



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

UNESCO Regional Bureau  
for Education in the Arab States - Beirut

## UNESCO International Meeting of Experts

# Fostering a Culture of Intercultural Dialogue in the Arab States

Meeting Report  
UNESCO – BEIRUT

A meeting organized by UNESCO - Beirut, in partnership with the Government of Saudi Arabia and the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue and in Collaboration with the Arab Thought Foundation

The Meeting of Experts Report on “Fostering a Culture of Intercultural Dialogue in the Arab States” is prepared by **Selim EL-Sayegh**, Professor, Former Minister (Lebanon).

Edited and compiled by **Maysoun Chehab**, Basic Education Programme Consultant, UNESCO.

Reviewed by **Hegazi Idris**, Basic Education Programme Specialist, UNESCO.

The organization of the Meeting of Experts was financed by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia within the framework of the Project: Fostering a Culture of Peace and Dialogue in the Arab States.

**For more information or any queries please contact:**

UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States - Beirut  
Cité Sportive Avenue, Bir Hassan  
P. O. Box 11- 5244  
Beirut - Lebanon  
Tel: 961.1.850013/ 4  
Fax: 961.1.824854  
E-mail: [beirut@unesco.org](mailto:beirut@unesco.org)  
Website: [www.unesco.org/beirut](http://www.unesco.org/beirut)

**© All Rights reserved**  
**UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education**  
**in the Arab States - Beirut, 2012**

LB/2012/ED/RP/62

The ideas and opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of UNESCO.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



*“An approach of modern culture of dialogue must be adopted focusing on the cultural diversity as a platform to promote social cohesion, especially as countries in the era of changes are in the process of re-drafting their constitutions and their official institutions, as they are as well in search for a new social contract.”*

*“The framework required for the culture of dialogue between cultures is a methodological framework that is generally applied, while it is left of the societal and national initiatives the freedom to adopt the private and public policies on this basis.”*

# Table of Contents



<b>Background</b>		<b>7</b>
<b>Part I</b>	<b>Synthesis of the Meeting Highlights</b>	<b>11</b>
	Panel I: Framing a Culture of Intercultural Dialogue	12
	Panel II: Journalism and Intercultural Dialogue	14
	Panel III: Education and Intercultural Dialogue	16
	Panel IV: Concluding Session	19
<b>Part II</b>	<b>synthesis of the main challenges, questions, recommendations</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Part III</b>	<b>Annexes, Relevant Documents &amp; Selected Pictures</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>Annex 1:</b> Meeting Background Paper on “Promoting a Culture of Dialogue among Cultures in the Arab States”	26
	<b>Annex 2:</b> Agenda of the Meeting	46
	<b>Annex 3:</b> Guiding Questions	48
	<b>Annex 4:</b> UNESCO “Fostering a Culture of Peace and Dialogue” Project Profile	51

# Background



Within the framework of the project “Fostering a Culture of Peace and Dialogue” an international meeting of experts on ***Fostering a Culture of Intercultural Dialogue in the Arab States*** took place in Beirut, Lebanon on 6 and 7 March 2012 at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Verdun. The meeting was organized by UNESCO Beirut Office in partnership with the Government of Saudi Arabia and the King Abdulaziz Center of National Dialogue and in collaboration with the Arab Thought Foundation. The 2 days event was a landmark meeting of 35 experts and professionals from more than 11 countries, representing a wide range of fields in conflict resolution, research and education, media and journalism. The meeting is the first activity of a series of regional activities and interventions to be organized within the framework of the UNESCO project “Fostering a Culture of Peace and Dialogue”.

The meeting intended to fulfill the following objectives:

- Discuss and identify main existing opportunities and challenges related to the promotion of a culture of intercultural dialogue at the regional and national levels as a pilot phase in the Arab States.
- Share successful existing experiences/initiatives that contributed to the promotion of policies and programmes related to fostering a culture of dialogue.
- Come up with tangible recommendations for the promotion of a culture of intercultural dialogue in governmental and nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, media and civil society organizations that serve the implementation of the programme activities.
- Strengthen and sensitize a support regional structure for the promotion of a culture of intercultural dialogue in the Arab states.

The meeting covered three fields for open discussion and brainstorming:

- Framing the culture of intercultural dialogue
- Journalism and intercultural dialogue
- Education and intercultural dialogue

To maximize participation, sessions included interventions from resource persons followed by open discussion and brainstorming with all participants.

At the opening session, senior representatives of participating organizations set out their vision and expectations for the meeting and the practical follow-up. The first panel started with a presentation of the background paper “*Promoting a Culture of Dialogue among Cultures in the Arab States*”, prepared and presented by Dr. Selim El Sayegh. It was followed by two other main panels with focus on a) Journalism and intercultural dialogue and b) Education and intercultural dialogue. The meeting ended with a concluding session that presented a set of recommendations, messages and guidelines for the promotion of a culture of intercultural dialogue in the region.

*For the Background Paper please see annex 1.*

*For the detailed meeting agenda please see annex 2.*

## **SETTING THE SCENE**

In preparation for the meeting a background paper addressing main issues pertaining the promotion of a culture of intercultural dialogue was prepared and aimed to provide a frame for the meeting and its panels, as well as to lay a common and fruitful ground for discussions. The paper was shared with all participants ahead of the meeting. In addition, a set of focus questions for each panel were developed and shared with all participants and intended to orient and guide the discussions.

The meeting had a methods’ coordinator, who was in charge of the overall framing of panel discussions and acted as the main facilitator of all panels and sessions.

The meeting included three main panels, each have included in addition to the facilitator, one or two expert resource persons, who provided guidance on the substance of the discussions. At the end of each panel, the facilitator and the resource persons presented a set of partial recommendations for the participants.

For the set of focus questions please see annex 3.

## THIS REPORT

This meeting report provides a synthesis of key points and issues raised in the meeting background paper, panel presentations, and discussions. It is organized into three parts as follows:

**Part I** is a synthesis of the main issues and highlights of various panels. It is organized along the chronology of meeting.

**Part II** is a synthesis of the main challenges, questions, recommendations and guidelines discussed and highlighted by the participants.

**Part III** includes all the annexes, meeting related documents, and selected pictures.

# PART I

## Synthesis of the Meeting Highlights



### Opening Session

- **Facilitator**

Dr. Hegazi Idris/Basic Education Specialist  
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States

- **Panelists**

Dr. Hamed El Hamami/Regional Director  
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States

Dr. Fahed El Sultan/Deputy Secretary-General  
King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND)

Dr. Suleiman Abdel Muneim/General Secretary  
Arab Thought Foundation (ATF)

The opening speeches emphasized the importance of promoting a culture of intercultural dialogue in the Arab States as it allows preventing all divides and enables our region to move forward together, to deal with existing differences constructively and in line with shared values. Representatives of UNESCO, KACND, and ATF have all confirmed the commitment of their organizations towards promoting a culture of peace and dialogue. However, they all stressed that this must be met with the larger commitment of other regional organizations and governments of the Arab States.

The panelists reiterated the aims of the meeting and hoped that the meeting results will feed into the success of the UNESCO project and the advancement of promoting a culture of peace and dialogue in the region.

In addition key factual information about KACND its vision, mission, history and main activities were presented by Mr. Abdalla El Sakhan, the Training Unit General Director.



## PANEL I: Framing a Culture of Intercultural Dialogue

- **Facilitator**  
Dr. Suleiman Abdel Muneim / General Secretary  
Arab Thought Foundation (ATF)
- **Key Note Speaker**  
H. E. Dr. Selim EL Sayegh, Professor, Former Minister (Lebanon)

This panel outlined the main issues and debates associated with the issue of promoting a culture of peace and dialogue in general with particular focus on existing current situation and opportunities in the region. The role of youth and the 2012 Arab Uprisings provided an exceptional flavor for the presentation and its followed discussions.

