown issues and situations. To be able to facilitate and motivate young people to interreligious and intercultural dialogue requires that everyone is ready to permanently challenge his or her own convictions and stereotypes.

Dialogue: challenging exercise but still a possible mission

The whole symposium was a whirl of activities and reflections on the real obstacles of living together in a constructive way, and on the potential and opportunities for developing a constructive interreligious and intercultural dialogue as a key that may open the door to a real democratic and participative society.

Most of the guest speakers and the participants made an in-depth analysis of our realities, enabling us to gain better and faster access to contacts and information about our and others' realities. The extraordinary quantity of information we receive increases the complexity that people face in decoding the messages, creating a feeling of inadequacy in living together. Unfortunately, the increasing quantity of information, stimuli and virtual contacts does not correspond with a better understanding of each other but with a decreasing quantity and quality of encounters. As mentioned before, in most of our globalised-local societies, being fast and in a hurry is a status symbol, and one which does not support communication and dialogue. In fact, to establish effective communication, time is of the essence. Indeed, time is necessary in order to respect and consider the emotions and feelings, thoughts and reflections of each person as an integral part of communication.

Nevertheless, communicating with one another, and especially preserving the dialogue in communication, is not easy or natural. Should we consider developing communicative competences as a possible solution to the difficulties we face in establishing a constructive dialogue?

The ability to communicate is too often confused with the skills of persuasion re-affirming the dichotomy between you and me, with the result of confirming the superiority of the self towards the other.

Developing one's skills and abilities for dialogue implies, in fact, a strong will and commitment to be open up to others while retaining one's critical judgement.

Magdalena Sroda, in her speech, underlined the importance of dialogue based on the principle of 'political correctness' which can prevent offensive speeches and support the spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. The linguistic codes we use are indeed very important. Recent facts confirm the increasing number of conflicts created by hate speeches, offensive remarks and insults. To use a politically correct language may help us to prevent major conflicts and to consolidate the foundations of our democracies.

In my opinion, political correctness may be a very useful tool since it is related to the form of speech and does not influence the contents of discussions. However, to disassociate form from content is a very challenging exercise.

Today, to live together means to be able to live with diversity and to accept and respect other ways of communication.

During the symposium, it was affirmed that to preserve dialogue in communication is the only way to guarantee equal opportunity and dignity for everyone, for every religion, belief, or culture. Dialogue concerns us all, from decision makers to youth leaders, from individuals to societies, and from youth to stakeholders.

In conclusion, the Symposium demonstrated that to be open to dialogue implies:
- being critically tolerant towards others, quoting Mehmet Ali Sahin
- being ready to protect and fight for others' rights (not only for one's own)
- being animated by the *philo-xenia* spirit, as exemplified by Magdalena Sroda, and to love each other more, as mentioned by a number of the spokespeople of the working groups
- being aware that to succeed we need to pass through a process that needs time and perseverance
- taking into account that the process it is not an easy journey, and that, to quote Ibrahim Kalin, 'living together is one thing: being aware of it is something different'. To continue to treat the reality of Western and Islamic countries as a dichotomy runs the greater risk of promoting misunderstandings, causing potential disrespect and further discrimination and multiple phobias
- questioning ourselves and the environment in which we live
- developing educational tools to facilitate openness, to stimulate curiosity and to promote active tolerance

- learning how to communicate differently, and defining a code of communication in which we continuously define and redefine the meaning of our and others' values, and what we represent.

In connection with tools for dialogue, I would like to recall again the speech of Magdalena Sroda, in which she underlined the importance of a constructive dialogue, in which 'caritas' plays an important role. In the Christian concept of 'caritas' the immediate translation into the Islamic 'anlayis' can be found, meaning tolerance and acceptance. At the risk of being simplistic, we can affirm that no matter which religion or belief we profess, love and friendship, and respect and acceptance of each other are the fundamental common bases of several religions and beliefs. It is becoming urgent in today's societies to recognise that people are not only a body with a rational mind, but also have a spirit. To look for similarities and common roots instead of differences can help enormously in the process of recognising the equal dignity of any belief or religion. There is not a belief or religion that is superior or inferior, but, nevertheless, for each of us our own belief or religion is one of the most important elements of our identity.

Is discontent the first necessity of progress[3]?... Personal comments

At the very end of the Symposium, all participants took part in the approval of the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration'. Consensus was the method adopted to approve or reject each one of the recommendations that were elaborated upon, based on the suggestions made by the thematic working groups.

In the role of general rapporteur, I had the chance to observe the adoption process and to listen carefully to the proposals for amendments to the recommendations. Most of the time, I had the impression that the comments in the form of the recommendations were a politically correct excuse to challenge the contents and the meanings behind them.

The issues were often very touching and the emotions and feelings of most of the participants, combined with their prejudices, transformed the discussion into a confrontation of monolithic identities. Participants attending the exhausting confrontation stopped to listen to each other and chose the simple form of monologue, imposing their point of view, and persuading others of the truth of their positions. At the very end, the participants approved the proposal to stop

the debate in plenary and to delegate a group of people, mainly representing the organisers, to finalise the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration', taking into account the discussions, fears, doubts, and different opinions expressed by the participants during the last session of the meeting.

Despite the frustration and the discontent, I strongly believe that this was a learning experience from which we can all benefit, reminding us that dialogue requires time and a strong commitment from all parties. The last session showed that, to engage seriously in dialogue, more meetings are needed than one symposium.

I sincerely hope that this moment of tension will drive all the Symposium's participants to reflect on the experiences they received during the event, and on their will, motivation and commitment, matched with their abilities and knowledge, to transform the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration' into concrete actions in their daily life.

Notes:

[3] The original quotation of Thomas A. Edison is "Discontent is the first necessity of progress".

DOCUMENTATION

OPENING STATEMENTS

Mehet Ali Sahin
Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister of Turkey

Dear guests, young friends, respected media representatives, ladies and gentlemen, Welcome to the Symposium on 'Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue', organized within the framework of the 'All Different – All Equal' Youth Campaign of the Council of Europe.

We find it very meaningful and satisfying to organize such a symposium in Istanbul, a place of three celestial religions which have existed in peace for years: Turkey, the crossroads of civilizations.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union decided that the year 2008 would be designated the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue'.

The UN (United Nations) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) have declared the year of 2007 as the 'Year of World Tolerance and Mevlana'[4] on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of Mevlana's birth.

Both in our region and in the world, the aim of these developments, the calls for cultural and interreligious dialogue and the efforts of tolerance and understanding are quite clear: creating a common ground which enables us to live together in a friendly environment, and developing a common language and understanding in our diversity; in other words, to put forward the will of living together peacefully.

'Tolerance' is not a natural tendency. It is a 'human merit' which develops over a long period as a result of many harsh and sanguinary human experiences. As a result, it is of utmost importance. Tolerance is not a 'rule' in discussions, especially those with a certain ideological, cultural or religious background. On the contrary, all over the world the people objecting to the ideas adapted by the great numbers of the community paid and have been paying for it throughout the long history of mankind.

Of course, there are two main factors necessary for the existence of democratic rights and democratic life:

to form legal and constitutional institutions, and to teach individuals the respect and tolerance for difference. In realizing the first element, the road is long and hard and the price we pay is very high. Even in Europe, mankind has experienced two world wars in order to possess these institutions. However, preserving the above-mentioned freedoms institutionally does not mean that people in society can manipulate them as they wish. No parliament, no court or law can preserve freedom by itself. The rights which citizens and societies do not defend fiercely cannot be preserved. Freedom and rights are the things which people have and must preserve for themselves.

If we do not teach people (especially young people) tolerance and respect towards those with different cultures and religions, we cannot be optimistic for the future. At present, we know that when we say 'dialogue', in many parts of the world 'monologue', that is to say, one-sided communication is understood. Dialogue and tolerance are not methods for using after insisting on just one religion or culture, removing the differences and making them invisible. The identity whereby one is in no doubt of being right and superior is confined not only to young people but also to the societies where these prejudices are difficult to overcome. When a person believes that his personality is superior, suspicion appears, thus making dialogue impossible. If there is no reciprocal communication, understanding each other becomes a remote dream and this gap is filled with fear and violence, triggered by prejudice.

It is impossible to understand each other without having unprejudiced and true knowledge about our differences. It is impossible to live together and get on without understanding each other with all sincerity and frankness. What is necessary is to promote dialogue and try to understand each other.

As Mevlana, the master of tolerance and understanding said, "Every tongue is the curtain of a heart. When the curtain moves, we reach the secrets."

We are very pleased that such a symposium, aiming to remove the curtains of our heart, is taking place in Turkey, one of the founding members of the Council of Europe. In my opinion, Istanbul, with its historical and extraordinary cultural inheritance, is the most ideal place to make such a call.

Anatolia is not only the biggest cultural and religious bridge in the history of mankind, but it is also the most successful one in enabling these different riches to live together.

I am sure that in front of the wonderful view of the Bosporus in Istanbul – the queen of cities – we will make new friends. You will witness the richness and harmony of all these differences and diversities in the city of a country where everybody is different and everybody is equal. I hope and wish that the European Union will be supplemented by the full membership of Turkey and will carry on its harmonious relationship with the big human family by strengthening it.

I would like to thank you sincerely for having listened to me, and congratulate everybody on organizing this Symposium.

Thank you.

Notes:
[4] Mevlana stands for Mevlana Celâleddin Rumi that means "an ecstatic flight into infinite love". Philosopher and mystic of Islam addressed all people, regardless of their faith or ethnic origin

Mr. Ralf-René Weingärtner
Director of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a rare privilege for me to be addressing you at the opening session of this Symposium in Istanbul. Through my career as an international civil servant, I have organised and attended many meetings, but rarely has one been so meaningful to me because it represents so many things we stand for in Europe today.

This is a youth meeting, taking place in the youngest member state of the Council of Europe in terms of population; Turkey is also one of the oldest member states of the Council of Europe, which it joined in the year of its foundation, 1949. Holding this Symposium in Istanbul is also very special: very few cities in the world can claim such a rich and unique role as catalysts of so many cultures, religions and civilizations. There could be no better place to hold a symposium on interreligious and intercultural dialogue than Istanbul. The third special dimension of this meeting is that it is held in the framework of the European Youth campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation, 'All Different – All Equal'. There are very few opportunities in the Council of Europe to be more active than in this campaign which, by what it stands for and what it fights against, should not leave any of us indifferent.

The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the oldest and largest European intergovernmental organisation, bringing together 46 member states, soon to be 47. The world has changed significantly since it was created and since Turkey joined it in 1949, but the main values and aims of the organisation remain fully valid: to promote and safeguard human rights, and to deepen and strengthen democracy and the rule of law. The 'All Different – All Equal' European youth campaign is a part of the action plan adopted by the last official Summit of heads of state and government in Warsaw; the campaign seeks to promote diversity, human rights, inclusion and participation in society. The campaign must fully reflect the concerns of all citizens, but particularly those of young people. The campaign is anchored within the framework of indivisible, inalienable and universal human rights. While religious and cultural diversity has various meanings in different social and cultural contexts, it affects us all through social belonging, identity, and distribution of power and wealth.

The Campaign, we can also say, represents the sum of the issues and principles of the Council of Europe's youth policy, namely accession and inclusion, solidarity and social cohesion. The Council of Europe has always paid particular attention to matters affecting young people, with a double perspective: to associate young people to the building of a European space of democratic participation and cooperation, and to promote cooperation among member states with the view to addressing issues that affect young people. The European Youth Centres, in Strasbourg and Budapest, and the European Youth Foundation are among the Council's main tools for youth policy and youth work development in Europe. In addition to youth policy development, the Council of Europe's youth sector has three other work priorities: human rights education and intercultural dialogue; youth participation and democratic citizenship; social inclusion.

For us, youth policies are not only about solving young people's problems; they are about the shaping of the future of our societies. This is also what the campaign is about and what this symposium is about. In today's increasingly globalised world, we cannot remain indifferent to the concerns of young people and the threats posed to our societies by extremism, racism, islamophobia, social exclusion or antisemitism, to name but a few of the many evils we ought to address.
All different – all equal, but not indifferent!

Interreligious and intercultural dialogue

For the next few days we'll be discussing interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Both of them must be part of our daily work and concerns, in addressing the causes of polarized perceptions of each other, collective phobias and frustrations, and in putting into practice activities that help re-affirm the fundamental equality in dignity of every human being and the respect among peoples of different cultural and religious traditions.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance." This fundamental human right, proclaimed and protected by the Universal Declaration and by the European Convention on Human Rights, provides, together with the other human rights, the framework under which interreligious and intercultural dialogue can be held. Human rights, however, require the commitment of all, young people included, to uphold them.

Intercultural dialogue appears as an essential approach to counter and overcome mutual prejudices and the self-fulfilling prophecy of the 'war of civilisations'. If the purpose of intercultural dialogue is 'to learn to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging', it is clear that it can only work if it involves everyone, young people included, and that it is not reduced to 'culture' but encompasses all the social manifestations and expressions of 'culture' including religion. Here I would like to congratulate the Turkish government for initiating the 'Alliance of Civilisations' project. Alliances are certainly better than confrontations.

We know that diversity is not always accompanied by social cohesion and cooperation, key factors for equality in dignity and equality in access to rights and social opportunities. Situations of discrimination remain problematic to many societies, sometimes being expressed in violent forms, from hate speech to armed conflict. Young people, especially those from minority groups and those living in highly multicultural environments, can be found among the victims and among the perpetrators; they are, in any case, important actors in promoting social change.

It is often argued whether cultural diversity and religious difference are the 'real' problems or factors for discrimination, exclusion and hatred, or whether they are simply the new clothes for deeper and older forms of racism and domination. More important than knowing what the role of religion and culture is in what we are discussing, is to address the consequences of non-dialogue, of prejudice and exclusion on all of us, on our societies and on the future generations.

I would like to invite you to challenge these perceptions and to engage in constructive discussions and projects that go beyond this. After all, not one of us is immune to prejudice.

- It is not cultural difference that is a problem: it is discrimination and xenophobia that are the problem;
- It is not religious diversity that makes social relation difficult: intolerance and fanaticism are;
- It is not intercultural dialogue that is useless and outdated: nationalism and extremism are;
- It is not human rights that pose a challenge to our societies: it is the persistence of their violations that worry us;
- It is not that the campaign and meetings which are superfluous: it is the lack of commitment and action that are often disappointing.

All different – all equal, and hopefully all active as well.

Beyond the campaign

Youth work, the key actor in this Symposium, is not necessarily about intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation. Youth work is about opportunities to develop every young person's full potential in society; it is about developing strategies and policies for the inclusion and participation of all young people. In the multicultural reality of our societies, this means many of the most intense interculturally dialogical situations: the encounters between young people of different origins and backgrounds, not on the basis of their religion, language, culture or nationality, but simply as young people concerned about their future, the future of their friends and the future of their planet. Today's young generation can probably embrace the first realistic vision of a planet in which the common concerns and aspirations are more important than domination and racism. But this vision will not come true without commitment, motivation and hard work: *all different, all committed.*

I hope, therefore, that this Symposium will not only discuss the various aspects of cultural and religious diversity but that it will also have a very strong orientation towards action. We will obviously debate the youth campaign, the European Union's 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' 2008 and the 'Alliance of Civilizations Youth Initiative'. Maybe the most basic of these initiatives and projects, however, is the 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue', a policy document which the Council of Europe intends to publish towards the end of this year.

With the 'White Paper' – and we will hear more about this tomorrow morning – the Council of Europe will formulate a coherent and long-term policy for the promotion of intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension. It will look at intercultural dialogue within European societies, but also dialogue between Europe and its neighbouring regions. The 'White Paper' will encourage policy makers and practitioners, governments and civil society, majorities and minorities alike, to engage in intercultural dialogue. It will formulate guidelines and highlight examples of good practice. It will name the preconditions for peaceful interaction between different cultures on our continent. It will identify the necessary steps to enable everyone to live within a culturally diverse environment in a positive, creative way – and not with rejection, fear, ignorance and suspicion. That is the challenge we all have to win. The 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue' will not be written in Strasbourg alone. It will be the end result of a Europe-wide open and inclusive consultation process, because we want to ensure that the experience of the various 'stakeholders' of intercultural dialogue is reflected in the document.

Among the most important 'stakeholders' of intercultural dialogue are young people. "The hearts and minds of the next generation are the real object of a dialogue among civilizations", the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said in 2005 when presenting the global agenda for dialogue. We are convinced that there will be no lasting intercultural understanding in this world if it is not owned and driven forward by young people. That is why we want to use the opportunity of this Symposium to listen to your views, to learn from your experience, and to hear your proposals and suggestions. The 'Istanbul Youth Declaration' that you will produce by the end of the Symposium will go a way to conveying them and making sure that the results of this Symposium go beyond this meeting.

Holding the Symposium in Turkey is more than just symbolic. Turkey is a highly multicultural and multi-religious society with an important historical role in bridging cultures, religions and civilisations. I hope that this will also reflect on the outcomes and results of this Symposium. It also corresponds to the approach of de-centralising the activities of the campaign and, in this particular case, of supporting the campaign in Turkey.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Turkish authorities, in particular the General Directorate for Youth and Sport, for fully supporting this Symposium and making it possible for us to be here. I hope that this will also translate in accrued visibility and impact for the campaign in Turkey. My thanks go also to the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, whose efforts have made the cooperation possible. We hope this will contribute to an increased visibility and cooperation with Muslim youth organisations in Europe.

The campaign 'All Different – All Equal' is an inspiration for young people from all faiths, not only to understand the value of human rights but also to encourage them to be proactive in defending the religious minorities around them. You are representing the visions of many young people in Europe and many other parts of the world. It is also in our hands, in your hands, to create a world where everyone can "live like a tree, unique and free; like a forest in harmony", if you allow me to quote here the great Turkish poet Nazim Hîkmet.

I wish you much success and look forward to working with you.

Mr. Mehmet Atalay
Director General of Youth and Sport Ministry

Speaking points

Dear guests,
Istanbul is a great 'mosaic' of different cultures, and therefore the ideal place for this Symposium. We are very happy to host this meeting in Turkey and, for this reason, we thank all the organisers, the ministers and participants of this event.

We are here to establish friendship, dialogue and peace.

Different cultures need to be digested. We first have to remove the barriers that separate us. To support interreligious and intercultural dialogue, we need to read a lot and to get to know each other.

In Turkey, there is a population of 25 million youth, all of whom are very active. We wish for the unification of youth, with all their differences.

Istanbul can be a bridge. It is a candidate for the Olympic Games and other events. In the near future, we could organise the Olympic games of culture and peace.

I sincerely hope that a cultural 'mosaic' could be made from indivisible bricks after the Symposium. I hope the conference serves the purpose of creating peace and understanding.

I wish you all success and interesting conversations.

Mr Pierre Mairesse
European Commission

Dear guests,
I am pleased to be here at this conference in Istanbul.

The European Commission welcomes the Turkish authorities' initiative to tackle important topics such as interreligious and intercultural dialogue in youth work.

The importance of the issue of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in general and in the youth field in particular

2007 is the European Year of Equal Opportunities for all.
The aims are:
- To make people in the European Union more aware of their rights to equal treatment as a basic principle of the European Union
- To launch a debate on the benefits of diversity both for European societies and individuals

The link with youth is that 10 young people accompanied the Year and they formulated their expectations to the Year at the opening conference in Berlin in January. They will evaluate the Year at the closing conference in Portugal.

2008 will be the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue
The aims are:
- To contribute to raising the awareness of people living in the European Union, that active European citizenship means engaging in intercultural dialogue in daily life
- To promote respect for other cultures
- To promote the common values of the European Union

The link with youth is that:
- Young people are a main target group of the Year
- Probable Youth conference on inter-religious dialogue in 2008
- Cycle of structured dialogue with young people on relations between cultures and religions in Europe and its neighbourhood, from regional and national debates starting in 2007 and with a Youth week organised in autumn 2008.

Intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in the youth field

The promotion of diversity and intercultural dialogue as well as the fight against discriminations are priorities in the youth policy cooperation and of the Youth in Action Programme.

In youth policy cooperation two approaches are applied: mainstreaming of youth in diversity and antidiscrimination policies.

In terms of mainstreaming: youth is a main target group and a main subject of the Commission campaign „For Diversity-Against Discrimination".
The activities of the youth sector on these issues are the following:
- Two youth conferences on diversity in cooperation with German authorities in Berlin in 2001 and 2005
- Strong support to the EuroMed Youth Parliament organised by the German presidency in June 2007
- Support for cultural activities of different cultural, ethnic and religious communities in the EU through the Youth in Action programme or politically

The Youth in Action Programme in Turkey

The Youth in Action programme started at the beginning of this year and has five objectives:
- To promoting young people's active citizenship,
- To develop solidarity and tolerance and to reinforce social cohesion,
- To foster mutual understanding,
- To contribute to develop the quality of support systems for youth activities,
- To promoting European cooperation in youth policy
- The promotion of diversity and intercultural dialogue is a permanent priority.
- Turkey is a Programme Country of the Youth in Action Programme
- Young Turks are encouraged to participate with their projects!

Young Turks may address themselves to the Turkish National Agency in Ankara whose role it is to support young people who wish to have their projects co-financed under the Youth in Action Programme.

The Commission's experience with youth work

European Commission supports the exchange and training of youth workers in the framework of the Youth in Action Programme. Currently study is in preparation on socio-economic scope of youth work in Europe in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

Youth work has an important role to play in promoting the benefits of diversity and intercultural dialogue including inter-religious dialogue.

The European Commission support to the campaign „All Different-All Equal"

The topics of the campaign, 'participation', 'diversity' and 'human rights' are also priorities of the European Commission. The European Commission supports the campaign financially and through active participation in events.

Examples of events supported by the Commission in the framework of the campaign are the following:
- Opening event in Strasbourg, France;
- Youth event in St. Petersburg, Russia;
- Diversity Symposium in Budapest, Hungary

The main expectations of the European Commission towards this symposium are the following:
- Intercultural dialogue of young people and youth workers – 'discover the other;
- Exchange of best practices in intercultural and inter-religious dialogue in the different countries;
- Establishment of networks of young people with young people from Turkey;
- Interesting Declaration reflecting the views of young people on intercultural and inter-religious issues and in which the young people might wish to not only address policy-makers but also to engage themselves.

I wish you all a successful conference!

Mr. Elshad Iskandarov
Secretary of the OIC Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation

Distinguished Excellencies, Dear Friends,
I am very grateful to see all of you here in Istanbul, and especially taking part in this unique event, namely, the Symposium on interreligious and intercultural dialogue in youth work. This city is definitely a symbol of different cultures contributing to the richness of human beings living in mutual respect and tolerance.

Recognition of multiplicity and respect for diversity are two main points to consider in response to our current situation.

The Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation has the aim of coordinating youth activities in the sphere of the Organization of the Islamic Conference but also of establishing sustainable links between youth of different cultural backgrounds, and removing barriers of mistrust and prejudice.

Dialogue among young people is important today if we do not want to continue the disastrous experiences of the twentieth century into the twenty-first. Particular concern for our constituency is the growing trend of islamophobia in some European countries, which not only threatens lives and the well-being of millions of European citizens of Muslim background but, by reviving the darkest memories of racial hatred and fascism, threatens the very humanistic grounds of European culture.

To foster a crucial dialogue the OIC Youth Forum has developed a very important initiative to put together youth and decision makers: the Youth for 'Alliance of Civilisations'. The importance here is to bring the views of youth to the decision makers' level in order that they can influence the final decision and, as a consequence, the impact of the decision themselves.

Sincere and open dialogue are the pre-requisites for cooperation. We are looking for open, sincere dialogue, and for the voice of young people to offer viable and concrete recommendations here in the Symposium.

I will conclude my speech with a motto proposed in the midst of World War I to the restless Caucasian region by Alimardan Topchibashev, founding father of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, the first democracy in the Islamic world: „Live and have others live." I wish you all a fruitful Symposium and successful results.

Ms. Bettina Schwarzmayr
President of the European Youth Forum

Sometimes I have the feeling that activities aimed at intercultural dialogue do little more than confirm stereotypes. If we define culture as a set of values, norms, institutions and artefacts, we must be aware that there are many cultures even within cultures. All of them are ideological, sociological and technological sub-systems of our societies that govern interactions between people. Culture therefore refers to the consumption of goods, the production of goods, and construction of meanings and social relationships. Addressing intercultural learning within an organisation and beyond therefore implies a complex set of measures. All recommendations that you will come up with during these days should be based on the principal of 'nothing about us without us', which is essential for the sustainability of intercultural dialogue.

The European Youth forum is an umbrella organisation of almost 100 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations. Together with our members we are trying to be advocates of social change, a change that would allow more people, while still young, to enjoy the right of being who they are in dignity. We are advocating for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation in our daily work and this is why we deem this campaign fundamental.

The EU celebrated its 50th birthday just this weekend – so what has it brought to Europe in terms of intercultural dialogue? The EU could be about solving global problems by pooling sovereignty and setting up a framework of mutually accepted rules. However, in the current political environment, the dominant theme in political discourse is security. Political ideologies provide different explanations on what the sources of insecurity are, as well as how to provide protection against it. Insecurity may span from economic to social and even cultural fears.

As immigration is seen as a growing threat to economic stability and security, parties from both the right and the left have radically toughened immigration laws. This crackdown on immigrants is probably the most appalling and shameful of European policies of recent years. We need to set straight the cause and its effect: it is the police violence and disfranchisement of immigrants that create criminality and deteriorate job markets; destabilisation through immigration is not a sign that rules are not tough enough, but rather that immigration policies have failed.

Let me emphasise that the principle of universal and indivisible human rights must prevail in a real and genuine manner throughout our continent. Many public authorities and institutions still fail to provide adequate answers to severe human rights violations and discrimination. We believe that we must hold everyone accountable for their actions and their lack of action in promoting legal and social rights.

Fears are the real frontiers in Europe; today's borders are in our heads. I do not want to be afraid of who I am and I am sure that you all agree that no-one should be. The reality though, is that in many places and situations I do have to be afraid of who I am, afraid of being open about my faith or who I am in love with.

Following the news and headlines, it seems today that everything is about the prevention of tensions between cultures and the 'war on terror', especially on the lips of decision makers. This is a fear-driven debate. It worries many young people. We do question the trend that sees the fight against terrorism as a legitimate reason to commit human rights violations. Words such as 'peace', 'freedom', 'liberty', and 'equality for all' seem to have disappeared from the public debate, although those are the values that the Youth Forum and, in fact, many of you are fighting for. And these are values and visions that none of us should forget in the current debates about clashing civilisations and terrorism.

During the next few days we have to challenge our own stereotypes – our internalised racisms, our own homophobia, islamophobia and antisemitism, and our daily sexism. I sincerely believe that we need to question our own preconceptions and scrutinize the systems that we are living in.

Many people speak about intercultural dialogue and pay lip service to it, but the steps taken are incredibly small compared to the amount of words and promises in the field. Your multitude of experiences, realities and identities have to be the main contribution to the success of this Symposium. But for this you have to take your experience from here home with you and continue working with it – it is your responsibility to multiply the conclusions of this Symposium and to implement them. Otherwise this event will just remain one symposium amongst many. Use the opportunity, gain experience, and talk to as many people as possible to learn from them and make this event a success.

Mr. Azad Rahimov
Minister of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Dear participants, Ladies and gentlemen!

First of all, greetings to you all on behalf of the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and all good wishes for the Symposium's good work.

