EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs had a key contribution to make, particularly as the network aims to act as a think-tank and bridge builder between academia, civil society, local communities, research and policy-makers. Each chair brings expertise in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and practical experience from different regions of the world.

The UNITWIN Network on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding has been operational since 2006 and includes some 30 UNESCO Chairs worldwide, spread across all continents. The Network has well-developed capacities and extensive experience in implementing projects in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Its various activities (http://unitwinidiu.org/) aim to foster better understanding about the complexity of a globalized and interconnected world, including issues such as human rights, and social and ethical matters. The Network is coordinated by Prof. Fethi Mansouri, Chairholder, Chair in Comparative Research on Cultural Diversity and Social Justice (2011), Director, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalization at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE SECOND ACADEMIC FORUM:**

The main objectives of the Academic Forum were to assess the contribution of UNESCO Chairs on the rapprochement of cultures, to present ongoing research in the area of interreligious and intercultural dialogue and to develop an operational plan on their future contribution to the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (IDRC) 2013-2022.

**FOCUS OF THE SECOND ACADEMIC FORUM:**

- Presentation and discussion about the UNESCO Chair publication: “Interculturalism at the crossroads: comparative perspectives on concepts, policies and practices” which was released by UNESCO Publishing to help clarify how interculturalism is conceptualized and operationalized across the world;
- The contribution of the UNESCO Chairs to the mid-term review of the IDRC;
- An overall discussion about Chairs’ activities/UniTwin Network/Connection with specific UNESCO priorities;
- Ongoing research and potential contributions to UNESCO’s programme to be adopted by the 39th session of the General Conference in November 2017;
- Enhancing the visibility and outreach of the Network’s various activities.
INTRODUCTORY SPEECHES:

Ms Sevda Mammadaliyev, Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, officially opened the Academic Forum and recalled the continuous support of scientific research in the Baku Process launched by President Ilham Aliyev in 2008.

Ms Nada Al Nashif, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences, welcomed the participants consisting of 9 UNITWIN Chairs on interreligious dialogue for mutual understanding and newly appointed UNESCO Chairs on intercultural dialogue (ICD) from Cuba and Spain (see programme and list of participants enclosed).

She highlighted the role of the Network in the soft power of UNESCO among the United Nations System and notably the importance of research within the implementation of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). She recalled the achievements since the last Academic Forum in 2015 and the publication of *Interculturalism at the crossroads* launched by UNESCO’s Director-General on 5 May 2017. She thanked the steady support and perseverance of Prof. Fethi Mansouri, UNITWIN Coordinator, and the accomplishment in producing the book. She stressed the importance of the network as a think tank and bridge-builder, noting that it is playing a critical role in catalyzing and mobilising the most recent research from UNESCO.

She underlined the fact that the UNITWIN Chairs on ICD are now a reference point and an inspirational model for other networks of UNESCO Chairs, notably the one on human rights, migration, gender and inclusion due to meet in June 2017. The same goes for chairs working on the natural sciences and sustainable development agenda. Ms Al Nashif said that the UNITWIN network could have an important role to play in advancing UNESCO’s proposal to develop an Global Indicators Index on intercultural dialogue, peace, cultural literacy and intercultural competencies particularly knowledge, values and skills.

Nada Al-Nashif informed participants about the recent Kuala Lumpur Management of Social Transformations (MOST) meeting and its work towards advocacy for the research-policy nexus. The World Humanities Conference in Liege, August will also welcome additional experts to disseminate the outcomes assembled in the *Interculturalism at the crossroads* publication. She stressed that the UNITWIN network is a unique reservoir of expertise which is needed to support Member States.

UNITWIN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE IDRC:

Prof. Fethi Mansouri, the UNITWIN Coordinator recalled the global rise in populism and xenophobia, and related discrimination. Today, values are under attack. He started his presentation by talking about the *Interculturalism at the crossroads* publication:

Methodology: All UNIWTIN members were invited by the coordinator to contribute to the publication. After a first call, the coordinator searched for additional experts with the support of UNESCO to enlarge the gender, geographical and problematic scope of the project. In final, the contributions reflect disciplinary diversity as well as geographic specificities, and are to a certain extent guided by the following three questions:
1. How is intercultural dialogue (ICD) understood and conceptualized philosophically in the academic literature?

2. Are there specific spatial and temporal variants (attributed to locale/social milieu) that shape the way ICD activities are approached? How are these reflected in articulated public discourse and policies (if any)?

3. How does ICD and its local manifestations contribute to addressing emergent social fissures and intercultural tensions (as per NESCO’s IDRC agenda)?