The panel framed the topic by reviewing main concepts and definitions. It stressed the importance of differentiating between the “culture of dialogue” and the “dialogue among cultures” and well elaborated on the concepts of and interactions between culture, conflict and dialogue.

The Keynote Speaker considers that the major characteristics of cultural interactions causing conflicts could be regrouped under four categories: the identity-based divide, the religious question, the North/South divide, and the problems of governance and pointed to the following important points:

- The **identity conflicts** take the form of struggle for survival (ex the Palestinian or the minorities’ questions).
- **The separation of religion from politics is recommended** to uproot the causes of such divide. Theoretically, Islam encompasses all aspects of life including politics; however the differentiation between the higher religious principles “Ibadat” (core body of law creating imperative norms with universal application without exception. It is the obligation of the believer vis-à-vis his creator) and other religious principles the “Adat” (code of conduct or social contract that binds the believer to the other citizens) is the key that offers to Islam the possibilities of openness and flexibility which are essential for the development of an interreligious dialogue.

- On a social level, the alarming rate of poverty and the minimum income and wages in Arab countries were the major engines of the revolts against the regimes in place, noting that the lack of development in these countries widened the gap between the South and the North, between the have and the have-nots. On another hand, to keep up with the globalization, we should find a **solution for the wealth distribution issue** taking in consideration the importance of **encouraging the individual initiative** and the need of **building capacities**. To reach that stage the modernization of the state and the **openness of the community** are imperatives.
- The development of a **social pact** is a must for Arab societies. It could be based on the Lebanese one because the focal point of any social pact is the welfare of human being. The social pact is an interactive effort among the state, the private sector and the international community.
- The Panel highlighted the necessity for the dialogue to be “purposeful, frank, and open” when acknowledging the diversity of religions in the region as well as the diversity within Islam, the existence of conflict within Arab communities, and the need to expose important elements and features, such as the separation between secularism and religion within Islam itself, with a view to avoiding continued isolation and stagnation.

Followed the presentation, a number of comments and thoughts were shared by participants around the following lines:

- The need to view dialogue as part of a broader human and not only Arab perspective;
- The need of critical assessments as an essential part of the culture of dialogue, through posing questions such as: what kind of human beings do we actually want to see emerge from the dialogue? What is the conflict between identity and confession that was covered up by the dictatorial regimes?
- The need for the Arab civilization to reaching out and linking tradition to modernism.

## PANEL II: Journalism and Intercultural Dialogue

Panel II discussed the role of communication in facilitating an intercultural dialogue as a central challenge of the Arab world, especially with the increase use of social and citizen media, as well as the easy access of media among youth. It was emphasized that the use of communication is vital to advancing mutual understanding among people and between cultures. Empowering youth and professionals on the use of media and journalism is considered a vital initiative to be undertaken and supported by different actors.

### Session A: Youth as actors of intercultural media

- **Facilitator**  
H. E. Dr. Selim EL Sayegh, Professor, Former Minister (Lebanon)
- **Resource Person**  
Dr. Farag ElKamel/Professor  
Cairo University

The session outlined that media may play a dual role in facilitating or challenging the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue. While media has the ability to facilitate intercultural dialogue in diverse societies by challenging prevailing stereotypes and promoting tolerance and acceptance of existing differences, it can also reinforce prejudice and negative assumptions concerning the “others”. Therefore, a careful and sensitive approach is required.

The session noted that the recent spread of social media poses questions regarding the role of Arab youth as citizen journalist who played a focal point role in recent Arab Revolts.

The session pointed to the diversity of available media mediums: printed publications, TV, mobile phone, radio and internet... The influence of media differs from a medium to another and from a country to the other. With the wide variety of used mediums, the audience may receive information in a fragmented manner. Therefore, messages of any intercultural dialogue campaign shall be first specified in order to identify the best medium to be used.

The session affirmed the role of the state in protecting and not antagonizing the position of journalists; it should permit the establishment of journalism syndicates, facilitating access to information, raising the level of awareness, and building the capacity of human resources working in the field.

## Session B: Media as actors of intercultural dialogue

- **Facilitator**  
H. E. Dr. Selim EL Sayegh, Professor, Former Minister (Lebanon)
- **Resource Persons**  
Mr. Fadi El Halabi/Media Specialist  
Independent Consultant  
  
Mr. Firas Al-Khateeb/Media and Communication Officer  
UNESCO - BEIRUT

The session pointed to the critical period the Arab region is facing and the significant decline of concepts related to values. It described this period as an “intensive care state”. The lack of available common spaces among youth is contributing to a larger gap among cultures. The session outlined the dangerous growing tension among Sunnis and Shiites communities in the region, which in turns may lead to never-ending divides. This state shall require the immediate attention and consideration of governments, political, and religious actors. As a result, a call for action should be addressed to religious and media actors and institutions who are both considered to be main “opinion and decision makers” in this region.

The panelists and the facilitator confirmed the fundamental role of religious leaders (sheikhs and clergies) agreeing that all religious institutions should be part of the “promotion a culture of dialogue mission” and should be responsible of it in order to avoid the creation of an external role for themselves which perhaps will not be in line with intercultural dialogue objectives.

An active role of civil society in facilitating intercultural dialogue in light of extremism politics that is leading dynamic developments in the Arab world was also stressed.

## PANEL III: Education and Intercultural Dialogue

This panel explored the central role education play in fostering a culture of intercultural dialogue. It examined different forms and targets of education in the formal and non-formal education sectors. Panelists and participants confirmed the need for an education reform in the Arab region that takes place at many levels including with policies, curricula, textbooks, preparation of teachers and education personnel... Such a reform should take a holistic, integrated, scientific, and bottom up approach.

### Session A: The literature of learning

- **Facilitator**  
H. E. Dr. Selim EL Sayegh, Professor, Former Minister (Lebanon)
- **Resource Persons**  
Dr. Mohamad Faour/Senior Researcher  
CARNEGIE  
  
Ms. Eva El Assadi/Education Specialist  
Arab Thought Foundation

This session addressed the issue of quality in education that reflects inclusive and pluralistic strategies, relevant to the contexts of students in both content and form. Panelists argued the importance of an active learning approach in delivering education methods and content. Quality education is vital to nurture the “creative and emotional growth of learners” so that they will be able to a) gain the values and attitudes for responsible citizenship and b) learn to live and work together. Learning to live together should be mainstreamed in the curricula at the school level and as early as possible. The session stressed on the significant role of the mother tongue language and its impact on building a self-identity and pride. The importance of emotional intelligence was discussed, emphasizing the necessity of developing self-esteem and esteem for one’s culture; as well as empowering children with emotional management skills and techniques.

A call for rethinking citizenship education was underlined. It was suggested not only to teach citizenship in schools, but also to demonstrate it through operational ways. “A new approach is needed”; that is inclusive, pervasive, continued through life, and linked to the interests and values of the society. The engagement of parents and families in this process shall ensure the

internalization of the provided education content and would contribute to its sustainability.

The content of history books that respect diversities was highlighted. “Though it is very difficult to have a neutral history book,” it shall be developed with the participation of all stakeholders, without including or imposing prior judgments and conclusions. The session urged the inclusion of visiting historical venues and sites in the education programmes as it allows for real cultural discovery and understanding.

The role of the “teacher as facilitator” was also discussed and participants agreed that teachers need to be trained and guided in order to play the “facilitator – mediator” role.

The session pointed to the lack of available Arabic and local resources related to intercultural dialogue and called for a comprehensive regional mapping and assessment.