As you know, today the world community is undergoing an important turning point in the development of its history. Each person, as a citizen of a specific country, is also becoming at the same time a citizen of a global society. He falls under the influence of the processes taking place in the world, he sees the sorrow and grief of the world, and he feels its delight and shares in it.

The attitudes to the essence and perspectives of the so–called process of globalization are various: some people regard the process as a factor of improved production and rapid development, considering globalization as a determinant of future progress.

The other attitude is exactly the opposite, claiming that the process of globalization has greatly aggravated a social, economic and political inequality, and has caused a crisis of historical progress and desperate decay. As a result, today's world, in parallel with the process of globalization, has been dealing with the anti-globalization movements.

Under these conditions, such duties as determining the place and role of youth in the modern world, their direction in ongoing processes, and the efficient use of their knowledge and abilities all remain important. From this point of view, the topic of our event is both current and relevant, and I am sure that during the Symposium we will have a fruitful and useful exchange of views.

I'd like to take this opportunity to try to inform the participants of the event about Azerbaijan and the work which has been done in Azerbaijan in the youth field. As you know, an ideological pluralism, which began after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has created conditions for people, both in all post-Soviet regions and in Azerbaijan, to broaden their world outlook, and to express openly their religious feelings in accordance with the principle of religious liberty. This has been an incentive to form new criteria and vital principles in our society.

Azerbaijan was the first country of the east, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to take on the principles of a secular state; today the country is still loyal to these principles. With the return of sovereignty, religious liberty has created the conditions for people of Azerbaijan to revert freely to their roots and religious beliefs.

Historically, Azerbaijan has been a place where not only Islam has had an opportunity to develop, but other religions as well, and tolerance has been displayed towards them.

Today, about 80 different nationalities and ethnic minorities live in Azerbaijan. Most of them are representatives of various cultures and religions. In spite of this, they are citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan and enjoy equal rights. All of them take an active part in the development of sovereign Azerbaijan, in the construction of a democratic society, and in the defence of its territorial integrity. I believe that the tolerance that exists in Azerbaijan could become a model for other countries.

Under the conditions of the integration of our country into the international community and the influence of global problems which exist in the world, the main focus of our activities is to maintain national, ethical values and the scientific analysis of national customs and traditions. Present realities compel us to pursue a more flexible policy. In order to meet the needs of youth in compliance with deadlines, it is important to introduce new methods of working. It is also necessary, especially in our world of the double approach to realities, national, ethnic and religious diversity to form a more flexible and balanced modern youth policy based on the principles of a global society.

We are endeavouring to educate the youth of sovereign Azerbaijan to love their motherland, and to respect its history, language, culture, state symbols, customs and traditions. At the same time, regardless of residence, no young person should be indifferent to the social and political processes taking place in the world, but should participate in the development of youth movements, in the defence of human rights, intercultural dialogue, cooperation and exchange practices on the problems of globalization, and try to be steadfaston such issues.

It is known that the progress of any country directly depends on a high level of education amongst youth, with the mastering of the basics of science and technology. Today the tasks confronting us in youth work are very important.

As a leader of a government body implementing the youth policy, I can tell you that today the government of Azerbaijan has created all the necessary conditions and opportunities to enable us to function at a high level. Since 1996 a Youth Forum, which is a summit meeting for young people, has been held every three years. Since 1997, 2 February has been celebrated annually in our country as 'Youth Day'.

During the period 1996-2006, approximately 20 normative documents on different directions in youth policy and the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan 'About Youth Policy' were adopted. In 2005, in order to improve state youth policy, to turn youth into leading power and to solve their social and economic problems, the 'State Youth Programme for 2005' was approved in Azerbaijan. By decree, signed by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in February 2007, the year 2007 has been declared in Azerbaijan as the Year of the Youth.

All the above has demonstrated once more that the state of Azerbaijan pays great attention to youth policy, to issues of the powerful development of its nation and strategic evolution. One of the main principles of state policy followed in the field of youth work is to create conditions for forming public youth units and, through them, establishing international contacts.

As you know, the idea of organizing the Islamic Conference Youth Forum was suggested by the National Assembly of Youth Organizations of Azerbaijan and the International Eurasian Association. Our state has officially supported this international initiative of Azerbaijani youth.

Changes taking place in the world, integration as a consequence of globalization, information and communication technologies, and information overload have all resulted in introducing innovations into the system of moral and ethnic values which have formed in our society over the centuries. In such conditions, maintaining our originality in the globalized world, yet remaining at the same time a participant of the process of integration, depends in the first instance on the development of our countries and readiness of our societies to adapt. From this point of view, it is appropriate to mention the example of the 'All Different – All Equal' campaign initiated by the Council of Europe. The aim of the campaign is to encourage youth and to give them an opportunity to participate on the basis of integration, and in building peace-loving societies in the spirit of mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect to difference. As you see, the main directions of the campaign are to ensure the equal participation in societies of all social, ethnic and religious strata through the use of educational methods.

The campaign is being carried out with success in Azerbaijan as well, because our country is situated at the crossroads of eastern and western cultures and civilizations and represents the synthesis of these cultures.

In Azerbaijan, as well as in Europe, the campaign is taking 3 directions:
- establishment of dialogue between youth;
- creation of conditions for participation of youth in building a democracy;
- dissemination of different cultures.

However, in parallel with the above, Azerbaijani youth have faced challenges. More than one million Azerbaijani citizens live with the status of refugee or IDP (internally displaced person), which causes many problems. More than half of the refugees are young people. As you know, Armenia has occupied more than 20% of the territory of Azerbaijan and this problem has not yet been resolved. The Republic of Armenia has been recognized as an aggressor by four of the UN Security Council Resolutions, as well as various documents of the Council of Europe, the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Organization for Regional Cooperation of GUAM states. However, Armenia has respected neither the resolutions of international organizations, nor international law.

I would like to mobilize our efforts at this Symposium for the elimination of conflicts that exist in Europe. Youth, regarded as the future of our nations, suffer from these conflicts most of all. The role of youth in the settlement of conflicts should be increased. With precisely this aim, we are planning to hold an international conference on 'The role of Youth in Solutions of Conflicts' in October in Baku, and I would like to ask all representatives of international organizations in attendance here to assist us; I invite each one of you to participate in the conference.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have participated in the organization of this event, and wish once more the Symposium much success.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Ms Astrid Utterström
Chairperson of the Joint Council on Youth, Council of Europe

Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today, because it is an honour for me both to have been asked to represent the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe's youth sector as well as to actually be able to do so.

I know that this seminar is the result of intense planning and I am looking forward to taking part in the outcome of this initiative. I am also very grateful for the warm welcome that we received on our arrival here in Istanbul – this beautiful city offers a vibrant and hospitable venue for us all.

I would like to begin by posing the following question: why are we here today?

It is my belief that the main reason for us being here today is a mutual desire to put young people at the top of the political agenda. And indeed, at the third summit of the Council of Europe, which took place in 2005, the Heads of States and Governments took an important step in placing youth issues as a top priority in the action plan for the future.

The 48 member states working together in the Youth sector decided last year to launch a new campaign, 'All Different – All Equal', in the spirit of the campaign against racism from 1995, which had the same slogan. The idea came from the European Youth Forum, the umbrella organization on the European level for the youth organizations. Well done! The campaign was also endorsed by the Summit in 2005.

This campaign will run until September 2007 and the underlying principle behind it, and one that is essential for its success, is the principle of co-management (we will come back to this principle later). The previous campaign focused on racism. This campaign differs from the last one in that it encompasses Diversity, Human rights and Participation. Apart from its own intrinsic value, and we have great hopes for the effectiveness of the campaign, this campaign is also further verification of the fruitful cooperation between the EU and CoE.

So, what are these statutory bodies in Europe? The first is the intergovernmental Steering Committee for Youth where 48 member states debate, discuss and take decisions together.

I am, at present, the chair of this steering committee.

The other statutory body of the Council of Europe is the Advisory Council, which is the youth organization's own body, representing 30 youth organisations in Europe. These two bodies, the Steering Committee and the Advisory Council, meet together in the Joint Council. I am currently also chairing the Joint Council.

You might ask yourselves, what is this Joint Council? And what is its purpose? Let me enlighten you on this highly important matter.

The Joint Council is concerned with a very central principal, the principle of co-management. This has to do with cooperation between governments and civil society, in this case the youth organizations. The Joint Council meets to discuss, debate and decide together. This is, in a true sense, a wonderful example of real participation on a pan-European level today. All decisions and all kinds of policy making regarding youth will have a greater impact, a greater degree of legitimacy, and be of a higher quality if young people are included in the process of evaluation, the prioritizing of issues and in the decision making. Young people are, after all, experts on their own living conditions and their situation. That is why we must listen carefully to what they have to say. This is why the co-management principle is so vital and important.

The current priorities governing our agenda in Europe are four-fold: Human Rights, Youth Participation, Social Cohesion and the Development of Youth Policy. These priorities are set by a Ministerial Conference that takes place every three years. The most important item on the agenda for the Steering committee at this time is the formation of the new strategy for future work in the youth sector. This strategy will be approved by the next Ministerial conference in the Ukraine in 2008.

In today's world, no-one can question the obvious need for dialogue and cooperation. All 48 member states and the Advisory Council, which I represent here today, are working more tightly together, constantly exchanging experiences and good examples with each other, with the single goal of improving the situation and living conditions for our Youth.

I'm sure I do not need to emphasise to you how essential it is that the policy makers, the researchers, the practitioners, the youth workers and young people themselves in all countries and regions join forces to make things better. This event, which brings together young delegates from all over Europe to further develop interreligious and intercultural dialogue, is a shining example of such important cooperation. In a globalised context we have a lot to learn from each other – both on the macro level by exchanging knowledge, know-how and methods, as well as on the micro level with successful methods and good examples from youth work carried out by organisations and local authorities.

Young people today have new opportunities that were closed to previous generations. Young people today meet a world that is both smaller and bigger than before. The IT-world, the Internet and cheaper transport, for example, have all opened up a new world of opportunities for young people. A lot of young people speak not only one foreign language but perhaps two or three, which helps them make new connections in the world. The youth participants of the campaign 'All Different – All Equal' have, with their enthusiasm and hard work, already shown the governments how important these issues are for the young generations and the need for a continuation of some sort.

All good things will come to an end, and so does this campaign. The final event will take place, I'm very pleased to say, in Sweden from 4-7 October 2007. Over 200 youth participants will be able to share best practices and celebrate the work that has taken place since the launch of the campaign. We will also look into the future by discussing ways for the participants and the National Campaign Committees to continue working and staying in touch with each other.

Finally, I would like to wish you all the best with this seminar.
Thank you.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE SYMPOSIUM

Mr. Rui Gomes
Education and Training Unit – CoE Directorate of Youth and Sport
On behalf of the Preparatory Group of the Symposium

Culture is part of everything in our life.

In 1988, when visiting Northern Ireland for the first time, I was asked if I was Catholic or Protestant. It was actually the first time I had been asked this question, most probably because until then it was not important for my partners in communication. I did reply, and it seemed that my answer satisfied the expectations of the taxi driver who had come to pick me up and had posed the question. I guess that if I had said that I am Muslim, the next question would have been "but… are you a Catholic or Protestant Muslim?"

Religion and Culture are interlinked: they do not mean the same thing for everybody, but indeed they are important for everyone. The Symposium is about religion, culture and human rights. Culture and religion are reflected in Human Rights. In fact, in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it is stated that, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance".

Intercultural dialogue is about learning to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging. Human rights are part of the framework and background of the programme and Symposium.

The aims of the Symposium are:

- to exchange practices of interreligious dialogue by young people, their organisations, and local, national and international authorities:
- to propose ways through which interreligious and intercultural dialogue can be further sustained through and as a result of the 'All Different – All Equal' campaign and other relevant initiatives.

The expected outcomes are:

- A statement affirming the key values, principles and purpose of intercultural and interreligious dialogue – the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration' (working title);
- Guidelines for the (good) practice of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in youth work (conclusions useful also for the 'White Paper');
- Opportunities to develop contacts and partnerships between participants and organisations represented.

The programme:

Plenary sessions will be used for proposing the topics, thanks to keynote speakers, on the cross-cutting issues of the symposium:
- Turkey and its role in relation to intercultural and interreligious dialogue
- Europe and intercultural dialogue
- Human Rights and Religion.

Other plenary sessions will be organised to share information on:
- The 'All Different – All Equal' campaign
- 'White paper on Intercultural Dialogue'
- Existing projects and initiatives.

In addition to these plenary sessions, the participants will work in 12 Thematic Working Groups, in which they will discuss and share their experiences and views on a particular topic in greater depth, and will elaborate proposals for the final declaration.

At the end we expect to have:
- The Istanbul Youth Declaration
- Conclusions of the working groups
- Conclusions of the General Rapporteur.

These will be presented at the closing session, after which there should still be time to discover Istanbul and to get acquainted with a tiny fraction of Turkey's rich cultural scene with the Kopuzdan Gununumuze dance performance.

TURKEY AND INTERRELIGIOUS AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE FROM INDIFFERENT TOLERANCE TO CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Mr. Ibrahim Kalin
SETA – Foundation for Political, Economical and Community Research

In no period of recorded history have human beings known about different cultures as much as we do today. Thanks to the pervasive nature of globalization, what happens in Washington, London or France has an immediate impact on what positions are taken in Istanbul, Cairo or Kuala Lumpur. Our global public space is so powerful yet so elusive that it leads many to believe that more information brings more understanding. Getting to know others from close up, however, is not always a smooth and easy experience. It may result in some pleasant surprises and enriching experiences. Yet it may also result in disappointment, frustration and mistrust. In the current state of relations between Muslim and Western societies, we are doomed when we refuse to recognize each other in one way or another. Yet we also face tremendous difficulties when we show the courage and honesty of getting to know each other closely, for there is too long a history of doubt, mistrust and refusal.

Today, living together is no longer confined to living in the same city or country. Geographical and political boundaries become trivial details when it comes to the shared space of thought, imagination and feeling. Living together becomes a burden and threat when this space, so dear to the heart and mind of every human being, is ridiculed, underestimated, attacked or destroyed. It is at such moments of violence that we lose our resolve to defend the middle path and begin to see extremism of various kinds, economic, military, political, religious, or cultural, as a refuge and basis for our oppositional identities. This is where Muslim sentiments collide with those of the West: ordinary people with sound minds become suspects or enemies. Our so-called information age gives us not understanding but misguided intellects and hardened souls.

As we experience it today, the form and scale of living together is a new phenomenon in human history. Never before have human beings been so open and vulnerable to what others think and do. Blessed ignorance or calculated

indifference is only a luxury that comes at a high cost. A New Yorker can no longer ignore the Middle East peace process, nor can an Egyptian turn a blind eye to the uninspiring and tasteless work of a few Danish cartoonists. Whether we see it as a challenge or threat, we have to live together and try to make sense of our lives through the lenses of such real and demanding experiences.

This is especially true if we consider the large number of Muslims living in Europe and the United States. Today, about a quarter of the world's Muslim population lives as minorities from India and Western China to Africa and Europe. This is a drastically new phenomenon in Muslim history and will take generations to adjust to. Muslims have always lived as a majority – politically, economically and culturally – even when they were outnumbered by the locals they ruled. The modern period has brought an end to this and a new situation has emerged where living together with communities of different religious and cultural traditions has become a prominent fact of our lives.

Living together is one thing; being aware of it is something quite different. At the risk of being simplistic, we can divide our experience of sharing the world into three periods. The first is what pre-modern cultures and societies have experienced. Traditional societies were able to exist as more or less independent and integral units. Internal coherence, both metaphysical and social, had given them the ability to grow organically without much need for interaction with the outside world, different cultures and societies. There have always been interactions with others, of course. But this was not a condition for the long and healthy existence of a civilization. A Chinese painter could have easily produced some of the most beautiful works of art without knowing anything about Islamic miniatures or Christian icons. Today, no matter how close one tries to remain to his or her tradition, it is no longer possible to remain oneself without recognizing the reality of others, both close and distant.

Curiously enough, in the Middle Ages there were two major civilizations that were exceptions to this rule. It would be no exaggeration to say that no two world civilizations have been as intimately intertwined with one another as the Western and Islamic civilizations. We cannot understand, for instance, the development of Islamic science, philosophy and arts without recognizing the significance of what Muslim scholars did with the Greek and Byzantine lore available to them. Nor can we talk about medieval Europe without acknowledging the heavy influence of Islam on everything from the scholastic tradition and rise

of colleges to Beati miniatures and even Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It is because of this long history, rather than its absence, that the two civilizations have seen the other as a worthy rival.

Euro-centrism and its misdeeds

The second model is what emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a new mode of cultural development. The rise of the West as the dominant force of the modern world created a Euro-centric paradigm whereby the 'idea' of Europe became a 'reality' for the rest of the world. Needless to say, Euro-centrism has never been simply a matter of economic and military might. It has manifested itself in such diverse areas as culture, the arts, historical consciousness, philosophy, urban design, architecture, humanities, science, imperialism, novels, taste and social stratification. Its hallmark has been the pushing of others to the margins of human history. Whether these others are Muslims, Russians, Chinese, African-Americans or Native Americans, makes little difference.

Today, we're still struggling with this image of a uni-polar world. Euro-centrism is a problem that hurts not only non-Western societies but also Westerners themselves, for a uni-polar world only leads to the economic, political, intellectual or artistic marginalization of the vast majority of world populations. No matter how it happens, it strips people of a sense of meaning and purpose. Much of the current sentiment of dispossession and frustration we see in the non-Western world today is a result of this.

These two models of cultural and civilizational order can no longer provide a sense of security and participation for all citizens of the world. A multi-polar and multi-centred world has to arise to undo the misdeeds of both cultural isolationism and Euro-centrism. A world that is no more than an excuse for the 'White Man's Burden' cannot foster a culture of peace and civilized diversity. The future of the relationship between Islamic, Western and other societies will largely depend on the extent to which we accept this fact and act on it. It will also shape the ways in which the large number of Muslims living in Europe and the United States as equal citizens and legal immigrants will be allowed to be part of Western societies.

A multi-polar and pluralist world, which would be our third model of sharing the world, is not a world without standards or values. It is a world in which all cultures

and societies are seen as equals but are urged to vie for the common good. This is not a wishy-washy multiculturalism which runs the risk of eroding any common ground between cultures and creating parallel communities. Rather, it is an act of enriching oneself by recognizing others. A shared framework of ideas and values can emerge only within the context of what Gadamer has called the 'fusion of horizons'. Today, Muslims living in the West and Westerners interacting with Muslims have a chance to enrich themselves by recovering the middle path of preserving their identity while recognizing those of others. It is through such acts that we can foster an ethic and culture of coexistence that will not tolerate racism, xenophobia, islamophobia and hate crimes against Muslims nor the demonization of Jews, Christians and others.

Part of the problem we face lies in creating a conflict between an absolute self and an absolute other. Much of the language of clash today is based on an opposition in which Islam is set against such values as justice, equality, human rights and human dignity. Many non-Westerners and Muslims among them make the same mistake in reverse in the name of indigenous oppositions, belated nationalisms or simply communal uniqueness. Speaking of the self and the other as a binary opposition, however, does not necessarily lead to an essential conflict. The distance between the self and the other can be construed as a healthy tension in expanding one's self-understanding and reaching out to the world around us.

There is a further danger in dissolving all boundaries between the self and the other: it creates a sense of insecurity and homelessness, which we see everywhere today from the streets of Cairo to Spain. In many ways, globalization has further deepened this sense of insecurity. This is felt deeply especially in Muslim countries where the eroding effects of modernization have created a profound sense of mistrust and resentment towards the modern world in general and the West in particular.

Muslims living in Europe face similar tensions. What is being asked of them in the name of integration is usually assimilation and a call for losing their identities. They are asked to become French, German or Danish, as if there are such neat identities that can be applied to all Europeans. Combined with the deep-rooted culture of mistrust and suspicion, this demand results in the further alienation of European Muslims, and forces them to become a sub-culture within Europe. Whether Muslims are considered religious communities or ethnic minorities, they are seen as an 'other' and as a security issue.

Immigrants and Minorities with a Human Face

Islam and Muslims, however, are no longer distant phenomena, existing in some far away part of the world. They are part and parcel of the cultural and demographic fabric of the West. This has been the case for a long time, especially if we remember the presence of Muslims in the Balkans for the last four centuries. It was an erroneous and costly assumption to think that Europe could have immigrants without a face, identity, culture and values. Take the example of Turkish workers in Germany: when they were invited by the government to help rebuild post-war Germany, they were seen as guest workers, a mere work force for German factories; there was hardly any debate on integrating these manual workers at the time. Forty years later, we have suddenly awakened to the reality of Turks living in Kreuzeberg, Munich, Frankfurt and other Germany cities as if they just got off the plane yesterday. They have been around for decades and no-one had noticed them. Yesterday, we did not care if any of these guest workers spoke German or learned about German culture. Now, we want them to speak perfect German (many of whom do anyway), know the culture and history better than the natives, and test their level of civility by asking them the most sensitive moral questions which would disqualify even many ordinary Germans as citizens.

The rising tide of political and intellectual conservatism across Europe feeds this deep and often dormant opposition to the presence of Muslims in Europe. What cannot be said about any other religion or race is easily being said about Islam and Muslims. The ethnic and religious diversity of Europe is reduced to one single block with no place for Muslim communities. Thus Oriana Fallaci[5] tries to pass off her unsophisticated racism as an act of calculated 'rage and pride' as if Europe had not had enough of it already during the Holocaust and the Bosnian genocide. Even Pope Benedict XVI opposes Turkey's accession to the European Union on the grounds that there is no place for a Muslim nation in Europe.

An exclusivist identity politics underlies all this. In fact, much of the current debate about immigration and integration in Europe is underlined by an attempt to create a European identity in opposition to others such as Muslim, Asian, African, or simply immigrant. But to be a global power, Europe has to recognize its own diversity and strengthen its pluralism for there to be a chance for a place for freedom, justice, peace, creativity and innovation. There is greater awareness of this across Europe today. But it is far from being the mainstream position with respect to minority communities and especially Muslims.

So, what is to be done?

The first step is to recognize the problem for what it is, that is, Europe has to adjust itself to the new realities of our day and age. If change is inevitable, it has to happen not just in the Middle East but also in Europe and the United States. The old model of integration through assimilation is a thing of the past. An Iraqi or Indian Muslim cannot be expected to go through the same stages of integration today that a Polish immigrant went through in the United States a century ago. Modern means of communication and the emergence of group identities beyond national borders force us to develop new patterns of social cohesion and harmony. Integration through participation and accommodation, constitutional citizenship and democratic representation, need to be allowed to foster a new culture of equality and diversity.

Secondly, religion continues to be a major social force in the world. Much of the rhetoric of clash uses religious language. At this point, religious sources of tolerance must be mobilized to address issues of racism, discrimination and intolerance. Religious leaders must play an active role in calling for a peaceful co-existence with other faith communities. Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus and others must come together on issues of shared concern and develop common strategies. Yet, this must be done in a responsible and inclusive way. A Muslim cannot tell a Jew or Christian how to interpret his sacred texts, but can argue with him over the conditions of living together. The Pope's talk at Regensburg University last September is a good example of how not to engage in dialogue with Muslims. At the end of the day, this is an ethical position and must be articulated and implemented by all communities, both religious and non-religious.

Thirdly, a number of practical measures need to be taken. These include an active fight against islamophobia by establishing monitoring centres, opening new channels of communication between Western Muslims and their governments, revising school curricula and text books to include Muslims in a more balanced world history, conducting extensive and reliable surveys of Muslims in Europe and the United States and their social problems, and supporting interfaith relations and educating the general public about Islam and Muslims. Achieving these goals and creating an ethic of living together is the shared responsibility of both Westerners and Muslims. It will be long and hard; yet if there is a will, there is a way.

Notes:

[5] Oriana Fallaci (1929-2006), Italian journalist, author and political interviewer. Recently she received much public attention for her comments on Islam and European Muslims.

IS EUROPE READY FOR MULTICULTURALISM?

Prof. Magdalena Sroda
Institute of Philosophy, Warsaw University – Poland

For me this is a rhetorical question. I am convinced that the answer is "Yes". But first a few thoughts regarding some reservations which are worthy of our consideration, and not just where Europe is concerned.

There are approximately 8,000 ethno-cultural groups and barely 200 states in the world. So, most states (more than 90%) are home to more than one ethnic group. No matter where we live, multiculturalism is all around us. But several questions remain: can multiculturalism be turned into something positive rather than a problem? How can dialogue be encouraged? How can we enjoy and learn from multiculturalism instead of it being an obstacle to our fulfilment as individuals and as a community?

First, the negative points, of which there are five.

As part of the integration process, Europe is again wondering about its own identity. This should involve identifying what unites us rather than what separates us. It is all about cohesion, asking ourselves what traditions we share, and which ideas prevail. What is Europe? How are we to define or redefine its identity in the light of the changes brought about by the presence and inclusion of so many nations with such different traditions, cultures and identities? Europe's problem today is how to redefine itself. This does not make the task of opening up to other cultures an easy one.

Religion plays a key role in defining Europe's identity and, more generally, community identities. Religious faith, with its irrationality and insistence on adhering to dogmas that cannot be verified, is one of the major obstacles to multicultural dialogue.

For the time being, Europe is a federation of nations. Nation states are based on tradition, language, faith and common political ambitions. They are founded on what we call organic links. Strengthening and promoting these links does not further multiculturalism. Man is first and foremost a political animal and being part

of a nation gives him an important sense of sovereignty. National policies, or rather policies based on identity, whose influence is far from insignificant in Europe, tend to foster exclusion. While citizen's rights are certainly human rights, human rights are not necessarily citizen's rights. Citizen's rights are granted by the nation. Paradoxically, while founding nation states helped to spread universal human rights, it also limited their scope to the national level. Take the famous Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen: the first few articles indeed stipulate that all men and women are free and equal, but Article 3 states that, "The source of all sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation". It is because of this idea of the nation and the rights of the citizen that not all citizens everywhere have the same access to human rights. This is a major obstacle to the utopia of a multicultural society.

Another obstacle stems from the fact that democracy, which is more or less synonymous with the idea of Europe, rests on a universal concept of the individual, professed to by its founders, and on the idea that rights are general. Is this universal concept of the subject-citizen truly universal? Is it to be found in every culture and can it serve as the common ground on which the political organization of the world is based? This may be a philosophical question, but it must be addressed if intercultural dialogue is to be achieved.

And finally, an entirely political problem: the ongoing debate between those who advocate a 'minority rights' policy and those who prefer a policy of national identity and stronger citizenship values. According to many conservatives, multiculturalism undermines values and destroys understanding of the single common good handed down by tradition. So how does one preserve the common good if multiculturalism renders it meaningless?

And now for the positive points, of which there are also five.

If we think about Europe's identity, which we are obliged to do, as I mentioned earlier, because of the integration process, then we have to understand that one of the things that characterise European identity is openness. As Husserl tells us, reviving Greek tradition, the essence of the European character is defined by its philosophy, that is, dialogue, openness, critical thinking, curiosity, respect for one's partner in dialogue and, finally, rationality, which means acknowledging the common ground shared by all present and future participants in dialogue, regardless of their faith or other cultural attributes.

Europe has strong religious roots in Judaism and Christianity. This acts as a powerful barrier against other faiths and cultures. On the other hand, Christianity embodies a notion which makes it an extremely open religion, namely love for one's neighbour, *caritas*, or even for one's enemies. It is not by chance that Benedict XVI's first encyclical was about loving others.

