



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

10/06/2013

Ref.: CL/4021

Subject: **International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures
(2013-2022)**

Sir/Madam,

Following a suggestion from the Republic of Kazakhstan, the UNESCO General Conference proposed, during its 36th session, that the period 2013-2022 be proclaimed as the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (36 C/Resolution 40). This proposal was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 67/104 of 17 December 2012 entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace", by which it invites the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to be the lead agency for the United Nations system.

By this resolution, the General Assembly acknowledged and reaffirmed the pioneering role and long-term work performed by the Organization "to promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, as well as activities related to culture of peace, and welcome[d], in particular, the adoption of its new programme of action for a culture of peace and non-violence and its focus on concrete actions at the global, regional and sub-regional levels".

As lead United Nations agency, UNESCO is expected to mobilize a wide variety of actors, at all levels and in all regions, to help build bridges and promote mutual understanding conducive to harmonious coexistence among the peoples and countries of the world.

The new International Decade provides a unique occasion to reaffirm the ideals of a plural humanity where cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are mutually reinforcing, and where international cooperation can be enhanced through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information, bringing about a real rapprochement of cultures and countries.

Activities during this Decade are expected to nurture social inclusion and intercultural dialogue in order to improve the world's global understanding. Special emphasis will be placed on the role and empowerment of young women and men who have enormous possibilities of access to, and participation in, global conversations.

At this early stage of the Decade, I should like to solicit your contribution and input on the elaboration of an Action Plan that could guide a mutual commitment to the rapprochement of cultures. This Plan shall be a flexible and efficient tool, and will consist of strategic initiatives, programmes and activities at the local, national, regional and global levels, to underline the particular value and impact of intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a means of fostering the equal dignity of all cultures, religions and beliefs, engendering mutual respect and a lasting peace.

To Ministers responsible for relations with UNESCO

As a starting point for this reflection, allow me to recall that the approved Plan of Action for the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010) had identified the following areas of action:

- (i) promoting reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity;
- (ii) building a framework for commonly shared values;
- (iii) strengthening quality education and intercultural competences; and,
- (iv) fostering dialogue for sustainable development.

More information on the achievements of the International Year may be found in the publication entitled “Highlights”, which can be accessed at the following Internet link: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001915/191590e.pdf>.

Furthermore, I wish to recall the objectives of the Interdisciplinary and Intersectoral Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, adopted by the General Conference at its 36th session (2011), which served as a compass in the quest for peace as an everyday reality for all and aims at, *inter alia*, rethinking the dividends of cultural diversity while promoting the principle of learning to live together in a safe world for all. They are contained in the publication “UNESCO’s Programme of Action – Culture of Peace and Non-Violence – A vision in action”, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002177/217786e.pdf>.

A broad range of stakeholders are called upon to participate actively in the International Decade: Member States, National Commissions for UNESCO, organizations of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, Goodwill Ambassadors and Artists for Peace, UNESCO Chairs and Associated Schools, Clubs and Centres, parliamentarians, locally elected officials, intellectuals, the world of culture, science, education and the media, and civil society as a whole, including the private sector. The active involvement and participation of women and youth is particularly encouraged.

I should be grateful if you would send your comments in writing, by **16 September 2013** and preferably by e-mail, to Ms Katérina Stenou, Director of the Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence in the Bureau of Strategic Planning (tel: + 33 1 45 68 23 73; e-mail: k.stenou@unesco.org, with a copy to hc.ngandeu-ngatta@unesco.org).

I hope that your Government will associate itself fully with the implementation of this International Decade.

Accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Irina Bokova
Director-General

Enclosures: 36 C/Resolution 40
United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/104

cc: National Commissions for UNESCO
Permanent Delegations to UNESCO

36 C/Resolution 40

40 Proclamation of an international decade for the rapprochement of cultures (2013-2022)¹

The General Conference,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Noting that intercultural dialogue and the rapprochement of cultures must always take place on the basis of the principles of that Declaration,

Also recalling UNESCO's mandate, enshrined in its Constitution, to ensure mutual understanding and to deepen awareness of the culture of peace,

Also noting the significance of 34 C/Resolution 46 of 2 November 2007 and United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/90 of 17 December 2007 proclaiming 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, and UNESCO's role in the successful conduct of the Year,

Referring to United Nations General Assembly resolutions 53/22 of 4 November 1998, 54/113 of 10 December 1999 and 55/23 of 13 November 2000, proclaiming and preparing the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001), and 60/4 of 20 October 2005 on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations,