### **Session B: The certification of qualified programmes**

- **Facilitator**  
Ms. Maysoun Chehab/Basic Education Programme – Consultant  
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States
- **Resource Persons**  
Dr. Mahmoud Azab/First Advisor  
AL Azhar Al Sharif  
  
Dr. Malak Zaalouk/Education Professor  
American University in Cairo

This session included a presentation about Al Azhar mission and mandate towards the promotion of a culture of dialogue in the region and beyond. It was noted that Al-Azhar is the oldest education institution and the first one to work for the promotion of intercultural dialogue in the world. Al-Azhar considers that “being different” is a rule of life and that co-existence with the “other” can be only achieved through dialogue. It was affirmed that dialogue among Muslims themselves and among Islam and other civilizations in the Arab region is at the same level of importance as dialogue with the West. It was shared that Al Azhar has established the “Egyptian Family Home”, in which Orthodox, Protestant,

## Fostering a Culture of International Dialogue in the Arab States

Catholic, and Anglican representatives join with Al Azhar to promote dialogue, argue interreligious matters, and confront fanatical discourse within Egypt. The Egyptian Family Home has re-activated the culture of co-existence and dialogue between Islam and Christians in Egypt and can be considered to be a model for other countries. It includes an education committee; where its major function is to stand out the human values in each religion (as the justice in Islam and love in Christianity) in order to create a common ground for both parties and achieve the convergence of views. The presentation discussed the recent “AL Azhar Charter”, an agreement reached between Al-Azhar officials and various high-level intellectuals and religious representatives in Egypt. Its main purpose is to serve as a basis for a new social arrangement in a post-Mubarak Egypt. The Charter calls for a “modern state” that guarantees equality for all citizens and “respects freedom of thought and opinion and voices support for human rights, including children’s and women’s rights.”

The session confirmed the importance of establishing certified programmes/ courses on intercultural dialogue in academic institutions. This will in turn contribute to increased academic mobility which will guarantee intercultural competences needed in diverse societies. Such programmes will help build bridges of greater understanding and acceptance. The content of such programmes were discussed as to include courses on psycho-social support, rebuilding trust, confidence, self-esteem, and communication skills.

The session highlighted that our current programmes lack relevant and updated Arabic resources. Therefore, it is recommended to initiate a wide process of resource translation and adaptation to make them available and accessible to scholars.

Certified programmes should change to power game between instructors and students where the later should take an active role in the learning process and should be given the opportunity to actively interact with the education materials. For this purpose, instructors and teachers should be trained on how to facilitate knowledge and skills instead of imposing those on learners.

The session called to widen the circles of dialogue between universities and schools which can be achieved through increased collaboration between institutions of higher education and student exchange programmes. UNESCO Chairs are considered to be an example of such collaboration. The session concluded by stressing that our region needs to focus on ‘the how’ not ‘the why’ of promoting dialogue.

## PANEL IV: Concluding Session

The concluding session focused on the UNESCO project and aimed to come up with a set of guidelines and recommendations for the promotion of intercultural dialogue in general and for the implementation of the project components in particular. The project includes 4 main components as follows:

1. Building certified resources for regional intercultural dialogue and piloting of service learning university programme in the Arab States
2. Development and dissemination of material on intercultural dialogue in the Arab States
3. Learning to live together media Campaign
4. Reporting to others – youth, journalism and dialogue

The panel debated the four components of the project in light of the meeting discussions. It involved general exchanges on the necessity of: involving youth in the further conceptualization of the projects; adopting inclusive and bottom-up approaches in pursuing the activities of the projects; keeping a flexible and transparent process along the implementation of all activities; “thinking out of the box”; setting standards and criteria for all trainings and capacity building activities; coordinating with as many stakeholders as possible, giving special attention to innovative and small NGOs; and taking into account the existing cultural sensitivities of each country of the region.

Some other specific exchanges were also noted:

- To develop ethical standards and guidelines for any media campaign to be launched.
- To choose neutral and unbiased media institutions for any media campaign to be launched.
- To use modern and traditional media mediums such as: internet, mobile phones, radios, newspapers, flyers, facebook, twitter...
- To focus on training of trainers workshops to ensure scaling up and sustainability of the activities.
- To choose the “ambassadors” from different and diverse fields such as: art, sport, and public field.
- To target the age group 18-35 as much as possible.
- To train on what is practical, effective, and being able to be applied in the field.
- To focus on the “how” and not the “why” in relation to intercultural dialogue.
- To link up with teacher preparation programmes in higher education, pre-service, and in-service settings.
- To train on and advocate for volunteerism and life skills programmes.
- For the UNESCO project profile please see annex 4.



# PART II

## Synthesis of Main Challenges, Questions, & Recommendations



### Challenges and Issues

The following issues and challenges identified in the meeting are among the most noteworthy:

- The need to develop and scale up effective intercultural dialogue programmes in the region;
- The need to map, document, and assess innovations and successful experiences across the Arab region;
- The gap between theory and practice in the field of intercultural dialogue;
- Lack of media literacy and the know-how of promoting a culture of peace and dialogue.
- Lack of private sector or civil society involvement or the need for partnership;
- Lack of resources to meet the challenges of promoting a culture of peace and dialogue in the Arab region and the need for region-wide mobilization of resources.
- Lack of qualified personnel in the media and education field specialized in intercultural dialogue.

### Questions for further reflection

A set of questions were raised by participants during the different panels of the meeting. Below are the most salient ones:

- Why in the Arab world the religious, sectarian, cultural and ethnic diversities are sources of conflicts while they are the sources of strength and social richness in the West?
- Where are we today as Arabs from the values of dialogue and culture?
- How do we transform the values of dialogue from the theory process to the practice?
- How we should combine between the reconciliation and the frankness

in the intercultural dialogue In order to be credible?

- Who should participate in the process of dialogue, and who should not?
- What kind of human beings do we actually want to see emerge from a process of dialogue?
- How to get rid of the circular tendencies and prior impressions in our dialogue with the Western world because it is a prior condition to the success of any dialogue?
- How parties have to get rid of suspicions and concerns that the subconscious mind has in each one of us regarding facing the other?
- How is it possible to achieve the convergence of views in the education curricula in light of the prevalence of religious fanaticism in as the case in the Arab World?
- How to promote the culture of non-exclusion and acceptance of the other in a society composed mostly of extremist parties.
- How to mobilize sustainable funding for intercultural programmes and initiatives.
- What is the conflict between identity and confession that was covered up by the dictatorial regimes?
- How to avoid major crisis and ongoing conflicts?

## General Conclusions and Recommendations

Most of the meeting's objectives are achieved noting that tangible recommendations were not officially submitted however different proposals were deeply discussed as they are presented below:

- There is a difference between "culture of dialogue" and "dialogue among cultures"; the latest is the end of this project. Thus, the intercultural dialogue should be among Islam themselves, Islam and other civilizations in the Arab world, as well as Islam and the West.
- The separation of religion from politics is recommended. Openness in Islam is essential for the development of interreligious dialogue and the application is possible when we differentiate between "Ibadat" and "Adat".
- Development of social pact is crucial in the Arab societies. It could be based on Lebanese social pact.
- Issues related to governance should be treated; such as human rights, democracy, administrative reforms, and transparency etc.
- A media strategy to implement the intercultural dialogue is fundamental taking in consideration the important role of social media.
- The fundamental role of the religious institutions and leaders in the

intercultural dialogue is confirmed.

- The rectification of the education curricula and the training of the instructors are very necessary in order to include the intercultural dialogue in the academic institutions, schools as well as universities.
- The participation of all civil society components in the intercultural dialogue is a requisite; youth, woman, people with disabilities, journalists, and academic

According to the “guiding questions for discussion” prepared previously by the author, 23 questions among 55 were debated in the seminar which means 42% of the total questions. The remaining 58% of the questions are to be addressed by the steering committee of the project and submitted to a focus group for further evaluation.