Europe was also shaped by many other, non-religious traditions, however. One of the most important of these was the Enlightenment, with its ideas of rationalism, human rights and tolerance. These provide the perfect backdrop for dialogue. Take tolerance, for example. Tolerance requires not only that we refrain from hostility whenever we encounter 'otherness' that is not to our liking, but also that we help protect those who suffer from discrimination. Voltaire summed it up nicely: "I might not agree with what you say, but I will fight to the death to defend your right to say it."

Another ideal, handed down to us from the Greeks, complements the Enlightenment ideal of tolerance. The Greeks subscribed to phyloxeny (xeno meaning 'welcome guest' as well as 'foreigner' or 'stranger'), an attitude towards guest-foreigners that demands both openness and respect for difference. When the Greeks offered food to their guests, rather than serve them a Greek dish they would give them products with which to prepare their own meal. One could say that they believed in integration more than assimilation. It is also important to remember that Europe gave birth to the ideas of cosmopolitanism, solidarity, brotherhood and individualism, which defy or negate nationalism, separatism and identity- or community-based politics.

The last argument in favour of multiculturalism is the premise of pluralism, which is part and parcel of European democracy, together with the principle of openness, equal rights, and stronger rights for the weak. The European idea of tolerance is not just one of formal equality. It is also important that no-one is left out. We must not be blind to difference, since this is what stigmatises minorities. Instead we should pursue an active policy of minority rights through affirmative action, 'positive discrimination' and respect for the principles of political correctness.

So in spite of the major obstacles to multicultural coexistence, there are numerous opportunities for coexistence to become a reality and a success. There are certain conditions which must be met if the multicultural debate is to move forward.

One such condition involves religious matters. There is no debate within or between fundamentalist states. Religion, as Habermas said, "must come to terms with the cognitive dissonance where different religions and beliefs meet, must adapt to the authority of the sciences, which have a monopoly on our knowledge of the world, and must recognise the principles of the democratic state founded on secular morality and truths." What matters is what A. Gutmann calls a 'two-way-protection' policy, which guarantees the religious freedom of the individual while ensuring the separation of Church and State (as in the French or American models, and unlike the Israeli model, where protection is 'one-way', ensuring religious freedom but without the separation of Church and State).

The second condition concerns the law. It is important to reduce the discrepancies between citizens' rights and human rights. Citizens' rights must be handed out faster and more widely than they are today.

The third condition concerns our understanding of policies and notions of nationality. Policy must focus more on voicing opinions (talk-centric) and not on expressing them through the ballot box (vote-centric). This means recognising 'public rationality'. Kimlicka says: "in culturally diverse communities, expressing opinions is only effective when there is a concept of public rationality which does not simply reflect the cultural tradition, language and religion of the majority, but which is accessible to the different ethnic and religious groups in society". Instead of invoking religion, the reasoning should be based on things which everybody can understand. The term 'citizen' must be redefined. It must be based on a 'transcendental identity', in other words, an identity which can coexist with older, religious and ethnic identities. In many societies, such an identity already exists.

Another condition is tolerance. It is important to recognise the principle of tolerance as the most important aspect of public morality. Also important are education in a spirit of tolerance and the development of programmes, handbooks and workshops on tolerance, all highlighting the importance of the awareness of otherness, the ability to communicate despite differences, and forging attitudes of openness towards otherness.

There is also the language used in debate. It is important to respect the principles of political correctness. The twentieth century shows us what damage can be done by hate speech. Extermination begins with the language of contempt, the language of hate. Political correctness safeguards us against this. These principles are the fruit of past experience, so we must respect them.

Of course, many questions remain. We have not come to this conference armed with ready-made solutions, because there are none. There are some questions which are of immediate concern: is interfaith dialogue possible if we sincerely profess a religion? Is it possible to accept different ethical positions on the same questions if we have steadfast moral convictions? Is secularisation a threat to morality, as many people believe? Will multiculturalism do away with community-based identity and weaken the distinctive identities forged by different cultural communities? Should we focus more on identity or on minority rights? How can both be strengthened without setting them against each other? What role do religious communities play in our lives? What status do religious truths have in democracies? Will rationalism and secularism really put an end to the violence, fanaticism and intolerance, or just cause them to take on a different guise?

These are all questions worth debating. There are those who believe that such a debate is pointless; I would like to convince them otherwise. Two and a half thousand years ago the Greeks already knew that the difference between a citizen and a barbarian was that a citizen resolved conflict by means of persuasion, not by violence.

For the Greeks, the ability to speak, discuss, persuade and engage in dialogue was not just a feature of political life, but the main attribute of humankind. This is worth remembering. It is worth keeping up this constant dialogue because it paves the way for a multicultural community.

WORKING GROUPS ON COMMON ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND EXPECTATIONS

At the end of the first day, the participants were divided into seventeen working groups. The aim was to give them chance to speak about issues they thought relevant in relation to the topic of the meeting, and to express their concerns and expectations towards the Symposium.

Each working group was facilitated by a trainer of the preparatory team and had to prepare a one-minute creative report to plenary, and present their message to the whole group in relation to the Symposium.

Below is a summary of the concerns, challenges and expectations of the participants towards the Symposium, as well as their key messages to the whole group.

Reflections, concerns and challenges

Participants had various evaluations on the opening ceremony. Despite the fact that most of them considered the opening ceremony very long, they admitted that it was both informative and inspiring. The information was seen as a significant positive in the plethora of work being undertaken in encouraging intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

There was a general feeling that the discussions and issues that arose in the morning session provided a space and opportunity for expression in an open manner, without the suppression and cultural norms that some of the participants found in their countries.

The Symposium was perceived by most people, at this stage, as a means of experimenting with an open dialogue as an instrument of motivation, which can help to engage and empower young people.

Only few of them were concerned with the fact that the first guests were adults. They did not feel fully represented, except by Bettina Schwarzmayr, President of the European Youth Forum.

Groups especially discussed keynote speeches and talked about the issues related to them. Some participants argued that the keynote speeches were abstract and academic and did not fit in with realities of the today's world. Others emphasized the question marks they had after the speeches. Both Ibrahim Kalin and Margareta Sröda helped the participants realise how important it is to have a clear vision about the objectives we want to achieve when we do work aimed at promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Most of the participants agreed that Ibrahim Kalin's speech gave them a good perspective and linked different aspects of the issue successfully.

Some of the participants mentioned the need to have more action-oriented speeches, expressing also the concern that they do not have enough nor *adequate tools* for working with young people. They strongly supported the idea of having access to web-based tools for empowerment and capacity building, and to an online data base for refugees.

Dialogue was one of the key issues discussed by all the working groups. Some of them needed time to define what dialogue is; others needed time to clarify the conditions in which a real dialogue can take place.

For most of the participants dialogue could be translated as:
- Shared inspiration
- Openness
- Empathy
- Discussion
- Active listening
- Acceptance and understanding
- Beginning in an equal position

Some of the crucial conditions in which only a real dialogue can take place were identified by some participants as follows:
- sensibility
- openness
- openness to learn from each other
- learning about their own religion / culture
- elimination of prejudices with education
- search for common points and not only differences

- acceptance and respect
- forgiveness
- participation
- equal socio-economic chances

Dialogue, and the possibility to make it real in our societies, was also one of the most important concerns of all the working groups. It was underlined by some participants that dialogue takes time and that it will be difficult to realise when there are two extreme positions. Others expressed the importance of raising awareness among people in order to prevent conflicts. Most of them affirmed that they were committed to promoting dialogue, despite the obstacles and threats. They also expressed the will to take on the challenge of creating the conditions for dialogue without starting a war even if they recognised that it can be difficult if issues are not addressed for a long time, or avoided by many people.

Some participants deepened their discussions about the concept of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. They mostly agreed that there are two ways of examining this concept: firstly, as an abstract concept, and secondly as a concept within a spatial and temporal framework. Some people veered towards the impossibility of dialogue between religions but towards the possibility of intercultural dialogue. Some others argued that dialogue is possible between different beliefs and religions because dialogue does not aim to change others' beliefs or views, merely aims to provide communication between them.

Another concern of the participants was to be able, during the Symposium and their own contexts afterwards, to *influence politics* to accept the reality that Europe is multicultural and no longer homogeneous. The challenge some of the participants foresaw was to promote and start debating the existence of multiculturalism and multi-religious groups in their countries and not to avoid these subjects in the public spheres.

In our multicultural societies and realities, the participants felt the need to learn how to deal with the parallel processes of *globalisation* and *localisation*. Another challenge, in today's realities, is to enable other groups to recognise a local identity, as in the case of Palestine-Israel.

Another controversial issue debated by most of the participants was the *role of education* in creating the conditions for dialogue. They noticed that education, and especially upbringing within the family should be open-minded and aim towards equality.

The role of the media was also matter of discussion in most of the working groups. The real challenge is to prevent the media from adding fuel to interreligious conflicts and to be able to use the media to promote interreligious dialogue, peace and cooperation. In fact, someone noticed that through education and upbringing, and through the media, values and principles are constructed which operate to shape a person's perspective. This is a rather subconscious process that comes into conflict and often overwhelms our conscious intent of being open-minded.

The need for revising history books was valued by most of the participants, since they record and render traditional the value and belief system of a certain point in time, which in turn influences a person's point of view today. Furthermore, the need to develop a more realistic approach to confronting prejudices and what reality looks like from a point beyond the self was further emphasised.

Some participants specified that history books should be mindful of religious framing, suggesting that *minorities should be involved in the process of revising history books*. This would also be a good way of reconciling with minorities. The issue of reconciliation was brought up in another context later on in the discussion when the group was talking about acceptance and mutual respect. People who share differences in this way can 'agree to disagree'. A starting point, however, is that there has to be a will to engage in dialogue in the first place.

Further on in the discussion *the role of spiritual leaders* was stressed, especially in functioning as an example. The Pope's recent visit to the Blue Mosque in Istanbul was used as an example of how this could be done, though it was underlined that this needs to come from the heart and not just be for the media.

In the discussions, the problem of *mobility for Turkish nationals*, especially for students, was raised. The problem is two–fold: firstly, there is a visa problem; secondly, a financial one. In relation to this, everyone needs to have equal opportunities, and an equal platform needs to be created from which to engage in dialogue.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGION: FRAMEWORKS FOR DIALOGUE

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Human rights are the rallying call of our times. They have gained widespread currency in international affairs as:
- "the central criteria of political legitimacy";[6]
- a standard for civilisation;[7]
- an ethical basis for governance;
- "a means of empowerment against oppression by States";[8]
- "the strongest ethical language that exists".[9]

Religion has, however, asserted itself onto the international agenda, especially in recent years.

I commend the organisers of this conference, therefore, for inviting us to address the very challenging question of religion *and* human rights in this lecture and the afternoon seminars. How do religion and human rights react to one another – do they compete, clash, or can they work together towards a better world?

Rights are for Realisation

The *effective* enjoyment of human rights clearly requires its implementation worldwide in order to translate it from a paper tiger into an effective legal framework of protection. Universal respect for rights needs more than the strengthening of the international and national human rights monitoring machinery. No machinery can oversee and address *all* international, national and local situations. We need *all* organs of society to be engaged actively and vigilant in upholding human rights at all levels, but especially at the grassroots level. Only a *universal* grassroots commitment to human rights can serve as effective 'guardian' to the realisation of rights standards.

But one challenge we need to overcome is reassurance that religious communities and believers are on board with this project for the universalisation of human

rights. As one writer has argued, "Religion must be seen as a vital dimension of any legal regime of human rights ... Religions will not be easy allies to engage, but the struggle for human rights cannot be won without them."[10]

> *So this is our first of eight conclusions in this lecture: that human rights need religion (or, more accurately, religious communities) on their side in order to ensure their effective realisation at the grassroots level.*

The value of the engagement of religion becomes evident when we consider the long-called-for need for nurturing a 'culture of human rights'[11]. This has been defined as bringing about "a world in which all could feel safe and secure – a world in which a violation of the rights of one would be felt as a violation of the rights of all."[12]

The coming into existence of such a culture needs the creation of a new mindset. As human vision may be *significantly* informed through visions of faith, religion plays a significant role in deepening the vision of universal human rights *and* the commitment to them.

Human action is often profoundly motivated through deeply held belief. "[W]ithout committed individuals and groups, human rights will become a dead letter"[13], therefore the 'rooting' of human rights in religions will assist in widening both the enjoyment of its standards and its understanding.

Complexity, Diversity and Human Rights

Our increasingly globalised world means that we have never needed an ethic that will regulate relations between groups more – whether between racial, cultural or religious groups and their governments. Many see much of this task of regulation as falling on international human rights law, stating that "the greatest task, weighing on modern international lawyers is to craft a universal and legal process capable of ordering relations among diverse people with differing religions, histories, cultures, laws and languages".[14]

But universality rests on diversity and pluralism. "If human rights are to be truly universal ... they must be based on the broadest and deepest possible consensus among all cultural traditions. This can be done through an intelligent and purposeful employment of the processes of internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue."[15]

What we need therefore is a multicultural, multiethnic and multifaith approach to the universality of human rights, in a way that it is able to capture the imagination of the public worldwide.

At the moment some feel that "The question of human rights is asked and pursued in the Western context. What the rights of human beings as humans are is often described in terms of Western categories. ... There is a need to investigate the meaning of human rights … not simply from the perspective of the dominant cultures – but from the perspective of others as well."[16] This is not to claim that human rights are a western construct; in fact, I believe human rights can serve as a legal or political framework of protection for *all*. However, what can be done to expand the cultural language of rights?

Having been brought up in Qatar, for example, I can see that from a Qatari/Arab perspective one may say that the rights of, for example, parents (for respect), the elderly (care), the family (protection), the individual (for 'honour'), the tribe (continuity, lifestyle choices), the mother (to be provided for whilst with young children)... may be some issues that would appear to receive insufficient attention in human rights law as it currently stands. The challenge is therefore to promote ways of enriching human rights through the insights of more cultures without risking compromising its achievements to date. We can enrich human rights by expanding the cultural norms that are used to mediate their purposes, the languages in which they are promoted, the means by which the next generation of youth grasps their purpose and commits to their universality. We need to genuinely engage cultures, peoples and religions to their cause.

> *So this is our second conclusion: that human rights can be enriched and made accessible by engaging a greater diversity of cultures, peoples and religions to pour their resources and traditions into their reinforcement.*

Do human rights need to reject religion in order to be neutral?

It has been claimed that "Human rights rest on an account of a life of dignity to which human beings are 'by nature' suited."[17] As religions are also involved in the provision of universal ethical norms for human dignity, it is not surprising that religious leaders and believers have, at times, considered human rights a threat. Religion and human rights have therefore sometimes conflicted rather than collaborated.

Proponents of human rights *may* suggest that human rights are:
- a unique language of morality;
- contrast with the self-referential 'truths' of specific religion or belief.

They may emphasise that human rights are a non-ideological moral currency, well positioned for the moral dialogues that challenge our times and serving as the basis of "an ethic of tolerance towards those who differ on religious [or other] grounds."[18]

Some supporters of human rights even reject religion and believe that the modern human rights movement was even brought into existence as "an attempt to find a world faith to fill a spiritual void".[19]

One has to admit that one reason for this rejection of religion is due to the problematic impact of religious claims of exclusivity in our diverse world. Human rights attempt to seek consensus in our complex world but do human rights *need* to sideline particularities and differences in order to seek this consensus? Does it *need* to replace the language of 'the divine' for 'human dignity'? Does this make human rights *neutral* and therefore effective?

There may seem to be some advantages in such a strategy in terms of shedding controversy, but there are disadvantages too. Such a basis of rootless neutrality (i.e. not rooted in amenable cultures and traditions) at best achieves a nominal commitment. However, it also alienates large communities and civilisations whose worldviews are strongly informed by spiritual insights promoted by the world's religions and beliefs. Human rights rejection of 'the divine' forbids religious communities from crafting or visualising an association between human rights and their religious teachings, for example, relating to brotherhood, the promotion of harmony and seeing the 'divine' in our fellow human being.

It is an enormous loss for the potential of human rights if they are not able to 'reach' these communities, inspire and mobilise them. The realisation of human rights standards needs more than the tokenism that 'man made law' sometimes inspires. It needs more than the superficial governmental statements sometimes made in human rights arenas for short-term policy objectives. It needs to inspire all of us profoundly, to deep commitment for the rights of our fellow human beings.

So the third conclusion goes further: not only can religions and cultures reinforce human rights, but they can inspire more profoundly to a deeper commitment for human rights.

Applying human rights in a non-discriminatory manner

Whilst 'neutrality' does not require rejection of diversity, human rights do require a universal standard of norms and "a set of *neutrally formulated* common human rights"[20] that have not been fabricated for the benefit of the few. Human rights must, of course be non-discriminatory. Human rights must "reconcile commitments to diverse normative regimes with a commitment to a concept and set of universal human rights".[21] This does not, however, make it any less desirable for religions and beliefs to be encouraged to pour their visions and moral resources into the progression of human rights, whilst allowing "room for neutral norms and values independent of such traditions".[22]

So the effectiveness of human rights does not rest on the rejection of religious diversity, but human rights cannot be made conditional on, or compromised by, religious affiliation. Let me give two brief examples here for the sake of clarity.

Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution recognises only Muslims, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians as religious minorities. The largest minority community, the Bahá'ís, has been actively persecuted over the past 28 years – through killings, torture, imprisonment, denial of jobs, of pensions, of access to the judiciary, of tertiary education, and so on. Clearly such denial of basic human rights on the alleged basis of ideology or religion is illegal under international law. Secondly, in a decision of the Supreme Administrative Court in Egypt on 16 December 2006, the court decided that "what is meant by religions [in Egyptian law and international law] are those that are recognised, namely the three heavenly religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism". On this basis the court denies the possibility of obtaining Egyptian identity cards to all others, thereby denying them the right to register marriages and births, obtain passports and bank loans, access to health care and all government services. Again, human rights cannot be denied on the basis of religious affiliation, just as it cannot be denied on the basis of gender or race. Such religious conditionality for rights is totally against the fundamental reality of human rights.

The fourth conclusion is that whilst we should not reject religious diversity, neither can we make rights dependent or conditional on categorisations such as religious affiliation. Human rights apply to all as the birthright of all human beings.

'Imaginative' religion required for partnership with rights.

Due to the recent nature of the modern human rights discourse and its sixty year old history, it is evident that no religion was historically able to comment on 'human rights' or, if it did, that the implications of the concept are different to current thoughts surrounding it. The religious response to human rights is therefore interpretative and imaginative in nature, demanding a reconsideration of religious norms in response to a recent innovation.[23] A religious response to such a development requires a particular attitude which is able to accept that religious *traditions* (not religion itself) "develop, change and – sometimes – improve in response to circumstances and in dialogue with their context. Critical dialogue does not mean a flight from fixed, unchanging positions but rather a mutual search for a better understanding of human life, a just and merciful society, nature, and ultimate reality."[24] So religions need to develop their position on human rights, to address the question of human rights.

This process of interpretation requires from within these traditions an attitude which encourages a positive approach to responding to new social realities. It is by this means that human rights and religion can prove to be complementary and mutually enriching.

The fifth conclusion is that religions need to interpret their scriptures positively towards human rights in order for complementarity with human rights to be instrumentalised.

Religion and Human Rights have no need to clash

Having established the above, there is no *need* for human rights and religion to clash. After all, the norms of religion and human rights do not compete. 'Believers', too, may appreciate the role of human rights in ensuring minimum political and legal standards for human dignity, and do so for the purposes of human flourishing on this earthly plane, regardless of religious or belief affiliation. The enjoyment of human rights is not coloured by the choice of religion, belief or commitment of

each individual. However, the appreciation and vision of human rights should not be disconnected from the context of one's cultural values or religious beliefs. "Human rights must be approached in a way that is meaningful and relevant in diverse cultural contexts."[25] Human rights can be supported by a variety of cultural and religious symbols and commitments, to aid its realisation.

Secondly, human rights have a unique utility in relation to statecraft, in a way that religious norms do not. As human rights are a *manmade* code, they represent merely the latest register of agreed and negotiated standards for a decent human existence. This simple claim provides its flexibility. As social conditions and circumstances alter, their nuances can be adjusted to register more appropriate measures for changed circumstances. This allows an in-built elasticity and flexibility in interpretation: human rights can be pulled, stretched and infused with new meanings and interpretations, or changed and added to. "Human rights simply regulate state power versus vulnerable groups and individuals".[26] Human rights are designed such that they can be "transformed into legal or other procedures as quickly as possible."[27]

> *The sixth conclusion is that many religions and religious communities and individuals have realised the unique utility of human rights in relation to upholding human dignity, something that is congruent to the spiritual essence of all religions.*

The benefit and challenge of freedom of religion or belief

Many religious groups have put their weight behind the campaign for strengthening human rights[28] precisely because they have come to realise that the only means of ensuring non-discrimination, for example on the basis of belief, is through strengthening *shared* standards of human rights. In their search for particular protection, therefore, they have come to appreciate the need for its *general* application and protection. This comes from a realisation that "in a world of inter-dependent peoples and nations the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole".[29]

They have recognised the important function human rights can play as a "common ground for a pluralism of ideologies"[30] and contributed their "religious resources that remain richly and irreducibly diverse"[31] to reinforce the 'energy and courage' without which human rights struggles cannot be won.

An initial manner in which religions have come to be interested in human rights has been due to their experience of engagement in the cause of religious liberty for their fellow believers.

Freedom of religion or belief in international human rights law protects, in essence, two aspects:
- freedom to have a religion or belief of his/her choice, and to change it;
- freedom to manifest that religion or belief.

Alone or with others in 'teaching, practice, worship and observance'

This is captured in the language of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

Having and changing religion or belief is an absolute right. Only manifesting religion or belief can be restricted in particular circumstances. The 'burden of proof' is on States to demonstrate that any limitations that are imposed comply with the law. Article 18[32] of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states, "Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others." These restrictions need to be interpreted restrictively. Restrictions on other grounds are not permitted; they can only be applied for the specific purposes provided and proportionate to that need.

> *The seventh conclusion relates to the particular utility of human rights for religions and religious communities or individuals in pursuit of freedom of religion or belief and beyond.*

Religion's Contribution to Human Rights

Most of our consideration has been on the contribution of human rights to religion, but what of the potential impact of religion on human rights? One author has argued that, "The deprecation of the special role and rights of religions ... has

'impoverished' the general theory of human rights".[33] Religion may lead to the enrichment of human rights. Let's focus on three: the widening of the cultural base of human rights, challenging the state-centric and individualistic basis of human rights and deepening the concept and commitment towards third generation rights.

1. *The widened base*
One of the major contributions that religious thought can offer the human rights movement is to allow a widening of the (perceived *and* actual) cultural basis of human rights in a way that it re-dresses the alienation of faith-based communities. A reassessment of this presentation of human rights will go a long way towards allowing the engagement of non-western societies and concepts into human rights.

2. *A mutual enrichment?*
Another fruit of the religion-human rights engagement may include challenging the very individualistic reading of human rights. Group rights have long epitomised this weakness of the human rights dialogue. The resistance faced in the recognition of minority rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, social and economic rights, third generation rights in general, and even the collective dimension of religious rights as mainstream human rights exemplifies this tension between individual and group human rights. "In such a dialogue [between religion and human rights] Western individualism will be subject to correction, and hierarchical social-religious philosophies will be questioned on the matter of the rights of individuals".[34]

3. *Conceptual developments*
Having failed to recognise religion as "a powerful tool in the struggle against discrimination and repression in the social, economic, legal and political structures of a community",[35] human rights have missed out on the galvanism that can be imparted by religion. This includes its potentially positive role in terms of concepts, commitment, grassroots activism and role in developing a human rights culture.[36] As one author argues, "Religious institutions offer some of the deepest insights into norms of creation, stewardship, and servanthood that lie at the heart of third generation rights."[37]

The profound spiritual vision offered by religious communities can re-contextualise the whole question of human rights. One religious community recasts the significance of human rights in the following words: "since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the human race is born into the world as a

trust of the whole".[38] This, they state, constitutes the "moral foundation" of human rights. Therefore, it devolves "upon every person, as a divinely-created being, to recognize the essential oneness of the human race and to promote the human rights of others with this motivation".[39] This sets a tremendously empowering model and positive context for the assertion of human rights. This re-contextualisation of human rights releases a new context for individuals and communities to assert the rights of others, drawing upon their fundamental belief in the oneness of humanity. It also broadens "the conceptual framework for addressing human rights problems from an adversarial paradigm – pitting the government against the individual citizen – to a cooperative one, where we consider relations among all human beings as members of one community. In this context, everyone has an essential role to play in implementing fundamental human rights. When individuals assume responsibility for ensuring each other's human rights the foundation for unity will be firmly established."[40]

Eighth conclusion: religion can also conceptually contribute to the advancement of human rights. Revisiting our 8 conclusions therefore….

Firstly, human rights *need* religion (or, more accurately, religious communities) on their side in order to ensure their effective realisation at grassroots level.

Secondly, human rights can be enriched and made accessibly by engaging a greater diversity of cultures, peoples and religions to pour their resources and traditions into their reinforcement.

Thirdly, not only can religions and cultures reinforce human rights, but they can also inspire more profoundly to a deeper commitment for human rights.

Fourth, is that we should not reject religious diversity; however, neither can we make rights dependent or conditional upon categorisations such as religious affiliation. Human rights apply to all of us as the birthright of all human beings.

Fifth, religions need to interpret their scriptures positively towards human rights in order for complementarity with human rights to be instrumentalised.

Sixth, many religions and religious communities and individuals have realised the unique utility of human rights in relation to upholding human dignity, something that is congruent to the spiritual essence of all religions.

Seventh, is that human rights have a particular utility for religions and religious communities / individuals in pursuit of freedom of religion or belief.

Eighth, religion can also conceptually contribute to the advancement of human rights.

The challenge is therefore an intricate one: that of allowing human rights to "transcend all differences in the subjectivities and practices of peoples",[41] whilst also "mediating international human rights through the web of cultural circumstances".[42]

In the same way that we feel the sense of 'collective trusteeship' over natural resources, applied to human society the principle of collective trusteeship means that we should value "the immense wealth of cultural diversity achieved over thousands of years"[43]. Nevertheless, we should also enable natural interaction and mutual enrichment between cultures. "Minorities and majorities must embrace an expansive view of world society that sees all human beings as members of one human family, united in their fundamental aspirations, yet enriched by the *precious variation* in human thought, language, religion and culture. The development of such a universal and unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind is essential if the rights of minorities are to be fully realized."[44]

What we seek is to make universal human rights a cooperative enterprise to which religion imparts its energies and inspiration. As one author puts it, we need to allow religions to give human rights law "their spirit – the sanctity and authority they need to command obedience and respect ... its structural fairness, its 'inner morality'".[45] If one goes so far as to recognise the translation of human rights into a universal 'culture' as a necessary prerequisite for their effective continuity, one may even go so far as to conclude that "human rights need religion to survive".[46]

Notes:

[6] G. Luf, 'Human Rights in Christian and Islamic Thought, A Report on the Tubingen "Human Rights Project'" in L. Swidler (ed)., Religious Liberty and Human Rights, in Nations and Religions p. 235 (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press and New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986).

[7] The title of Jack Donnelly's article, 'Human rights, a new standard of civilization?', International Affairs Vol. 74, No. 1, pp. 1-23 (January 1998).

