

2nd Baku World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue Baku 2013

“Living together peacefully in a diverse world”

Two of the most pressing challenges of the contemporary world and, indeed, challenges that increasingly manifest on a global scale are those of living together peacefully and the intercultural dialogue that helps make that happen.

This second high-level international meeting devoted to various aspects of living together with mutual respect and understanding between all cultures of the world has been declared by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly and is supported by a roster of international organisations. The first Baku Forum in 2011 addressed challenges of intercultural dialogue in its various aspects regarding conceptual frameworks, governance, policy and practice. It tackled the barriers to dialogue and faced concretely how dialogue can best be pursued in diverse context. The Baku Forum is establishing itself as a powerful convenor for sharing good practices and launching new initiatives.

At the first Baku Forum two key commitments were made:

- To turn the World Forum into a regular event;
- To use appropriate means to place cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue higher on the international agenda.

The distinctive role and purpose of the World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue at Baku (WFID) will be to continue to raise global awareness about the importance of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as well as to reflect the rising strategic weight of Azerbaijan and its near neighbours as both a geo-political crossroads and as an emerging geographical corridor in which a convergence of interests between global actors abounds, serving a common interest and addressing strategic needs of all countries involved.

In an unprecedentedly interconnected world both corridors through which encounter and exchange take place and other more virtual connections are required. The Baku World' forum is fully inclusive and has ensured sufficient and full engagement from a truly global community.

WFID will continue to enable Azerbaijan and its close region to make a distinctive contribution to global understanding. A more local, regional component within the Forum reflects long traditions of acceptance of cultural diversity in and between communities and nation states.

WFID is focussing on the challenge of living together peacefully in a diverse world. It has taken as a starting point acceptance that global communities are diverse, some super-diverse; this demographic fact sets an important agenda for people worldwide.

The 2013 Forum combines national governments, international agencies, business and civil society in intense and practical conversation about building a peaceful world together, about the particular challenges of multicultural societies and about the responsibilities of global citizens for intercultural action.

The Forum will use plenary sessions, parallel roundtables and workshops as well as hosting a Ministerial Conference. Session formats are described in Annex 1.

Introduction: a distinctive approach to WFID2

The approach to the 2nd WFID will retain the strong commitment to intercultural dialogue as a tool, a process and as a 'destination'. A key component of this Forum will be the building of support among people. This is predicated on the concept accepted at the first Forum, and elsewhere, that intercultural dialogue has become both a necessary and desirable characteristic of the contemporary world –the unavoidable consequence of globalisation and super-diversity.

Organising for WFID 2013



An organising theme for the WFID 2013 will be to take stock of where we are, taking a critical view about how well we have used intercultural dialogue in various challenging contexts over the past few years. The participants will bring essential insights drawn from experience and best practice; the strategic partners to the Forum combine agencies and organisations whose commitment to successful dialogues is unambiguous. WFID provides a unique opportunity for convergence and collaboration for this important agenda

Each session of the Forum will highlight insight -looking broadly at what has been successful, and why? And will respond with foresight -together taking a positive and practical forward-look to where we might be in, say, ten years' time. What are the goals that we would set against this understanding? So, where might we be, and how might we have used intercultural dialogue to get there? WFID 2013 gives structure to this foresight by choice of three contemporary themes for dialogue:

1. Working together to build a shared future;
2. The emergence of new hybridity in culture as a consequence of globalisation
3. The role of global citizenship for intercultural action.

Taking the Insight-Foresight approach to our work at the WFID will help develop a sense of distinctiveness for the continuing conversations at the Baku Fora over time.