# PART III

## Annexes, Relevant Documents, & Selected Pictures



- Annex 1: Meeting Background Paper on “Promoting a Culture of Dialogue among Cultures in the Arab States”
- Annex 2: Agenda of the Meeting
- Annex 3: Guiding Questions
- Annex 4: UNESCO “Fostering a Culture of Peace and Dialogue” Project Profile
- Annex 5: Selected Pictures from the Meeting

## **Annex 1: Meeting Background Paper**

### **Promoting the Culture of Dialogue between Cultures in the Arab World** Background Paper by Sélim El Sayegh

#### **Introduction**

The major challenge of the Arab uprisings resides in the youth drive. Accounting for 60 per cent of the Arab population, Youth have been calling for political and economic reforms. During the revolts, these claims have become more radical seeking a fundamental change. This gradual evolution, from a relatively partial change to a more absolute comprehensive one, ushers in a new era with a different intellectual construct. With the ousting of dictatorships, all civil society forces are unleashed with huge actual and potential resources mobilized to contribute to building up the new order. Groups of solidarity, communities, parties, associations, and organizations of all nature among many others put forward new ideas and adequate action plans. Liberty thus acclaimed becomes the outcry for dignity, honor and pride.

Never before in the Arab world has the individual had such a central place as it does today. An individual fully grasping the possibilities of restored liberty and recognized dignity gives birth to a new citizen acting in a new paradigm; a new citizen that seeks a transcendence of the ego to relate the individual to the common good. This fresh paradigm empowers the individual as a citizen in the name of equality, while simultaneously recognizing the right of difference of each citizen when it comes to belonging to a culture or sub-culture. The right to be different involves more than the right to differ and to dispute and by the same token, the obligation of peaceful settlement. The right to be different, by belonging to a culture or a sub-culture means in a new era of liberty and dignity, the obligation to conduct a transformation of the patterns generating disputes and conflicts among cultures. Henceforth, the issue of promoting the culture of intercultural dialogue in the aftermath of the Arab revolts represents major characteristics that will be reflected hereafter.

### Framing the issue: culture of dialogue or culture of dialogue between cultures?

One should first differentiate between the «culture of dialogue” and the “**culture of dialogue between cultures**”. The Culture of Dialogue aims at building collective customs and traditions that would lead to finding a peaceful solution to both the solving and the disagreement matters. Thus, the objective becomes inclusive to the community as a whole, without any distinction made between cultures or between cultural specificities which are the embedded components. The culture of dialogue has a public pattern that characterizes a given society, a given family and a given state.

As for the **dialogue between cultures**, it stems from the general culture of dialogue, but takes into account the cultural factor as the standard on the basis of which the points of difference and conflict are identified. It is therefore vital to examine the positive and negative effects of this cultural factor in order to recognize the evolution of the disagreement towards an open conflict, seeking to build a common ground that preserves on one hand the cultural specificity of the national components, while on the other hand it is linked to the principle of the common good, which is -in this context- to maintain civil peace as well as social and human interactions. The impact of the dialogue between cultures can be national and “internal” as it can be regional and “external”.

In order to grasp all the dimensions of this paradigm shift, it is important to try to understand the concepts of and interactions between culture, conflict and dialogue.

### Culture

Culture comes from the Latin term (*colere*). It refers to the placement of symbolic practices, often called “codes” into a theatrical scene. Those theatrical representations are designed to transmit a sense of belonging. They are derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population in a sociological manner. However, dialogue is differently organized and includes images or “encodements” (symbols) and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations (traditions), contemporaries, and formed by the individuals themselves (modern). Therefore, Culture becomes a set of shared and enduring meanings, values and beliefs that characterize groups and orient their behavior.

- **Culture is a community domain. Indeed**, culture is essentially collective and it affects and influences human behavior. In general, culture often determines the criteria for what is good or bad. Values as part of the culture influence “the selection from available modes, means and

ends of action” (Kuckhohn, 1951, p.395). Actors may be guided unconsciously by cultural values that help reproduce learned behavior.

- *Culture helps people to build and preserve their own identity.* Identity stems from the consciousness of difference. Sometimes, this identity sharpens after a confrontation. It strengthens the self-esteem of the individual, and it makes it easier for the individual to accept compromises in deals with other parties without being afraid of “losing face”.
- *Subcultures.* Corporate or professional culture is a subculture that has its own meanings, norms of behavior and symbols. A corporate culture also has a transnational dimension which may conflict with the local ethnic cultures. This conflict may sometimes lead to opposed rationale and strategies. The family culture, the clan and the tribal culture, are all infra national cultures, making it even more difficult to assess the dominant characteristics of a person’s or group’s culture.
- *Culture also seeks an analysis of the past,* to look and see what went wrong. This is a process of self-reflection which is a form of therapy in itself.
- *Culture is a positive organizing force,* that lends coherence, meaning and richness to life (Lebaron, 2001, p.6). It shapes a person’s values and identity. Identity stems from differences in Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class, Religion, Nation, Language, and Geographic Region.
- *Characteristics of culture,* In addition to dynamism that makes it open to the different interactions with its environment, culture has three major characteristics, heterogeneity, social complexity and individual construct.
- *Heterogeneity* Though it gives coherence to organized individuals, the nature of Culture itself is rarely homogenous. Culture is rarely monolithic. It has a heterogeneous nature and is embodied by a number of internal paradoxes and contradictions so that decoding the behaviors of individuals requires a fine understanding of its complexity. It is composed of a major, a minor and sometimes of different minors. This intra-cultural variation helps interpret the cultural reference of a lawyer belonging to an Orthodox group from Lebanon located in a village in the Beka’ Valley. He has a Lebanese, Orthodox, Beka’i and legal cultures which must be recognized in order to comprehend what motivates him. Such a cultural mapping shows the complexity

of the cultural containers in a society, in our case, the national, the regional, the religious community and the professional subculture. Globalizing behaviors, jumping to shortcuts or oversimplification of the heterogeneous and pluralistic nature of Culture leads to false and sometimes dangerous stereotyping. However, this heterogeneous characteristic is not an impediment to resolving conflict. True cultural management by the choice of values, their development, and their reinforcement as a result of the learning process of the dialogue itself could lead to satisfactory ending of the dispute such as the Rhine water dispute (Faure & Rubin, p.216).

- ***Social complexity*** The heterogeneous nature of society implies that individuals belonging to a group with a dominant culture might not be sharing exactly the same cultural content. The Greek-Orthodox lawyer example illustrates the comparison that could be made with another Greek-Orthodox man from the same village, but who is a gardener. The socio-professional subculture differentiates both individuals' cultures and therefore, would provoke different behaviors in certain situations.
- ***Individual Construct*** A psychological approach to culture seeks to establish the link between the inputs; the way culture is integrated by human beings at both the levels of affect and cognition; and the output; the way behavior is affected by that integration and how it is generated. The introduction of psychology to the analysis of culture has another important effect: the constructive approach to culture. The individual, whether he is or is not aware of the culture embodied in him/her may consciously or unconsciously, use different cultural references according to the situation he is facing.

At the international level, with national groups distinct from his own, an individual could react as if he were most exclusively embedded with a national culture, allowing it to dominate his behavior. In Collective Bargaining, putting Labor Union and Business representatives face to face, the individual becomes ideologically motivated, with his predominating behavior animated by his professional culture. His functional interest supersedes his national or other interests. The same holds true when it comes to issues of ethnicity, gender, race, religion, geographic belonging or language. The integration of culture and the way it affects behavior depends on the situation involved and the connection of the issue to the hierarchy of one's interests.



