

5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue (WFID 2019)

Building dialogue into action against discrimination, inequality and violent conflict

Context and background

Our global community is facing the enduring strains of our contemporary world, including climate change, uneven development progress, security challenges, and deep socio-economic divisions. Evidence is showing us that as these strains grow, so too does the potential for violent conflict between people within and across nations.

Over the past ten years, the World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue (WFID) has sought to raise awareness about the specific challenge of living and prospering within communities characterised by complex diversity. Whereas climate change and the plight of the abjectly poor have been strongly recognised in international debate and policy, the WFID has sought to add and highlight 'living together with difference' as a third, critical global challenge.

In recent years, diversity in communities has been amplified by the continuing mass movement of people, with recent estimates counting some 70 million people as forcibly displaced, unable for whatever reasons to remain in their homes. In response to this human mobility, many governments around the world have acted to control the resulting diversity, anxious that without direct policy intervention, rapid change can polarise societies and encourage ideological extremisms, political fragmentation, everyday xenophobia and racism, social division and ultimately social and political violence.

Against this challenging global context, and across all three of the detailed themes, WFID 2019 will examine the critical role of Intercultural Dialogue (ICD) as an actionable strategy for building human solidarity and for helping localities prevent discrimination, exclusion and violent conflict. WFID 2019 will place emphasis on the critical contribution of local and non-state actors, and discuss the position of national and regional governments as both *enablers* and engaged *stakeholders*.

WFID 2019 will initiate follow-up activities and evaluation protocols for establishing a strong evidence base for good ICD practice, placing increased emphasis on a continuing process rather than on the Forum as a series of independent 'events'.

Aim and Themes of WFID 2019

Overall Aim:

WFID 2019 will enable exploration of optimal conditions for ICD between peoples, communities and societies, and of how such conditions can enhance 'diversity dividends' – the benefits and advantages resulting from more diverse societies – within and across nations.

Three specific objectives:

Objective 1: Identifying the preconditions for successful ICD

To identify, examine and agree the societal preconditions for successful ICD between people and communities, and the important inter-connected role of regional, national and local governments.

Objective 2: Promoting ICD good practice

To establish a shared agenda and agreed approach for the promotion of ICD good practice, especially among youth and community leaders.

Objective 3: Measuring success and maintaining momentum

To map methodologies for reporting and evaluating ICD good practices and optimal strategies for wider dissemination.

Three themes of the 2019 WFID

WFID 2019 will seek to engage participants on the above aims and objectives, both at the Forum and beyond, by focusing on three inter-connected themes.

Theme 1: Multi-level and multi-sectoral governance of diversity

A recent trend in the governance of diversity is growing attention being paid to innovative intercultural approaches that reflect locally driven dynamics. WFID 2019 will seek to reflect this by encouraging discussion and action to enhance coordination and coherence among different structures and levels within governments (local, national and federal), as well as suggesting specific approaches that can reduce policy and political tensions, while at the same time leaving enough space for respect of cultural and heritages values and traditions.

Theme 2: Youth and intercultural leadership

Youth epitomise the complex reality of diversity, with their demonstrated capacity for creating and sustaining multiple networks and affiliations that transcend the spaces in which they are physically located. WFID 2019 will facilitate discussions about how the digital world is mobilised by young people to connect with and demonstrate identities that transcend their physical location. WFID 2019 will also examine the challenges faced by two critical institutions (school and family) for

ensuring the positive social engagement of youth and their protection against social harms, radicalisation and violent extremism.

Theme 3: Migration, displacement and human security

The significant movement of people fleeing violent conflict or pursuing economic security is a specific challenge for the international community. Millions of people across the world have been forcibly displaced and are seeking durable resettlement solutions which meet their aspirations for a sense of meaningful socio-political belonging. Their need to belong, and to engage, requires an acceleration of creative policy development and responses, in citizenship, and the associated rights and responsibilities that can implicate and impact both national residents and new arrivals. WFID 2019 will, therefore, showcase and promote innovative approaches to intercultural practice for active citizenship, positive social peace, political integration and transnational solidarity.

WFID 2019 within the Baku Process: building new approaches

Launched in 2008, the Baku Process has for 10 years worked to create a positive platform for an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, living on different continents, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.

Recognising the success of the Baku Process to date, the UN Secretary-General's Annual Report (2017) to the UN General Assembly on intercultural and interreligious dialogue and a culture of peace (A/72/488) contained a reference to the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, as a key global platform for promoting intercultural dialogue. One of the two corresponding resolutions (A/RES/72/136) also emphasized the importance of the Baku Forum.