An overarching agenda

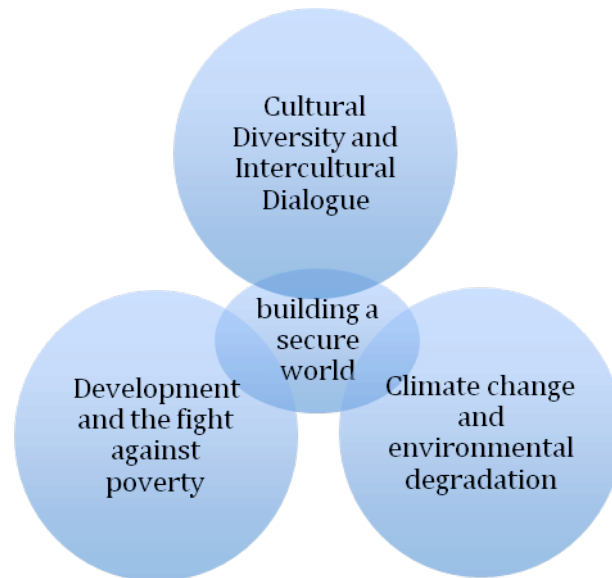
Globalisation has brought the world closer together; distances between places have seemingly become shorter. As a result, people interact with cultural difference on a daily basis. In order to address some of the pressing issues of modern day life, it is vital to be able to navigate global networks. Intercultural dialogue is important in meeting these challenges. It helps recognition that difference exists, and addresses the need to encourage mutual trust and understanding between diverse people. The environment in which intercultural dialogue takes place is marked by difference, proximity and interconnectedness.

Placing cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue higher on the international agenda is critical for human security and a prime responsibility for the 21st Century. Human security is a people-centred concept that focuses on the most critical and pervasive threats below which the survival, livelihood and dignity of individuals are seriously threatened.

Multiple influences, complex identities, growing inequality and almost-complete interdependence characterise a world where success and peace depend on peoples' ability to share space, resources and understanding. In this regard, 21st Century change is unprecedented and demand a new sense of priority for understanding cultural difference in a connected world in which threats to peaceful coexistence challenge individuals, local communities and spill over into regional and international security threats.

The high level ambition of the WFID 2013 is to promote agreement and international commitment that cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is elevated to a position alongside the war on poverty and climate change as prime global priorities for human

development and security, and the particular role that cultural exchange and diplomacy can have to these agendas.



The first ten years of the 21st Century was characterised by an urgency to understand each other better. The second ten years will be more about learning to live together in ways that promote security, prosperity and environmental sustainability. Cultural relationships, and intercultural dialogue in particular, make a significant contribution to this challenging agenda through earning intercultural trust. This stands at the beginning and at the end of development and yet it is also a resource along the way.

What and why culture and cultural identity?

WFID seeks to examine the importance of culture as a source of difference and demarcation, through the lens of perceptions of culture. The Forum will seek to take as a starting point an imperfect reflection of culture that can create the opportunity to operationalise cultural exchange, rather than to focus on the myriad of definitions of culture that exist and how people continue to discuss semantics. Culture and cultural identity are symbolic, a system, applied to groups, to a large extent learned phenomenon as well as being both process and product.

For WFID, culture is defined as

a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.

Culture, then, in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behaviour through social learning.

The “Baku Process”

Azerbaijan is one of the unique places where different cultures and civilizations meet and a significant corridor between the East and the West, the North and the South. At the same time, being a member of both Islamic and European organizations Azerbaijan absorbs the values of both civilizations, thus enabling it to assume a role of a genuine connector.

The Baku Process is a challenge for the promotion of intercultural dialogue to move from ideas to practice and to establish a platform in which today's challenges can be discussed in the spirit of intercultural dialogue and universal values.

The Baku Process is understood as a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage living on different continents, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.

The Baku Forum has taken responsibility for delivering the global agenda on the Dialogue among Civilisations adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (November 2001), the UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), the Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which was adopted by ISESCO in 2004, Declaration and Action Plan of the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states, the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (May 2008), as well as the Baku Declaration for the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue Azerbaijan hosted the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue on 7-9 April, 2011 in Baku under patronage of H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan that had been declared by the President at the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (23 September 2010, New-York).

WFID 2011, supported by prestigious international organizations such as UNESCO, UN Alliance of Civilizations, Council of Europe, North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, ISESCO, convened 500 representatives from 102 countries from all continents of the World; Cultural Ministers from 20 countries, deputy ministers of numerous states, leading international organizations including the ISESCO Director General, the Assistant Director General of UNESCO, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, mayors of various world cities, diplomats, media organizations, international NGOs, scientists, scholars, distinguished cultural experts, practitioners,

intellectuals and activists. Together pursuing the theme "United Through Common Values, Enriched by Cultural Diversity" they worked to advance the initiatives, realized by Azerbaijan in the sphere of intercultural dialogue, from regional context onto the global level, and to establish a fully-functioning International Forum in the country.