## Conflict

Conflict is a situation in which parties holding incompatible views take action against each other. Conflict is therefore the willingness to make one's view prevail over that of another by using different coercive means, including the use of force. The incompatibility of views stemming from divergent ideas, interests or persons involves mental struggle because of the opposing needs, drives, wishes, and internal or external demands.

Not all conflicts are decisively influenced by culture. Culture's impact on conflict is a function of a number of variables. Among these are perceptions, interdependence, language and style, pluralism and national interest, legitimacy, leadership, gender, number of parties, power, and historical memory.

The perceptions of conflict, as a concept, differ greatly from one culture to another. Some cultures dictate conflict avoidance; others are more prudent, preparing for war to win peace. Still others apply the principle of an eye for eye. Would dealing with the other party in an open way be considered as a betrayal, or on the contrary, would it be praised as a wise move to preserve peace?

In cases where interdependence is high, where common interests are greater than divergent ones, and issues of values and identities are diffuse, culture is likely to play a peripheral role in framing the conflict.

Cultural differences affect the style and language with which conflict patterns are expressed and transmitted. The problems of communication before and during the conflict become so central that a critical part of the process of conflict resolution must be consumed by the matter of assigning meanings to words and behaviors. Language structures reality and orders experience. Language influences perceptions and thinking. Language is linked to symbols and communication.

*Culture* either helps communication, or it may hinder it when stereotypes and differences lead to distortions and cause misunderstandings. If there are no perceptions of similarities or shared values, it may be hard to continue regular communications and the parties may be prone to accept a mediator or facilitator.

*As for pluralism and national interest*, the complexity of international relations and the extension of its domain has empowered new actors other than states. The diplomatic game is no longer the exclusive sphere of a few trained civil servants belonging to the same Foreign Service sub-culture. Other professional subcultures are involved in conflict and later in its resolution. Experts in

different domains play major roles as facilitators or as influential resources in conflict management and transformation. The major difficulty that often arises out of this pluralism, before the resolution process starts, is to forge a coherent national interest between different domestic actors with different cultures and sub-cultures. In order to overcome such intra-national cultural clashes, the conflict transformer must spend a great deal of time focused not only on the problem itself, but on related issues as well. Examples of those types of issues can include reconciling domestic views through inter-ministerial coordination or selling the draft agreement to the constituency. It frequently is a necessary step before sealing off any agreement; otherwise, it could ultimately be rejected during the ratification process. Even when the issue is technical, the need for domestic approval gives a political dimension and becomes then open to cross-national cultural influences.

Legitimacy and its embedded notion of justice, is the driver of many conflicts. It is the very backbone of any solid agreement. For legitimacy and justice to be fulfilled, they should be the product of popular consent, adhesion, and appropriation; a very cultural process involving human beings, as individuals and as organized collectives.

Producing conflict transformation may require faster processes than those involving long-term ownership by the public of the outcome that resolves the conflict. Most of the time, it requires strong leadership capable of taking risks in order to achieve peace. Those risks are taken with the knowledge of the other party. They will have often to face the resistance to change of ones' own party. Here again, there must be a balance between the realistic approach, advocating the necessity of creating a compromise, sometimes at the expense of perceived legitimacy; and the cultural approach, in which one is tempted to see the world only through the lens of one's own rights. Leadership could then be tempted by demagogy, using culture to promote or to block a deal. It could be historic, inspired by real statecraft, and taking initiatives regardless of the fluctuations of public opinion. In both cases, the involvement of public opinion in the settlement raises the political stakes and increases the influence of cross-cultural differences (Cohen R., 1990).

Women have unique interests and needs. A cultural perspective takes such specificity into consideration placing as much importance on the gender issue as any other cultural consideration. It integrates the perspective into all processes and all levels of conflict prevention and peace-promoting effort. Women are usually only regarded as victims of conflict, and are therefore overlooked in the conflict transformation process. In order for women to become actors of

peace building, there should be a focus on their often ignored but important role during the conflict: women act as bridge-builders between parties. As the warriors are usually men, it is left to women to ensure the continuation of civil life, through education, arts, and daily tasks. In the post-conflict phase, the attitude of local populations to equal rights for women and men may become an obstacle to implementing a gender perspective (Karamé K., 2006).

Degrees of power play a major role and therefore cultural factors might become less decisive in the determination of conflict parameters and their resolution. According to this approach, power suppresses differences, minimizes obstacles, simplifies relationships, and unifies language. Once the balance of power is evident, strategic forecasting may be increased reducing immaterial frictions. The intensity of the cultural dimension is not uniform, however. It is a function of the evolution of the conflict and the violence level tolerated.

The way a group selectively interprets past events is its historical memory. By doing so, it attempts to apply historical lessons to current needs. Here, "the present explains the past" (Braudel F., 1969). At this point, history becomes instrumental not only to the present but to the future as well. When it is applied to future-focused projects, historical memory serves a political objective, and reinforces the cultural cohesiveness of the group. Historical truth or reality has no meaning other than the one appropriated by the collective memory. The dynamic relationship between culture, politics and the past affects the evolution of a conflict and its resolution.

### **Intercultural Dialogue for transformation/prevention**

In this process, the parties change the patterns of conflict. They change the structure and the system that were conducive to the emergence of disagreement. The goal is integration of all concerns and interests into a new paradigm. This integrative approach goes beyond a mere win-win. The end result is greater than the sum of the component parts. Europe's post World War II era is a good example of preventing war between Germany and France through the integration of the ingredients of military industry, in the framework of the Steel and Coal European Community. Intercultural dialogue shifts the focus of the process from achieving a cessation of hostilities or negative peace to addressing the causes of structural and cultural violence or positive peace.

Actually, culture can read the situation through the prism of the actor of a conflict. This actor is primarily concerned with the data helping him deal with the day-to-day issues on the ground. He tries to identify all relevant details and the subtleties of language that are the key to understanding the precise

scope of words used, and to encoding the behavior and attitudes of the others. This is case study approach. Culture can also seek to build categories that could be used in different situations across different cases. The idea is to determine the most salient parameters of culture in order to integrate them into a quantitative analysis. In using both approaches, the actor perspective and the categorization tool, one should avoid falling into the trap of reducing diversity, forcing homogeneity, assuming stability of dimensions of culture, and potentially, dictate some determinism of the behavior of individuals and groups. In order to avoid such oversimplification, a balanced combination of the case study approach and the category approach tries to organize the issue into categories before addressing the specifics of the case studied. Henceforth, the risk taking by the Youth is peculiar of dynamic societies, but then to determine the price this category is going to pay depends on the precise socio-economic and political context framing the specific perceptions of the actors.

### **Characteristics of cultural interactions with conflicts and dialogue in the Arab World**

The major characteristics of cultural interactions with conflicts in the Arab world can be regrouped under four categories: the identity-based divide, the religious question, the North/South divide, and the problems of governance.

#### *The identity-based divide*

During intense and prolonged conflict, identity conflicts take the form of a struggle for survival. Affirming one's existence in the climate of hatred becomes synonymous with the annihilation or reduction of the other. Maximizing one's share is essentially a fight for the right to live with dignity. The Palestinian Question is a good illustration of the centrality of such an identity-based divide. Other examples can be taken from the minority question in the Middle East, and it may concern ethnic groups (the Kurds or the Armenians) or religious ones (the Shi'a or the Christians). This issue complicates the traditional intra-state paradigm. It adds the dimension of non-state actors and forces the adoption of additional levels of analysis, focused on conflict genesis and transformation through intercultural dialogue.

