

## **Annual report of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations for 2017**

### *Summary*

The present report outlines the main activities and projects carried out by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations from January to December 2017. The activities were developed and implemented in compliance with the approved United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Strategic Review and Plan for 2013-2018.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, an initiative of the Secretary-General, was launched in 2005 with the co-sponsorship of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey. The former President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, was appointed as the first United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations in May 2007.

2. In February 2013, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and former Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, became the second High Representative. After assuming the post, Mr. Al-Nasser prepared and submitted the strategic review document for 2013-2018 on the new vision for the Alliance, which was approved by the Secretary-General and endorsed by the Group of Friends of the Alliance in September 2013. Since its inception and in accordance with the strategic review document for 2013-2018, the Alliance's work has been anchored in four main fields of action: youth, education, media and migration. It has placed special emphasis on the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in promoting greater understanding and respect among countries or identity groups, all with a view towards preventing conflict and promoting social cohesion.

3. The Alliance has increasingly mainstreamed its activities and strengthened its partnerships within the United Nations system. It also pursues its mission by serving as a platform for dialogue and cooperation by empowering and connecting civil society organizations with local authorities.

4. As in previous years, the Alliance continues to occupy a unique place within the United Nations system. It is a key platform in the larger structure of the United Nations architecture that actively works with Member States as well as international and regional organizations, media, youth, faith-based organizations and other civil society representatives.

5. The present report is the High Representative's tenth annual report to the Secretary-General. It highlights the main activities during the past year (January to December 2017).

## **II. Institutional development**

6. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is a leading United Nations platform for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation. Through its convening power, it continues to assemble Governments, international organizations, media, young people, faith-based organizations, lawmakers, local authorities, civil society organizations and individuals committed to promoting peaceful coexistence across diverse communities.

7. Since its inception, the Alliance has recognized that it could not fulfil its mandate alone. Partnerships have continued to be the cornerstone of its strategy. Under the leadership of the High Representative, the Alliance has expanded its network of relationships with Member States, regional and subregional organizations, and other non-State actors. Since 2005, the Alliance has signed 63 memorandums of understanding with academic institutions, think tanks, foundations and international organizations to amplify the impact of its work.

8. During the reporting period, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China on strengthening cooperation and communication among civilizations under the Belt and Road initiative. Additional memorandums were signed with Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George and the Royal Order of Francis I and the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

### **Group of Friends and focal points**

9. Members of the Group of Friends continued to provide guidance on key issues and strategic directions for the Alliance through bilateral consultations, group discussions and meetings. As of December 2017, the Group comprised 146 members, including 119 Member States, the State of Palestine and 26 international organizations.

10. The High Representative continued his efforts to broaden the composition of the Group of Friends. Invitations to attend Alliance events and observe meetings of the Group continue to be sent to United Nations Member States not currently in the Group.

11. The Group of Friends met at the ambassadorial level in New York on 19 April 2017. Discussions centred on the theme “The role of interreligious and intercultural dialogue processes as a tool for preventing conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding”. The High Representative informed the Group that the Alliance had made considerable progress in promoting the use of interreligious and intercultural dialogue through a wide range of partnerships with grassroots organizations, faith-based leaders, youth, media experts, academia and the business community. He highlighted efforts by the Alliance to empower local partners with regard to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, and on building platforms for social inclusion and the prevention of identity-based conflicts.

12. On 22 September, the Group of Friends met at the ministerial level in the margins of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly and addressed the theme “Youth engagement: the nexus to building inclusive societies and sustaining peace”. The High Representative highlighted a series of Alliance achievements at the programme and policy levels in the area of youth, peace and security. In particular, participants were informed of contributions by the Alliance to the work of the steering committee for the progress study on youth, peace and security, mandated by the Security Council in its resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#). The meeting featured the participation of the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and a number of Foreign Ministers and senior delegates of Member States and international organizations.

13. During the reporting period, the Alliance maintained regular contact with its network of focal points. The focal points oversee the implementation of the Alliance’s objectives at the national level and coordinate with the Secretariat.

#### **Strengthening links within the United Nations system**

14. The Alliance continued to engage with departments and entities within the United Nations system, in particular with the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development. During the reporting period, the Alliance maintained its engagement with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, including its working group on youth and peacebuilding. Closer ties were formed with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, including by supporting events such as International Youth Day. The Alliance increased its engagement with the United Nations Population Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office, particularly in preparation for the progress study on youth, peace and security. During the reporting period, it also strengthened its partnership with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth.

15. The Alliance took part in Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force inter-agency processes and working groups, and participated in the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, including by participating in an inter-agency expert retreat on the development of national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism, held at Greentree Estate, in Manhasset, United States of America, on 22 and 23 February. The Alliance also contributed to United Nations communication strategies to counter violent extremist narratives.