Book structure: The book has three main, inter-connected, sections pertaining to:

- Theory, policy and practice/practical interventions from different fields and geographic locations.
- **Global perspectives**: Contributions from Europe, Australia, NZ, Africa, Asia and North America and the Middle East were included.

Key-questions to authors: What future awaits ICD? What role does national and supra-national governance play in shaping this future?

Are all stakeholders (policy-makers, inter-governmental agencies, researchers and practitioners) actually asking the right questions and invoking the right theoretical frameworks, approaches and arguments in our push for an ‘intercultural turn’ (Zapata-Barrero, 2015)?

The concluding chapter presents three inter-connected arguments exploring the promise of ICD from conceptual, policy and ethical perspectives, respectively.

Conceptual argument: “One of the unfortunate developments regarding ICD is that many intellectual, philosophical and policy debates tend to unhelpfully **juxtapose interculturalism with multiculturalism**.

While the argument against this juxtaposition has been taken up elsewhere (Meer, Modood and Zapata-Barrero, 2016), the position in this book is that these two policy **paradigms are not and should not be discussed in oppositional terms**.

Equally, these two concepts cannot be analyzed in **ontological isolation from public discourses and policies** that are shaped and have themselves shaped distinct temporal and spatial contexts (Meer and Modood, 2012).” (ICD book, p. 319).

Policy argument: “As a policy paradigm, interculturalism arises within cities and functions as an urban policy strategy. It can even be interpreted as a kind of a ‘**policy rebellion of cities’** vis-a-vis state-centred policy domination in diversity policies for the last few decades.
This ‘local turn’ in migration policy and research whereby cities are increasingly recognized not only as implementers of policies, but also as new players in diversity management, can offer a new area of focus for the current UNESCO ICD framework” (ICD book, p. 322).

**Ethical argument:**

“Reducing violence and working towards inclusive and peaceful societies is not merely a matter of public policy or legal obligation, but also an ethical orientation and a societal condition for ensuring dignity for all.

ICD demands that peaceful coexistence among diverse groups and communities, indeed between societies, be taken to a higher and more ethical level whereby individuals not only accept diversity, but also commit to developing the critical tools necessary to engage with it more positively and productively” (ICD, p. 324).

**Conclusion - Interculturalism as an alternative to the extremist narrative:**

These three arguments (conceptual, policy and ethical) relating to the present context for ICD assume that interculturalism is a mechanism to generate trust and mutual understanding, and to break down prejudices, stereotypes and the misconceptions of others that constrain interaction and contact between individuals living within culturally diverse cities (p. 325).

“Xenophobia, racism, and intolerant discourses and practices are increasing their presence in all spheres of European (indeed global) society from political parties, to social discourses and among citizens” (p. 326).

“[These challenges] require more nimble, locally driven initiatives, such as those articulated within ICD where the agency of the individual, the authenticity of local context, and the heuristic premise of contact and interaction are all given primacy over top-down narratives that no longer reflect the complexity of the world within which we all live” (p. 327). Top-down policies are making things worst. Example of Coventry University which is undertaking more studies on far-right populism, in addition to empathy research.

**Reactions to the Interculturalism at the crossroad publication:**

- Chairs recognized that the book represented a particularly timely achievement, taking into consideration the endemic growing populism and xenophobia. It is a future-oriented book and sets the agenda for the next steps. They also noted the strong convergence of the argument considering the diversity of contributors.

- Chairs noted that the book crystallized the challenges of bringing together the UN world and academia.
KEY OUTCOMES OF THE ACADEMIC FORUM:

The discussion was led by Prof. F. Mansouri on the potential cooperation of the Chairs towards the programme of UNESCO.

Ms Ann-Belinda Preis, Chief of Intercultural Dialogue Section at UNESCO recalled the operational framework of UNESCO where UNITWIN’s contribution is required. She reprised the Roadmap for the IDRC which consists of five pillars:

- mapping
- research
- capacity-building/knowledge sharing
- outreach
- coordination.

She presented the on-going and planned activities:

- A training manual on Intercultural Competences;
- A survey on the operational and conceptual orientations of ICD among Member States conducted in cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (data may be able to be shared with Chairs – to be verified);
- The development of a Global Indicators Index on ICD;
- Research and web platform on the potential of e-Resources on ICD;
- Preparation of a mid-term assessment of the IDRC and organization of an international conference.