[8] R. Künnemann, 'A Coherent Approach to Human Rights', Human Rights Quarterly, A Comparative and International Journal of the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Law Vol. 17, No. 2 (May 1995), pp. 339-340.

[9] C.E. Curran, 'Religious Freedom and Human Rights in the World and the Church, A Christian Perspective' in L. Swidler (ed.), Religious Liberty and Human Rights, in Nations and Religions p. 158 (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press and New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986).

[10] J. Witte Jr, 'Law, Religion, and Human Rights', Columbia Human Rights Law Review Vol. 28, No. 1, (Fall 1996), p. 2.

[11] This has been proposed in many UN circles, for example by the former UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance. He suggested that such a human rights culture should be 'learned and absorbed progressively through initiatives and measures over the long term', particularly through education. See: Doc. E/CN.4/1996/95, Commission on Human Rights, 52nd session, 15 December 1995, report of Mr Abdelfattah Amor, p. 15.

[12] The Bahá'í International Community – United Nations Office, Creating a Universal Culture of Human Rights, Statement to the forty-fifth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Agenda item 11: Further promotion and encouragement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the question of the programme and methods of work of the Commission; alternative approaches and ways and means within the United Nations system for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms; national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, Geneva, Switzerland, 15 February 1989, BIC Document #89-0215.

[13] R. Künnemann, 'A Coherent Approach to Human Rights', Human Rights Quarterly, A Comparative and International Journal of the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Law Vol. 17, No. 2 (May 1995), p. 340.

[14] M.W. Janis, preface to M.W. Janis (ed.), The Influence of Religion on the development of International Law (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1991), p. ix.

[15] A.A. An-Na'im, 'The right to reparation for human rights violations and Islamic culture(s)' in T. van Boven, C. Flinterman, F. Grünfeld and I. Westendorp (eds.), Seminar on the Right to Restitution, Compensation and Rehabilitation for Victims of Gross Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Maastricht, 11-15 March 1992 p. 177 (Utrecht: Studie-en Informatiecentrum Mensenrechten, and Maastricht: University of Limburg Human Rights Project Group, 1992).

[16] K. Mitra, 'Exploring the Possibility of Hindu-Muslim Dialogue' in L. Swidler (ed.), Religious Liberty and Human Rights, in Nations and Religions p. 116 (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press and New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986).

[17] J. Donnelly, International Human Rights, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), p. 21.

[18] Kevin Boyle and Juliet Sheen, eds., Freedom of Religion and Belief, A World Report, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 13.

[19] J. Witte Jr, 'Law, Religion, and Human Rights', Columbia Human Rights Law Review Vol. 28, No. 1, (Fall 1996), p. 9.

[20] A. A. An-Na'im, 'Toward an Islamic Hermeneutics for Human Rights' in A. A. An-Na'im, J.D. Gort, H. Jansen, H.M. Vroom (eds.), Human Rights and Religious Values, An Uneasy Relationship? (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), p. 229.

[21] A. A. An-Na'im, 'Toward an Islamic Hermeneutics for Human Rights' in A. A. An-Na'im, J.D. Gort, H. Jansen, H.M. Vroom (eds.), Human Rights and Religious Values, An Uneasy Relationship? (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), p. 229.

[22] P. de Silva, 'Human Rights in Buddhist Perspective' in A. A. An-Na'im, J.D. Gort, H. Jansen, H.M. Vroom (eds.), Human Rights and Religious Values, An Uneasy Relationship? p. 133 (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995).

[23] The modern expression of the human rights discourse stretches back five decades to the post second world war period.

[24] Preface to A. A. An-Na'im, Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, Hendrik M. Vroom eds., Human Rights and Religious Values, An Uneasy Relationship? (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), p. vii.

[25] Doc.E/CN.4/1996/59, Commission on Human Rights, 52nd session, 21 March 1996, Report on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, prepared by the Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Maurice Copithorne (Canada), Introduction, section A.

[26] R. Künnemann, 'A Coherent Approach to Human Rights', Human Rights Quarterly, A Comparative and International Journal of the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Law Vol. 17, No. 2 (May 1995), p. 340.

[27] R. Künnemann, 'A Coherent Approach to Human Rights', Human Rights Quarterly, A Comparative and International Journal of the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Law Vol. 17, No. 2 (May 1995), pp. 339-340.

[28] For examples, see: L. Swidler (ed.), Religious Liberty and Human Rights, in Nations and Religions (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press and New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986).

[29] Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2nd rev. ed. 1974, 1982 reprint) p. 198.

[30] R. Künnemann, 'A Coherent Approach to Human Rights', Human Rights Quarterly, A Comparative and International Journal of the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Law Vol. 17, No. 2 (May 1995), p. 340.

[31] I. Bloom, 'Introduction' in I. Bloom, J. P. Martin and W.L. Proudfoot (eds.), Religious Diversity and Human Rights p. 10 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[32] ICCPR, Article 18.3.

[33] J. Witte Jr, 'Law, Religion, and Human Rights', Columbia Human Rights Law Review Vol. 28, No. 1, (Fall 1996), p. 11.

[34] Preface to A. A. An-Na'im, Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, Hendrik M. Vroom eds., Human Rights and Religious Values, An Uneasy Relationship?, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), p. vii.

[35] Johan D. van der Vyver, 'Religious Fundamentalism and Human Rights', Journal of International Affairs, vol. 5, no. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, Summer 1996), p. 35.

[36] Under this hierarchy, first generation rights contain civil and political rights, second generation rights contain economic, social and cultural rights and third generation rights include solidarity rights such as the rights to peace and development. For a discussion of this hierarchy see: T. Meron, Human Rights Law-making in the United Nations, A Critique of Instruments and Processes, pp. 174-175 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

[37] J. Witte Jr, 'Law, Religion, and Human Rights', Columbia Human Rights Law Review Vol. 28, No. 1, (Fall 1996), p. 13.

[38] The Bahá'í International Community – United Nations Office, Turning Point For All Nations, A Statement of the Bahá'í International Community on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations, New York, USA, October 1995, Overview, BIC Document #95-1001.

[39] The Bahá'í International Community – United Nations Office, Right & Responsibility to Promote Human Rights, Written comment on the Draft Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms submitted to the 50th session of the Commission on Human Rights in response to an invitation from Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, issued in accordance with resolution 1993/92 of the Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland, 3 December 1993, section C, BIC Document #93-1203

[40] The Bahá'í International Community – United Nations Office, Right & Responsibility to Promote Human Rights, Written comment on the Draft Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms submitted to the 50th session of the Commission on Human Rights in response to an invitation from Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, issued in accordance with resolution 1993/92 of the Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland, 3 December 1993, section C, BIC Document #93-1203.

[41] Richard Falk, 'Cultural Foundations for the International Protection of Human Rights', in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, ed., Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives, A Quest for Consensus, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 44.

[42] Richard Falk, 'Cultural Foundations for the International Protection of Human Rights', in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, ed., Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives, A Quest for Consensus, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 45.

[43] The Bahá'í International Community – United Nations Office, The Prosperity of Humankind, A statement prepared by the Bahá'í International Community Office of Public Information, Haifa, first distributed at the United Nations World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark, Haifa, Israel, 3 March 1995, section I, BIC Document #95-0303.

[44] The Bahá'í International Community – United Nations Office, Rights of Minorities: Comments on the Draft Declaration, Oral statement presented to the 48th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Agenda item 18: The rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, Geneva, Switzerland, February 1992, BIC Document #92-0207.

[45] J. Witte Jr, 'Law, Religion, and Human Rights', Columbia Human Rights Law Review Vol. 28, No. 1, (Fall 1996), p. 8.

[46] J. Witte Jr, 'Law, Religion, and Human Rights', Columbia Human Rights Law Review Vol. 28, No. 1, (Fall 1996), p. 31.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S 'WHITE PAPER ON INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE'

Mr Ulrich Bunjes
Directorate General IV, Council of Europe

I would like to thank the organisers for giving us the opportunity to present one of the most interesting current projects of the Council of Europe.

This thrilling project is the 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue'. You may say that a White Paper is just another political text, to be adopted, published, filed and forgotten. Not so in this case. I'll explain to you why, in a minute. First let me say a few words on the politics of intercultural dialogue and its religious aspects as a political theme.

Intercultural dialogue as a policy priority – everywhere

Over the last few years, intercultural dialogue has become a political priority for basically all international institutions:
- In 1998, the UN decided to proclaim 2001 as the 'UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations'.
- In 2004, the 'Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures' was set up as part of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation process.
- 2008 has been proclaimed the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' by the European Union.

For the Council of Europe, the 'Europe of the 46', intercultural dialogue has been an area of work for many years, under this name or under different titles, because it includes activities in many different areas, for example, in relation to the protection of minorities, the interpretation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in situations of cultural diversity, intercultural and citizenship education, protection of minority and regional languages, cultural policies promoting cultural diversity, the strengthening of civil society, and non-formal education through youth organisations. In 1995, the Council of Europe adopted the European Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, the first legal document which specifically demands that relations between majority populations and national minorities be conducted in the 'spirit of intercultural dialogue'.

In 2005, the Heads of the 46 States and Governments of the Council of Europe made intercultural and interreligious dialogue a high priority of the Organisation. Work on a number of new initiatives, including the 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue', began.

Facing the challenge of cultural diversity

Why this increasing focus of the international community on intercultural dialogue?

On the surface, it may appear as if it is a reaction to the fear that we are moving towards a 'clash of cultures', or a 'clash of civilizations', which in the 1990s – after the end of the Cold War – was painted as an imminent threat by academic scholars such as Bernard Lewis and, later on, Samuel Huntington.

The real reasons lie elsewhere. Our cultural environment is changing quickly and becoming more and more diversified. New cultural influences pervade virtually every society, not only in Europe, but everywhere on the planet.

Cultural diversity is an essential condition of human society. It is caused and fostered by many factors, such as cross-border migration, the claim of national and other minorities to a distinct cultural identity, the cultural effects of globalisation and the growing interdependence between all world regions, and the advances of information and communication media.

More and more individuals are living in a situation of 'multiculturality' and have to face the influences of different cultures in their daily life. Many of us, if not all, have to manage our own multiple cultural affiliations.

Cultural diversity is a fact and a right to be protected. However, it is also an economic, social and political bonus, which needs to be developed and adequately managed. Protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity are factors of human development and a manifestation of human liberty, and they are an essential requirement for sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations. As the new UNESCO Convention formulates it, "cultural diversity is a rich asset for individuals and societies".

On the other hand, increasing cultural diversity often triggers fear and rejection. Negative reactions – from stereotyping, racism, xenophobia and intolerance to

discrimination and violence – can threaten the fabric of local and national communities. International conflicts, the socio-economic vulnerability and marginalisation of entire groups, and widespread cultural ignorance – including the lack of knowledge of one's own culture and heritage – provide fertile ground for rejection, social exclusion, extremist reactions and conflict.

This is why it is politically imperative to address cultural diversity, at all levels. Intercultural dialogue, as a tool for the promotion of cultural diversity and social cohesion, is by definition a transversal task, a task that has to be tackled in all major policy areas. It concerns, to name just the most obvious, policies regarding citizenship and rights of participation, education, social cohesion, minority rights, immigration, foreign affairs, language, relations between the state and religions, the development of civil society and gender equality. Education, in all its forms, arguably plays the most important role of all.

That said, it is important to stress that the Council of Europe is committed to common values and principles, which are rooted in Europe's cultural, religious and humanistic heritage. Europe can manage its cultural diversity – in any context – only on the basis of, and with respect for, these values. Intercultural dialogue is neither an expression of, nor leads to, cultural relativism. Dialogue must be based on the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council of Europe rejects the idea of a clash of civilisations and expresses its conviction that, on the contrary, increased commitment to intercultural dialogue will benefit peace and international stability in the long term.

We are convinced that we have to learn to live together. We have to accept the 'other', and we have to respect each other's rights. We must learn how to cooperate.

The religious dimension of intercultural dialogue

Allow me a quick word on religion in this context.

It is sometimes said that the number of regular churchgoers is low and declining in many European countries. This may be true, but it does not mean that there are no religious beliefs. In a recent survey conducted in the 25 member countries of the European Union, we learned that 52% of the population on average "believe

that there is a God", and an additional 27% "believe that there is some sort of spirit or life force", which puts the religious potential on average at almost 80%.[47] 18% of the average European population do "not believe there is any sort of spirit, God or life force."

As with individual religious beliefs, organised religions are an important, some say an increasingly important dimension of the cultural diversity of Europe. Within the 46 member states of the Council of Europe, we have countries with strong Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions, as well as Muslim majority populations (i.e. in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Albania, as well as in parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Russian Federation) and Muslim and Jewish minority communities in almost all countries; in addition, there are faith groups such as Sikhs in the United Kingdom, and Buddhists. The legal status of religious communities, incidentally, varies strongly from country to country.

Often it is the role of religion in intercultural dialogue that leads to misunderstandings. The High-Level Group reporting for the 'Alliance of Civilizations' initiative of the UN Secretary General (sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey), recently deplored that "the exploitation of religion by ideologues, intent on swaying people to their causes, has led to the misguided perception that religion itself is a root cause of intercultural conflict"; it would therefore be "essential to dispel misapprehensions and to give an objective and informed appraisal of the role of religion in modern day politics."[48] The Group also pointed out, however, that religion "can play a critical role in promoting an appreciation of other cultures, religions, and ways of life to help build harmony among them". [49]

The Council of Europe, which for a long time saw religion exclusively under the aspect of freedom of thought, conscience and religion as a human right, or religion as part of the cultural heritage, is gradually opening up to other issues. Our primary interest lies in the contribution of religious communities to the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

'Interreligious dialogue' in the narrow sense of the word, that is, dialogue between the representatives of different religious communities, may be important for the communities themselves and for civil society, but in secular states the role of public authorities is probably very limited indeed in this context.

The 'White Paper' project

This is the political background against which the Council of Europe decided, some months ago, to develop a 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue'.

The 'White Paper' is part of our policy for the promotion of intercultural dialogue, and a clear expression of our commitment. We expect it to be published towards the end of this year, in time not only for the 2008 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' of the European Union, but also in time for the implementation of the 'Alliance of Civilizations Initiative' of the UN Secretary General.

With the 'White Paper', the Council of Europe will formulate a coherent and long-term policy for the promotion of intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension; it will …
- look at intercultural dialogue within European societies, but also dialogue between Europe and its neighbouring regions;
- encourage policy makers and practitioners, governments and civil society, majorities and minorities alike, to engage in intercultural dialogue;
- formulate guidelines and highlight examples of good practice.

The 'White Paper' will name the preconditions for a peaceful interaction between different cultures on our continent. It will identify the necessary steps to enable everyone to live within a culturally diverse environment in a positive, creative way, and not with rejection, fear, ignorance and suspicion. That is the challenge we all have to win.

The 'White Paper' is not written in Strasbourg alone. It will be the end result of a Europe-wide consultation process, which is open and inclusive. We want to ensure that the experience and the needs of the various 'stakeholders' of intercultural dialogue – governments, parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, civil society, immigrants and national minorities, religious communities, journalists – are fully reflected in the document.

These consultations are basically conducted in three different forms. For some stakeholders we have developed specific questionnaires, for instance, for non-governmental organisations with participatory status or for governments. Some of you probably received such a questionnaire from Strasbourg. In some cases, we are organising specific consultation events, where it is possible to discuss the views and proposals in more detail. And finally, we are offering an

internet site at www.coe.int/dialogue, which invites everybody to share with us their views and make proposals for examples of good practice.

In order to help our discussion, the Council of Europe has published a 'consultation document', which presents our concept of intercultural dialogue to include the background theory, and the preconditions and results as we see them today, the expected messages of the document and some technicalities of the consultation process.

The role of this Symposium

This Symposium, as you may have guessed by now, is one of the consultation events that help us – to learn from you. I am not being polite when I say that young people are arguably the most important 'stakeholders' of intercultural dialogue.

In virtually all workshops organised today and tomorrow, you will have ample opportunity to look at the various issues connected to intercultural dialogue and its religious dimension. As you will see from the 'consultation document', we are interested in the same questions that are also important for you, be they gender issues, the role of education, migration policy, the fight against discriminations, the role of the media or the 'Alliance of Civilizations', to name just a few examples. We will listen carefully to what you have to say on those issues, and we will study the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration', which you will hopefully adopt, carefully.

But this is not all. Consultations will not stop on Saturday. In the weeks to come, every one of you – individually or as organisations – is cordially invited to share with us your views, maybe views formulated at greater leisure than is possible here in the context of a symposium, or maybe views that you develop only after you have arrive home from this event. You find all the technicalities in the 'consultation document' and on our website, but please note that the final deadline for contributions is the end of May 2007.

Thank you for your interest in the 'White Paper', and for your attention.

Notes:
[47] Eurobarometer survey 'Social Values, Science and Technology', June 2005. Figures for the age group 15 to 24 are slightly lower (44% believe there is a God).
[48] HLG Report 'Alliance of Civilizations', November 2006, page 9
[49] HLG, op.cit., page 6

THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Ms Karin Lopatta-Loibl
European Commission

As set out in the decision on the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' 2008, which was adopted on 18 December 2006, one of the main objectives of the Year is to contribute to raising the awareness of all those living in the EU, in particular young people, of the importance of engaging in intercultural dialogue in their daily life and of developing an active European citizenship which is open to the world, respects cultural diversity and is based on common values in the EU.

Implementation of a wider strategy

The preparation of the European Year has led to the development of a wider strategy to promote intercultural dialogue, involving EU programmes and instruments, as well as mobilising Member States and all interested parties. It is widely recognised that most of the experience of promoting intercultural dialogue lies at local level in Member States and requires the active participation of civil society. The Directorate General of Education and Culture, in close cooperation with other Commission services, has therefore started to develop a bottom-up and sustainable process within the framework of the preparation of the Year 2008.

Building on experience

The **first step** of this process is to exchange the best practices identified among projects supported by EC programmes.
  • A Conference promoting best practices was held in the Committee of Regions (Brussels) from 22 – 23 November 2006. It was an important step in the preparation of the Year 2008. The good practices presented both in the exhibition and during the Conference should help us to identify useful models for projects that could be developed in the light of the 2008 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue'. (The conclusions of the Conference and information about the selected projects are available on the website of DG Education and Culture:
  http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/dialogue/contributions/call_idea_en.html)

- We have extended the process of identifying best practices by launching a study on National Approaches and Practices in the EU in relation to Intercultural Dialogue.

Implementing a horizontal priority

The **second step** of the process is to introduce intercultural dialogue as a horizontal priority in all relevant Community programmes. We will therefore have a critical mass of new projects focusing on intercultural dialogue starting in 2007 in different community sectors.

- Intercultural dialogue has become an explicit priority in the new generation of EAC programmes from 2007 onwards, including within it the calls for proposals which are currently being published. The promotion of intercultural dialogue is one of the three specific objectives for the new 'Culture 2007' programme. Moreover, there is a clear reference to the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' 2008 in several documents linked to the 'Lifelong Learning', 'Culture 2007' and 'Europe for Citizens' programmes, and it is also part of the 'Youth in Action' programme.

- Contacts have also been developed with other DGs to assess how the intercultural dialogue priority was taken into account within their actions and programmes and how it would be possible to introduce intercultural dialogue as a horizontal priority in all relevant Community programmes in order to have a critical mass of new projects focusing on intercultural dialogue starting in 2007 in different community sectors.

- A 'Guide to programmes and funding' is in preparation. A first draft will be available in April in order to publish the final version on the website of the DG EAC in May. This document will help stakeholders by providing useful information on programmes within the DG EAC and other DGs (JLS (Justice, Freedom and Security), EMPL (Committee on Employment and Social Affairs), INFSO (Information Society and Media), RTD (Research), RELEX (External Relations), etc.) which will offer significant opportunities to support actions and projects on the theme of intercultural dialogue. It will also provide general information on the publication of the relevant calls for proposals for projects co-financed in 2008 and after. For example:
    - DG INFSO: a call for proposals for support for attending film festivals and other audiovisual events to promote European films and their distribution across Europe is being published;

- DG JLS: a call for proposals with regard to the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals will be published in the second half of 2007;
- Family RELEX DGs: calls for proposals should be published this year in the framework of the new financing instrument EIDHR (European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights) in the field of human rights and democracy in third countries (2007-2013) but also in the framework of the programmes 2007-2009 of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures (Anna Lindh Foundation).

Mobilising interested parties in the broadest sense

The **third step** of the process is the preparation of the Year itself. It will be a unique awareness-raising opportunity, and should provide momentum and visibility to the priority of intercultural dialogue with a specific focus on young people and the daily lives of citizens.

Actions have been launched in order to stimulate this participation:

- *Call for Ideas:*
  The call for ideas we launched last summer was a good opportunity to stimulate the active participation of civil society in the broadest sense (with more than 350 responses). It provides valuable information on the level of interest for the Year in different Member States and important messages from European civil society as regards the nature and content of future projects.

  The contributions to the Call for Ideas also included 21 projects aimed at involving youth in intercultural dialogue, which may inspire stakeholders and provide a means for the establishment of new partnerships in this field. These contributions are also available on the website of DG Education and Culture and a message has been sent to contributors to inform them of the publication.

- *Contacts with representatives of the civil society:*
  A first meeting with civil society organisations (major partners for the Year) took place on 17 January 2007 in order to inform civil society representatives of the state of play with the preparation of the Year and to get feedback on the actions foreseen, in particular the communication campaign.

In parallel with these consultations, the Civil Society Platform created by the ECF (European Cultural Foundation) and the EFAH (European Forum for the Arts and Heritage) organised a first meeting last November and a second one on 5 March 2007 with a view to mobilising a wide range of actors and contributing to the effectiveness of the Year. The Commission is working closely with the Platform and its members.

It is anticipated that a civil society 'contact group' will be created, composed of representatives of the Civil Society Platform and of the Social Platform (including the Youth Forum).

The more 'technical' preparation of the Year is also underway:

- *Communication strategy:*
  Our consultant, Media Consulta, has been asked to prepare a draft Communication Strategy paper for the Year. A draft document has already been presented to Member States and was also presented to the representatives of the civil society during the meeting for comments. A new document has been prepared, building on these first reactions.

  As a first step in implementing the communication strategy, Media Consulta produced a website concept (including a 'partners website') to be implemented in the short term. Civil society representatives were consulted on this concept on 2 March and decisions will have to be taken shortly for implementation.

  As regards communication aspects, proposals have also been formulated for the 'Ambassadors' of the Year. Their mission statement would be to inform a broad public about the objectives and activities planned for the European Year 2008 and to advocate and disseminate whenever possible the message that intercultural dialogue is the most relevant process to address an increasingly multicultural environment.

- *Contacts with representatives of Member States:*
  Several actions have been launched in order to associate Member States, to learn from national experience and to foster co-operation with a view to developing activities at local level. In this context, we had a first

meeting last December with representatives of Member States to take stock of the various inputs, including the results of the call for ideas, to present concrete orientations for the communication strategy and to have an exchange of opinion on the various preparatory steps for the Year.

Member States were formally asked to transmit to the Commission a first draft of a National Strategy for the European Year 2008, including actions planned to reach young people, in particular through traditional and new media, and measures to be taken in the education field. The papers so far received show that special attention will be given to these aspects in a significant number of Member States. This work will be taken forward with the Member States during the course of 2007.

A first meeting of the Consultative Committee took place on 23 February in order to take on board the comments of Member States as regards the draft calls for proposals. The next meeting will be held in September 2007.

The first meeting of the National Coordination Bodies is planned for 25 April 2007. These bodies will be responsible for the coordination in the Member States and for presenting pre-selected initiatives to the European Commission for financial support. One of the points at the agenda will be the discussions on the National Strategy and on the Communication Strategy. We have so far received 14 draft National Strategies.

Actions during the Year

Two **calls for proposals** regarding actions co-financed during the Year at European and national levels will be published by the beginning of April. The European Parliament right of scrutiny was launched on 9 March. The award criteria have been defined, taking into account the objectives of the European Year, the contributions to the call for ideas, and the comments formulated following the two informal consultations with Member States last December and with representatives of the civil society last January. The formulation of those criteria aimed to promote maximum transparency in the selection procedure of all future projects.

External dimension

Intercultural dialogue is relevant not only within the European Union but also in its relations with third countries. This is particularly the case with respect to candidate countries, but also with regard to the relationship between the EU and EFTA (European Free Trade Area) countries party to the EEA (European Economic Area) agreement, the Western Balkans, as well as third countries which are EU partners within the new European neighbourhood policy. The basis for intercultural dialogue within the EU on the one hand, and between the EU and third countries on the other, is nevertheless distinct: the Year is addressed to EU Member States, but third countries will be closely associated with it. Close coordination with the Year will maximise the potential synergies, in particular regarding visibility and communication.

Is far as the external dimension is concerned, a specific dialogue with the RELEX family General Directorates has been initiated, aiming at developing intercultural dialogue between the EU and third countries, as well as at identifying specific initiatives over the period 2007 – 2008. The response from the RELEX family is, however, rather slow. Possibilities have already been identified in the context of the Euromed partnership, the communication aspect around enlargement, but concrete projects still have to be identified.

We also had the opportunity to meet representatives of the Club of Madrid who expressed a strong interest in participating in the European Year 2008. The Board and General Assembly of the Club agreed during a meeting with the Commission in October 2006 that intercultural dialogue would be a priority for the Club for 2007 and 2008. This might lead to a major international event being organized in Europe in 2008. They have already contacted several Commissioners and registered the interest of the President of the European Parliament and of Javier Solana. A representative of the Club of Madrid will present the new version of their concept on 'Dialogue, Identity and Democratic Development' and the state of play of preparations on 23 March 2007.

Interreligious Dialogue

In order to explore possible forms of cooperation with a view to possible joint initiatives and to gather knowledge on existing best practices, a series of informal contacts with representatives of Churches and communities of belief and

conviction are being carried out within the framework of the preparation of the European Year 2008. A new wave of contacts will focus on assessing possible concrete deliverables, both in the field of public expression of common endeavour and of more precise commitments of individual partners to promote intercultural dialogue within the different religious communities and secular associations. The Youth Unit is also reflecting on the organization of an initiative involving a gathering of young people around the theme of interreligious dialogue for 2008.

BEST PRACTICES IN YOUTH POLICIES

Ms Söhret Yildirim
Adviser to Bert Anciaux, Flemish Minister for Culture, Youth, Sport and Brussels Affairs

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today on behalf of Bert Anciaux, Minister for Culture, Youth, Sport and Brussels Affairs in the Flemish Government in Belgium.

I should like to congratulate the countries which have prepared the content of this Symposium and the Turkish Government, which has supported it.

As we all know, intercultural and interreligious dialogue is now perceived as an issue of steadily growing importance.

But at the same time, we can see that it is very difficult to establish sincere and respectful dialogue. Why do we find it so hard to develop dialogue and understand one another?

Dialogue and identity

To avoid causing cultural conflict in the society in which our children are to live, we must start working now to dispel the anxiety, fears and prejudice engendered by difference.

So I believe the good examples put forward at symposia such as this one will be useful to us all and I hope they will at least prompt everyone to pause for a moment and think about this issue.

Unless we work together today, with all our strength, for a peaceful and happy life, our children will grow up tomorrow in an atmosphere of mutual mistrust.

Dialogue cannot succeed unless it is viewed as a two-way process. For example, achieving harmony does not simply mean that minorities should fully accept the dominant culture. If dialogue is to succeed, there must be mutual respect, understanding and tolerance.

Belgium currently has a population of ten million. It has a federal structure, with six million Flemish and four million Walloon inhabitants. People of different origins account for 10% of the population.