#### **Public-private partnerships**

16. The Alliance built substantive partnerships with the business community, in particular with the BMW Group through the Intercultural Innovation Award. Launched in 2011, the Intercultural Innovation Award is the result of a unique public-private partnership between the Alliance and the BMW Group. This public-private model of collaboration creates deeper impact, as both partners provide their respective expertise to maximize impact.

### **III. Key advocacy initiatives to advance the goals of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations**

17. During the reporting period, the Alliance continued to champion a collective and broad-based approach towards building consensus across nations, cultures and religions for stability, prosperity and peaceful coexistence. Under the leadership of the High Representative, the Alliance developed its advocacy activities and outreach programme under the themes set out below.

## **Intercultural and interfaith dialogue**

18. In observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week, the High Representative, in collaboration with the Committee of Religious Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations, commemorated the sixth annual Interfaith Harmony Week at Tillman Chapel, at the Church Center for the United Nations, on 6 February. The theme of the 2017 celebration was “Interfaith harmony: embracing the other”. The High Representative underscored the vital role of religious leaders in conflict mediation, humanitarian action and the prevention of violent extremism.

19. Later that month, the President of the Portuguese Parliament, Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, hosted the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in Porto, Portugal, on 23 and 24 February. The objective of the Plenary Session was to review and discuss challenges in the region, including violent extremism, the refugee crises and irregular migration. The Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson for the High Representative, Nihal Saad, delivered remarks.

20. On 6 and 7 April, the Alliance co-organized the first International Conference on Peace in Diversity: The Integrative Approach to Intercultural and Civilizational Affairs, launched in Agadir, Morocco. The High Representative reaffirmed the Alliance’s commitment to empowering future generations of youth in building more inclusive and peaceful societies. The Conference marked the inauguration of the Ibn Batuta International Center for Inter-Cultural and Civilizational Studies. On the margins of the conference, the High Representative received the “International Outstanding Achievement Award 2017” for the work of the Alliance in promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, diversity and respect among civilizations.

21. As in previous years, the Alliance participated in the advisory group meeting of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers in Helsinki on 7 April. The event was supported by the Government of Finland and hosted by Finn Church Aid. The meeting enabled the Network members to share strategic thinking and planning, particularly with regard to shifting global trends in the peace and conflict field. The meeting contributed to the sharing of best practices, practical tools and methods on religious and traditional peacemaking. It also helped deepen collaboration and strategic thinking between the Network and its partners to enhance overall engagement in the field.

22. The Alliance co-sponsored the fourth World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue on the theme “Advancing intercultural dialogue: new venues for peace, security and sustainable development”, held in Baku from 4 to 6 May. Government officials from 50 countries, including Heads of State, senior representatives of the United Nations and representatives of civil society organizations participated in several sessions dedicated to strengthening inclusive dialogue for peace. The Alliance organized a plenary session on the theme “Promoting dialogue and building bridges as a tool to preventing violent extremism” and two break-out sessions entitled “Inclusive dialogue in an age of polarization: how to make it work?” and “Promoting innovative approaches to foster intercultural dialogue”. Forum participants were presented with a publication co-authored by the Alliance entitled *Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa*.

23. On 22 May, the Alliance observed World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, established by the General Assembly in its resolution [57/249](#). Hanifa Mezoui, Senior Adviser, Humanitarian Affairs and Civil Society, delivered remarks on behalf of the High Representative, highlighting the linkage between peace and development and the importance of embracing diversity for peace.

24. On 24 May, the High Representative participated in the second International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East. The event was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, as a follow-up to the previous conference held in Paris in 2015 where the Paris Action Plan was adopted. In his remarks, the High Representative highlighted the Alliance’s mission to strengthen dialogue between people from different cultures and religions and reaffirmed that such dialogue constituted a key tool to preventing radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism. Through several projects, the Alliance had addressed many of the areas identified in the third part of the Paris Action Plan - preserving the diversity and plurality of the Middle East. The High Representative reiterated the Alliance’s commitment to expand its areas of action and to empower civil society through a wide range of partnerships with grassroots organizations, faith-based leaders, youth, media, academia and the business community.

25. On 18 July, the Alliance convened a panel discussion on “The role of religious leaders in peacebuilding in the Middle East”. The event served as a follow-up to the Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East,

held in Alicante, Spain, in November 2016. The panel featured seven religious leaders from the Holy Land, representing three major monotheistic faiths – Christianity, Islam and Judaism -- as well as the senior leadership of the United Nations. Within their respective mandates, religious leaders agreed on strengthening cross-regional support for the Alicante process. The Alliance and the Government of Spain committed to organizing a series of capacity-building workshops for religious leaders to enhance peaceful coexistence and reconciliation in the Middle East.

### **Youth and peacebuilding**

26. On 21 September, the High Representative participated in the Ministerial Meeting on Youth, Peace and Security, co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, Ayman Safadi, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Børge Brende. The High Representative highlighted the important role of young people in sustaining peace and development, as well as in preventing and countering violent extremism.