The UNESCO Chairs were invited to propose proposals for collaborative work across the UNITWIN network over the coming two years. Where relevant, Chairs were also invited to submit more detail proposals at a later stage. Initial suggestions included:

- Fethi Mansouri: Continuing work on a systematic review on ICD, potentially evolving into a meta-analysis, helping to identify major components of ICD.

- Fethi Mansouri: Developing measurement and audit tools to account for and predict the impact of ICD.

- Hassan Nadem: Continue to collaborate to produce publications and translate the recently launched *Interculturalism at the Crossroads* into other languages.

- Steven Shankman: Produce content on collaboratively decided themes.

- Carmen Parra Rodriguez: Produce holistic study on ICD activities (what they are and what impact they have) in immigrant communities in order to study the effectiveness of ICD activities in addressing immigrant concerns.

- Roger Koussetogue Koude: Promoting the concept of ICD in school curriculum.

- Roger Koussetogue Koude: Expanding cooperation with academics from the global south, including non UNESCO Chairs.

- Alina Venkova: Produce a small publication with anecdotes of how ICD is beneficial, in order provide a more accessible definition of the concept.
- Alberto Melloni: suggested that the Chairs may have a role in discussing ‘delicate issues’, particularly regarding the naming and designation of sacred sites. It was noted that a conference is due to be held in June by the Chairs in Bologna and Jerusalem on scientific approaches to the naming of sacred sites. Further details were requested in writing by co-Chair of the meeting, Fethi Mansouri, on this proposal.

- Alberto Melloni: Add articles to a database to allow people to ‘create their own book’ by collating their articles which interest them.

- Alberto Melloni: Add more Chairs to the network in disciplines outside of the humanities, for example archeology.

From these initial proposals, consensus was found that the UNITWIN network could focus its attention on a number of issues, and focus their efforts on particular ways of working:

- To contribute toward the development of UNESCO’s global index on ICD. If the Index is well-defined conceptually, has clear indicators and well-defined variables, then it might be authoritative and can serve as a reference tool for policy-makers and politicians. An index does not solve problems, but helps to identify their source providing understanding about what conditions can produce what outcomes.

- To work on intercultural education, potentially by pairing Chairs/north-south/south-south; a cooperation. mapping exercise at the individual level for the next six months, data analysis/needs assessment and an operational plan to address the emerging gaps.

- To mobilize researchers working on ICD in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: UNESCO Harare shared their proposal to set up a workshop with selected contributing authors and other regional experts in a South-African University which hopes to mobilize young researchers on ICD from Africa and South America in a south-south perspective.

- One of the key outcomes of the interculturalism book is highlighting the primacy of the intercultural turn, a reverse of a centralized top-down approach to a more attainable frame: cities and local governments. UNESCO has five networks of cities which could contribute to operationalize the roadmap on the rapprochement of cultures. They could notably contribute to a global index definition. UNESCO Chairs could also undertake surveys at their own level (in relevant Member States and consisting of an evaluation survey on ICD).
AGREED ACTION:

1. **Contribute to UNESCO’s ICD global index**: The Chairs will liaise with UNESCO and Coventry University (Prof Mike Hardy) about how they can contribute to the development of UNESCO’s Global Indicators Index on intercultural dialogue, supporting UNESCO’s programme on intercultural dialogue and its leadership of the UN International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). Prof. F. Mansouri will initiate a concept paper for further consultation and development in initial consultation with UNESCO Paris and Coventry University (Prof Mike Hardy, one of the Conveners of the Baku forum on Intercultural Dialogue). All chairs are invited to contribute..

2. Local/regional **mapping of a multicultural/intercultural education resource**: Chairs attending the second academic forum agreed to try to work on this collaboratively possibly in pairs.

3. **Main Output and Timeline**: it was agreed that within six months (i.e. by 22 September 2017) initial scoping reports (of approximately 10 000 words) will be prepared about the status of intercultural/multicultural education in the relevant country/region. This scoping report will focus on the following inter-related issues:

   - Analysis of existing educational policies (e.g. curriculum standards etc.) and highlighting institutional and societal challenges for uptake and implementation of such policies if they do indeed exist!
   - Stock take of educational/curriculum resources available towards multicultural/intercultural education; and
   - Assessment of related pedagogical approaches.

   - The Chairs emphasized the need to use these initial brief reports for two purposes:

     1. An initial collective publication; and
     2. A basis for possibly developing a UNESCO online ICD teaching module.

   - All chairs are invited to contribute to both main agenda items as well as the overall active participation in the International Agenda for Rapprochement of Cultures as per Ann Belinda Preis’ presentation (summarized above).
Annex: List of participants

Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Ms Sevda Mammadaliyev  Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan

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<table>
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