For instance, of the 400,000 Muslims, 150,000 are of Turkish origin, 200,000 of North African – especially Moroccan – origin and the remainder of various other national origins. Of course, the accuracy of these statistics is open to discussion, because our third-generation children are now automatically registered as Belgian citizens.

In the past, for many years, Belgium's Flemish citizens fought hard against the Walloons to establish their own identity.

Until the 1960s, for example, the universities attended by Flemish students in the Flemish Region were French-speaking. Flemish young people did their military service in French and were obliged to use French in government departments and in all official matters.

Now the Flemish people must accept that what they once wanted for themselves is also valid for others. This is the prerequisite for living together. The same is true in other countries. A mono-cultural structure, closed to different cultures, with a single mode of thought and a single lifestyle, cannot be healthy.

Of course there may be people who feel anxiety about different cultures. But if we want future generations to live together in a less fearful atmosphere, we must not hesitate to accommodate different cultures in our present-day society. The most serious form of discrimination is to ignore other cultures and try to cut them off from their past. Unfortunately, in Europe and other countries, we all still experiencing and witnessing practices of this kind.

In Brussels, for instance, thousands of young immigrants live without self-respect. Neither these young people nor their families attach any importance to education because they have been induced to believe that studying will get them nowhere.

From childhood, when personality begins to form, they have repeatedly been told that they are nothing. Sadly, they have been led to believe that they must be ashamed of their own identity. Young people who grow up with this kind of prejudice do not know how rich their own cultures in their countries of origin are. We must explain to them that they must be proud, not ashamed, of their own

cultures and societies. We must explain to them that cultural diversity is not a cause for inferiority feelings but an honourable thing. That is the only way we can all form a real community together.

The Flemish intercultural action plan (intercultural dialogue)

In Belgium, on 20 February 2006, the Flemish Minister Bert Anciaux put forward the Flemish action plan to develop intercultural dialogue in the culture, youth and sport sector. This plan covers the legislation to be applied and the activities to be carried out between 2006 and 2009. The most important point for us is to involve more people of different ethnic and cultural origins in institutions and organisations in the Flemish Region.

The plan's contribution to community life is firstly that it makes intercultural communication a statutory criterion in the laws we have passed concerning all cultural, youth and sports organisations. It also ensures that all organisations and sectors include this criterion in their action plans and agreements.

The second major change is the requirement that at least one out of every ten people on all state cultural and youth committees and governing bodies be of foreign origin. As I said earlier, 10% of the current population of Belgium's Flemish Region are of different origins. We want this proportion to be reflected in state cultural and youth committees. We aim to achieve all this by June 2008. We are also working along the same lines to make changes in staffing.

Likewise, we are calling for changes in governing bodies in provinces and municipalities according to the proportion of people of foreign origin living there.

We are also setting aside 10% of the entire project support budget for intercultural dialogue and for projects and activities submitted by associations of foreign origin.

From 2006 to 2009 we also have an additional annual budget which we are using to develop intercultural dialogue and projects from associations of foreign origin. The ministry supports these projects on condition that they innovate, point the way forward and set the example.

We have set up an information point to ensure that staff working in this sector perform their tasks with a proper awareness of intercultural communication.

The information point provides training to members of the culture and youth committees to enable them to make well-informed recommendations to the minister on the project applications submitted to them with a view to developing intercultural dialogue.

ANTENA

There are many cultural centres in Belgium's Flemish Region, but until now their governing bodies had virtually no members of foreign origin. So in 2005 we launched the ANTENA project to develop dialogue between people of foreign origin and Belgians. The project is steadily expanding, so we view it as a satisfactory development.

The main purpose of the project is to ensure that people of foreign origin join the governing bodies of Flemish cultural centres. One of the aims is to give people wishing to join these governing bodies access to information and experience.

44 candidates from various countries, living in Belgium, have taken part in the ANTENA training project. They have received information about the cultural sector and cultural legislation in the Flemish Region, while also bearing in mind their own cultures.

Given the success of the project, we have extended its scope to governing bodies in the youth sector. It is a great honour for us that some people of foreign origin who trained on this project, which only started in 2005, are already members of governing bodies. Some of them are even members of juries awarding major cultural prizes.

Brussels

Another of our ministry's aims is to bring together Belgians of different origins living in Brussels, the capital of Belgium and of the European Union. In Brussels we currently even have a secretary of state and municipal councillors of foreign origin. As of now, we see how useful it is to have foreign immigrants in government. In 2006, for example, the fact that people of foreign origin stood for election and won seats in the local elections brought the largest Flemish racist party in Belgium to a standstill. Our wish, and the purpose of our efforts to develop intercultural dialogue, is for foreign immigrants in Brussels and the Flemish Region to have a greater say.

Associations and federations of foreign origin

In the Belgium's Flemish Region, 800 associations of foreign origin are active at municipal level. Most of them are attached to federations at provincial level, and the Flemish Ministry of Culture supports 14 federations.

Youth associations

In the Flemish Region, youth associations unfortunately still have difficulty in reaching young people of different origins. We have produced and distributed a handbook to increase awareness among officials working for young people at municipal level.

In this handbook, we tell them how to reach out to young people of different origins and which points to pay attention to in this respect; we also propose problem-solving methods. For example, we emphasise the importance of visiting homes to inform parents about the youth sector, and of distributing leaflets in different languages. We also provide information on the living environment of young people of different origins.

As I said earlier, only a very small proportion of young people of foreign origin take part in activities organised by Flemish youth groups. Over time, as an alternative, these young people have set up their own associations, but they still have difficulty in preparing their applications and providing proper support to young volunteers.

We shall soon have five new staff members to support these associations at both municipal and provincial level. Our aim is to strengthen youth associations of foreign origin, ensure that they work actively and independently, and develop their participation in youth policy.

Through these associations, we also try to encourage Flemish young people and young people of foreign origin to get to know one another and work together in the intercultural arena.

The intercultural youth platform **Kif Kif** is a case in point. It nurtures the artistic abilities of young people of different origins in various areas, for instance, offering training to young people who want to be writers.

Kif Kif often receives coverage in the Belgian media; it speaks out when necessary and successfully publicises its work. It has become one of our most forceful anti-racist organisations.

We also support the work of the foreign-origin **women's and girls' association**, which has contacted Flemish youth associations and developed an intercultural method for reaching more girls of foreign origin.

We are launching a new athletics and football project in Antwerp and Brussels to help young people of foreign origin be more successful in **sport**. Our aim is to direct our young people towards sport in a more professional manner, with the support of sports clubs and federations.

Intercultural project on heritage

This year, in order to develop intercultural dialogue, we are launching a major project designed to enable people of different origins living in Belgium's Flemish Region to present and explain their cultural heritage and customs more widely through exhibitions and panel discussions. The project will involve museums, associations and hospitals.

We have chosen hospitals as partners in this project because they are places where we can reach people from every section of the community. This will allow us to contact large numbers of people of different origins.

Centre for Islamic studies

Muslim and mosque associations have informed us that Muslims and non-Muslims living in Belgium's Flemish Region need information about Islam. It is a known fact that Muslim young people growing up in a western environment are in search of their identity and that non-Muslims are prejudiced against Muslims living in Belgium. On the basis of this information, we launched a survey at Ghent University to find out what type of centre for Islamic studies our people need.

We shall very soon be submitting the survey findings to the Flemish government.

We hope there will soon be a centre for Islamic studies in the Flemish Region.

The arts: Article 27 association

Another point I should like to mention is this: under Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts. On this basis, an 'Article 27 association' has been set up in Belgium.

The Ministry of Culture always supports associations set up to involve people of different origins more fully in the arts.

For example, during a school visit to one of the exhibitions mounted as part of the association's activities, a teacher astounded the association's members by saying, "These children are from foreign backgrounds; they can't understand art".

The association embarked on the production of a short film to demonstrate that this prejudice did not reflect reality. The film is entitled 'Turks don't understand anything about art' and we regard it as a first step towards Belgians and Turks getting to know one another through art.

18 December

As we all know, 18 December is International Migrants Day. The Flemish Ministry of Culture ensures that on this international day the stories of migrants living in Belgium are broadcast on radio and television to develop intercultural dialogue.

The European Youth Campaign

On 20 March 2006 the Youth Ministries of the Walloon, German-speaking and Flemish Regions, representing Belgium, announced to the press that they were supporting the European Youth Campaign 'All Different – All Equal'.

We, too, invite young people throughout Europe to support diversity and human rights and to participate more fully. It is our belief that everyone has a duty to internalise and apply human rights, and that participation by ordinary people, especially young people, is the core of democracy.

As of 21 March 2006, the Flemish Region's Youth Minister Bert Anciaux started a media campaign together with the Youth Council.

In reaching out to our children and young people between the ages of 6 and 18, we place the accent on equality and difference.

To be more effective in our campaign work directed at children, we use two mascots: **Mie** and **Mo Bizar** – meaning 'strange'. These names owe nothing to chance: we simply want to show that like everyone else, Mie and Mo have their own distinctive attitudes.

We try to explain that when we get to know someone else, that person is both different from us and not very different. We give our children a positive message in their mother tongue. We explain that Mie and Mo have their own distinctive private life and circle of friends and that this is a perfectly normal and healthy lifestyle.

Our purpose is to educate children and young people about equality and difference, to convey the idea that we must behave respectfully with people in spite of differences of all kinds. We want to explain what it is like to reach out to others with respect in a community, and of course emphasise the importance of establishing contact with others. So we place the accent on equality and point out that everyone has interesting sides to them in their own way.

Our message: respect others and yourselves!

Our campaign song, 'The other one', written by Raymond van het Groenewoud, starts: **"The other one is strange, that's very true, but I'm that other one so I'm afraid of myself"**.

The success of this campaign depends on our children and young people.

Leaflets are distributed and activities organised everywhere, in schools, in youth associations, in cafés and in shops.

Various associations and educationalists have invented methods and games revolving around diversity, human rights and participation. Thanks to a project called 'Special Abnormal' run by a magazine, young people are sharing information on all sorts of topics.

On 21 March, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, children and young people in various places held birthday celebrations for Mie and

Mo Bizar. Symbolically, in the municipality of Saint-Niklaas, 650 couples were ceremonially married by a municipal councillor of African origin who had been subjected to racist behaviour a few months previously. This ceremony attracted extensive international media coverage.

In the course of our work to develop intercultural and interreligious dialogue in Belgium's Flemish Region, we have observed that bringing about change successfully largely depends on the right people working with conviction, enthusiasm and resolve at the right time and in the right place. So I hope that here the right people will get together at the right time and in the right place. Thank you very much for your attention. I wish you a good and enjoyable Symposium.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO CHALLENGES POSED BY RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Ms Kanchan Jadeja
Government Office for the east Midlands, United Kingdom

Speaking points

Historical Background to the debate

The relationship between the government institutions and diverse communities has always been a dichotomy. They were required to fill the economic gap and at the same time they bring with them differences in culture, religion, lifestyles and race that is found to be 'a threat' to a way of life. This threat has then been the argument for cuts in numbers of immigration, and policies that have looked at diverse communities as 'the other'.

The institutional responses…

The policy debate on this issue has been through a journey of changes in attitudes and responses to the Black and Ethnic Minority population in the host country.

Integration – We are all the same, attempting to ensure that the new arrivals to BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) communities are supported to integrate into the British way of life. Many were keen to do this in any case.

Segregation – This is not an institutional policy, but an outcome of the racism and separation of BME communities in order to survive in new environments in, for example, businesses, education, and housing.

Multiculturalism – A pluralist approach which considers all cultures to be equal; the policy focus was to learn about each other's culture and religion in order to live and work together. This has included provision of services by local authorities and health sectors on language translation and food, for example, and the teaching of different religions in education to understand each other.

Anti-Racism – An attempt to tackle the underlying perceptions by the host community of the diverse communities. This often took the form of Race Awareness Training (RAT), which came from the USA. To some extent it was strongly resisted in the '80s but some progress was made in providing a challenge to racist outcomes, particularly in the caring professions.

New Racism – ('90s) A re-emergence in policy terms with an attack on what was termed 'political correctness' and the anti-racist policies and strategies. It involved the closure of equality units in the name of mainstreaming that often did not happen.

Proposed new system

Back to integration! Back to square one!?

IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research): A new policy discourse around identity has emerged. A growing number of progressive thinkers, policy makers and politicians are now arguing that we need to build progressive identities, at national and local level.

Community cohesion…

Community cohesion as a concept was developed following the Oldham, Bradford and Burnley disturbances in 2001. It was based on pre-existing concepts such as race equality, social cohesion, social inclusion and social capital. It was typically focussed on race and faith flashpoints.

Current institutional response to diversity – What is community cohesion?

Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities.

Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Guidance on community cohesion (produced by the Local Government Association (LGA) in conjunction with the office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Home Office commission for Racial equality and the Interfaith network.

Community Cohesion...

In 2002 it was defined in terms of positive outcomes. The broad working definition is that a cohesive community is one where:
- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued.

Key components of Community Cohesion...

Research (2003) has shown that there are key components of cohesive communities:
- Sense of community – do people enjoy living in their neighbourhoods and are they proud of it?
- Respect for diversity, whether people feel that BME communities are respected.
- Institutions' recognition that diversity can contribute to the host country.
- Political trust: do people feel they can trust local politicians and councillors?
- Sense of belonging: whether people identify with their local neighbourhood and know people in the local area.

Citizenship survey 2005

- 80% felt they lived in an area where people of different backgrounds got on well together.
- 83% of people who lived in mixed areas felt that people respected ethnic differences, which marks a major difference from 79% in 2003.
- 32% felt very strongly that they belonged to their neighbourhood, which demonstrates a significant increase from 28% in 2003.

Clark and Drinkwater (Ethnic Minority Segregation Preferences: Evidence from the UK) identify the following reasons for immigrants choosing to congregate in particular areas

- the area may be a port of entry to the host economy;
- immigrants may head for where the economic opportunities are greatest;

- immigrants may choose to settle where family and friends have settled;
- immigrants may choose to settle where co-ethnics have settled as it is easier to obtain ethnic market and non-market goods and services, including social interactions for themselves and their children;
- immigrants may choose to settle where co-ethnics have settled as they have a shared language, aiding trade and employment.

The challenges posed by diversity and religious differences are complex.

Health: 31% of doctors and 13% of nurses are non-UK born; in London, these are 23% and 47% respectively. Half the expansion of the NHS (National Health Service) over the last decade – that is, 8,000 of the additional 16,000 staff – had qualified abroad.

Education: Overseas teachers play an important role in staffing schools in London and a growing number of London education authorities are recruiting staff directly from abroad to address staff shortages in schools.

Higher education: In 1995-96, the Higher Education Statistics Agency showed that non-British nationals made up 12.5% of academic and research staff, and were most likely to be in medicine, science and engineering; they comprised over half the faculty of LSE (London School of Economics).

IT: The increase in demand for specialist IT skills has been spectacular, and is expected to continue. Projections suggest that the IT services industry alone will need to recruit another 540,000 people between 1998 and 2009.

Catering: An estimated 70% of catering jobs in London are filled by migrants.

Agricultural labour: There was significant excess demand for the Seasonal Agricultural Worker scheme.

Source: Migration: an economic and social analysis (Home Office 2002)

Youth Policy – New Labour
The primary focus of recent responses to cohesion and integration has been demonstrated in a range of programmes funded by central government in order to

address disadvantaged young people. These include MV (Millennium Volunteers), PAYP (Positive Activities for Young People), Youth Opportunity Fund, Youth Capital Fund, and Youth Matters legislation with Positive Activities.

LAA: more funds are being provided to Local Area Agreements so that local areas have control over the use of funds.

Voluntary and community sector: This provides an increased role for the sector, particularly with regard to young people.

Meeting Challenges and moving forward

What do young people think? Institutions must listen and find out.
- Complex approaches not simple platitudes
- Opportunities at a strategic level
- Opportunities at all levels economic, social cultural in the context of globalisation.
- Opportunities at local regional national levels.

TOOL-KIT ON INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Ms Olga Israel – European Union of Jewish Students
Mr Michael Roekaerts – Pax Christi International
Faith Based expert group, European Youth Forum

Speaking points

The Faith Based Expert Group is an informal group that gathers faith based youth international NGOs to:
- celebrate the differences between members of different faiths in diverse and multicultural Europe,
- develop an understanding of the role of religion and interfaith dialogue in youth work and European society,
- contribute with its expertise to the activities of international institutions in the field of interreligious dialogue,
- develop specific action,
- serve as an expert body of the European Youth Forum, AND
- have 'FUN' together!

The 8 partners of the Faith Based Expert Group are:
- EPTO (European Peer Training Organization)
- EUJS (European Union of Jewish Students)
- EYCE (Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe)
- FEMYSO (Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisation)
- FIMCAP (International Federation of Parochial Catholic Youth Organisations)
- JECI-MIEC (International Movement of Catholic Students)
- JECI-MIEC (International Movement of Catholic Students)
- WSCF (World Student Christian Federation)

These eight organisations looked at Europe and noticed that
- Europe is a multicultural, multi-faith reality;
- nevertheless, there are still many prejudices and stereotypes;
- therefore there is a need for more knowledge, education, and dialogue.

The group figured out that it is important to:
- know your own faith;
- understand and respect other faiths.

When organising an interfaith activity it is essential to remember:
- the calendar of main religious festivities
- the time and place for worship
- dietary requirements
- gender sensitivities
- a suitable location
- to choose the right tools (ice-breakers, activities, methods, etc).

The group decided to start developing a pedagogical tool-kit to organise interfaith activities.

They are in the process of finalising it, and it will be ready very soon.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

The programme of the Symposium relied not only on the guest speakers' reflections and discourses, especially on religion, culture and multiculturalism, and human rights, as well as experiences and tools for and on intercultural and interreligious dialogue. It also relied on the experiences and ideas of the participants. In order to allow the participants to express their views and concerns about interreligious and intercultural dialogue and to share their experiences on the subject, a specific framework was set up.

The organisers envisaged establishing several thematic working groups on the basis of the experiences, proposals and preferences the participants might have expressed in their application forms.

Each thematic working group had the aim of sharing their experiences, doubts and concerns on the chosen theme, directly or indirectly related to interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and also of developing recommendations to be included in the final document of the Symposium, provisionally called the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration'.

Among different proposals, twelve thematic working groups were set up with a focus on the following issues:
* *Armed conflicts and intercultural youth work for conflict transformation*
* *Faith-based youth work*
* *Intercultural learning and education for interreligious and intercultural dialogue*
* *Migration*
* *Racism and discrimination*
* *Religion, Human Rights and Human Rights Education*
* *Religion, Culture and Gender*
* *Religious based discrimination*
* *The 'Alliance of Civilisations' Initiative*
* *The consequences of terrorism on interreligious and intercultural dialogue*
* *The role of and working with the media*
* *The role of local authorities in working on interreligious and intercultural dialogue*

Each thematic working group was facilitated by a trainer and enriched by the presence of a resource person, who contributed to the group with his / her own experiences and reflections for discussion.

In the following pages you'll find the final report of the thematic working groups, synthesising the key elements of the discussion, presenting proposals for the future and also pointing out their recommendations for the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration'.

Armed conflicts and intercultural youth work for conflict transformation

Facilitator: Mr Arnold Stepanian
Resource Persons: Mr Fuad Muradov and Mr Michael Roekaerts

The group started its sessions with a short introduction from each participant. The group was very diverse and it was interesting to see that some came from areas of armed conflict, others had temporarily lived in those areas and some had never directly experienced armed conflict.

An introduction given by the two resource people, and several guiding questions introduced by the facilitator, gave the session its framework.

The group tried to understand what makes conflict, a basic part of every day human life, escalate into armed conflict and war and tried to find out what can be done once the conflict has reached this violent stage.

The group asked itself if youth can actually be an actor of change in the conflict to the peace process, and furthermore, if NGOs can contribute during both conflict and post-conflict situations?

The group briefly looked at the differences between conflict resolution, management and transformation.

Conflict resolution treats conflict as a short-term phenomenon that can be matched up with the right solution to settle the conflict, whereas conflict management understands that conflicts are always processes that occur over a longer time but presupposes that conflicts can be directed and controlled. It does not, however, ensure that the conflict is actually resolved or settled.

Conflict transformation on the other hand, is a process which starts with an analysis of the momentary state and the history that led to it, and then tries to

derive future oriented ways out of the conflict, taking into consideration that short-term changes are necessary, but long-term structural change is what can eradicate the causes of the conflict.

In understanding these approaches to conflict, the group focussed on the different approaches to transformation.

The human rights based approach refers to the transformation of victim to social actor, relying on the legal framework.

The Economic approach looks at individuals as exploitable resources and tries to transform them into economic actors using economic policies within a short-term range.

Finally, the Socio-political approach sees the person in a conflict as a spoiler and tries to transform him or her into a peace-builder using participatory approaches.

In this, NGOs, both from the affected area, and externally, can function as educators and mediators. NGOs can transform individuals and groups into actors of change and peace-builders through, for example, exchanges, training courses, mediating sessions, and establishing dialogue between conflicting groups, as well as through passing on knowledge and resources, advocating together or simply showing solidarity.

Working in a post-conflict environment means mainly reconstruction and reconciliation, and this is where intercultural and interreligious dialogue is needed. It requires an intercultural learning background, including sensitivity, knowledge, and educational competence, being able to communicate between different values, backgrounds, identities and experiences, and different senses of belonging and cultural lifestyles.

We need to be aware of the dynamics involved in prejudices, stereotypes, tolerance and intolerance, inequality and injustice, culture and identity.

In situations of conflict, sometimes even post-conflict, non-formal education will be the best way to heighten people's sensitivity towards intercultural and interreligious differences and, by creating a dialogue, people can be helped to

overcome them and can learn to be actively tolerant. In regions that are not directly affected by armed conflict, an introduction of these concepts into formal education is highly desirable. Even more necessary, and a point which had been addressed earlier in the plenary room came up again: the importance of the revision of history books as a crucial factor in the prevention of conflict.

The group further emphasised a number of issues:

All kinds of intercultural and interreligious dialogue have to secure the participation of all stakeholders involved, otherwise only an active elite is created. This would prevent insights, approaches, and peaceful and tolerant attitudes from disseminating through all levels of society, which is necessary for a sustainable transformation of conflicts.

Local initiatives have to be supported, because these are the ones that will bring the most effective results. They should be supported by all other stakeholders, be they regional, national, trans-national organisations or groups that have the capacity to enhance these initiatives.

One underlying idea re-emerged a number of times: the importance of the right phrasing of words in the context of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as well as in peace-building and conflict transformation. The common north-south terminology and the introduction of western concepts and approaches into different mindsets and cultures have to be circumvented, since it creates distance and blockages.

The basis of all youth work, independent of where the initiative comes from, has to be an understanding of equality and recognition of difference without negative judgment.

This is why intercultural and interreligious dialogue is so important in youth work in the transformation of (armed) conflict.

Faith-based Youth Work

Facilitator: Ms Magnea Sverrisdottir
Resource persons: Ms Olga Israel and Mr Hakan Tosuner

Participants of the group included a cross-section of practising and non-practising believers and non-believers. Initially the group worked from various starting points – some from governmental levels, others from a practical grassroots level. This was a challenge that the group managed to overcome successfully.

The concept of a faith-based youth organisation (FBYO) was explained in order to provide a basic framework for Faith-Based Youth Work. It is as follows:

The first level of faith-based youth work is the introspective level: it is a space for believers to learn about their own faith.

The next level is value-based work on social issues, for example, environmental protection. This set of values would most likely overlap with common humanistic values and may not necessarily be strictly faith-based.

These are the two basic ways of working in faith-based organisations;

A third level would be to engage in interfaith dialogue: to look beyond the borders of one's own group.

From that point, we shared our experiences of being involved in interfaith activities. For example, some had experiences of being stereotyped because of an association with a faith-based group – the fear of being judged for not being religious enough or being too religious.

The 'tabooisation' of religion causes people to only see extremism. One can see that legal systems have emerged from religion. The essence of faith-based youth work also comes from the values of the system. Faith-based organisations can contribute because many find a way to neutralise a stigma of religion. In addition, religion itself provides morals to live by.

Some had experiences of being in a society or country that would not acknowledge any faith-based youth work. They found this very problematic.

Social problems have manifested themselves through religions. Political and social problems are being addressed through religion. Religion can solve problems because the same ideals are valued. A humanitarian approach can solve the true problems, but not a fight against Islamophobia, for example. The premise is wrong – nothing is wrong with Islam.

The group was divided into smaller working groups to discuss answers to the question, "How can we engage in dialogue?"

The group agreed that a general set of rules should be established before the start of a dialogue, and were important for interfaith dialogue: For instance,
- listen before judging;
- do not compare the best of one's faith to the worst of the other's faith;
- be aware that it is a dialogue and not a monologue;
- develop creative ways to attract people to engage in interfaith dialogue;
- ensure that a sense of equality exists between groups; otherwise the dialogue does not start on an equal footing;
- create opportunities to have dialogue at a pan-European level to support each other; create a critical mass;
- work step by step: start with creating trust, and then tackle the bigger issues.

The methodology to enhance or initiate solutions to conflicts is situational.

Finally, we discussed faith-based youth work at local and at European levels. Is it necessary at both levels?

The group agreed that neither level could be left out.

Local level:
At the local level, faith-based youth work brings young people together and helps them strengthen their identity.

Ethical Level (Value-based): Faith-based youth organisations provide the opportunity to acknowledge the identity of various beliefs/groups in a multicultural society. They can serve as a platform for teaching common values such as acceptance, and respect for human rights. The groups can also work for the good of the local community at large.

Faith-based youth work (religious and non-religious) can be important platforms for interfaith dialogue.

At both levels (Middle ground):
It helps the youth become aware of common values.
All groups can learn good practices from each other.
It is possible to rebuild respect and values.
Everyone must be ready for changes.
In general, share and learn from other FBYOs.

From FBYOs, we should share human values (of religions) and break prejudices and stereotypes.

European level:
The FBYOs can:
- create networks,
- share information,
- share good practices, and
- participate in international programmes.

As a potential platform for interfaith dialogue, FBYO (religious or non-religious) should promote respect for each other and facilitate the process of living in diversity at the European level.

Interfaith dialogue, if rightly used, can be a very fruitful tool in coping with navigating within a multicultural society.

From all the above, the group's recommendations for the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration' emerged.

1. We, the youth, recommend that decision makers should support society in recognising the existence and acceptance of Faith-Based Youth Organisations, in accordance with Human Rights and democratic values.
2. We, the youth, recommend that, as a potential platform for interfaith dialogue, Faith-Based Youth Organisations (religious and non-religious) should promote respect for each other and facilitate the process of living in diversity, both at local and international levels.
3. We, the youth, recommend an interaction between Faith-Based Youth Organisations and other kinds of youth-related activities to foster mutual understanding.

Intercultural learning and education for interreligious and intercultural dialogue

Facilitator: Ms Saskia Law
Resource Person: Mr. Cihad Taskin

The working group for intercultural education for intercultural and interreligious dialogue started to work with an exercise called 'imagination-association', aiming to show to the participants the different ways in which we can associate with different things. The participants were asked to make associations for a given word so that we can see the diversity in which the group was expected to work. As an example, the word 'loyalty' for some referred to the authority based relationship to a government, and for others it was associated with trust and mutual loyalty among friends.

The input from the resource person started with a statement that showed the group that we should always talk in our own name and to have in mind the different perceptions of everyone. "There is no-one to teach; the way to learn is open for both sides."