### **Racism and xenophobia**

27. In its ongoing efforts to prevent xenophobia and hate speech in the media, the Alliance met with the editorial team on race and ethnicity of the *New York Times*, composed of several journalists and editors who cover news related to race and ethnicity, including commentary and archival articles published in the paper. Organized in January 2017 at the *New York Times* headquarters in New York, the meeting was an opportunity for the Alliance to share information about its work to foster diverse and inclusive societies, with a focus on the Alliance's "#SpreadNoHate" initiative to combat hate speech against migrants and refugees in the media. The fruitful exchange led to discussions about potential synergies and collaboration between the *New York Times* and the Alliance.

28. The Alliance presented at a workshop entitled "Covering Islam and Muslims", organized by Princeton University on 23 April. The goal of the event was to provide media professionals with tools to address racism, xenophobia and related intolerance against Muslims in public discourse. Ms. Saad took part as a panellist in two main discussions on "The complexities of covering Islam and Muslim debates" and "The politics of being Muslim in America". The panel discussions provided a platform for journalists and journalists-in-training to exchange views on Muslim life in America and the role of the media in covering ethnicity and religion.

29. On 12 October, the Alliance participated in a discussion on nationalism and xenophobia in the context of Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#), organized by United Nations youth delegates of Luxembourg and Romania at the Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations in New York. The event provided a forum for an open exchange of ideas on the role of youth in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The event provided an opportunity for the Alliance to share its findings and recommendations on this issue.

### **Media and information literacy**

30. New media and information technologies, while offering greater opportunities for new types of citizens' engagement, also give rise to issues of misinformation security, and privacy. In this respect, the Alliance organized a panel discussion at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 7 September, focusing on the role of news literacy in offsetting the spread and impact of fake news. The panel discussion was the second instalment in a series of panels organized by the Alliance on topics related to media and information literacy. The High Representative discussed the importance of developing media and information literacy skills to build resilience to fake news in the digital age.

31. The Alliance also participated in a conference entitled "Reporting on the other: media and intercultural dialogue", organized by the Institute of International Relations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czechia. The event took place on 7 November at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Czechia. The Alliance addressed the audience as part of a high-level opening session and chaired a panel on "Media as a means of disinformation and radicalization", during which it presented its #SpreadNoHate initiative.

### **Migration**

32. The Alliance maintained its engagement with the Global Forum on Migration and Development. As part of the Tenth Summit Meeting of the Global Forum, the Alliance co-organized a side event entitled "Fostering migrant integration through innovative civil society actions" in collaboration with the BMW Group and the Government of Canada. The event was held at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin from 28 to 30 June. Selected recipients of the

Alliance's Intercultural Innovation Award, Welcoming America, Give Something Back to Berlin and SINGA Deutschland, presented lessons learned and recommendations stemming from their projects aimed at improving the social inclusion and integration of migrant communities. More than 700 policymakers and practitioners from 140 States, international organizations, civil society and the private sector attended the Summit. Outcomes of the Summit will feed into the ongoing process of forging a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, a framework for effective migration governance to be adopted by the United Nations in 2018.

33. During the reporting period, the Alliance continued to study the role of faith-based organizations and local faith communities in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. As a lead entity of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Development, the Alliance, with the assistance of the European Commission, convened a workshop entitled "Muslim humanitarian and development organizations in and around conflict zones: barriers to and opportunities for engagement" at United Nations Headquarters on 22 and 23 May. The workshop, organized in collaboration with the British Council and Georgia State University, brought together practitioners, policymakers and analysts to exchange views on the multifaceted role of Muslim humanitarian and development networks and organizations in the provision of humanitarian assistance in and around conflict zones. Under the auspices of the European Commission-funded Bridging Transatlantic Voices initiative, researchers at the British Council and Georgia State University published a report in November 2017 entitled "The Muslim humanitarian sector: a review for policy makers and NGO practitioners", which incorporated outcomes from the workshop. The Alliance will take the findings of the report into account in its ongoing advocacy work in this area, particularly in the context of its work on migration.

#### **Preventing violent extremism**

34. Since its inception, the Alliance has recognized the role of youth, media and information literacy in preventing violent extremism. In this respect, on 10 February, the Alliance and the United Nations Academic Impact co-organized a round table discussion on the theme "Media and information literacy: educational strategies for the prevention of violent extremism" at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event centred on the notion that media and information literacy offer a long-term strategy for promoting a culture of peace and understanding among individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

35. On 7 March, the Alliance was invited by the International Bureau of Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to participate in a round table discussion on "Preventing violent extremism through universal values in curriculum". The discussions focused on the personal and professional experiences of leading scholars in the field and their substantial contributions to inclusion, peace education and human rights in various contexts worldwide. The event stimulated an important discussion about the significance of preventing violent extremism through education, including through formal and non-formal educational activities.