The 5 A - Intercultural Cooperation Platform was established at the Forum to promote wider attention to cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Bearing in mind the Azerbaijani language acronym of the first letters of the five continents, represented with huge delegations at the event - "Avropa, Asiya, Amerika, Afrika, Australiya", the new platform was symbolically named the "5 A's".

Contemporary influences for the Baku Forum

WFID 2013 will reflect how global awareness about the importance of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is growing. This concept note describes how it is proposed to ensure that the 2nd Baku Forum (and those that follow) has a clear and distinctive role and purpose. This might set it apart from other important fora, such as the Alliance of Civilisation Forum in Vienna held in February 2013.

The emergence of a distinctive and sustaining role for the Baku Forum will help turn it into a regular event.

At the First World Forum in 2011, Intercultural Dialogue was acknowledged for its power and as a 'pressing need'. The preparatory concept note for that Forum argued importance of such dialogue "by pointing to dramatic transformations in the world system in recent decades which fostered renewed intolerance of the 'self' for the 'other'" (Wilson 2011), and showed how it can engage in the broad cultural arena where acute manifestations of intolerance appear. Little has changed.

Since that time there has been more questioning about the likely global order of the future in which any and all forms of dialogue might take place to promote positive cultural relationships. For some time, and particularly since discussion about the decline of the 'West' started in earnest, the move from a bi-polar to a multi-polar world has created significant changes for dialogue. What is now referred to as the 'Western World Order', together with the West's capacity to define modernity, has created generation of commentators unsure whether there was a difference between modernisation and Westernisation. These are big issues for the context of Intercultural Dialogue – particularly the foresight that we may be about to experience a world with competing narratives (rather than a convergence towards a Western narrative).

Some have argued that a future world order may look rather different from our current thoughts. The West may have to embrace political diversity rather than insist that liberal diversity is the only legitimate form of government. The World may well be headed towards a "global dissensus." (Kupchan, 2012).

There may be some resonance with this for the contribution that Azerbaijan and its close region can make to global understanding, where long traditions of acceptance of multi-faith communities and moderation are in evidence. A regional component that examined this and drew in relationships with central Asia as well as central Europe might bring distinctive outcomes.

Finally, WFID 2013 will retain the strong commitment to Intercultural Dialogue as a tool, a process and as a 'destination'. This is predicated on the concept accepted at the first Forum, and elsewhere, that intercultural dialogue has become both a necessary and desirable characteristic of the contemporary world –the unavoidable consequence of globalisation and super-diversity.

Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue (ICD) as a prime responsibility of our time

Successful intercultural dialogue is essential to help us navigate the unprecedented challenges of the 21st century world. Cultural relationships that are involved help provide the means, opportunities and skills required by people, organisations and communities to work successfully together. Through working together, we can better understand and share approaches to the challenges confronting us during this age of globalisation and super diversity.

“The exchange of knowledge and ideas generates opportunities and responds to aspirations. This builds understanding and co-operation and enables people to have more secured and fulfilling lives. This is a people-to-people endeavour; these cultural relationships are essentially dialogue between human beings, not between cultural entities..” (Anna Lindh Foundation)

Intercultural dialogue is important as it allows long-term and intensive engagement with people from another culture. This can help people see their own culture from a different perspective, which leads to re-evaluating their own views and ideas. On the other hand, intercultural dialogue also re-introduces some of the detail – the diversity – into our perception of others.

Successful intercultural dialogue is based on purposeful long-term interactions. These allow the development of individuals' confidence and competences to move towards bridging cultures through a two-way process of open, honest and critical engagement. Intercultural dialogue explores difference, insisting not on agreement but on listening with respect.