Cihad Taskin's presentation focused mostly on the contents of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and at the end he briefly presented a practical project involving these issues.

It included the following:
For communication it is important to be self-confident and to want to start communicating. But it is also very important to understand that "dialogue doesn't mean pursuing your own opinion, but trying to understand the other as much as possible". In this part of the working group session, the resource person introduced the 'Iceberg model', showing the visible and invisible part of an individual's personality.

WHAT ARE WE SEEING?

WHY DO WE SEE THIS and WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
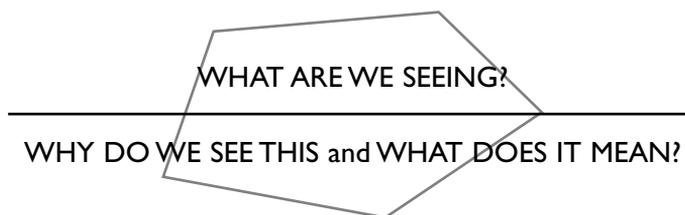
Thus, each of us as a unique individual with different layers of identity (as a citizen, ethnic and religious background, as a friend, a parent, a partner) can contribute along the way.

To be able to lead a dialogue it is necessary to understand the context of communication differences among people. Some cultures are used to expressing themselves in an indirect way, always using the plural in sentences instead of singular, and explaining their needs in an indirect way (by using associations, etc). For other cultures, it is typical to communicate directly by saying what your needs and wants are. Many misunderstandings come from this area. Also interesting in this context is the fact that every individual has a limit in terms of intimacy. Not all cultures and religious groups accept talking about private things as a must. As the discussions go deeper and no answers are provided, one could easily open the 'box of imagination' that leads to creating more prejudices and stereotypes. That is why it is important for people to feel confident to say and accept, 'It is personal', as an answer to some of the questions during a dialogue.

"Dialogue is like a gate: don't completely open it, nor completely close it," one participant pointed out. At one and the same time, different people can be talking about the same issue but from different perspectives. That's why it is important to have in mind that people might interpret differently what you are saying, and so be cautious.

Information can be received in two different ways. The first model is frequently used to describe teacher-student relations, and the second model is actually a basis for dialogue.
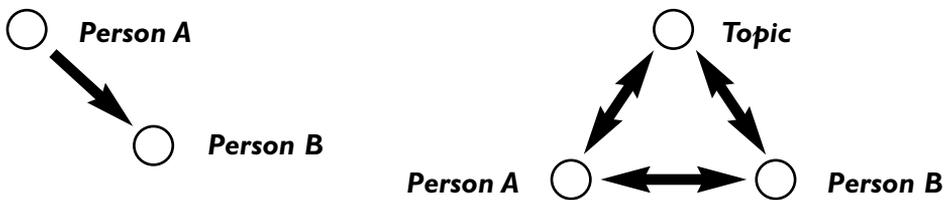
Afterwards, the participants presented their experiences in intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Some of the projects were international, others local; some had a large target group, while others had a more specific one, but in general, all of them are examples of good projects. The participants made presentations focusing on the following main areas:

- Best practices in Intercultural Leaning and Intercultural/Interreligious dialogue
- How to bring it into schools
- How to implement it in non-formal / formal education in all its stages (from kindergarten to university)
- The impact on the mass media as a source of informal learning.

Some of the examples shared included projects directly implemented in schools. Such projects took place in Russia, where national days of local ethnic minorities were organized in schools with the support of NGOs and teachers. These events served as a place to talk and a chance to experience the culture and traditions of the ethnic minority groups by all students, which can eventually lead to greater understanding and acceptance. In Belgium, an organization was also working on setting up discussions in schools, but this time with refugees who have come into the area. The discussions were about the limitations that the groups feel regarding each other and the ways in which they can support each other. In the Netherlands, workshops conducted in schools aimed to discuss identity. As a result, "after they've got to know you, they don't see the physical image, but the person with their own identity."

It became clear how diverse the activities aimed at promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue among youth are. In India, conflicts between religious communities were addressed by using artistic performances and presentations as a tool. Through these performances, young people represented religious and regional differences of India.

In Australia, a fashion show of traditional clothes from a large number of countries from around the world was organized, inspiring in the audience a feeling of the beauty of the diversity of these cultures. In Macedonia, young children were taken directly to religious places so see and talk about religions other than their own.

Concluding from the experiences put forth, youth exchanges are a widely-spread and effective way of promoting and conducting intercultural dialogue, and to achieving sustainable learning and change of attitudes among youth. These exchanges could be done in a way that one group spends some time in another country. (A Polish group visited Turkey to discuss and assess possibilities for student exchanges.) They can be international with participants from a number of countries and on a topic connected with intercultural / interreligious dialogue (e.g. the Azerbaijani ministry organizing a conference about the role of youth in conflict

resolution). Alternatively, they can also aim to strengthen the cultural identity of youth who are living in a country that is not their home country (e.g. a summer camp for the youth in diaspora organized in Armenia).

Intercultural learning depends to a great extent on the context of the local community where a project takes place (the location, the customs, and the background of all relevant stakeholders) and so needs to be adjusted to it. Thus every project that is initiated should be different and specific to its circumstances.

Intercultural Dialogue and Intercultural Learning should aim towards the following longer-term goals:
- Mutual understanding and the ability to reach mutual conclusions
- Learning to live together in peace
- Unity in diversity by promoting the equality of differences
- Creating a culture of peace-building, respect, tolerance and acceptance
- Enriching the knowledge of differences.

Intercultural and interreligious dialogue should be regarded as a process. In this process every project is a single step in a long-term development. Therefore, it is impossible to expect that the goals can be reached by one project alone. This needs to be realized by local, national and international organizations, networks and even non-formal groups or movements, in order to develop coherent projects which build upon each other and thereby reach sustainability.

In small groups the recommendations for Education for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue were discussed. Before splitting up, the entire group agreed on points that build the framework for the following consultation. Groups agreed on considering the following points:

- Focusing on best practices in terms of methodology
- Implementation in both formal and non-formal education at all levels
- Media and informal learning
- Relations to and the responsibilities of the authorities
- International relations and context.

Although the participants were divided into 4 groups, during the discussions two of the groups merged into one. Each group organized their working time and methods separately and later on presented the outcomes to the other groups.

The first group of eight participants developed the following recommendations:

One of the best practices for intercultural and interreligious dialogue are
- the organization of cultural evenings both locally and internationally which will engage youth in discovering other cultures;
- youth exchanges;
- an opening of so-called 'culture houses', as an idea, should lead to a greater understanding of other cultures; the method should be adjusted to the goals and the target group;
- an effective method is roleplay, which can be interactive and fun at the same time;
- Educational programmes should focus on the similarities between cultures and religions.

Young people should start with intercultural learning from as early as kindergarten. In this way they get used to an intercultural environment from an early age.

Non-formal education is a valuable addition to formal education and should always aim to promote diversity and intercultural dialogue.

The second group discussed and concluded the following issues:

- Education for teachers and youth workers on how to engage in working with multicultural groups. Today, the world is multicultural. Unfortunately some of the people directly involved with education are unable to deal with multiculturalism and ensure equal educational opportunities for youngsters. Therefore, it is necessary to develop and undertake a series of training courses to develop the capacity of teachers, and also to create intercultural and non-discriminative educational programmes.
- Inclusion of people with fewer opportunities into educational programmes. The most vulnerable, for example, ethnic and religious minority groups in particular, need to be encouraged to participate actively in the process of intercultural dialogue.
- Creating international training teams that will design and deliver the programme of non-formal education activities.
- Developing special programmes for youth and children that will be based on interactive methodology, through books and exercises.

The third group considered:
- using representative and inclusive methodologies that allow equal access and participation; the methodologies also need to contain positive examples and approaches, and to be adjusted to the age of the participants.

The following suggestions were made for formal education:

- An upgrade of materials used in the formal education system should be carried out in order to take education to a multicultural global level. This included strong suggestions for re-phrasing those parts of educational materials that can be found offensive by certain cultural / religious groups.
- Capacity building for public institutions working with education to be able to implement such programmes that promote a culture of understanding and peace, instead of a culture of glorification of history and oppression.

For the non-formal education, the following actions are considered as positive examples:

- National, international and even local youth exchanges and encounters that use non-formal education and experiential learning.
- The possibility of internships for marginalized youth in the institutions and media is also important in intercultural dialogue (the EVS – European Voluntary Service – programme as a positive example). For a dialogue to involve everyone, the group also suggested using pictorial messages and non-verbal communication.
- The media should be involved and allow more opportunities for equal representation of the local community with regard to their diversity.

Migration

Facilitator: Ms Tülin Şener
Resource person: Mr. W.B Emminghaus

At the beginning of the meeting, the participants introduced themselves, stating where they were born, and where their parents were born.

Atinc Keskin – Turkish Republic of northern Cyprus; parents born in southern Cyprus; after the war they migrated;

Mersiha Smajic – from Bosnia; parents also from Bosnia; during '94-'98 war, they moved, first to Croatia, and then to Germany;

Nadeem – Britain; parents born in India and Kenya; roots in India;

Zeliha – Turkey; parents born in Turkey, Ankara; studied in Malaysia – different culture; moving back, re-integrating (issue of headscarf);

Rilka – Bulgaria; parents also from Bulgaria.

How does migration influence your youth work?
Bad economy, limited economic activities, Turkish help – increased affluence – freedom in north Cyprus, separate youth work (attempts to integrate refused – referenda).

Youth work has to have multiple dimensions; attempts have been made to integrate women and men in the same environment, but unfortunately, due to the apprehensions of parents, a separate programme has been necessary; a sensitive approach is crucial.

The participants detailed the situation of youth work in their countries:
Bulgaria: During Communism, youth centres and related activities were organised and managed directly by the government. After the fall of the system, no more youth work was possible. Only in 2005 were student organisations re-launched.

Bosnia: It is a very similar case to the Bulgarian one. After the war, the organisations had other prevailing priorities and there was not much investment in youth work. In 2006, for the first time, youth were represented.

Turkey: I was involved in NGOs. I got experience from living in Malaysia. I gained ideas, working with Amnesty International. The Ministry of Youth cannot deal with the issue of the 'headscarf' because of secularism.

Public and private sponsors support an international recognition of the youth work.

The goal is the following:
- Government support to youth participation, also providing infrastructure.
- Facilitation of integration, understanding, freedom of choice, and individual responsibility in line with human rights.
- Young people need recognition internationally in their representative role.
- Having a well-developed youth participation structure within Britain, I feel it is important that all the youth work being carried out at European level needs to be co-ordinated.

Our message is: *Share our similarities and celebrate our differences.*

Recommendations:
We recommend that concerted efforts are made towards creating a statutory structure for youth participation and youth work, a structure which provides funding as well as the opportunity for young people to directly influence those making decisions on their behalf.

It is through these structures that young people are able to advance their views and ideas on migration and intercultural relations.

Consultation between young people and decision makers can provide the impetus for constructive outcomes on burning issues such as migration.

We also recommend that all member states of the Council of Europe install youth integration services to facilitate dialogue and youth mobility.

Migration is a unique way of learning and studying each other interculturally, and should serve to forge stronger bonds to a more homogenous world.

Racism and discrimination

Facilitator: Ms Manuela Tavares
Resource person: Mr Mohammad Khan

The group felt the phrase below was more real, that we are …
Not all that Different
Not all that Equal

Summary of the issues raised:

The group created the following distinction between the two terms:
- Racism was understood as the context or the culture of a given individual or community operating within. Racism in this context was as defined by what was in it as well as by what was absent.
- Discrimination was the direct action emanating out of this cultural as well as institutional context; discrimination, though focusing on acts of violence, is often most damaging on a long-term basis in its invisible behaviour and day to day practice, such as institutional racism.
- The role of educational and government institutions in 'educating out' racism and discrimination.

The conclusions of the working group on Racism and Discrimination:
Racism and Discrimination are still worrying realities that are more often experienced by young people, and still seem to be spreading under a series of guises. We, as a group, are committed to creating a more human and inclusive society.

That a title of 'Not all that Different – Not all that Equal' will have greater legitimacy for youth workers who experience these inequalities through their practice, and for communities for whom this aspiration is more of a feel-good thing for bureaucrats than for hard-up communities.

Recommendations for the guidelines and policy orientations with reference to the 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue' and the 'Istanbul Declaration':

We recommend the following and wish that these recommendations are monitored in order to see the outcomes of our good intentions.

- **Institutions**
  Institutions urgently need to strengthen their relevance to the practical necessities of disparate and diverse communities.

  Abstract language, selective hearing, historical relationships, cultural hegemony and denial of problems are all creating parallel realities that are only forced together by out of the ordinary events. This only serves to expose institutional double standards and create local apathy.

- **Young people**
  Young people need to be actively involved: participating, listening and providing a real voice in making a difference to local and global society. Frustration, aggression and disengagement are reactions to being disabled in being of service or developing their interests.

  Encounters are essential and the ease of transport and technological advances makes this an important element in building networks of support and relationships that challenge racism and discrimination.

- **Emerging and existing NGOs**
  We believe that NGOs can play an important role in the process for building a civil society. They are the platforms that communities create for respect and equality in dignity. Therefore, they should be encouraged and supported in these goals, in creating encounters between different groups and minorities. Supporting developing networks as a means of bridging gaps is important in society.

- **Diversity, Education and Human Rights – Rhetoric to Reality**
  Diverse societies and the benefits they bring should be appreciated rather then feared and rejected. Innovative formal and non-formal educational activity that encourage direct communication between different subcultures need to be developed and supported on a long-term basis. This work needs to be informed by different multi-disciplinary critical perspectives that can inform the work of minority communities.

  This can only happen in a context where states and societies respect and apply human rights. Where these human rights are enshrined in legal instruments these should be enforced when violated. No double standards should be allowed.

- **Globalisation**
  Technology has drawn us closer together. Its ability to be a force for good rather than creating moral panics and folk devils is yet to be realised fully; public service broadcasting has an important role. The expectations of this broadcasting service need to be set.

Other outcomes, conclusions and proposals:
- A need to acknowledge and respect the powerful experiences and realities that participants bring with them.
- That the final decisions of 'change' and 'reconciliation' can be made more comprehensible through education, but this does not mean that they will be any easier.
- An e-group to be created to continue the relationships that were established.
- Conference outcomes need to be monitored in order to see their experiences in institutions to counter the apathy generated by unfulfilled declarations and lessons missed in good practice.
- To hear that young people are saying 'Our place and our time'.

This group comprised individuals from across Europe and the Mediterranean – youth workers, practitioners, academics and social entrepreneurs in response to the agenda set under the remit of challenging racism and discrimination.

Religion, Human Rights and Human Rights Education

Facilitator: Mr Dariusz Grzemny
Resource person: Ms Eva Boev

The group had the following objectives:
- To explore the relationship between freedom of religion and other fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as responsibilities;
- To critically discuss the role of human rights education within education on religion or on religious facts;
- To discuss the challenges to the universal culture of human rights based on religious or cultural grounds;
- To discuss different approaches to teaching about religion(s);
- To propose approaches to education about religions in a human rights context;
- To share good practices and successful initiatives.

The group started its work by brainstorming on what freedom of religion means to them:
- to be a member of a religious community
- to be free to practise your own religion
- to have a place to worship and practise religion
- to be able to do what your religion tells you
- to live your own religion freely
- to respect other religions and beliefs
- to be able to teach and learn about your own religion
- to share your belief with the others or worship individually.

The resource person, Ms Eva Boev (Italy), gave a short introduction on the human rights documents and the way freedom of religion is expressed in them. She referred to Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All those articles clearly give the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, which include the right to practise, teach and change the religion. Ms Eva Boev presented the case that had happened in her town where the local population was very much against building the mosque, which had been asked by the Muslim community.

The discussion focused on finding the answers to 3 questions.

What examples of situations / events do you meet in your country / town / community that are related to religion and to the universal culture of human rights?

The group identified many examples from daily life that they consider the challenge to universality of human rights: protests against building a mosque (the biggest in the EU) in the city of Cologne in Germany; the that view some religions have on homosexuality (forbidding or condemning); no possibility of or ban on exposing religious symbols in public institutions and schools; discrimination based on wearing or not wearing religion-associated clothing; expelling children from school activities due to the religious reasons (some Muslim girls are not allowed by their parents to participate in the obligatory school camps as they will be exposed to the situation where boys and girls live together; they are not allowed to go to swimming classes); discrimination in the job market (women wearing veils have very small chances of getting a good job); time of service very often coincides with the time for prayer; there are no places where people can pray in public institutions and schools; young people are asked in some countries to state their religious affiliation when they get their ID (the religion is stated there); young people coming for different religious backgrounds do not have equal access to education; the media sometimes convey religion in a very negative way, confirming stereotypes.

What human rights are included when we talk about these challenges?

The group came up with many examples of the interrelation of the right to freedom of religion with many other rights. The closest link can be seen with the freedom of expression and opinion. However, where this right is concerned we can notice many contradictions, for example, looking at the media, which very often convey certain religions in a very stereotypical way, contributing to enforcing prejudices. Another right closely connected with the freedom of religion is the right to education, which, for example, becomes very visible when we talk about teaching religion. In many countries, young people do not have the opportunity to attend classes in religion on the religion they practise, as only the religion of the majority is provided in schools. The group did not reach an agreement as to whether religion should be taught in schools at all. Many participants claimed that classes in religion should not be obligatory and that young people should have a possibility to choose whether they want to attend these classes.

When we tackle freedom of religion we very often raise the issue of equal opportunities for all. Do educational systems create such opportunities through providing only the teaching of the religion of the majority?

The group also identified the following conflicts:
- freedom of practising your own religion vs. freedom of speech
- freedom of religion vs. the right to be protected from discrimination
- the right to exercise your own religion vs. rules of the institutions.

Are these rights in conflict? What can we do about it when they are?

As mentioned in the previous point, these rights are very often in conflict. The group tried to come up with several examples of how these conflicts could be overcome. Here are the examples:
- Everyone should be able to receive religious education relevant to the faith they believe in. The content of religious education, however, should be widened to include the teaching about other religions and interreligious dialogue.
- Courses on religion should be optional.
- National laws should follow the principles of human rights, such as non-discrimination and equality.
- Human rights education should be provided in schools using non-formal education methods. HRE should focus on developing young people's skills in critical thinking, active listening, empathy and responsibility.
- History textbooks should be adapted and revised when it comes to teaching history in Europe in order to promote diversity, interreligious dialogue, and the integration of migrants.
- Religious leaders should take the responsibility of facilitating dialogue between young people who practise different religions.
- The decisions which are made and concern young people should be made with the participation of young people.
- The education of teachers of religion should be improved, and special focus should be put on interreligious dialogue.

Examples of practice:
The participants of the working group presented several examples they have used when promoting interreligious dialogue. The initiative of the Anne Frank House in Berlin was presented as an example of work that is done with young people

towards intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The initiative – Free2choose – is the compilation of short cartoons and documentaries that deal with different human rights issues relevant for young people. The movies are used to initiate debate among young people.

Recommendations
After a long debate, the group came up with the following recommendations:

To the Council of Europe and the European Commission:
- to initiate the process of elaborating and creating a school manual for young people on different religions; the manual should promote understanding and dialogue; the process of its creation could be similar to the one taken when revising the history textbooks;
- to promote and organise youth gatherings (such as our Symposium) where young people can meet and discuss relevant issues related to intercultural and interreligious dialogue;
- to support establishing youth networks and intercultural projects through creating different programmes and funding opportunities (such as the Youth in Action Programme);
- to create a system of monitoring which will make sure that European programmes (aimed at formal and non-formal education) are more accessible and inclusive for young people with fewer opportunities;
- to support translations of 'Compass – a manual on human rights education with young people' – and training courses that can be organised in order to promote it;
- to organise international training activities for trainers in intercultural and interreligious dialogue;
- to create the European university curriculum (including resource materials) on interreligious dialogue)
- to call on national governments to implement affirmative actions in public institutions and schools in order to create space for people from minority groups.

Other recommendations:
- to promote the building of places of worship for different religions;
- to put pressure on educational authorities to allow religion-related clothing in public institutions and schools.

Religion, culture and gender

Facilitator: Ms Annette Schneider
Resource Person: Mr Sami Danguir

Introduction
The workshop on religion, culture and gender was a very interesting workshop, as young people from diverse backgrounds participated in it and worked together.

This allowed us to view the topics from different perspectives and to have a multi-levelled approach.

At the beginning of the group work there were some tensions in our group when, as a result of the variety of different standpoints, we could not agree on a topic. However, we managed to overcome this situation and to find a mutual consensus by focusing on the challenges which young people face today and how to find ways to improve the situation of young people. It was highlighted by the different members of the group that, in youth work in particular, it is important to respect each other and their different opinions in order to have successful dialogue.

Methods
We used different kinds of methods in order to achieve a good climate for discussions where everybody could felt included, and free to speak. Some of the methods used were statement exercises, work in smaller groups, discussions in the larger group and brainstorming.

Summary of the issues raised

Guideline questions and definitions

At first, Sami Danguir, the resource person, outlined the topic to us. He defined religion, culture and gender and posed one guideline question and five sub questions. These questions were the following:

Guideline question:
What can the roles of religion and culture be in order to secure and develop equality of treatment of women and men and in respecting diversity?

Sub questions:
1. As NGOs, Civil Society and society activists, what are the main issues of discrimination that you have been confronted with? What was your reaction?
2. What are the sources of discrimination, the consequences of discrimination and the factors that enforce / enable this?
3. In order to eliminate discrimination, which resources do we need? What results do we want? How do we achieve this, and by what means?
4. What actions are needed to change the public opinion and that of policy and decision makers?
5. How do you perceive the relationship between religion, and (homo)sexuality?

Afterwards, we proceeded with trying to find our own definitions for religion, culture and gender. The definitions often differed significantly from each other. Hence, we did not try to find common definitions but we contented ourselves with having a variety of definitions. Some of the definitions were:

Religion
• the codification of divine revelations
• theoretical and practical rules based on personal faith
• a set of rituals, behaviours, moralities, rules and regulations that form the life system
• the relationship between humans and God, and how people practise this
• believing and acting according to the divine scriptures which God has sent to people to guide them.

Culture
• the way people live
• customs, art, attitudes, language, habits, architecture
• sharing the same values and identity
• shared reference points.

Gender
• socially constructed roles and expectations
• NOT biological sex
• the other half, because each gender complements the other and they cannot do without each other for a peaceful and harmonious life
• a way of categorizing, depending on role and sexual relationship.

Topics discussed

In our workshop, we touched on many different topics within religion, culture and gender. It would be too much to present all of them in this report; therefore I will try to give a short overview of the most interesting discussions.

We had a lively discussion on the question of whether religion promotes gender equality. There were basically two different standpoints. One group stated that their religion (Islam) as it is written in the Quran promotes gender equality and that the genders are equal before God. Females and males each have their own special areas and duties in Islam, but they are still equal. The other group upheld that religion, as it is lived and practised today, treats women and men differently. Here the difference between religion and culture became clear as culture has an influence on how religion is practised.

Another controversial topic was if homosexual people could be true believers. Again we had two opposing standpoints and the differences in opinions ranged from homosexuality being a human right, and homosexuality having nothing to do with religion, to homosexuals only being able to be true believers if they are willing to change their sexual orientation. However, the people who represented the latter standpoint stated that the word 'true believer' was not appropriate here, because only God knows who the really true believers are. Hence, we are not here to tell who the true believers are, but rather to ask ourselves whether we are true believers or not. Our duty is not to judge others but ourselves.

We then had discussions in small groups about the challenges we are facing in youth work related to religion, culture and gender.

Key issues which came up were:
- While teaching religion is primarily the task of families and religious bodies, public schools should teach <u>about</u> all religions and cooperate with religious communities in the area.
- When taking part in international youth exchanges, intercultural learning is one of the main issues. Youth organizations should be aware that religion is part of culture, and include it in intercultural learning.
- NGOs should increase the sensibility of the media about offences against cultural / religious values.
- A generation gap exists, resulting in people from different generations having difficulties in communicating and understanding each other.

- There is a problem with young people's indifference which leads to difficulties in understanding each other, in giving, sharing, engaging and changing their own situation.
- Women in authoritative positions are not always respected; (this is a problem faced by social workers in Germany when dealing with youth from Arab backgrounds).
- In most Western countries stereotyping of immigrant groups exists which impedes interreligious and intercultural dialogue between young people.
- 'Honour crimes' occurring in Western countries provide a misconception of (Turkish) culture in Western countries.
- A lack of respect to equality and differences and its administrative applications exists in many countries.
- Religion affects culture (women as 'second gender' when man becomes the standard).
- Problems exist with religion-based discrimination.
- There is a lack of access to sexual education.
- Culture and religion can limit, for example, young women's access to education and work.
- Ethnocentrism.

After defining the challenges in small groups, we continued the discussion in the larger group. Some of the main issues raised here were the role of the media in spreading bad images about other religions, especially Islam. Somebody commented that 9/11 could not have happened if it wasn't for the media, as the aim of the terrorists was to reach out and spread their message through the media. We also discussed what could be done about the media. One suggestion was to educate young people in critical thinking and about how the media works. Another idea was to educate media representatives. Furthermore, we discussed that it would be important to make the media more transparent, to exercise more control over the media as Civil Society, to reinforce power in society and to direct media campaigns. The most important in this would be to plant seeds and not to expect the changes to happen immediately.

In addition, we talked about the need to address people who are leaders in religious and societal organizations in order to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue. These people could be religious leaders, scholars, politicians, key players in Civil Society, families and educational institutions.

Lastly, we discussed the role of women and men in religion and culture. For instance, in Islam, many transmissions of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad were brought to Islam by women. The first revelation of the Quran was, „Read!"; it was universal, and it was addressed to every human being, without any distinction.

Conclusion of the group on the themes and questions raised

The group agreed on several topics which will be important to focus on in order to improve the situation for young people today, and to enhance intercultural and interreligious dialogue with a gender perspective among young people. These topics were:

Education
- Education is biased because the state is in charge of it. However, we felt there is no one way to change this right now. Therefore we have to accept it as it is for now but always bear in mind that education is biased.
- Not all children, and especially girls, have access to education. This is something which has to be improved. Responsibility for changing this situation lies with the states.
- Teachers, parents and other actors involved in education have prejudices about other cultures and religions, and they pass them on to their children. The same is also true for schoolbooks. This must be improved by revising schoolbooks and educating actors involved in education.
- **Academia is youth-discriminatory. Youth needs to get better access to academia.**

Involvement and motivation
- There is a lack of involvement of young people in NGOs and youth organizations. Therefore, more youth organizations have to be founded (especially in Turkey) and young people have to become involved in these.
- However, many young people are not motivated to get involved with youth work. How can this be changed?
- There is a domination of middle class youth in youth organizations. We, as youth organizations, have to be better in reaching and motivating unorganized and disadvantaged young people.
- There is a lack of youth political participation.
- In order to involve young people and gain their trust, there is a need for a 'safe space', such as this Symposium.

We realized during the workshop that we had talked a lot about religion and culture but we had hardly touched on the topic of gender. However, the group concluded that gender should not be viewed as a separate issue in itself but it should be present and considered in all discussions. Therefore, it is better to integrate it into all discussions than to treat it separately.

A set of guidelines and policy orientations for further work on the issue:

Proposals for the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration':
1. Governments and NGOs need to address the roots of religious, cultural and gender-based discrimination by promoting equal access to education, employment, public and political participation of youth.
2. NGOs and religious communities should cooperate with schools and the media in order to motivate and organize young people to engage in intercultural / interreligious dialogue.