36. On 19 December, the High Representative participated in a meeting of the Secretary-General's high-level action group on the prevention of violent extremism. The meeting was the second meeting of 2017 for this advisory body. The primary topic of discussion was the role of youth in preventing violent extremism. During his remarks, the High Representative highlighted a number of project activities undertaken by the Alliance designed to support grassroots efforts by young people to prevent violent extremism.

37. The Alliance participated as an advisory board member in reviewing and editing the "Youth-led guide on prevention of violent extremism through education" produced by the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development in New Delhi.<sup>1</sup> Supported by the Government of Australia, the guide is the culmination of an active dialogue with youth globally. It includes testimonies and experiences of more than 150 youth from over 58 countries across the globe, including Alliance programme alumni. The guide also includes guidelines and recommendations for teachers, school administrators, policymakers, youth and other stakeholders with the overall aim of preventing violent extremism among youth.

## **IV. Project activities**

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002605/260547e.pdf>.

38. Alliance programming is fashioned around its four pillars, namely education, youth, media and migration. Project activities are also developed in line with the global United Nations policies and strategies set by the Secretary-General, and in accordance with priorities identified by Alliance co-sponsors.

## **A. Youth and education**

### **Young Peacebuilders programme in the Middle East and North Africa region**

39. Guided by the principle that youth are key agents for preventing conflict and achieving peace, the Alliance develops educational programming for youth peace organizations to foster mutual respect, understanding and long-term positive relationships between peoples of different cultures and religions.

40. Building on the success of the 2016 pilot project in West Africa, the Alliance, in collaboration with Generations For Peace, and with the generous support of the Agencia Extremeña de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AEXCID), started implementing a second edition of the Young Peacebuilders programme with a focus on the Middle East and North Africa region. The aim of the project is to support the growth of networks of young peacebuilders who are equipped with tools to address negative stereotypes, prejudice and polarization in order to build more inclusive and peaceful societies at the local, national and regional levels. The project also seeks to develop the capacities of young people and youth organizations in order to enhance their positive role in policymaking on peace and security issues while bringing visibility to their initiatives towards peacebuilding and promoting cultural diversity and human rights. The programme responds to several international policy recommendations outlined in the progress study on youth, peace and security mandated by the Security Council in its resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#), and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

41. After a competitive selection process, 10 young women and 10 young men from 12 countries across the Middle East and North Africa region, each between the ages of 18 and 25 and representing youth-led organizations in their communities, were selected to participate in the 2017-2018 edition. At the end of 2017, the participants started the first phase, which involved the completion of seven online modules about identity, diversity, conflict analysis and intercultural dialogue.

42. This two-month intensive online preparation will be followed in 2018 by a face-to-face workshop in Amman. The project will be implemented in each participant's community upon returning home. The final results will be presented at a final symposium during which the participants will share their experiences, lessons learned and recommendations with a broader audience of practitioners, policymakers, media and the general public.

### **Youth Solidarity Fund**

43. During the reporting period, the Alliance continued to support youth-led organizations by funding seven projects in Asia and Africa through its Youth Solidarity Fund. The 2017 edition of the Fund was implemented with the support of the Governments of Finland and Spain.

44. Seven youth organizations from Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa received a grant (up to \$25,000) as well as technical support to implement projects. All projects were selected to advance the Alliance's mandate in promoting intercultural dialogue and social inclusion. The projects were implemented in Afghanistan, India, Liberia, Morocco, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda. Projects ranged from promoting peaceful elections in Liberia to the social inclusion of migrants through arts-based public events in rural areas of Morocco and engaging young women in peace clubs and sports to promote diversity in Afghanistan. Other projects focused on the role of the media in preventing violence in South Sudan, training Pakistani youth to advocate for the local implementation of Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#), using filmmaking to share stories of young peacebuilders in Bhutan, India and Nepal, and teaching peace education to reduce instances of violence towards refugees in Uganda. These activities impacted 11,166 direct beneficiaries, 9,242 of whom were youth and 5,289 of whom were young women.

45. The projects engaged youth from diverse backgrounds, including faith groups, university students, civil society organizations, members of the media and refugees. An effort was made to include projects that encouraged intergenerational partnerships. Projects were designed to provide tools and spaces for constructive dialogue and collaboration, attitude shifts and the dissemination of alternatives to violence.



46. As part of its technical support, the Alliance organized a capacity-building workshop for recipient organizations of the 2017 edition of the Youth Solidarity Fund. It supported the sustainability of youth-led initiatives through skills enhancement, the dissemination of project results and networking for partnership and solidarity. The training was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 11 to 15 December. The training focused on the following topics: (a) fundraising and donor networking; (b) communicating results through social media; (c) strategic planning; (d) advocacy; and (e) monitoring and evaluation. Three alumni from past editions of the Fund were also invited to share their experiences with the sustainability of their projects.