#### *The religious question*

Religion plays an active role in escalating and de-escalating a conflict because it influences the issues, parties, strategies, outcomes, and interveners. Religion helps to construct both the individual's and the group's value system and worldview. If an individual or a group has internalized a set of religious values, these beliefs can motivate changes in attitude and action.

### *The complex nature of religion*

- The demarcation lines are not defined between religions, but within the same religion as well. Instead of becoming a source of inspiration to build the common good for all humanity, religion thus used by politics becomes a source of differentiation to assert one's claims and demands in the name of the private good of the community. These new demarcation lines of politics embedded with religious alibi put more pressure on the inter-religious dialogue. The separation of religion from politics could have been one venue to uproot the causes of such a divide. This approach remains theoretical and impractical. Theoretically, Islam is a way of life that encompasses all aspects of life, including politics. And practically, the religious awareness and the emergence of political parties claiming the implementation of Sharia as the major source of law make very difficult to operate such separation between religion and politics.
- There is however some genuine effort made to differentiate in Islam between the higher religious principles or Ibadat, and the other religious principles relate or Adat. The first set is the core body of law that creates imperative norms that suffer no exception and should be of universal application. Whereas the second set is open to interpretation and adaptation to the prevailing situation. The first one creates the obligation for the believer vis-à-vis his creator, whereas the second one creates the code of conduct or the social contract that binds the believer to the other citizens. That internal vertical separation within the hierarchy of norms of Islam replaces the difficult horizontal separation between religion and politics and by so doing, paves the way for a more civic approach to constitutions, laws and policies. A genuine common understanding of the possibilities offered by Islam for such an openness and flexibility is mostly needed with an outcome oriented research and development of the interreligious dialogue.

### *Intercultural friction*

A crisis, which may have been a simple intercultural incident, has overtaken its entire existential dimension. Regarding the notion of freedom of speech, misrepresentations are sometimes made. The respect of freedom of speech has been falsely opposed to the issue of lack of respect for the sacredness of human rights. Wrongly but surely, an opposition exists between Islam and the West, to the detriment of the effort to separate the domain of the private sphere and the domain of the public sphere. This resurgence of the question of values is charged with emotions. Dialogue both at the conceptual or the procedural level can't but remain durably affected.

### *Difficult isolation of religious variables*

- It is very difficult if not impossible to find a speaker in the name of the whole community of Islam. This religion has interacted with the different societies adopting many of their customs and opening it up to all kinds of interpretations and beliefs. It means that the perception of Islam as a structuring set of beliefs to determine the culture and then the behavior could be reductionist of a more complex reality. In the Arab world, the divide occurs between “religious” political parties and within them. Such a divide makes it even more difficult to use religion alone to determine the patterns of intercultural dialogue.
- Examples of the revolt in different Arab countries show that the issue of religion was diluted in the opposing positions taken by different referents in Islam. Therefore, the call of Ulemas to oust the dictators was faced by other religious opinions advocating the regimes in place. Issues such as dignity, honor and pride were the driving mottos behind the dynamism of the uprisings. But the religious parties, because of their organized force, were able to draw most of the votes cast in the elections. Such a result should not lead however to another simplification according to which institutional Islam rules the most revolutionary countries: Religion plays a role in mobilizing the masses along with ethical values but it does in a context embedded with more variables than religion, such as the North/South divide and the problems of Governance.

## **The North/South Divide**

### *The problems of globalization*

- Those problems coupled with the slow pace of development in the Arab countries, have widened the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The patterns of opposition however, are not represented according to the traditional North/South divide but rather to the West in opposition to Islam.
- For example, the issue of the Prophet Mohammad cartoons has triggered unprecedented public and diplomatic reaction in the Arab and Islamic worlds. Satirically mocking the most sacred person in Islam in a western country is viewed as an offensive behavior. It was perceived to be a lack of respect for the values of the other, and a violation of the sacred. The crisis, which could have been relegated to the level of a simple intercultural incident, has expanded into another level. It sparked tensions between core values in each culture, freedom of speech and the respect of holy symbols. As a result, the notion of sacredness has extended to cover a wide range of concepts and principles, such as human rights and religious traditions.

### *The social dimension*

Such a situation would have been much less likely to occur, had it not been for the fertile ground provided by social despair. The feeling of oppression and marginalization of the weakest towards the West that is wealthy, powerful and modern proved the conviction that international justice has been sacrificed for the interests of the powerful.

The Arab revolts gave a strong indicator of the role played by the have-nots in the Revolutions. Social unrest and contestation were in phase with the prodemocracy activists. The alarming rate of poverty, the minimum income and wages, the degree of organization of the unions joined their efforts to give a decisive blow to the regimes in place. The strong unionized labor shaped beliefs and created a resistant culture of social strata seeking to protect the poor and the labor force from exploitation. In the post-revolutionary era, social issues remain central and will certainly cut across all other cultural dimensions. Therefore, to promote a culture of intercultural dialogue means to take into consideration the permanent need for collective bargaining between the partners of the Social Pact.

### *The problems of Governance*

The recurrent problem of governance remains at the center stage in the current Arab transformations. Whether corporate or public; governance is intimately linked to the question of development in all its dimensions, whether human, social, economic or political. The perennial aspects of this development question give it a structural dimension, intrinsically shaping collective behavior, and becoming an integral part of the value system. It is against this cultural background that perceptions of conflict in the Arab countries interact with issues related to Governance such as: gender, education and technology, the role of the state and civil society and transparency. Human rights, democracy and digital divide have required a special focus.

### *The Human Rights Issue*

- Human rights belong to each person on the basis of his or her inherent dignity as a human being. No difference is made on the basis of nationality, race, color, social status, gender, age, political beliefs, wealth, sexual orientation or any other discriminating characteristic. Dignity affords human beings certain fundamental rights and freedoms that are universal. They apply at all times in all situations and contexts. They relate to the principles of equality, security, liberty and integrity embodied in legal principles addressing concrete needs.
- The basic needs of human beings are: clothing, community, creation, education, food, freedom, free movement, health, identity, love, money,

participation, protection, recognition, resources, respect, shelter, subsistence, understanding and water.

- To address these needs, international legal instruments have been developed and adhered to by most countries. They have a great deal of legal weight, even for those countries that have not ratified them. In fact, they are part of international customary law and most are considered part of jus cogens, or the imperative self-imposing rules of law. The most important of these needs are: the right to life, liberty, and security of the individual; the right not to be subjected to slavery, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile; the right to be recognized as a person before the law, presumed innocent until proven guilty; the right to freedom of movement; the right to own property, to work, to the free choice of employment, and just conditions of work; the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and of thought, conscience, and religion; the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; the right to take part in the government of one's country, and to equal access to public service; the right to an adequate standard of living (including food, shelter, water, medical care); the right to education and to freely participate in the cultural life of the community; the right to marry and to found a family.
- The denial of political, civil, economic, social, cultural, and other human rights infringes upon the dignity and integrity of human beings; and undermines their wellbeing and welfare, hindering their participation in public life. When it occurs over an extended period of time, it could provoke a phenomenon of accommodation. With the evolution of communication and the society of knowledge, the expectations for a betterment of one's conditions have increased. When those expectations are not met, they trigger frustrations, making this a definite source of conflict that may take two forms. An internalized form is characterized by the person or the group inflicting upon itself apathy and a negative attitude leading to civil disobedience and a lack of trust in the respective system or the government. An externalized form allows the claims to come in terms of social or political expression occurring through both the institutions or in the street.
- This sustained denial of human rights must be addressed at the structural level over a long period of time. This can be accomplished through the development of legal measures and institutional reforms, or through grass roots training, education and development.