Also recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/25 of 10 November 1998 on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010) calling for peace and non-violence at every level of society,

Further recalling United Nations General Assembly resolutions recognizing the valuable contributions of all the world's religions to modern civilization, and demonstrating the desire of the world community for dialogue among cultures and cooperation for peace (General Assembly resolutions 59/23 of 11 November 2004 "Promotion of interreligious dialogue", 60/10 of 3 November 2005 "Promotion of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace", 60/11 of 3 November 2005 "Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation", and 60/150 of 16 December 2005 "Combating defamation of religions"), as well as all UNESCO General Conference resolutions in this regard, including 29 C/Resolution 48 "The contribution of religion to the establishment of a culture of peace and the promotion of interreligious dialogue",

Also referring to 33 C/Resolution 38 of 19 October 2005 "Promotion of dialogue among peoples", calling for the development of a universal global consciousness, free from all forms of prejudice and involving all stakeholders globally, regionally and nationally, including through new partnerships,

Taking into account the intersectoral and interdisciplinary programme of action for a culture of peace and non-violence proposed by the Director-General in draft document 36 C/5 Add. and United Nations General Assembly resolution 65/11 of 23 November 2010 on "Implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace",

Emphasizing, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the imperative need to respect and promote cultural diversity, dialogue and cooperation in a climate of trust and mutual understanding, as the best guarantees for peaceful co-existence, international peace and security,

Encouraging the efforts of UNESCO and the Alliance of Civilizations, in the framework of their memorandum of understanding signed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in May 2010, to improve relations between peoples of different cultures in order to counter emerging tendencies of extremism, to promote mutual understanding and respect, and to increase confidence and trust,

1. *Endorses* UNESCO's aspiration to work for a "new humanism for the twenty-first century" aimed at uniting the efforts of the international community in support of solidarity among all the peoples of the world, equity and inclusiveness, as well as cultural diversity;
2. *Invites* the Director-General to implement the new programme of action for a culture of peace and non-violence as contained in draft document 36 C/5 Add.;
3. *Recognizes* with appreciation that the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010), led by UNESCO, succeeded in stimulating dialogue and exchanges among peoples, thereby creating an international environment conducive to harmonious coexistence and interaction among the peoples and countries of the world;
4. *Emphasizes* the need for the international community to continue and intensify such efforts, and to search for new avenues promoting mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue, including through efforts by United Nations country teams;
5. *Recommends* that the United Nations General Assembly proclaim the period 2013-2022 as international decade for the rapprochement of cultures, and to designate UNESCO as lead agency for that decade.

¹ Resolution adopted on the report of the CLT Commission at the 17th plenary meeting, on 10 November 2011.



General Assembly

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Sixty-seventh session
Agenda item 15

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/67/L.44 and Add.1)]

67/104. Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹ in particular the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,

Recalling its resolution 66/226 of 23 December 2011 on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace and its other related resolutions,

Recalling also its resolution 64/14 of 10 November 2009, on the Alliance of Civilizations, in which it welcomed efforts to promote greater understanding and respect among people from different civilizations, cultures and religions,

Bearing in mind the valuable contribution that interreligious and intercultural dialogue can make to an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind,

Noting that interreligious and intercultural dialogue has made significant contributions to mutual understanding, tolerance and respect, as well as to the promotion of a culture of peace and an improvement of overall relations among people from different cultural and religious backgrounds and among nations,

Recognizing that cultural diversity and the pursuit of cultural development by all peoples and nations are sources of mutual enrichment for the cultural life of humankind,

Bearing in mind that tolerance of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversities contributes towards peace, mutual understanding and friendship among people of different cultures and nations and that these diversities should be made part of intercultural and interreligious dialogue efforts, as appropriate,

¹ Resolution 217 A (III).

Emphasizing the importance of culture for development and its contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and in this regard noting the close links between cultural diversity, dialogue and development,

Noting the various initiatives at the local, national, regional and international levels for enhancing dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions, cultures and civilizations, which are mutually reinforcing and interrelated,

Welcoming the inauguration of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Vienna, initiated by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, established on the basis of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and acknowledging the important role that the Centre is expected to play as a platform for the enhancement of interreligious and intercultural dialogue,

Acknowledging the tenth anniversary of the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity,² and welcoming the commemoration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2010 and the adoption by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its thirty-sixth session of resolution 40, entitled “Proclamation of an international decade for the rapprochement of cultures (2013–2022)”,³

Encouraging activities aimed at promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue in order to enhance peace and social stability, respect for diversity and mutual respect in diverse communities and to create, at the global level, and also at the regional, national and local levels, an environment conducive to peace and mutual understanding,