47. Throughout the workshop, participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and develop strategies for the future. In addition, in commemoration of the second anniversary of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), Youth Solidarity Fund recipients met with representatives from the Turkic Council youth network in a dialogue exchange on 11 December. Discussions focused on how the international community could support young people in peace efforts. Overall, the workshop was an opportunity to showcase the success and expertise of young people working to advance intercultural dialogue, particularly highlighting the importance of providing increased funding and technical support to youth-led organizations in this field.

### **Fellowship Programme**

48. In September 2010, the Alliance launched its Fellowship Programme, which is aimed at facilitating cross-regional dialogue and cooperation among emerging leaders from North America, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The Alliance has gradually developed a network of emerging leaders who bring innovative perspectives to global issues. It will continue to provide an enabling environment for young leaders to exchange knowledge, understanding and experiences with a view to forging productive partnerships across borders.

49. The Alliance organized a Fellowship session over the course of 2017 on “The role of media and civil society in combating hatred and fostering inclusion”. Alliance Fellows addressed the topic with a wide range of local stakeholders, including government officials, journalists, religious leaders and representatives of civil society organizations. From 1 to 18 October, a cohort of 12 Fellows from North Africa and the Middle East participated in a programme that included meetings in France, Germany, Spain and the United States. The Fellows came from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the State of Palestine. The agenda included meetings with the United States State Department, the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of France and Spain. They also met with Islamic Relief, Caritas Internationalis and local non-governmental organizations involved in assisting refugees. They had exchanges with journalists from renowned media organizations such as National Public Radio in New York, Deutsche Welle in Berlin, *Le Monde* in Paris and *El Mundo* in Madrid.

50. A second cohort travelled from 15 October to 1 November. The 12 Fellows, from North America and Europe, participated in a programme that included meetings in Spain, Morocco, Egypt and Qatar. The Fellows came from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States. Their agenda included meetings with officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Morocco and Qatar, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Qatar and the League of Arab States. In Rabat, Fellows visited the Mohamed VI Institute for the Training of Imams. In Cairo, they met with the Director of the Al-Azhar interfaith department and the Al-Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism. In Doha, they enjoyed heart-to-heart conversations with young Qataris on overcoming prejudices and negative stereotypes. Fellows also exchanged views with officials from the national human rights institutions of Egypt, Morocco and Qatar. At the end of their journey, Fellows submitted reports addressing the main theme, basing their conclusions on lessons learned during their experience.

51. In December, the Alliance and the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations invited 16 Fellowship alumni from 16 countries in Europe, North America, the Middle East and North Africa to present their recommendations on the role of media and civil society in promoting a culture of peace. The event provided Fellows with an opportunity to share good practices and lessons learned gained during their Fellowship experience.

52. On the day prior to the event, two Fellowship alumni were also invited to participate in an event organized by the Task Force on the Responsibility of Religions for Peace of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. Together, they shared their experiences as young civil society leaders in the field of interfaith dialogue in their home countries, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine.

53. The 2017 iteration of the programme could not have been possible without the financial contribution of the Government of Germany and the support of the Governments of Egypt, Morocco and Qatar, and the League of Arab States.

## **B. Media and migration**

### **#SpreadNoHate initiative**

54. During the reporting period, the Alliance continued to implement its #SpreadNoHate initiative aimed at countering hate speech against migrants and refugees in the media, in line with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the United Nations TOGETHER initiative against racism and xenophobia towards migrants and refugees.

55. The Alliance and the European Union co-organized a symposium to address “Hate speech against migrants and refugees in the media”, held in Brussels on 26 January. The event gathered over 100 participants from the media sector, civil society, international organizations, migrant communities and leading technology companies, including Facebook and Google. This fourth #SpreadNoHate symposium included discussions on the role of the media in the rise of populism, the triggers and mechanisms of hate speech against migrants and refugees and the role of Internet intermediaries in combating hate speech. A full report, including key findings and recommendations on promoting positive narratives towards migrants and refugees in the media was issued following the symposium.<sup>2</sup>

56. On 13 December, more than 120 journalists from around the world gathered in Cairo to discuss negative narratives and stereotypes about migrants and refugees in the media. The symposium was the fifth in the #SpreadNoHate series. Particular emphasis was placed on engaging journalists working in the Middle East and North Africa region on ethical and fair reporting of issues associated with migration and refugees. The #SpreadNoHate symposium also included migrants and refugees and representatives of international organizations, think tanks, the private sector, academia and civil society. A full report of the Alliance’s #SpreadNoHate symposium in Cairo will be published in 2018.

### **Media-friendly glossary on migration for the Middle East region**

57. The Alliance and the International Labour Organization launched a tool for journalists across the Middle East to ensure human rights-based reporting on migration. The *Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration – Middle East Edition* details technical terminology relating to forced labour, human trafficking, displacement, refugees and labour migration, and proposes accurate and neutral alternatives to discriminatory terms and frames adopted in media coverage. The glossary was produced in English and Arabic, allowing journalists to cover the issues accurately in both languages. It also includes guides on photojournalism, gender-sensitive reporting and working with victims of trauma.<sup>3</sup> The *Glossary* is based on the “Media-friendly glossary on migration”, produced by the Alliance and Panos Europe Institute in 2014 with the support of Open Society Foundations.