Intercultural dialogue is a particularly sensitive area of cultural relations, inherently contentious and open to different, contradictory interpretations. Mutual respect - not the same as mutual approval - is crucial. Reasoned disagreement builds stronger, more authentic and lasting relationships. Avoiding difficult questions (such as political

conflict or differences in values) is counterproductive: addressing them directly and with respect builds trust.

WFID is looking at both religion and science in the context of intercultural action.

Religion, faith and belief play form the backdrop to the day-to-day lives of the majority of the world's population. Without approaching some of the key current intercultural debates of global significance through the lens of belief, we are unable to effectively engage with the concerns or interests of a significant section of global societies.

The role of faith in public affairs can be a highly contentious issue in international and cultural relations. It could be argued that the role of faith in society it is central to some of the most pressing international political and security issues/debates of the day. However, in an increasingly pluralist and globalised world, building a more nuanced and cross cultural picture of the role that faith plays in our societies will help to tackle some of the preconceptions that drive these clashes at home and internationally – particularly in a multi-polar world where assumptions about the global order are challenged.

Whilst, there have been some very successful international initiatives that seek to engage effectively across different religious or faith communities. These tend to deal with some of the complexities of relations between world religions and their leaders or internally to those groups (Intra and Inter faith initiatives).

These conversations between 'religions' clearly play a central role in inter-cultural dialogue. However, the differing cultural contexts of faith does not simply come down to understanding differing cultural practices, values or doctrinal stances within communities – it is actually a far bigger picture of the changing nature of the role of faith in the private and public sphere and individual, community, national or trans-national identity.

The role of intercultural dialogue in this sphere should seek to move on from simply bringing together faith leaders and move to seriously engaging with misconceptions and polarizing narratives concerning the nature of secular governance and the role of belief, faith and religion in society.

Annex 1. BAKU WFID SESSION FORMATS

Further to high level opening sessions, associated closed group ministerial/senior official round table sessions and the cultural programme, the Forum will consist of the following session formats:

PLENARY SESSIONS

Audience: All Attendees

The Plenary sessions will be framed around the two core themes of the forum: *INSIGHT* and *FORESIGHT*. These sessions will feature high profile speakers and world leaders, who can provide an overview of the broad range of issues and debates covered within the forum as a whole. It is intended that there will be opportunity for participation by all through moderated questions and comments.

PARALLEL SESSIONS:

Simultaneous sessions

Dialogue Round tables:

Audience: attendees can select sessions to attend between 30 -100 per session

These sessions will be designed to provide a more interactive space to explore the core issues within the forum in more depth.

Each session will be lead by a discussant chair with a panel of expert speakers.

Each speaker will speak for a maximum of 5-10 minutes on the session topic. The audience will then be invited to engage in a discussion around the session content. The Chair will end the session by summing up the whole discussion for 5 -10 minutes. The sessions are designed to enable the group to encounter and explore differing perspectives to their own. They will also be framed around the plenary session on *INSIGHT* and *FORESIGHT*.

The first day's dialogue round table sessions will focus on *REFLECTIVE* approaches. This will provide an opportunity to critically engage with past approaches to the topics/issues covered.

The second day's dialogue round table session will be *SPECULATIVE*. These sessions will be focused more towards future solutions, applications and demands for dialogue and will provide an opportunity for groups of delegates to collaboratively discuss and develop new approaches or ways forward to tackle relevant problems.

Capacity Building Workshops

Audience: Practitioner based attendees (though others may join) between 20 -30 per session

These sessions will be designed to provide interactive networking spaces which will allow practitioners to build capacity and indentify potential ways in which to work together in order to take action on specific challenges.

These will be convened by practitioner groups themselves and consist of sessions led by a number of representatives of different practice based groups. Each session will allow the host practitioner groups to introduce some of their work and the ways in which they have tackled some of the issues or problems discussed in the wider forum. The audience will then be invited to share their experiences or to give their perspectives. The session will then be summed up by the convening practitioner.

This format will provide an opportunity to both showcase groups work and to discuss some of the relevant thematic issues. Following the overarching themes of *INSIGHT* and *FORESIGHT*, the first day's capacity building workshops will focus on *SKILLS SHARING* and the second day's session will focus on *OPPORTUNITIES*.