Convened every two years, the Baku Process's seminal event is the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue. Throughout the first four editions of the Forum, organized by the Government of Azerbaijan in partnership with UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, UNWTO, the Council of Europe, ISESCO, and, in 2017 the UNFAO, participants sought to understand how dialogue within diverse communities has the potential to create tension – such as when mistrust and misunderstanding is exposed – but also to build understanding. In exploring this, and related themes, previous Forums have sought to strengthen and broaden the conceptual basis and operational definition of ICD in order to achieve a real sense of global application, moving from a suggested Euro-centricity or 'Western' focus to embrace wider socio-cultural contexts and genuinely universal values.

WFID 2019 will seek to build on this solid foundation to help mobilise intercultural dialogue for concrete transformative action. It does so with the foundational belief that whilst the "super diversity" characterising contemporary communities represents a significant policy challenge, it also offers real benefits.

Whilst previous Forums gave a lot of attention to state-led, 'top down' leadership initiatives, WFID 2019 will seek to examine broader multi-level and multi-sectoral engagement with ICD, highlighting the critical role of local governance structures and individual actors. It will encourage more discussion of working within and between cultures to promote contact and exchange that *reinforces the benefits of diversity and peaceful co-existence*.

Past Forums have made very evident the real paradox between interconnectivity and socio-political divisions. Keynotes and workshops at the Forums asserted how connectivity is celebrated in the growing dialogue and diversity literatures: the more connected we are as human beings, the easier it is to reduce misunderstanding and prejudice. However, through this very same connectivity, we encounter one another in ways that sometimes build tension and division that can weaken respect and empathy. WFID 2019 will build directly on these foundations by strengthening the focus on inter-connected global governance and examining the challenge of finding and creating new systems of governance which will make increasing connectivity inclusive, respectful and, critically, productive.

Building dialogue into action

Previous editions of WFID have valorized the definition of ICD as a process focused on finding commonalities between people with different cultural backgrounds, essential for bridging the intercultural discord and social fissures of our times. ICD, in this way, is approached as an inclusive conduit to promote cross-cultural relationships for the common good. It seeks to foster intercultural contact and interpersonal relations to prevent social conflicts and promote transformative mutual learning.

But this approach has placed less attention on how best to sustain ICD good practice and more importantly, how to evaluate, measure and report on its dividends. Therefore the 2019 WFID, through its identified aim, objectives and themes, will help shift discussion and work from 'destination' and 'outcome' to 'journey' and 'process', thus encouraging the setting of agendas for follow-on and follow-up activities that will go beyond the Forum itself.

It will seek to move beyond the conflict-based approach that has dominated work on intercultural relations and dialogue, to focus on innovation, performance and improvisation, that help to highlight the dividends of inclusive ICD. Instructions and specific guidelines for the construction and implementation of WFID 2019 workshops will reflect and encourage this approach. Thus, WFID 2019 will reflect cutting edge scholarship, as well as current ICD practice, with a view to improving the knowledge-base in tangible and, hopefully, transformative ways that might be adopted in the pursuit of more socially inclusive and culturally sensitive policies/practice.

Planned Format of 2019 WFID and the development of a Forum Charter

In addition to side events and exhibitions, WFID 2019 will combine three plenaries and nine breakout sessions with three action-oriented Work Sessions. Each Work Session will be convened by an appointed Session Director who will facilitate the development of an agreed two-

year-action plan – summarizing key collective actions and monitoring mechanisms planned in light of the discussions and deliberations at the Forum – which will be consolidated into one document after the Forum – the Forum Charter. Key to ensuring the momentum of these action plans will be a new online WFID Journal, which will encourage continued discussion and dissemination of progress and lessons learnt as the action plans are implemented. Dedicated sessions at the next Forum will evaluate the progress made on the Forum Charter, seeking to draw lessons to improve implementation in the future.

WFID 2019 Programme

	Theme 1: Multi-level and multi-sectoral governance of diversity	Theme 2: Youth and intercultural leadership	Theme 3: Migration, displacement and human security
PLENARY SESSIONS	Plenary session (max. 6 participants)	Plenary session (max. 6 participants)	Plenary session (max. 6 participants)
PARALLEL ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS	Maximum of 3 parallel roundtable sessions (organized by Forum partners, and designed to assess both the drivers and dividends of ICD under the theme)	Maximum of 3 parallel roundtable sessions (organized by Forum partners, and designed to assess both the drivers and dividends of ICD under the theme)	Maximum of 3 parallel roundtable sessions (organized by Forum partners, and designed to assess both the drivers and dividends of ICD under the theme)
WORK SESSIONS	Working towards the creation of two-year action plan, to be summarised as the Forum Charter	Working towards the creation of two-year action plan, to be summarised as the Forum Charter	Working towards the creation of two-year action plan, to be summarised as the Forum Charter
HIGH-LEVEL SESSIONS	Meeting of the International Organizations and Ministerial roundtable		
SIDE EVENTS	Side events and exhibitions (organized with Forum partners)		