### **PLURAL+: the youth video festival on migration, diversity and social inclusion**

58. During the reporting period, PLURAL+, the youth video festival developed as a partnership between the Alliance and the International Organization for Migration, received 320 entries from 67 countries representing all areas of the world. In addition to recognizing videos on the topics of migration, diversity and social inclusion, it also selected a video for a special award on the prevention of xenophobia. The PLURAL+ 2017 awards ceremony was held at United Nations Headquarters on 9 November and featured young award-winning filmmakers.

59. On 10 November, recipients of PLURAL+ awards participated in a series of panel discussions at the Paley Center for Media in New York. During these discussions, young media makers from Brazil, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nepal, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the United States discussed the production and objectives of their videos. The participants underscored the importance of supporting the distribution of youth-produced videos on topics of migration, social inclusion and the prevention of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance.

60. During the reporting period, PLURAL+ videos were screened at numerous venues around the world, including at film festivals such as Tribeca, the Hamptons and Seattle (United States), Tarifa (Spain), Chinh (India), and at

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org).

<sup>3</sup> The *Glossary* can be consulted and downloaded for free at [www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org).

United Nations Headquarters. Award-winning PLURAL+ videos were viewed over 1 million times on multiple Internet platforms (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.).

### **Media and information literacy**

#### *Publications*

61. In 2017, the Alliance collaborated with UNESCO and the UNESCO global university network UNITWIN on the *Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue Yearbook*, an annual publication of the university network. The theme of the yearbook for 2017, “Media and information literacy in critical times: re-imagining ways of learning”, was discussed during the global university network’s annual conference, held in Kingston during the annual UNITWIN meeting from 24 to 27 October.

#### *Clearing house*

62. The Alliance’s media and information literacy clearing house was developed in partnership with UNESCO. It has become a unique thematic digital platform on media and information literacy within the United Nations system. In 2017, the site had 6,100 registered users, and an average of over 5,000 unique visitors per month.

#### *Teacher curriculum website*

63. The Alliance and UNESCO collaborated in the development and launch of the web-based version of the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers. The website, available in the six official languages of the United Nations, provides access to a multimedia teaching resources tool for educators and researchers on media and information literacy. The web-based version of the curriculum contains interactive and intercultural teaching resources proposed for use in formal and non-formal educational settings.

#### *Conferences and events*

64. On 7 September, the Alliance organized a second panel event dedicated to media and information literacy at United Nations Headquarters entitled “Unravelling #fakenews from opinion-making information: a news literacy discussion”. Panellists acknowledged the urgency of developing news literacy skills in order to discern fact from fiction while respecting freedom of opinion and expression. News literacy was identified as an indispensable skill in the digital age, where individuals struggle to deal with information overload. The panellists underscored the importance of enhancing critical thinking and media literacy in order to be able to judge the reliability and credibility of information, whether it comes via print, television or the Internet.

## **C. Promoting intercultural dialogue and peace through innovation**

### **Intercultural Innovation Award**

65. Since its launch in 2011, the BMW Intercultural Innovation Award has continued to encourage the development of innovative and sustainable projects to promote dialogue and intercultural understanding to achieve prosperity and peace around the world. Through the course of 2017, the Alliance completed the one-year mentoring and support phase to projects awarded during the seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, held in Baku from 25 to 27 April 2016. Following the first capacity-building workshop organized in Munich, Germany, at the headquarters of the BMW Group, a second workshop was organized in Gurgaon, India, in February 2017. In addition to the face-to-face workshops, and in order to complement the support given to each organization, the Alliance organized two tailor-made webinars focused on donor networking and practical social media strategy. On the basis of a final report compiled at the end of the support period, it can be concluded that, one year after the award was conferred to the 10 organizations, all 10 recipients expanded their range of activities, increased the number of their beneficiaries (by 60 per cent) or expanded to new countries (30 per cent increase in countries impacted by the work of the recipients).

66. During 2017, the Alliance launched a call for applications for the fifth edition of the Intercultural Innovation Award. Grassroots initiatives that encouraged intercultural understanding through innovative methods with the aim of preventing identity-based conflicts around the world were encouraged to apply by 5 June 2017. More than 1,300 applications from 130 countries were received, representing an increase of 36 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, compared with the call launched in 2015.

67. United Nations Headquarters played host for the first time to the Intercultural Innovation Award ceremony on 29 November 2017. The 10 organizations who received the award were celebrated for their work in the presence

of ambassadors and high-level United Nations officials. Projects in 2017 originated from Argentina, Ecuador, Egypt, Israel, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tunisia, Uganda and the United Kingdom. In addition to grants totalling \$100,500, the Alliance and the BMW Group will provide technical support to award recipients. This support will include training and capacity-building programmes, customized support and mentoring, tailor-made webinars and membership in an exclusive alumni network.