Recognizing the contributions of the media and of new information and communications technology to changing peoples’ perceptions of different cultures and religions, including through the promotion of dialogue,

Reaffirming the importance of sustaining the process of engaging all stakeholders, including young men and women as relevant actors, in interreligious and intercultural dialogue within the appropriate initiatives at various levels which aims to challenge preconceived ideas and improve mutual understanding,

Recognizing the commitment of all religions to peace and the need for voices of moderation from all religions and beliefs to work together in order to build a more secure and peaceful world,

1. *Reaffirms* that mutual understanding and interreligious and intercultural dialogue constitute important dimensions of the dialogue among civilizations and of the culture of peace;

2. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on intercultural and interreligious dialogue;⁴

3. *Notes* the continuing work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on intercultural and interreligious dialogue and its efforts

² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-first Session, Paris, 15 October–3 November 2001*, vol. 1 and corrigendum: *Resolutions*, chap. V, resolution 25, annex I.

³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-sixth Session, Paris, 25 October–10 November 2011*, vol. 1 and corrigenda: *Resolutions*, chap. V.

⁴ A/67/283.

to promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, as well as activities related to a culture of peace, and welcomes in particular the adoption of its new programme of action for a culture of peace and non-violence and its focus on concrete actions at the global, regional and subregional levels;

4. *Takes note* of the positive outcomes of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2010, which contributed towards an environment conducive to harmonious coexistence and congenial interaction within and among diversified societies;

5. *Proclaims* the period 2013–2022 the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, calls upon Member States to utilize this opportunity to enhance their activities relating to interreligious and intercultural dialogue, promoting tolerance and mutual understanding, and invites the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in this context to be the lead agency in the United Nations system;

6. *Reaffirms* the solemn commitment of all States to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for and observance and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹ and other instruments relating to human rights and international law, the universal nature of these rights and freedoms being beyond question;

7. *Welcomes* the outcome of the Seventh Asia-Europe Meeting Interfaith Dialogue, on harnessing the benefits and addressing the challenges of migration through interfaith and intercultural dialogue, held in the Philippines on 13 and 14 October 2011;

8. *Underlines* the importance of moderation as a value within societies for countering extremism in all its aspects and for further contributing to the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, tolerance, understanding and cooperation;

9. *Welcomes* the efforts by the media to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue, encourages the further promotion of dialogue among the media from all cultures and civilizations, emphasizes that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, and reaffirms that the exercise of this right carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but that these shall be only such as are provided by law and necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals;

10. *Also welcomes* the efforts to use information and communications technology, including the Internet, to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and in this regard acknowledges with appreciation the establishment by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries of the Interfaith Dialogue e-Portal pursuant to commitments made during the Special Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development, held in Manila from 16 to 18 March 2010, and encourages relevant stakeholders to utilize the opportunity to disseminate their best practices and experiences on interreligious and intercultural dialogue by contributing to the Interfaith Dialogue e-Portal;

11. *Encourages* Member States to consider, as and where appropriate, initiatives that identify areas for practical action in all sectors and levels of society for the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, tolerance,

understanding and cooperation, inter alia, the ideas suggested during the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, held in New York on 4 and 5 October 2007, including the idea of an enhanced process of dialogue among world religions;

12. *Recognizes* the importance of interreligious dialogue and its valuable contribution to promoting social cohesion, peace and development, and calls upon Member States to consider, as appropriate and where applicable, interreligious and intercultural dialogue as an important tool in efforts aimed at achieving peace and social stability and the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals;

13. *Also recognizes* the efforts by relevant stakeholders to foster peaceful and harmonious coexistence within societies by promoting respect for religious and cultural diversity, including by engendering sustained and robust interaction among various segments of society;

14. *Acknowledges* the active engagement of the United Nations system with faith-based organizations in the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue and in bringing together people of different faiths to discuss common issues and objectives;

15. *Also acknowledges* the important role of civil society, including academia, in fostering interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and encourages support for practical measures that mobilize civil society, including building capacities, opportunities and frameworks for cooperation;

16. *Invites* Member States to further promote reconciliation to help to ensure durable peace and sustained development, including through reconciliatory measures and acts of service and by encouraging forgiveness and compassion among individuals;

17. *Recognizes* that the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat plays a valuable role as focal point within the Secretariat on the issue, and encourages it to continue to interact and coordinate with the relevant entities of the United Nations system and coordinate their contribution to the intergovernmental process aimed at promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

*58th plenary meeting
17 December 2012*