*The issue of democracy*

- The rule of the majority includes the rule of human rights as well. Cultural relativism has not served in this trend; thus, the question to be raised is “What is the counter model for the democracy coming from the West”? In point of fact there is no specific model for democracy; hence, there is and will be a cultural and intellectual pressing influence over the Arab countries until they develop a capacity to propose their own respective models. Democracy goes with freedom, and freedom goes with security. Yet, the more important factor in time of conflict, such that of the Arab-Israeli or the global war on terrorism is definitely security. Another question surfaces here: “Is the concept of freedom at odds with security?” “Does the issue of Security surface again?” What if the security issue, due to the nature of the conflict (the case of Israel) or the domestic threat to regimes or stability becomes not an ad hoc but rather a perennial matter? This means that while freedom is necessary to both generating and perpetuating democratic life, it will be forever subject to the most basic human rights: the right to the integrity and safety of the human being. Traditionally, a culture of accommodation with the foundations of realism becomes the dominant aspect of political life. It was faced with a growing frustration from an elite eager to participate in public life but finally accepting institutionalized clientelism as a mere fact of life. Therefore, adhering to the President party became the exclusive way to win a ticket in the governance system. The Arab states were often faced with a dilemma: if they were to give more freedom they would face greater threat. If they were to offer no freedom there would be no democracy. That lack of democracy created in fact more frustration and became a fertile ground for further turmoil. By and large, many governments failed to find the right balance between security and freedom. The destitution of different dictatorships in the Arab regions bring about a new era in which security and liberty have to operate for the sake of justice and therefore, civil peace.
- This nationalization of the democracy issue led to another important justification. Some systems use culture as an alibi to avoid proceeding with the necessary reforms. This justification assumes that the population is not yet ripe for handling democracy, and thus the creation of a larger middle class is needed before opening the door to democratic regimes. This issue of ripeness is no longer a valid argument, as appropriate measures with an adequate calendar help accelerate the democratization process and further motivate the population to make the necessary efforts to gain democracy. Otherwise, issues of the

security cycle, freedom, frustration and conflict feed off of the growing dissatisfaction developed by permanent cultural factors that largely influence conflict transformation.

- One of the major lessons of the Arab revolts is that the opposition does not have a single leader. This is a turning point in the history of revolutions and a major breakthrough. From the cult of the leader, the revolutionaries passed to the cult of the people. The people express themselves culturally. The proper of this emerging culture of the opposition is that no shaping is imposed from the top, no inherited paradigms to be followed, no mores or beliefs to be adopted in the name of natural or divine law. Liberty is the liberalization from the leader. The success of the revolution of the masses, and the emerging Republic, is concomitant to the failure of the personification of power. The sterilization of the political arena for a long term did not leave much chance for alternative leadership to prepare for power change or sharing. That repressive method of using threat against any emerging non-complying elite was transformed into an opportunity by the revolutions. The regime did not know where to concentrate its coercion when the moment of truth came. In the post-revolutions era, the democratic process has to recreate the political fabric allowing enough space for the emergence of a new elite.
- Such a process seemingly leads to the emergence of a culture of the new Republic, a new Social Pact and a new citizen. The more the revolutionaries in power become embedded with the achievements of their democratic leap forward, the more the culture of dialogue spreads, and with it, the respect for diversity within unity. In that framework, intercultural dialogue takes another dimension, between the old timers, or reactionary forces, and the modernists, aspiring to consolidate the new regime. The purpose of such a dialogue is to reconstruct the civil peace by an inclusive and global approach for all citizens, regardless of their “cultural” divide.

### *The issue of the digital divide*

- The digital revolution and the technological transfer of know-how largely contributed to the creation of an information and knowledge society. The trend of globalization impacted the elite with a potential spillover effect on other social classes. However, it did not reduce the gap between the different social classes nor contributed to a redistribution of wealth or power. The digital revolution was accordingly perceived to have fallen short of producing a decisive change in relationships within the national system. For almost a generation, the digital revolution remained intangible in a sense; it did not change the patterns of social

and political interactions in a decisive way. It needed the intersection with hard realities, with tangibles, to gain its strategic importance.

- The expectations of a higher level of transparency in government due to the possibilities opened by the internet and public information systems were not met. Corruption remained high by all standards, while administrative reforms managed to perpetuate patron-client relationships at the expense of meritocracy. The technological leap forward, where it happened, failed to produce the social, political and cultural transformation necessary to support the much-needed change. This digital divide widened the gap between the governed, or the leftovers by globalization, and the governors still sponsored by the International Community largely identified with the North. In other words, the North/South opposition took an infra-national dimension importing by so doing all the traditional burden of that divide.
- The frustration from failing to harvest the fruits of globalization implicates two targets: the domestic scene and international one. Domestically, the elite were accused of not having grasped all the opportunities offered to them by globalization and the venue of new challenges. At the International level the rich countries supportive of the Arab governments were suspected of perpetuating a power structure ready to sell the interests of the population to obtain the favors of the West. Here, the conflict takes on the essence of an ideological strife, one of the elements of our definition of culture. Mixed feelings about being left behind by globalization and nationalistic pride coupled with religious fervor unleashed new forces driven by cultural values and claims.
- The different Arab revolts intensively used social media. The authors were improvised journalists, reporting news and often times making the news. For the first time, social media ensured by the democratization of the use of the internet in Arab countries became an important political vehicle. So far controlled by the regimes, social media succeeded in bypassing coercive measures put in place to cover and promote the new ideas emerging out of the street. In some cases, it brought people to the streets. It largely contributed to bring down the state wall or firewalls of fear. The social media came as a support of the traditional media whose coverage, through cell phones and amateur reporters, was determinant in shaping the international public opinion. In some instances, the social media even replaced the traditional media. The Egyptian revolution was loaded with all means of new technologies of information and communication; it was even a “downloaded” revolution.

- How social media becomes determinant of a cultural pattern to shape identity and promote differentiation remains uncertain. More certain is that social media has emerged as an instrument of privileged expression or vehicle of Youth culture. It has played a major role in structuring the beliefs and claims of the Youth. In that sense, social media becomes a tool kit to better organize the underground in times of repression. Its role was less important during the organization of the elections. If Facebook was privileged by the candidate Barack Obama in 2009, it was neutralized during the Tunisian and Egyptian elections in 2011/12.
- These reserved remarks about the cultural impact of social media should not alleviate the importance of the role they play in shaping internally the cohesion of a group or community. The social media here plays a major role in “customizing” the awareness developed by different groups or communities by keeping a steady flow of information about a given situation or by maintaining an open line of discussion on different forums or digital platforms. Therefore, social media regardless of its role in the Arab revolts or in the post revolutions elections are expected to largely contribute to promoting, if not creating, the culture of intercultural dialogue.

### **As a result to this analysis, why there is need for a culture of dialogue between cultures?**

In fact, the changes in the Arab world reflects increasingly reflect the diversity that characterizes its various communities; and hence, it highlights the challenges/ problems relating to the conflict of the generations, particularly in the light of the rising youth factor, the friction between religions and sects, the conflict between the urban and rural areas, in addition to the escalation of violence on ethnic basis. These are breeding grounds of extremism that feed creating an industry of fear and an abuse of the intimidation from the other. All these issues embed cultural factors that tear the social fabric, threaten the family unit and affect the system of social, civil and political rights. Therefore an approach of modern culture of dialogue must be adopted focusing on the cultural diversity as a platform to promote social cohesion, especially as countries in the era of changes are in the process of re-drafting their constitutions and their official institutions, as they are as well in search for a new social contract. Promoting the concept of citizenship is to provide equal rights and duties on one side, while on the other is to study the cultural factors that create gaps between citizens as individuals belonging to communities. As a consequence, a culture of dialogue between cultures is developed, and further communication

is reinforced between groups, keeping in mind the significance of the citizen's rights, which are the main goal and basis for every dialogue.