***Focus on the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations-BMW Group capacity-building workshop for recipients of the 2016 Intercultural Innovation Award***

Monitoring and evaluation, organizational development and leadership were the focus of the second capacity-building workshop for the 10 recipients of the 2016 Intercultural Innovation Award. Hosted by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the BMW Group, the workshop took place in Gurgaon, India, from 12 to 16 February 2017.

Award recipients from Brazil, Bulgaria, France, Germany, India, Israel, Kenya, the United Kingdom and the United States attended the workshop. The training sessions were designed with the aim of building long-term impact and ongoing sustainability so that the recipients' initiatives could be expanded and replicated in other contexts.

The first part of the event focused on leadership, organizational development and sustainability, taught through experiential group learning, case studies and simulations. The participants were then taken through the steps of developing a monitoring plan, and trained on how results from monitoring and evaluation could be used in making management decisions and for communications.

A highlight of the workshop was seeing the work of current award recipients Routes 2 Roots and Safecity. Based in New Delhi, Routes 2 Roots is an organization that promotes peace through cultural diplomacy. Workshop participants were able to view one of their projects, "Virsa", which teaches cultural heritage to students throughout India on an interactive digital learning platform. Meanwhile, Safecity is a platform that crowdsources personal stories of sexual harassment and abuse in public spaces. The organization arranged for their Youth Campus Ambassadors to conduct an example of their meetings on gender rights and stereotypes, which take place in colleges throughout several cities in India. The training in Gurgaon was part of the one-year support programme provided to recipients of the Intercultural Innovation Award.

**PEACEApp: fostering integration of migrants and refugees**

68. In 2017, the Alliance organized two PEACEapp workshops. During PEACEapp workshops youth from local host communities and young migrants and refugees collaborate in developing video games as platforms for intercultural dialogue. PEACEapp workshops are also an opportunity to develop computational thinking skills.

69. The Alliance organized a workshop in Algeciras, Spain, from 16 to 20 January. It received the support of several partners, including the Algeciras City Council, the Regional Government of Andalusia (Junta de Andalucía), Foundation Campus Tecnológico de Algeciras, Foundation CEPAIM, Foundation Juan Ramón Jiménez, School Hostelería San Roque, Colegio Nuestra Señora del Cobre, the Commonwealth of Municipalities of Gibraltar and the Nairobi Play Project. The 25 participants included youth from nine countries: Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Morocco, Paraguay, Senegal, Spain and Ukraine. The workshop provided a platform for young people who would not necessarily meet and work together to jointly develop video games using a platform developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

70. In October, the Alliance organized a PEACEapp workshop in Tangier, Morocco. The workshop took place between 2 and 7 October, in partnership with the Mediterranean Democratic Institute for Development and Training (IMDDF), the Spanish collective Ideas para la Paz, and the gaming company OmniumLab, among other partners. Thirty youth representatives from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Morocco, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Syrian Arab Republic participated in the workshop.

71. Participants in PEACEapp workshops in Algeciras and Tangier collaborated with the Spanish video gaming company OmniumLab and were directly involved in the production of SURVIVAL, a gamified app focused on highlighting the challenges of undocumented migration.<sup>4</sup> SURVIVAL, among other recognitions, received a 2017

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<sup>4</sup> SURVIVAL is available for free download on GooglePlay and in the Apple App Store.

“Acción Magistral” nomination from the Fundación de Ayuda contra la Drogadicción (FAD), the UNESCO Spanish Commission and Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria (BBVA). Queen Letizia of Spain presented the award during a ceremony in Madrid in December. To date, SURVIVAL has been downloaded over 5,000 times.

## **D. Alumni programming**

72. As recommended in the strategic review document for 2013-2018, beneficiaries of the Alliance’s programmes in the areas of youth, the media, education, migration and cross-sector initiatives should be brought together into one network to share expertise, develop joint projects and maximize the impact of their work aimed at fostering cross-cultural understanding and cooperation.

73. During the reporting period, the Alliance, in partnership with the BMW Group, unveiled a new and improved Intercultural Leaders online platform ([interculturalleaders.org](http://interculturalleaders.org)), a revamped version of its alumni engagement network. Recognizing the role of alumni in the implementation of its mandate and broader outreach, the Alliance created Intercultural Leaders to provide an exclusive web-based platform for its alumni to collaborate, increase the visibility of their activities and exchange opportunities and knowledge. By strengthening civil society capacities, Intercultural Leaders enhances the Alliance’s role as convener, catalyst and thought leader. With new improvements introduced during the reporting period, Intercultural Leaders is evolving into a robust skills and knowledge-sharing network for civil society organizations and young leaders who work on addressing cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities.

