



North-South Centre of the Council of Europe



World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue

7-9 April, 2011, Baku (Azerbaijan)

Workshop: “Dialogue between and among the world’s religions”

8 April, 2011, Baku (Azerbaijan)

CONCEPT NOTE

(Prepared by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe)

The new society mapping, characterised by diversity and pluralism, has given a new situation of multiculturalism that needs to be nurtured to ensure respect between individuals, tolerance between different cultures and the practice of their freedom of culture and customs which includes freedom of conscience, and its corollary, freedom of religion, on the basis of the Human Rights (article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights).

In today’s world, the question of identity is resurging as element of distinction between cultures. Religions are gaining more importance as elements of distinction from each other. This situation can send a conflicting message when culture and religion are used as excuses for perpetrating attacks against people on the basis of political agendas, nationalism or other purposes, as demonstrated by recent cases of islamophobia, christianophobia, anti-semitism, persecutions of religious minorities and other instances of intolerance in the world.

In this context, intercultural dialogue has been recognised at international level as a key tool to manage cultural conflicts and to preserve diversity in inclusive societies by promoting exchange, communication and by facilitating the necessary knowledge for living together peacefully and constructively in multicultural societies.

Against this backdrop, the World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue will include a workshop on **“Dialogue between and among the world’s religions”** with the aim of reinforcing the exchange and discussions on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue.

In light of recent developments which brought these matters both to the forefront of the news and to the top of political agendas, the workshop will address the challenges for an understanding

between different religions and a true dialogue for a better knowledge, authentic respect and better coexistence.

With this purpose the workshop will bring together experts, representatives of religious institutions as well as networks for religious dialogue with the aim of hearing different points of views and discussions based on practical case studies for identifying action for the promotion of the role of the religious communities together with secular stakeholders – governments, local authorities, civil society organisations and communities - and facilitating the networking for a better dialogue and a culture of understanding and respect of other beliefs and creeds.