

Closing Remarks by H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdul Aziz Al-Nasser, The UN High Representative for The Alliance Of Civilizations at UNAOC Informal Meeting: Unity in Diversity – World Civil Society

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Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society,
Dear Friends and Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you all for joining us these past two days for a discussion which has proved to be extremely fruitful. On behalf of my team at the UNAOC, we appreciate all of your presentations which have helped us to better understand the context of your proposed initiative.

During these 2 days, you had the opportunity to meet with various entities of the UN.

First among my staff, the team of UNAOC, presenting to you the youth program, the partnership program, media program, the educational program, and migration program. We exhibited how my office deals with cultural diversity and interfaith

You were also honored by representatives of member states, Algeria, Russia, Brazil, Costa Rica, specialized agencies UNESCO, International Organization “Francophonie” and some partners from DPI the UN Academic Impact and from the Academia Fairley Dickinson University, Manhattan Multicultural Counseling, among others.

It has truly been a pleasure to have learned more about the innovative ways in which an engaged group like yours can help to advance the goals and activities of the UNAOC, particularly as they relate to the UN’s Post-2015 Development Agenda.

It was an honor to hear from NGO’s and individuals whose work is so valuable in spreading peaceful exchanges. We applaud your promotion of our pillars of youth, media, migration, and education.

We look forward to building deeper relationships as we work towards our common goals.

Today has been an opportunity to find common ground on which to collaborate. You have helped us to see how your activities will be aligned with those of the UNAOC and the ways in which your operation can support our projects.

In coming to us with this smart initiative, you are finding a niche within the UNAOC’s framework and alongside our line of activity. In helping us to achieve our goals of diversity and tolerance, you should ensure that you also maintain your autonomy in that process.

We will work independent of one another, but in harmony, as we strive to attain our respective objectives.

As individual organizations, we all have our own perspectives, opinions and ideas. This is what will make a partnership like ours successful—our diverse experiences which culminate into a broad spread of contributions and in turn, a wide array of achievements.

This, I feel, truly speaks to our theme of “Unity in Diversity.” Our various inputs, influences and involvement all advance a common objective.

With our efforts, we all share a mission to foster cross-cultural cooperation and dialogues. Allow me to clarify that cross-cultural cooperation does not mean forgoing your cultures.

We must continue to celebrate our own and each other’s cultures. We must build connections and create conversations across cultural lines. We must cherish our diversity, while still remembering that we are all united as human beings. It is in this celebration of diversity that we will truly unite. Your role as civil society is imperative in this regards.

We are not looking to streamline your participation by dictating or directing you. However we want to remind you of your responsibility that complements our mission.

Thanks to your autonomy, you will be able to customize the framework for your network. Your independent group will be able to adapt the framework so that the guidelines are specifically tailored to each of your individual needs.

You get your inspiration for what was achieved in Australia in the diverse intercultural relationships existing in this country. I agree with you it's a good model to follow.

We encourage you to continue to draw from each other's knowledge, experiences, and successes when leading your respective networks. This ever-evolving exchange of ideas and policies is possible only if you are autonomous.

In remaining autonomous, you remain innovative. We greatly value this originality and appreciate the fresh perspective it brings to the roots of our mission.

Another advantage that you all possess as independent entities is your overarching role in civil society. You have the benefit of being close to the grassroots level, whereas we at the UNAOC are on the opposite side of the spectrum, at the country level.

We commend your efforts in relation to grassroots campaigns, as they are the lifeblood of true cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. In doing so you address our concern about the lack of visibility at the local level.

But you should not be concerned about being more visible as long as you develop initiatives that are meaningful and relevant.

However, the UNAOC can also provide a link between your organizations and the country-level groups. Understanding the intergovernmental processes under which the UNAOC operates, will help you to tailor your own activities to be coherent with our agenda.

This is also an important step for you to take, as groups like yours are needed to fill in the gaps which can sometimes be overlooked through the wide-angle lens of the international level.

Thus, I encourage you to meet with the Group of Friends Focal Points in your countries of operation in order to connect with international bodies as you are already an active vibrant civil society movement. You can translate your cultural differences at the grassroots level.

I am aware that my Senior Advisor, Ms. Hanifa Mezoui, has encouraged you to apply for full UN consultative status. This will allow you to work with any UN entity, just as you are working with us.

The UN family is made up of an extensive assembly of organizations and agencies—many of which are likely to share in your respective causes. This offers many, exclusive opportunities for cooperation and collaborative projects.

This is why I must emphasize the importance of your autonomy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The next time we meet, we will be in Bali. We look forward to cooperating with you under the theme of "Unity in Diversity" and the implications it has for stability, prosperity and security.

I am looking forward to seeing you in Bali at the occasion of the UNAOC Global Forum; but not just to seeing you, I'm actually looking forward to your active participation and support.

I want you to mobilize the civil society movement in your country and around the world to bring its creativity, its operational responses and innovation into the conversation.

The role of Governments in fostering dialogue, understanding and collaboration among people and culture is important, but at the end of the day only the people themselves, local community and civil society can make the real difference. That is why I'm fully committed to help by all means to strengthen the voice of the civil society and to support all your efforts.

Our discussion today has given us a jump-start on that matter, as we have delved into your ideas for creating a more active NGO role in addressing issues pertaining to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

In closing, I would like to welcome your initiative and offer my sincere gratitude for your attendance during these two days. I look forward to pursuing this partnership which will help build a future of development and peace for all.

Thank you.