Religious-based discriminations

Facilitator: Ms Nadine Lyamouri-Bajja and Mr Ufuk Atalay
Resource person: Dr Anas Al-Shaikh

We started with a presentation by Dr. Anas Al-Shaikh Ali who pointed out that the world needs to start working on the issue of islamophobia, and that talking isn't enough anymore. Defining the key words, he said, is essential. The expression 'Islamophobia' was first coined in the late '80s, although the phenomenon existed already before.

Nowadays the term is also used by politicians and by the former general secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan. However, 'islamophobia' cannot under any circumstances be used in connection with disagreement or criticism about a country's political activity. The word has since then also been used in many reports on discrimination produced by Muslim NGOs and non-Muslim NGOs.

Part of the source of islamophobia is the categorization of Muslims. Very often, our sub-conscience proceeds to a generalisation (as with Jews or Christians). Wherever there is an increase of antisemitism, there is an increase in islamophobia and vice-versa.

The group readdressed the issue of the Danish cartoons: At what point do we cross the barrier of the sense of humour? A sense of humour should not be mixed with insulting one's belief or faith since it is a sensitive and individual issue as well as showing its differences from one region to another.

We agreed mainly that creating educational tools in which the other is integrated in order to overcome prejudices might help. We talked about interreligious youth exchanges. Furthermore, decision makers as well as security forces should be trained in intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as has already been implemented in some countries.

Since the media is a huge influencing source of islamophobia, it ought to be used as a tool to decrease religious-based discrimination. The media, cartoons, and messages in general should never insult a belief, faith or human dignity. It is the task of the national media agencies to avoid comments which degrade human dignity or belief.

Self-criticism on the one hand can trigger a solution to discrimination and decrease prejudices. We should re-examine ourselves. On the other hand, we should concentrate on brotherhood, dialogue, tolerance, unity and respect, rather than teaching our religion to others.

Further discussion on the issue of wearing headscarves was tackled. Some group members insisted on the idea of freedom of religions and faith. In relation to this, they felt it should not be the states' role to place restrictions.

Religious-based discrimination is without any kind of frontiers. The phenomenon can be found in all societies, and in all countries. Non-religious citizens are treated differently; minority religions become pressurized. Looking at the religious-based discrimination issue, trust, respect and mutual understanding could play a major role in improving the situation. In addition to this, the idea of intercultural education from the earliest age possible is considered as a key to a better understanding, and to a better world. We need trust, rather than tolerance.

The 'Alliance of Civilisations' Initiative

Facilitator: Mr. Elshad Iskandarov
Resource person: Ms Nadia Roumani

Nadia Roumani began by giving a general explanation about the meaning of the 'Alliance of Civilizations' Initiative, and clarified the steps taken within the Initiative as events of recent years have heightened the sense of a widening gap and lack of mutual understanding between Islamic and Western societies.

The 'Alliance of Civilizations' is intended as a movement to advance mutual respect for religious beliefs and traditions and as a reaffirmation of humankind's increasing interdependence in all areas – from the environment to health, from economic and social development to peace and security. The Initiative is intended to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, and misperceptions which potentially threaten world peace.

In the second part of the session, the secretary general of the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC), Mr. Elshad Iskandarov, informed the group that the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC) was planning to launch of **'Youth for Alliance of Civilizations' Initiative** and emphasized that it intended to bring about the establishment of a youth dimension and provide a powerful forum for discussion of the issues concerning dialogue among civilizations by youth representatives. Mr Iskandarov described the programme in detail, outlining its goals and expected outcomes.

He also emphasized the importance of the contribution from high profile people in academia, as well as artists and social activists in introducing the historical, political and social aspects of interaction between different cultures, as well as in diversity and richness of cultures in the West and East.

The participants put forward proposals for making the initiative sustainable, and emphasized how the initiative could specifically contribute to the development of intercultural and interreligious dialogue on a long-term basis.

During the session various recommendations were suggested for forming the 'Alliance of Civilizations'. The main recommendations included:

Education – Education in its various forms – including music, sport, art, drama and film – can help build bridges between communities and people. The promotion of cross-cultural and human rights education helps ensure that students everywhere develop an understanding of other cultures and religions;

The Internet can be used for destructive proposes, although it also has a wide range of positive influences: its openness makes it an ideal network for social interaction and a unique forum for exchanging ideas and information. In this regard, the Internet is an effective mechanism in bridging cultural and religious divides, capable of promoting dialogue and understanding.

Youth – Student exchange programmes, sport activities and political involvement can provide new opportunities for promoting cultural understanding and respect for diversity.

Media – Joint ventures for producing films and television programmes can be developed for showing diversity as a normal feature of society.

In the second part of the session the participants took part in joint discussions, engaged in dialogue on key issues, such as:
- Examining the history of alliance between different civilizations
- Modern challenges requiring joint action at the global level
- Mutual contribution of culture and civilizations
- Roots of political and cultural extremism.

They discussed their vision on the prospects of forming the 'Alliance of Civilizations', and lecturers answered questions related to the issue. At the end, the working group prepared an outline of recommendations for including in the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration'.
- They called for greater publicity and dissemination of information about the objectives of the 'Alliance of Civilizations' Initiative through the media, the Internet, entertainment, and sports activities.
- A focus on academic and educational fields, in particular the development of research on the 'Alliance of Civilizations'.
- The group stressed the necessity of a follow-up process for the 'Youth for the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative', and recommended that it be integrated with the follow-up of this Symposium and be called the 'Istanbul Youth Process for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue'.

The consequences of Terrorism on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue

Facilitator: Mr Burham Hamdom and Ms Gaja Bartuseviciute
Resource person: Mr Hagai Segal

In full recognition of the fact that terrorist attacks pose a real threat to societies, we think that it is self-evident that the shameless way in which the discourse on terrorism has been exploited by the media and large parts of the political and economical establishment has had a devastating effect on efforts to promote interreligious understanding among youth. How can we expect youth to distinguish between terrorism and Islam if all they are being exposed to are the one-sided images diffused by sensationalist and simplifying media? How can we expect youth not to be affected by fear if they are constantly exposed to anti-terrorism measures that are often presented or implemented in a needlessly high-profile way? How can we expect youth not to be infected by a public opinion that is constructed upon stereotypes and simplistic premises?

As the opinions, values and conceptual frameworks that youth develop can have a lasting impact upon the world view they will hold in their adult life, it is of crucial importance that they be sheltered from the simplifications and inflated threats that are currently circulating in mainstream discourse on terrorism. However, undoing the damage already done and creating the preconditions for engaging youth in constructive interreligious and intercultural dialogue is not an easy task. We should not be naïve about the fact this will raise difficult questions about freedom of education, the (im-) possibilities of intervening in the private sphere, and the political will to implement programmes that will eventually erode the foundations of power of those riding the waves of the terrorist threat. Furthermore, it is a long-term project that requires sustained and continuous efforts: halfway measures or temporary projects will not do.

Nevertheless, we are confident that change is possible and we have identified several avenues for action. Before presenting these, we would like to point out that all action aimed at reducing the stifling effects of the dominant discourse on terrorism on interreligious dialogue among youth needs to fulfil two conditions:
1. It should avoid perpetuating the very stereotypes and simplistic dichotomies it aims to combat. All too often, well-intentioned attempts to deny the existence of the supposed clash of civilizations end up

confirming the presumptions on which this flawed world view is founded, particularly that of the existence of monolithic blocs of civilizations. As it is exactly that problematic concept that lies at the heart of the problems we face in facilitating intercultural dialogue in the current context, deconstructing this trope is a precondition for any progress in this field. The same precaution is required with respect to attempts to deflate the terrorist threat. Even denials that such a threat exists contribute to the omnipresence of the discourse on terrorism in the public sphere, and risk giving credentials to its presumptions by reiterating its buzzwords. We realize that it is very difficult to counterbalance dominant ideas on terrorism without making use of the concepts on which they are based, especially in youth work, but we insist on the necessity of developing methods which take this into consideration.

2. In order for them to be effective, programmes aimed at youth should be adapted to different age-categories and levels of education. Although this might seem self-evident, reality shows that this is often not the case. An over focus on formal learning programmes with a theoretical focus will fail to reach out to less educated youth, just as it will prove very difficult to make young children aware of certain complex social and political processes. Unfortunately, many youth policies and programmes fail to differentiate and lump all youngsters together in the amorphous category of 'youth'. Furthermore, programmes aimed at stimulating youth participation frequently do not manage to reach the youth from certain minority communities, as they are focused on youth organizations, and some minorities have lower degrees of formal organization.

Taking the above-mentioned caveats into consideration, we propose the following measures to undo the paralysing effects of the discourse on terrorism on interreligious and intercultural dialogue among youth:

1) Guaranteeing the access of youth to more diverse sources of information, and familiarizing them with the workings of the media.

Breaking stereotypes and developing a more sensitive image of cultures and religions is impossible if youth lacks access to more varied sources of information than the mainstream media alone. Understanding what is going on in the world today is extremely difficult for adults and youth alike, but even more so without open and regular discussions about the news. Therefore we propose making

discussion hours and classes on current affairs an integral part of the school curriculum and youth programmes. Teachers and youth workers should be trained in discussing the news with youth in such a way as to expose them to a variety of perspectives, stimulate critical self-reflection, and try to deal constructively with differences of opinion, however challenging these tasks might prove.

Additionally, we suggest that it should be compulsory that youth in the lower classes of secondary school be familiarized with the workings of the media in creative and innovative ways. Youth should be made aware of the fact that the media can be highly biased or can be used as a vehicle to further particular interests. Furthermore, they should learn to be able to detect the drive towards sensationalism that is inherent in commercial media, and the dangers of uncontrolled information streams on the Internet. It is also essential to teach them to distinguish between reliable and less reliable sources of information, in order for them to learn how to make use of the media as a useful resource. Additionally, youth should be thoroughly familiarized with the ways in which they can use the media to voice their own opinions. This should be part of an overall effort to adapt school curricula and youth work to the exigencies and challenges of living in the present-day information society.

2) Developing learning programmes for youth that address the phenomena of radicalism, terrorism and the economy of fear.

Youth should be informed about radicalism and terrorism as they are constantly exposed to their direct and indirect consequences. It is therefore of the utmost importance that they get a basic understanding of what terrorism is and does, without this leading to intensifying their feelings of fear. Such programmes should explicitly aim to disconnect terrorism from Islam, as this is one of the main pillars of the dominant terrorism paradigm. It should be made clear that radicalism and terrorism are not phenomena that belong exclusively to the realm of fundamentalist Islamists, but that they can arise from other religious corners and parts of the political spectrum as well. Given the absence of an agreed-upon definition of terrorism and the risk of politicisation, this task is daunting. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that it is possible to develop programmes for youth that address some of the basic characteristics of radicalism and terrorism, and demonstrate the various ways in which these phenomena can be exploited for economic and political self-interests.

In a similar way, youth should be made aware of the workings of the economy of fear. It should be explained to them that fear is contagious, irrational and can be mobilized and consciously manipulated in order to reach certain objectives. Raising awareness about the causes and consequences of fear is a precondition for mitigating the hold of collective fear. As intercultural and interreligious dialogue can only be successful in a fear-free and depolarised environment, it is essential to give youth the space to talk about their own fears and to let them reflect upon the role that fear plays in their daily lives.

However, raising awareness about the mechanisms of manipulation alone is not sufficient to shelter youth from the poisonous effects of the discourse on terrorism. Much more can and should be done to hold politicians and the media accountable for the messages they diffuse. However important individual actions of citizens are in this respect, the scale and nature of this problem requires a more organized response. In full respect of the freedom of expression, we think that naming and shaming campaigns are effective ways of exerting pressure on the media and politicians who behave in an irresponsible way. We call upon the Council of Europe to fund such campaigns so as to restore the principle of accountability in the public sphere.

3) Stimulating and facilitating the active participation of youth organizations from all religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in public debates and policy making and raising their visibility in the public sphere.

We have concluded that in Western Europe, there is a huge lack of participation of Muslim organizations in interreligious and intercultural dialogue. This makes it difficult for youth to develop a sensitive image of Muslims, to differentiate between Muslims and immigrants and to familiarize themselves with the variety of opinions, cultures and values that are present within Muslim communities. However, many youth from religious or ethnic minority communities lack the experience or tools to organize themselves in a way that gives them access to funding, training opportunities or participation in the consultative processes. Therefore, we draw attention to the urgent need for capacity building programmes for youth organisations of minority communities.

As we are convinced that the most effective way of diffusing skills and knowledge is horizontally, we insist that such programmes focus on the exchange of experiences and best practices between youth organisations, rather than on the

diffusion of information in a vertical way. Furthermore, we would like to remind well-established and well-organized youth organizations of the moral and social obligation they bear in helping to develop other youth organizations, for example, by choosing such organizations as partners whenever they organize a youth exchange or seminar. We also urge both youth organisations and institutions working with or for youth to adapt their outreach strategies and communications channels so as to ensure the inclusion of a greater diversity of youth organizations, and representatives of youth groups with lower degrees of formal organization in their activities.

Facilitating the self-organization of youth from minority communities is only useful if such organizations are given the opportunity to contribute to public discussions and policy making. Therefore, we strongly emphasize the need for incorporating open and participatory methods in decision making at the European, national and local level. However, participatory methods of decision making will only result in programmes and policies that are better adapted to reality if the consultative processes accompanying such methods include the voices and opinions of youth from a wide variety of backgrounds. We have concluded that despite good intentions, many youth events, including those organized by the Council of Europe, are not sufficiently inclusive and representative. This necessitates introspection and a reconsideration of outreach strategies.

Developing ways to move interreligious dialogue out of the cul de sac in which it has been manoeuvred by the discourse on terrorism is vital in order to guarantee the survival of pluralistic societies. Now is the time to weave a cloth that is strong enough not to unravel under the pressure that any future terrorist attacks might generate. We call upon all those present to take up their responsibility and to ensure that their own thread will form an integral and crucial part of the communal cloth we are trying to weave.

The role of and working with the media

Facilitator: Ms Klavdija Cernilogar
Resource person: Mr Fozia Bora

We introduced the topic of the role and work of the media. We think that, in the context of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, we face, too often, the problem of misrepresentation of different groups or minorities.

We also discussed the notion of freedom of speech. This concept has been repeatedly challenged with the example of the caricatures of the prophet Muhammad, for instance. We feel the necessity for our society and our media to be more aware of their power and responsibilities. Education on the media becomes essential if catastrophic consequences and manipulation are to be avoided.

Power of the Media
More and more journalists are victims of kidnappings and killings in conflict areas. Increasingly, the media reflect government and financial interests. The media is losing credibility and trust, and seen as entertainment more than information and educational tools. Too often, the media creates a reality instead of reflecting and analysing it.

How far can we interfere, as citizens, to change this situation? For example, we can lead actions such as boycotting certain media, taking part in demonstrations, and putting pressure on editors and journalists. Another alternative should be the creation of new media, for instance, cross-border media, in order to extend intercultural and interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding. A further solution would be the creation of regulations, but then the problem of freedom of speech in the media is put to question.

Freedom of Speech
Does freedom of speech mean the freedom to offend? In many countries, freedom of speech is censored as being propaganda. On the other hand, we have observed no restrictions regarding ethics and respect of others' values, and as a result we question the necessity of regulations. Should we create a moral and universal code of values? Or should we encourage no limitation in the name of freedom? This leads to the definition of 'freedom'. What is it?

'My freedom stops where your freedom starts.' Rather than facing useless offences, we should expect the media to build some constructive criticism.

We are also aware that, in reality, freedom of speech is already limited by the misrepresentation of many voiceless groups (youth, minorities, the disabled, the poor, etc). We felt that the most efficient answer lies in initiatives from these groups to create their own media or to become part of the main media, which remains a huge challenge. In fact, most of the media are led by elitist and homogenous circles which are hardly accessible. So we ask support from governments and the larger media to change that situation in the name of democratic values.

If we manage to implement these solutions, the world would be able to hear their voices and views. In order to realise this, we need tools which require education of the media.

Education of the Media
By mentioning Education of the Media, we mean education of society about our media.

How can we educate ourselves about the media?

We expect our governments and NGOs to focus more on this in formal and non-formal educational spheres. To avoid any kind of manipulation and disastrous consequences, we feel that it is more than necessary.

Concerning our media, we suggest more cooperation and networks between academic and professional specialists in human science, such as sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, ethnologists, and journalists. We also encourage initiatives which offer opportunities for journalists and actors in the media to extend their knowledge on intercultural and interreligious learning. One good example to illustrate this is the Media Diversity Institute in the UK, which provides training courses and workshops for journalists.

To conclude, as citizens of the world, we have tried to find pragmatic answers to improve the quality of our media. In a system where censorship has different faces (either state or financial), we call for the independence of the media, fairness and the respect for human values.

We came up with two main recommendations. These are:

1. We ask for support to create international media networks to promote mutual cooperation and exchange of knowledge, experiences and views. We call upon national governments and international institutions to support the creation of online youth media news sources. Under the banner of respect for human rights and democracy, these networks would provide the possibility for an interactive and non-partisan exchange of news and views. We encourage our governments to provide the necessary infrastructure to enable access to these networks for everyone.

2. The Council of Europe, the European Union and the United Nations should encourage their member States to include media education, especially the development of critical approaches, in formal school curricula and, in the context of lifelong learning, to encourage the use of non-formal education and peer-to-peer education on the media.

The role of local authorities in working on interreligious and intercultural dialogue

Facilitator: Mr. Aymeric Dupont
Resource person: Mr Muammer Erol

At the beginning of the session, the participants said where they were from, which organisation they represented and why they were taking part in the Symposium. Then the session continued with two main questions:

Which issues do I want to discuss? What would I be reluctant to discuss?

Which issues do I want to talk about?
- Local democracy, grassroots democracy
- How much importance young people attach to intercultural and interreligious dialogue
- The role of local authorities in dealing with assaults on religions and cultures
- The role of local authorities in young people's education
- How local authorities can remain objective, irrespective of their beliefs, how they can ensure free communication facilities and on which common points they can bring together people with different beliefs and different cultures
- How people of different ethnic origins can live together. How interreligious and intercultural dialogue can be established How one can deal with the extremes that generate it
- Ideas and proposals for action to be forwarded to local authorities for the purposes of interreligious and intercultural dialogue
- Co-operation between governments, prefectures / provincial governors' offices and municipalities, and their work on the subject
- Taking young people to religious and cultural centres
- Setting up Muslim, Christian and Jewish cultural centres
- The steps that must be taken to develop intercultural dialogue
- Protecting and publicising religions and beliefs at local level
- Experiences in other countries
- The problems that have been encountered in dialogue projects carried out so far
- Organising interreligious and intercultural meetings in Europe and Turkey

- Clearly defining interreligious and intercultural dialogue in history and the equilibria reached in European countries as a result of migration in recent years; proposals on this basis.
- Whether this dialogue can really be established

Conclusion: Experiences (local democracy and diversity, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, experience and solutions); democracy; policies.

What am I reluctant to do?
- I am afraid of discussing general and abstract issues.
- I am afraid that if I talk on a different conceptual basis no-one will understand.
- I am not keen on hearing the same things repeated.
- I am afraid to share practical proposals and experience.
- I am not keen on long speeches.
- There is nothing I am reluctant to talk about.
- I am reluctant to talk about my own thoughts and feelings. I am afraid that people will exclude me because of my views.
- There are people from different backgrounds; I am afraid of not getting on with them.

Pooling experience regarding the role of local authorities in intercultural and interreligious dialogue

In Belgium they organise small-scale activities relating to dialogue; they organise events with young people (especially people with problems)

Proposal:
Cultural centres can be institutions for developing dialogue.
International projects must be carried out.
There must be people of different origins in cultural centres.
Prejudice against people of different origins must be dispelled; if we work together, we can understand them.

- Working to inform young people, and then the general public about the 'All Different – All Equal' campaign (e.g. the media, announcements in crowded streets in Istanbul, various youth camps, publicising the campaign with materials on the subject).

Local examples:
In Samsun there is a Roman Catholic church, and people wanted a second church to be opened, but this was not done; the church was later opened as a result of strong reactions from the public.

Proposal:
Municipalities must produce projects relevant to the community.
It was suggested that we can learn about religions and cultures in cultural centres and at symposia such as this one.

Afghan participant:
In Turkey they hold conferences to provide support in the face of negative events in Afghanistan. It was suggested that it would be a very good idea if such conferences were held in Afghanistan too, because the people need it. In conclusion, there should be more conferences.

Moldova:
In Moldova, action has been taken and legislation enacted against discrimination and racism.

Projects against social exclusion are being carried out.

The participants were asked for their views on the morning's presentations.
It was decided that the participants would pool their views in order to decide on two proposals to be submitted for the 'Istanbul Declaration'.

  1) Local democracy will be addressed;
  2) Policy will be addressed in a more practical manner.

- Research
- Budget
- Education (society and public officials)
- Panel discussions
- Support for youth cultural councils
- Activism
- Inclusion of popular personalities
- Positive discrimination
- Participatory democracy

Conclusion:

As a prerequisite for participatory democracy, local authorities must take measures – and implement them – to ensure that all groups (irrespective of ethnic origin, belief, age, socio-economic status, sexual preference, physical or mental disability, etc) are included in local government. Local authorities must receive the necessary budget and support to implement these measures.

Build awareness among local authorities so that they develop policies in support of multicultural initiatives launched by civil society organisations.

Encourage local authorities to set up bodies that will carry out local programmes and events to bring together representatives of different communities.

2. Session

1. How do communities with different beliefs view each other?
Cultural communities can be formed.
Municipalities should take the necessary steps to publicise civil society organisations. A city guide can be prepared.
Cultural differences relating to minorities must be brought into the open.
A platform can be set up under the aegis of the local authority.

CLOSING SPEECHES

Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni
Coordinator for Intercultural Dialogue and Director General IV – Council of Europe

At the end of this very interesting Symposium, I have to say that I am very grateful to all of you for the opportunity to follow your debate, for the many suggestions and proposals for future initiatives, and for your encouragement and commitment.

Interreligious and intercultural dialogue
Over the last few days, we have discussed some of the key issues of European and global policy.

The need for intercultural dialogue, the need to learn to live together peacefully, the need for managing cultural diversity in a democratic way – they all denote the same challenge. Our common aim is to build a Europe that is guided by a political philosophy of inclusion, by shared fundamental values and the respect for our common heritage and cultural diversity; it is also our will to build cohesive societies, to ensure a fair access to social rights, to fight exclusion and to protect vulnerable social groups.

In this Europe, no form of intolerance and discrimination is acceptable. We must develop rules and effective instruments to prevent and eradicate them. We, as Europeans – governments, civil society and the business community – must learn to accept and use diversity as a positive resource.

Intercultural dialogue is one of the key concepts we need to apply in order to meet this challenge. Over the last few years, the Council of Europe has developed many initiatives to strengthen intercultural dialogue as a transversal policy, which addresses the entire range of policy areas from the legal constitution of our societies to immigration policy, cultural policy, education, media ethics and the provision of social services.

Our policy also includes the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. Religious communities do not only influence the identities and the world vision of

many individuals in Europe today; they also have an advocacy role for the protection of the dignity of every human being, and for a just society. International institutions are well advised to take this into account. The Council of Europe is getting ready to cooperate more closely than in the past with religious communities who are willing to join our quest for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Many different elements must come together to make intercultural dialogue happen. Allow me to make some brief comments on three of the central notions which have marked this Symposium.

'Europe'

The first notion is that of 'Europe'. Sometimes, also during this Symposium, 'Europe' remains a vague concept. Are we talking about Europe as the 'Europe of the 27'? If yes, then Turkey is outside (or not yet inside…). If, however, we talk about the Europe of the Council of Europe, with 46 member states, then Turkey – as with Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia and other countries represented here – is well and truly inside.

This leads to a deeper question. Are we talking about Europe as a historical, and somewhat mythical, entity of peoples, held together by Christian values? A Europe that is eternally defending these values against external intruders? Or should we not refer to Europe as a modern, multi-polar and multicultural group of societies, bound together by clear rules and the common commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law?

'Human rights'

My second remark concerns human rights. They are the driving force of European unity. They are at the heart of the European institutions. And yet they are in no way 'typical' of Europe; they are not European values, but universal values.

In Europe today, human rights are not an abstract concept at all. There is a 50-year long tradition of active human rights protection as the cornerstone of the legal system in the member states of the Council of Europe. Where human rights are at stake, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg is the last instance. It is the Court which holds governments accountable for their action, or inaction.

The current system of human rights protection in Europe is not perfect. Indeed, we have to discuss the long-term development of human rights. Religious communities may be good partners to provide advice.

But nothing will change our position that intercultural dialogue must be based on human rights. Cultural and religious traditions cannot be pitted against human rights.

Traditions and communities that aim to restrict the human rights of any member of society are at odds with European ideals and cannot count on the support of European institutions.

'Education'

My third remark concerns 'education'. I found it very refreshing to hear from you, again, how important education is in the context of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

This is the position of the Council of Europe; it is also the position of other international institutions; it comes out very strongly as well from the Report of the High Level Group of the 'Alliance of Civilizations' initiative.

I would like to use this occasion to highlight some of the initiatives which we have taken already in the past:

- human rights education; in this context I would like to salute the publication of the Turkish version of 'Compass', the manual on human rights education with young people
- the education for democratic citizenship
- teaching for diversity
- history teaching, where we are currently starting a particularly interesting programme on the 'Image of the Other in History Teaching', with the image of Islam in European textbooks as one of the first topics. On this topic, incidentally, we are cooperating with the 'Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture' (IRCICA) of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, based here in Istanbul.

In our view, it is important to bring together formal education, informal education – such as in youth organisations – and non-formal education through the media. I am very grateful for your support in this.

The beginning of the 'Istanbul Youth Process'

Our Symposium on interreligious and intercultural dialogue in youth work is a space where several initiatives were allowed to come together, to create synergy effects and new insights:

- the European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Participation and Human Rights;
- the other activities of the Council of Europe for the promotion of intercultural dialogue, including the preparatory consultations for the 'White Paper';
- the initiatives of the European Union, which currently runs its 'European Year of Equal Opportunities' and is preparing the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue';
- the preparations of the 'Alliance of Civilizations' Initiative of the United Nations, which is entering its operational phase very soon, and which has a very strong youth and educational dimension.

In my view, it would be most appropriate to maintain the dynamism of this Symposium and to create what could indeed be called the 'Istanbul Youth Process'. In my vision, the 'Istanbul Youth Process'…

- should give a strong role to all present partners assembled here, but be open to new ones;
- should focus on the promotion of intercultural dialogue, but be open to other aspects of the underlying objectives of human rights protection, justice, inclusion and peace;
- should have a strong European dimension, but reflect the diversity of the world.

Our efforts are meaningless if you, the young people of Europe, are not taking a stake in them. Our educational resources remain dead letters if you do not give them life. Our campaigns will be useless if you do not follow-up them up, particularly through your voluntary work and your commitment. Our 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue' will be incomplete without your contributions.

We will continue our cooperation with the European Union, to ensure that the synergies between the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' and the follow-up of the European Youth Campaign are fully used. The 'Partnership on Youth' remains a useful instrument for common action. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the European Commission for its involvement and support of the campaign.