## **V. Outreach and communications**

74. During the reporting period, the Alliance’s digital outreach efforts continued to intensify with new milestones achieved in the context of organic web traffic and social media engagement. The Alliance attracted a robust following to its main website<sup>5</sup> and microsites.<sup>6</sup> The Alliance’s flagship website had an organic reach of more than 152,000 new users, totalling 353,000 sessions. Its microsites averaged more than 20,000 users per month.

75. Furthermore, the Alliance continued to amplify its digital communications strategies to maximize the visibility of its various programmes and activities to ensure maximum reach and impact. During the reporting period, the Alliance worked actively to engage its followers by publishing a wide range of multimedia materials, including infographics, digital cards, animated videos, video testimonials and photos.

76. The Alliance also regularly supported the campaigns of other United Nations agencies, particularly when they pertained to its four main pillars. For example, the Alliance has been an active participant in the United Nations TOGETHER campaign to promote respect, safety and dignity for refugees and migrants, and to counter the rise in xenophobia and discrimination. In particular, the Alliance’s #SpreadNoHate initiative and PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival have been used to encourage the global community to change negative narratives on migration and to strengthen the social cohesion among host communities, refugees and migrants.

77. In turn, many United Nations agencies and entities, including the main United Nations social media accounts, regularly promote Alliance programmes and activities on their digital platforms. The Alliance regularly celebrates landmark campaigns with other United Nations agencies to promote key international days by highlighting the relevant achievements of its beneficiaries, such as Youth Solidarity Fund alumni on International Youth Day, among other events.

78. During meetings, symposiums, panel discussions and other events, the Alliance’s real-time social media coverage has proved successful, reaching millions of users and generating record-setting impressions.

79. Key social media events that trended in 2017 included the Intercultural Innovation Award ceremony (#iiawardNYC and #iiaward2017), the PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival (#PLURALplus17), the fourth and fifth

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<sup>5</sup> See [www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://fellowship.unaoc.org>, <https://pluralplus.unaoc.org>, <https://interculturalinnovation.org>, <https://interculturalleaders.org> and <https://milunesco.unaoc.org>.

#SpreadNoHate symposiums in Brussels and Cairo – the hashtag #SpreadNoHate trended nationally in the number one spot across Belgium and Egypt – as well as periodic meetings of the Group of Friends (#Commit2Dialogue), among others. Noteworthy numbers are as follows:

- #SpreadNoHate (Brussels) – 13.4 million total reach; 29.5 million impressions
- #SpreadNoHate (Cairo) – 1.9 million total reach; 10.8 million impressions
- #iiawardNYC – 8.3 million total reach; 13.1 million impressions
- #PLURALplus17 – 770,131 total reach; 3.2 million impressions

80. As a result of the Alliance’s active social media presence, the number of its followers on social media increased steadily and rapidly across all platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn and Snapchat), and currently totals more than 125,000 followers, with a 9 per cent increase since 2016.

## **VI. Administrative issues**

### **A. United Nations Alliance of Civilizations voluntary trust fund and fundraising**

81. For the 2017 budgetary year, actual expenditures were kept to less than \$3.8 million. The High Representative’s efforts to further stabilize and increase the level of replenishment of the voluntary trust fund continued in 2017. He regularly called upon the members of the Group of Friends to continue to support the fund. During the reporting period, the following donors supported the fund with specified and non-specified contributions: Argentina, Finland, Germany, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, AEXCID and the BMW Group.

82. The Alliance continues to seek regular, reliable and predictable sources of funding for its voluntary trust fund. While efforts to enhance partnerships with the private sector are ongoing, the Alliance must also receive regular support from Member States in order to ensure sustainability.

### **B. Staffing**

83. Fiscal prudence and cash flow issues demand that the Alliance maintain budget discipline and seek cost savings wherever possible. One staff member joined the Alliance during the reporting period to serve as the Strategic Partnerships and Fundraising Consultant to strengthen the Alliance’s capacity to raise project-based funding, particularly from foundations and corporations. Other than that hire, staffing levels remained constant.

## **VII. Conclusion**

84. During the reporting period, the High Representative continued his efforts to enhance the visibility of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, advocating for the causes consistent with the mandate of the Alliance. Staff continued to implement project activities, further develop existing successful projects and create new ones, in collaboration with Governments, international organizations, foundations and civil society groups, as well as the media. The dynamic process of project development will continue with an emphasis on promoting the values of conflict prevention and reconciliation.

85. In line with the Secretary-General’s priority to streamline United Nations Secretariat activities, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations has increasingly mainstreamed its work within the Secretariat and continues its ongoing integration into Headquarters structures. In particular, it will continue to explore the possibility of developing joint or mutually reinforcing capacity-building programmes and projects with other United Nations entities in accordance with their comparative advantages and respective mandates. That process will lead to even greater cooperation and collaboration between the Alliance and United Nations system entities in 2018.

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