The Council of Europe has strongly welcomed the emergence and setting up of the 'Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Development and Cooperation'. The role of Muslim organisations, especially of young people, is of prime importance for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and human rights. The cooperation between the ICYF and the Council of Europe in the context of this Symposium has been vital for its success. I hope that this cooperation can be continued and extended.

None of this would have been possible without the support of the 'General Directorate of Youth and Sport' of Turkey. In the Council of Europe, we have been impressed by their capacity to organise the Symposium in record time and to pay attention to every detail and every person in this Symposium. I hope that this Symposium will also have contributed to the youth campaign in Turkey, and to the long-term determination of young people to remain committed to diversity, participation and human rights.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the Preparatory Group of the Symposium for their hard work and the results achieved. Like the campaign, the youth policy philosophy of the Council of Europe is based on participation: we don't do things for young people; we also do them with young people. The representatives of the European Youth Forum, of the European Union of Jewish Students and of the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe, have made sure that this was also a Symposium by young people, with young people.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu
Ministry of Youth and Sport

I wish to congratulate the organisers on the excellent and meaningful organisation of the Symposium within the framework of the 'All Different – All Equal' campaign. We should include this concept of 'All Different – All Equal' in our lives.

Despite the fact that since 1993 we have been speaking about the clash of civilisations, I believe that the existence of different civilisations is only richness. If you want to reduce them to one you have a dictatorship. The only good approach to dealing with diversity is the one that allows peaceful relations among civilisations.

How can we achieve the goal to be all different and all equal, as youth?
Three main conditions are necessary.

The first condition: A new interpretation of history (inclusive history) is essential, a common historical understanding. All the problems are in education and all the solutions are in education! Practising teaches more than a thousand books. To know the history of the others is a path to the better understanding of the history of our own country, community, and society too.

The second condition: Common understanding of the actual situations. We should have proper information to understand each other better. More face-to-face communication of young people and more and more platforms in which young people are in contact with each other are necessary.

The third condition: A common approach to the future in terms of the economy, politics and social affairs. Events such as this Symposium can help the dialogue.

I thank all of you for your participation and your hard work.

Ms Karin Lopatta-Loibl
European Commission

This conference was marked by the commitment and passion of those involved. I thank you, the young people, for your hard work that led to the final declarations. In this very heterogeneous group of conference participants from different countries, backgrounds and faiths, I witnessed a remarkable capability and will to listen to others, to respect each other and to cooperate. I read your recommendations with great interest and will not hesitate to spread them as appropriate.

Dialogue between different cultures is at the heart of the policies and programmes of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, where I work. Diversity and social inclusion are priorities of the team presidencies of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia in the youth field. These issues will be the subject of a Resolution of the Council of Youth Ministers of the European Union in May and of a youth event of the German EU-Presidency in April. The European Youth Week, which takes place at the beginning of June, will also tackle diversity and equal opportunities. Both issues are also permanent priorities of the Youth in Action Programme that supports projects of young people.

Next year intercultural dialogue will be the topic of the structured dialogue with young people, which is a bottom-up and top-down dialogue process, to take the points of view of young people into account in policy-making in domains of interest and importance to them.

I would like to thank the Council of Europe and the Turkish Ministry for Youth and Sports for the excellent cooperation as well as the young participants for their commitment and hard work. I invite you, the young people, to be ambassadors of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in your own countries.

I would like to close with a quotation from Mahatma Ghandi: "Be the change that you want to see in the world".

Mr. Ali Sarikaya
OIC Youth Forum for Cooperation and Dialogue

Distinguished guests and friends,

It is my honour to greet you again at the end of our four-day programme.
In a world divided by misunderstandings and misperceptions, we have gathered together in Istanbul to find a common path. Our programme addressed some of the most important and urgent issues of our day. I believe we have made an important contribution to our ongoing struggle to build a better world for us all. The reason for my optimism is that we brought together the young brains of European and Muslim countries to think about our common concerns and find solutions that are both inspiring and practical.

While everybody agrees on the importance of youth, we are far from having strong and effective mechanisms to address the problems of youth in our countries and across the world. A major reason for this is the absence of young people themselves. Young people can make tremendous contributions to our societies only if they are challenged and fully engaged in programmes that give them a chance to express their concerns. Intellectual ownership is a key value for any great idea, and we have to find ways to get the youth involved in such a way that they feel responsible not in a passive but in an active way.

The OIC Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation was founded with these concerns in mind. Our primary goal is to give youth a voice that they feel they own. Our programmes are designed in such a way as to engage them as responsible actors and full agents. This Istanbul meeting is, I believe, a good example of how we can engage the youth to think about our common problems and come up with concrete ideas and proposals to resolve them.

The OIC Youth Forum is also a bridge between the youth of Muslim and Western countries. While we target the youth of Muslim societies and bring out their creative energies, we also believe in critical engagement and the exchange of different ideas and experiences. All great civilizations have come about and matured as a result of such creative encounters. In this regard, our cooperation with the Council of Europe and European Commission has been extremely fruitful and we hope to continue our partnership with them and with other international organizations.

The OIC Youth Forum, like its counterparts in other parts of the world, upholds the principles of fairness, equality and mutual respect. We believe in these principles not in a historical vacuum but on the basis of the shared experience of various human communities. That is why our cultural, linguistic and religious differences are not a cause for conflict or confrontation. On the contrary, differences have always taught us something, and urged us to improve ourselves.

Many examples of this universalistic and inclusive approach can be found in the rich history of Islamic culture and civilization. From the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Baghdad to Andalucia, from the experience of convivencia to the migration of Jews from Europe to Istanbul in 1492, Muslim societies have always embraced differences as part of God's plan to teach us how we can learn from one another.

In its long history, all major Muslim cities, from Istanbul to Samarkand, have had non-Muslims in them. They have had them not as immigrants or refuges but as citizens fully engaged and employed in the various sectors of society, from holding public offices to being translators, scholars and artists. The Muslim sense of respecting the other and providing legal protection for non-Muslims has resulted in the long history of Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and African communities and their heritage in Muslim countries.

All major centres of learning and trade in Islamic history have been cosmopolitan. The city of Istanbul is a good example of how the cosmopolitan and pluralistic character of Islamic civilization is reflected in a city's life, architecture, streets, people, mosques, churches, temples, bridges, gardens and neighbourhoods. While remaining a distinctively Muslim city, Istanbul has been a host to different cultural traditions and witnessed their creative synthesis.

This is not a historical accident, nor some kind of anarchist pluralism. It is a result of the rich experience of Muslim societies in turning differences into peaceful coexistence. As a bridge between Europe and the Muslim world, the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey have carried this experience into the modern period. With its EU drive, Turkey is seeking a policy of peaceful coexistence again.

Turkey is well suited to playing a leading role in addressing youth problems as well as the problems of intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Turkey has an extremely young and dynamic population. Its youth are carriers of the Islamic tradition as well as agents of a modern world. They have the potential to know both tradition and modernity and engage in them critically.

Today, world societies, but especially Muslim and European countries, need to find common ways to address their differences in a constructive way. The rising tide of islamophobia and discriminatory acts against Muslims in Europe and elsewhere is and should be a concern for all of us. A truly pluralistic Europe can emerge only if Europe is prepared to embrace Islam and Muslims as part of its present reality and future aspirations.

In the same way, all forms of xenophobia, antisemitism, racial and ethnic discrimination should be totally rejected. We have to join our efforts and energies to fight against such evils. We have to stand for fairness and equality for all without discriminating on cultural and religious grounds. We have to remind ourselves and the world over and over again that we are all children of Adam.

Now the task ahead of us is to carry this sense of responsibility to the next level and apply it to the various problems we're faced with. I hope our conference is only the beginning of a long and exciting journey in providing solutions to the problems we have discussed over the last three days. I very much hope that we will follow up this conference with other meetings where we will continue to work on concrete projects and proposals which you have put forward during thematic group sessions. All of the major ideas and proposals are reflected in the 'Istanbul Youth Declaration' and the final report of the conference.

In conclusion, let me express my joy and happiness at this extremely successful programme in Istanbul. The 'Istanbul Youth Declaration' will be a milestone statement in youth activities. The goals it has set for us will be guiding principles for our youth work in the years to come. Its common sense approach and goodwill will inspire many other attempts to engage youth to solve the problems of our planet.

Let me end by thanking you all for your active participation in this conference. I thank those who have believed in us and supported us for convening this event. I also thank all of my colleagues and friends in Europe and here in Istanbul who worked so hard to make this conference possible. I know our efforts have not been in vain.

Thank you.

Closing words of Mr. Adnan Gul
Ministry of Youth and Sport

I want to thank you all for your work, and congratulate you on the results and the final declarations. They will be meaningless if they only remain on the paper. I hope that this declaration will be the starting point for action. In our planet we have different civilisations: the future of it is in the hands of the youth. It is important that everyone has space to express themselves and at the same time is able to respect the other opinion.

Thank you for coming to our country and for working so hard during the Symposium.

APPENDICES

PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 27 March

        Arrival and registration of the participants

19:00   Dinner

20:30   Informal activities

Wednesday, 28 March

09:30   Opening session with:
- Mr Mehmet Ali Şahin, Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister of Turkey
- Mr Ralf-René Weingärtner, Director of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe
- Mr Pierre Mairesse, European Commission
- Mr Ali Sarikaya, President of the OIC Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation
- Ms Bettina Schwarzmayr, President of the European Youth Forum
- Mr Azad Rahimov, Minister for Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan
- Ms Astrid Utterström, Chairperson of the Joint Council on Youth, Council of Europe

11:00 Break

11:30   Introduction to the programme and expected results of the symposium, Mr Rui Gomes, on behalf of the Preparatory Group of the symposium

11:45   *Religious and Cultural Diversity in Turkey*, keynote speech by Prof. *Mr.* Ibrahim Kalin SETA – Foundation for Political, Economical and Community Research

13:00 Lunch

14:30   *Is Europe ready for multiculturality?,* keynote speech by Prof. Magdalena Środa, Institute of Philosophy at the Warsaw University

16:00   Break

16:30   Working groups on common issues, challenges and expectations

19:00 Dinner

21:00   Cultural programme

Thursday, 29 March

09:15 Feed-back from the groups of the previous day

10:00 *Human rights and religion: frameworks for dialogue*, key note speech by Dr Nazila Ghanea, lecturer in International Human Rights Law at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom

11:00 Break

11:30 *The "all different - all equal" youth campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation*, introduction by Mr Michael Raphael, campaign manager

11:45 *The Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*, introduction by Mr Ulrich Bunjes, Directorate General IV, Council of Europe

12:30 Introduction to the thematic working groups

12:45 Lunch

14:30 Thematic working groups with a focus on:

1. *Armed conflicts and intercultural youth work for conflict transformation,* with Mr Arnold Stepanian and Mr Michael Roekaerts

2. *Faith based youth work,* with Ms Magnea Sverrisdottir, Ms Olga Israel and Mr Hakan Tosuner

3. *Intercultural learning and education for interreligious and intercultural dialogue,* with Ms Saskia Law and Mr Cihad Taskin

4. *Migration,* with Ms Tülin Şener and Mr W.B. Emminghaus

5. *Racism and discrimination,* with Ms Manuela Tavares and Mr Muhammad Khan

6. *Religion, Human Rights and Human Rights Education,* with Mr Dariusz Grzemny and Ms Eva Boev

7. *Religion, culture and gender,* with Ms Annette Schneider and Mr Sami Danguir

8. *Religious-based discriminations,* with Ms Nadine Lyamouri and Mr Ufuk Atalay

9. *The Alliance of Civilisations initiative,* with Mr Elshad Iskandarov and Ms Nadia Roumani

10. *The consequences of terrorism on interreligious and intercultural dialogue*, with Mr Burhan Hamdon, Ms Gaja Bartusevičiūté and Mr Hagai Segal

11. *The role of and working with the media,* with Ms Klavdija Cernilogar and Mr Fozia Bora

> 12. *The role of local authorities in working on interreligious and intercultural dialogue*, with Mr Aymeric Dupont and Mr. Muammer Erol

16:00 *Break*

16:30 Working groups continued

19:00 *Dinner*
Free evening

Friday, 30 March

09:15 Presentation of projects and initiatives for interreligious and intercultural dialogue
- *The European Year for Intercultural Dialogue,* Ms Karin Lopatta-Loibl, European Commission
- *The Alliance of Civilisations youth initiative,* Mr Elshad Iskandarov, OIC Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation
- *Best practices in youth policy*, Ms Söhret Yildirim, Flemish Ministry for Culture, Youth, Sport and Brussels Affairs
- *Institutional responses to challenges posed by religious and cultural diversity,* Ms Kanchan Jadeja, Government Office for the East Midlands, United Kindgom

10:30 *Break*

11:00 Thematic working group continued

13:00 *Lunch*

14:30 Thematic working group continued

16:00 *Break*

16:30 Thematic working group continued

17:45 Introduction to the draft Istanbul Youth Declaration (in plenary)

19:00 *Dinner*

21:00 Cultural evening

Saturday, 31 March

10:00　Presentation of the Istanbul Youth Declaration
10:30　Presentation of the conclusions of the thematic working groups
11:00　Evaluation of the symposium
11:30　Conclusions by Ms Silvia Volpi, General Rapporteur of the symposium
12:00　Closing session, with
 • 　Ms Karin Lopatta-Loibl, European Commission
 • 　Mr. Mehmet Atalay, General Director for Youth and Sport of Turkey
 • 　Mr Elshad Iskandarov, Secretary-General of the OIC Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation
 • 　Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Director General and Coordinator for Intercultural Dialogue, Council of Europe
13:00　End of the programme
14:00　Departure of participants
　　　　Optional cultural programme
19:00　Musical and visual performance "Kopuzdan Gününümüze" (at the Grand Cevahir Hotel)

Sunday, 1 April

Departure of participants

List of Participants

Country	Name	Organisation
Albania	Ermira Dani Dr. Ramiz Zekaj	The Future Albanian Institute of Islamic Thought & Civilisation
Algeria	Mohamed Hamidi	African Youth Network for Sustainable Development
Armenia	Emma Allakhverdyan	Federation of Youth Clubs of Armenia
Austria	Ewa Rudnik Ingrid Gogl	The "Hope-Hatikvah" Society (Poland)
Obessu	Saime Öztürk	BJV and Muslim Youth Austria
Azerbaijan	Gurban Karimbayli Nadirova Lina	Ministry of Youth and Sport Coordinator for minority issues
Bangladesh	Md. Atikuzzaman Limon	Bangladesh Youth Forum
Belarus	Dmitry Dobrovolski	Foundation for Legal Technologies Development
Belgium	Cécile de Borman Judith Verweijen Klodjana Malushaj Nadine Miessen Pinto Preethi Polat Nilüfer Serdar Kilic Tas Ertugrul	Ligue belge des droits de l'Homme ASBL Federation of Young European Greens FEMYSO, Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student KLJ Katholische Landjugend Pax Christi International (PCI) MRAX Jeunesse Socialiste de Mont-sur-Marchienne Centre Régional d'Intégration
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Harun Karcic	Islamic Community Of Bosnia And Herzegovina

Country	Name	Organisation
Bulgaria	Borislava Daskalova	Human Rights Club
	Rilka Kandilarova	State agency for youth and sport
Czech Republic	Jindriška Cižková	Junak - Association of Scouts and Guides CZ
	Markéta Soštáková	Junák-Association Of Scouts And Guides Of Czech Republic
Denmark	Anette Rormose Andersen	EYCE -Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe
	Christopher Mikkelsen	Refugees United Org.
Estonia	Lianne Ristikivi	Estonian Youth Work Centre
Finland	Elina Juntunen	Ministry of Education, Youth Policy Division
France	Ali Gedikoglu	Cojep International
	Cakmak Tuncay	Cojep International
	Combeau Aurelie	Conseil National de la Jeunesse
	Filiz Veysel	Cojep International
	Jérôme Sauvant	Comité national de campagne conseil national jeune
Georgia	Adam Shantadze	Association of Help to Georgian Youth
Germany	Dr. des. Burak Gümüs	Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland
	Daniel Bloemers	International Network For European Studies
	Florian Druckenthaner	Anne Frank Zentrum
	Klaus Waiditschka	Jugendhilfe und Sozialarbeit e.V.
	Nina Aeckerle	United Network of Young Peacebuilders
	Stefan Becsky	Forum 21

Country	Name	Organisation
Greece	Ali Chouseinoglou	Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association
	Christos Peroutseas	Greek Scouts Organization
	Constantina Sakellariou	General Secretariat for Youth
	Vasso Kollia	Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs
	Zacharoula Tourali	General Secretariat for Youth
Hungary	Fatemeh (Sara) Sohrabi	Mahatma Gandhi Human Rights Organization
Israel	Draoui Imen	SCI / Baladna
	Kifah Abd El-Halim	Arab Movement for Change
Italy	Barubiriza Mariangela	Amnesty International Hungary
Kuwait	Anas Al Falah	Asia Muslims Committee
Latvia	Natalija Kostrikova	Youth Media Center 'Next Media Group'
Luxembourg	Christian Mohr	Service National de la Jeunesse
	Louis Sébastien	Luxembourg against racism
Moldova	Abebe Tezeravorc	COTAARM - Afro-Asian Community in
	Crivoliubic Olga	Ministry of Education and Youth, Youth Department
	Vera Turcanu	CNTM, National Youth Council of Moldova
Morocco	Tijana Djurovic	Indecon Consulting GmbH
Norway	Claire Whelan	All Different-All Equal National Campaign Committe
Pakistan	Rana Bilal Ahmad	Pakistan National Youth Council
Poland	Lukasz Salwarowski	Manko Association

Country	Name	Organisation
Portugal	Pompeu Miguel Noval da Rocha Martins	Instituto Portugues da Juventude
Qatar	Hassan Al-Ibrahim	Qatari Student Network
Romania	Andi Pacurar	National Council for Combatting Discrimination
	Ioana Dragos	Youth Action for Peace Romania
Russian Federation	Maria Kopelyan	Center for Interethnic Cooperation
	Yusif Mailov	Local youth NGO "Drums of the World
San Marino	Katia Massari	San Marino NCC - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Saudi Arabia	Mohammed Al-TilBani	World Assembly of Muslim Youth
Serbia	Ognjen Arnautovic	Jewish community Belgrade
	Shpresa Vrenezi	Kosovo Alternative Playback Theatre & Care International
	Urosh Chubrovich	National Campaign Committee Serbia
	Babic Dušan	Personal assistant of Urosh Chubrovich
Slovenia	Vladimira Leskovec	Youth Information Center
Spain	Gal Leiferman Bensadon	Spanish Union of Jewish Students
	Jamil Majid	Zarya Group
	Anna Mateo Ferrer	National Youth Council of Catalonia
Sudan	Khedir Ahmed Musa	Sudan National Youth Council
Sweden	Amra Heco	Miljonkulturell ungdom and LSU
	Danilo Brozovic	Internationella Arbetslag Sweden
Switzerland	Koffi Agebessi Gbonougbe	Terre Nouvelle

Country	Name	Organisation
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Lirim Sulejmani Stefan Manevski Tatjana Kraljevska	Cross Religious Direction-CRD Center for Intercultural Dialogue Ministry of Culture – National Commission for UNESCO
The Netherlands	Adela el Mahdaoui Cor van de Griendt Naomi Bolderhey Wanjala Glenda Rosemary	Codename Future Palet International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organisation
Turkey	Abdullah Mohammadi Ahmet Talha Üstündag Armagan Atar Ayse Betül Dönmez Ayse Rumeysa Kilic Ayse Uzun Basak Kiliç Behrooz Motamed-Afshari Betül Erkan Bircan Zimer Cem Mirzanli Deniz Sinan Savas Dursun Atak Emrah Sagir Esra Demirci Esra Saricayir Fatma Kenevir Firat Bilir Geki Shoef Gizem Üliç Gözde Öztürk Halil Ibrahim Basar Hatice Cenkis	Burayi Bos Birakiyorum Bilim Ve Sanat Vakfi Ilahiyat Fakültesi Ankara Üniversitesi klahiyat Fakültesi Ankara Üniversitesi klahiyat Fakültesi Ilahiyat Fakültesi Geni Gelisim Dernegi SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre Ilahiyat Fakültesi Olimpiyat Genilik Evi Sodev(Sosyal Demokrasi Vakfi) Adana/Seyhan Genilik Merkezi Ilahiyat Fak Trabzon Gençliko Merkezi Sabanci Universitesi Istanbul University Ilahiyat Fakültesi Sirnak Gençlik Çalisma Grubu Dernegi Ayd Sosyal Demokrasi Vakfi AEGEE-Ankara Nevsehir Genilik Merkezi Ankara Üniversitesi klahiyat Fakültesi

Country	Name	Organisation
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	Hediye Yildirim	Elazig Geralik Sport
	Iclal Yilmaz	A.Ü klahiyat Fakültesi
	Ibrahim Demirel	National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme
	Ibrahim Kalin	SETA
	Ismail Kocak	Ankara Universitesi klahiyat Fakültesi
	Jenny Hennecke	Yfu Turkey
	Kadir Özkaya	Adana Seyhan Genilik Merkezi
	Mehmet Ulukütük	Bilim-Der
	Mehmet Ali Eminoglu	Bülbülzade Vakfi
	Mükerrem Baran	Ilahiyat Fakültesi
	Murat Atabay	Adana/Seyhan Genilik Merkezi
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	Ozcan Ozdemir	Ari Movement
	Pinar Derya Dogruyol	Akvam
	Samet Firat Soydemir	Antakya Yerel Gundem 21 Genclik Meclisi
	Sandra Eblevi	Arkadaslik Yurdu Dernegi (Ayd)
	Sefik Emre Coskun	DEÜ Genilik Ve Spor Kulübü Dernegi
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	Serkan Serbest	Genclik Merkezi
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	Volkan Kabaksiz	Ankara klahiyat Fakültesi
	Yasin Cakir	Ankara Ilahiyat
	Yener ÖZAMAÇ	Samsun Genilik Merkezi
	Yunus Emre Asan	Mavi Hilal
	Zuhal Yilmaz	Ilahiyat Fakültesi

Country	Name	Organisation
Ukraine	Galyna Bocheva	Amnesty International Ukraine
	Maria Boguslav	National Committee 'All different-All Equal'
United Kingdom	Shelina Thawer	Minority Rights Group International (MRG)
	Nadeem Patel	The British Youth Council
	Naseem Anawr	University of Glasgow

Resource Persons And Facilitators

Name	Organisation
Dr. Anas Ali AL Sheikh	Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism
Arnold Stepanian	Union "Public Movement Multinational Georgia"
Aymeric Dupont	European Youth Forum
Burhan Hamdon	Hakunila International Organization
Cihad Taskin	Diversity Management & interkulturelle Kompetenz
Dariusz Grzemny	Human Rights Education Youth Network
Eva Boev	Bashu
Fozia Bora	Q-News Magazine
Fuad Muradov	NAYORA - National Youth Council of Azerbaijan
Gaja Bartuseviciute	European Youth Forum
Hagai Segal	New York University in London

Name	Organisation
Hakan Tosuner	FEMYSO - Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations
Manuela Tavares	WFM - Young Women from Minorities
Michael Roekaerts	Pax Christi International
Muammer Erol	Metropolitan kstanbul Municipality
Muhammad Khan Foundation	National Youth Agency and the Muslim Youthwork
Nadia Roumani	UN Alliance of Civilizations
Sami Danguir	FEMYSO - Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations
Saskia Law	Baha'I Community of Germany
Tülin Şener	Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences
W.B. Emminghaus	Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, LV Saarland

Keynote Speakers

Name	Organisation
Ibrahim Kalin	SETA - Foundation for Political, Economical and Community Research
Prof. Magdalena Sroda	Institute of Philosophy at the Warsaw University
Dr Nazila Ghanea	Lecturer in International Human Rights Law, University of Oxford

Guest Speakers

Name	Organisation
Astrid Utterström	Chairperson of the Joint Council on Youth
Azad Rahimov	Minister of Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan
Bettina Schwarzmayr	President of the European Youth Forum
Etienne Genet	Advisory Council
Kanchan Jadeja	Government Office for the East Midlands, UK
Mehmet Ali Sahin	Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister of Turkey
Mehmet Atalay	General Director for Youth and Sport of Turkey
Söhret Yildirim	Flemish Ministry for Culture, Youth, Sport and Brussels Affairs

Preparatory Group

Name	Organisation
Gülesin Nemutlu	National Campaign Committee, Turkey
Klavdja Cernilogar	European Youth Forum
Linda Athanassouli	European Steering Group of the Campaign
Magnea Sverrisdottir	Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe
Mehmet Celebi	kslamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, US representative
Olga Israel	European Union of Jewish Students

General Rapporteur

Name	Organisation
Silvia Volpi	

Co-Organizers

General Directorate of Youth and Sport Turkey	
Adnan Gül	General Directorate of Youth and Sport
Akin Burak Bahçekapili	General Directorate of Youth and Sport
Firdevs Funda Celen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Kutlu Ersen	General Directorate of Youth and Sport
Mustafa Cenk	General Directorate of Youth and Sport
Sefa Yahsi	National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme
Ufuk Atalay	General Directorate of Youth and Sport
Vildan Görbil	General Directorate of Youth and Sport

Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation	
Ali Sarikaya	President
Alpay Ahmadov	Projects Coordinator
Bahaddin Yuksek	General Coordinator
Elshad Iskandrov	Secretary-General
Gulsum Akhundova	Asst. Project Coordinator
Sevinc Alkan Ozcan	Education Coordinator
Yunus Sonmez	Coordinator for External Relations

European Commission	
Karin Lopatta-Loibl	Directorate for Education and Culture, Youth Policy Unit
Numan Ozcan	Delegation of the European Commission in Ankara
Pierre Mairesse	Directorate for Youth, Sports and Relations With the Citizen

Council of Europe	
Annette Schneider	Educational Advisor, Directorate of Youth and Sport, European Youth Centre Budapest
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Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni	Director General and Coordinator for Intercultural Dialogue
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Michael Raphael	Manager of the "all different - all equal" youth campaign, Directorate of Youth and Sport
Nadine Lyamouri-Bajja	Educational Advisor, Directorate of Youth and Sport, European Youth Centre Strasbourg
Nikki Kazimova	Communications Officer, Directorate of Youth and Sport
Ralf-René Weingärtner	Director of the Directorate of Youth and Sport
Rui Gomes	Head of Education and Training Unit, Directorate of Youth and Sport
Ulrich Bunjes	Directorate General IV

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Intercultural dialogue is one of the key missions of the Council of Europe, along with fostering democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Young people are crucial actors in that process as the main stakeholders of societies who are freer from the prejudice, discrimination and segregation that have characterized most of Europe for the past decades.

The Symposium 'Intercultural and interreligious dialogue in youth work practice' was held in Istanbul from 27 to 31 March 2007. It focused on the problems young people across Europe face in relation to cultural and religious diversity. The participants exchanged good practice in youth work and agreed on a Declaration that sets out the main purpose and objectives in intercultural interreligious from a youth perspective.

The event was part of the 'All Different – All Equal' European youth campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation, run by the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe in 2006 and 2007. The campaign aimed to encourage and enable young people to participate in building peaceful societies, based on diversity, human rights and inclusion, in a spirit of respect, tolerance and mutual understanding.

The Symposium was organised with the support of the European Commission and in cooperation with the Office of the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic – Directorate General of Youth and Sports. The Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation and the Turkish National Campaign Committee were also co-partners.

In addition to the Istanbul Youth Declaration and the conclusions of the rapporteur, this report also gives an account of the issues raised by speakers and the various working groups of the Symposium.

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