The call for such a dialogue between cultures does not mean that the dialogue should take place between the representatives of these cultures, such as a youth delegate in a dialogue with an elderly representative, or a representative of women groups with another group, or representatives of ethnic minority in a dialogue with certain majority groups. Moreover, a dialogue between two ethnic cultures is different from a dialogue taking place between two sectarian cultures and it does not neither resemble to a dialogue between two national cultures, nor so forth. Dialogue is by itself an introduction of awareness about the need to take into account these cultural considerations in any decision or public policy, away from embracing a single model or prototype reproducible in all cases. Therefore, each dialogue has its features, its assets and its framework. It is therefore necessary to identify the general concept of dialogue. For instance, the dialogue in both the Islamic and the Arab Worlds is at the same time a general principle that reminds of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It is also a means of communication between the parties to the conflict through. Dialogue is also a way of life that is a duty before, during and after the emergence of conflict.

The dialogue in the traditional Arab culture has existed since before the advent of the Islam. It is part of the religious, ethical and moral duties, as expressed in a number of Coranic that state that resorting to force is the most hated actions. Therefore, there is a need to re-highlight these concepts so as to re-endorse the mechanisms of resolution such as counseling and consensus and to link these decisions to the concept of right and justice.

The framework required for the culture of dialogue between cultures is a methodological framework that is generally applied, while it is left of the societal and national initiatives the freedom to adopt the private and public policies on this basis. Therefore, the proposed UNESCO project (Annex 1) gives an outline of some of the key priorities that will stimulate the concerned countries to complement this framework with other priorities to be adopted as per their needs.

At this level of analysis, it is important to attribute high importance to the choice of the themes or topics to be addressed in the project, in particular the freedom of the media. Indeed, accountability and transparency stem from freedom, including the prospect of expression. It assumes legal and constitutional protections on one hand, while it guarantees the collective consciousness that

enriches and the cultural diversity as a catalyst for the development of the society on the other. As a result, it becomes important building the capacities on the means of freedom of expression, as well as the importance of the press and the media, as it is necessary today to be closely interrelated with one of the key components of society, namely young people who can build on the negative cultural heritage and liberate it from the unbending tradition and therefore to put it into the dilemmas of modernity. A key dilemma is to participate in governance and to respect the other opinion, especially when this opinion is of a cultural construct.

The universities are a shared space that represents a marked common space of interaction between the components of the community free from the cultural heritage constraints. As such, the university assumes the responsibility of identifying the culture of respect for other opinions, learning about different cultures as well as respecting various groups' opinions. This task can be reached through the curriculum development as well as through reinforcing the student governance within the university, whereby students need to learn the various means of conflict resolution and dialogue assets. Accordingly, the university becomes the best tool to convert a multicultural society from the state of fear of the other to the state of building confidence.

When the issues of dialogue are approached, the extraction of the best experiences out of the history of this region shall ascertain for the recognition of a deeper maturity among their people, especially for the need to resort to peaceful means when any dispute emerges. What is true at family level is also applicable at public matter. The intensification of the historical accumulation would enhance the privacy of the Arab region, without underestimating the general commitment to the human values as to renounce to violence and adopt a dialogue in any case. On this basis, one must develop school and university programs that link between global principles and local experiences while avoiding any cultural appropriateness in the name of privacy and any cultural sterilization in the name of a universalism.

**Annex 1:**

	Objectives	
<b>Youth &amp; Journalism</b>	<p>Youth Capacity Building. Intercultural Dialogue</p> <p>Expectations: Produce, participate traditional/ New media</p> <p>Youth led media</p> <p>Guidelines for training of youth</p> <p>Journalists - universities</p>	
<b>Media Campaign</b>	<p>Foster &amp; Promote a Culture of dialogue</p> <p>Awareness. Shared human value systems. Range of common ground. Critical thought on values system. Capacity Building of regional media professionals.</p> <p>Expectations: Mapping of Media actors, Seminars. Traditional &amp; new media, 60 trainees of national media campaign (design- assessment). Media global campaigns, 30 profs (6 countries), 3 regional Ambassadors</p>	
<b>Material</b>	<p>Education for children and youth</p> <p>Quality improvement</p> <p>Expectations: Materials to trainers, teachers, community workers, leaders</p> <p>Sensitive on use of Database of materials</p>	
<b>Certification &amp; University</b>	<p>Improve Human Resource capacity to establish/ sustain certified training system- Networking/ common space</p> <p>Expectations: Training &amp; certifications system = formal /informal settings</p> <p>Capacity to practice</p> <p>Network of practitioners &amp; facilitators</p>	

	Activities	Outputs
	<p>Review of current initiatives in universities Training modules on Citizen Media &amp; Intercultural Dialogue</p> <p>2 sub-regional youth training workshops</p> <p>1 sub-regional professional training for 6 countries</p> <p>support 12 youth – led media projects</p>	<p>180 youth trained, 40 academic &amp; professional trained</p> <p>Training modules in Arabic on Citizen Media &amp; Intercultural Dialogue</p> <p>12 Youth-led social media projects</p> <p>Network on youth media &amp; Intercultural Dialogue</p> <p>Regional Conference report</p>
	<p>Mapping of Media actors: Intercultural Dialogue, Tolerance, Common human values</p> <p>Seminars - focus media personnel</p> <p>Religious leaders- inter-faith, inter-community, in weekly seminars</p> <p>Training on key ambassadors</p> <p>Public/outdoor media campaign</p>	<p>Research on media mgt</p> <p>Training &amp; Empowerment of national counterparts</p> <p>Media campaign materials</p>
	<p>Review materials of King Abdullah Center &amp; adopt a selection of them</p> <p>Mapping of existing materials</p> <p>To establish short list of materials for review/translation/development/localization</p> <p>Generic guidelines &amp; norms for civic education at local/regional</p> <p>Test/validate with youth organizations &amp; Public Schools</p>	<p>Mapping of education &amp; Learning activities</p> <p>Mapping of skills</p> <p>Education &amp; training materials on/offline</p>
	<p>Review materials</p> <p>Identification &amp; training of critical core group of regional &amp; national trainees through seminars &amp; workshops</p> <p>Development of national action plan for training = formal/non formal settings</p> <p>Guidelines- credit-bearing university course</p> <p>UNESCO chairs</p>	<p>High Level working group - training modules</p> <p>30 regional experts</p> <p>120 national trainers</p> <p>Leaders' training at all levels</p> <p>Guidelines- graduate level University</p> <p>UNESCO chairs</p>



## Annex 2: Agenda of the Meeting

### DAY I – 6 March, 2012

Time	Session
8.30 – 9.00	Registration
9.00 – 10.00	Opening Session and Welcoming Remarks by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UNESCO</li><li>• Dr. Hamed El Hammami / Regional Director</li><li>• King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue</li><li>• Dr. Fahed El Sultan / Deputy Secretary-General</li><li>• Arab Thought Foundation</li><li>• Dr. Suleiman Abdel Muneim / Director</li></ul> King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue Overview and Achievements by Dr. Fahed El Sultan
10.00 - 11.00	<b>Panel I. Framing the Culture of Intercultural Dialogue-</b>  Presentation by the KEY NOTE Speaker His Excellency, Dr. Selim El Sayegh, Professor, Former Minister
11.00 – 11.30	COFFEE BREAK
11.30 –12.45	<b>Panel I. Framing the Culture of Intercultural Dialogue – Continued Discussion</b>
12.45 – 2.00	LUNCH
2.00 – 3.30	<b>Panel II. Journalism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Session A:</b> Youth as actors of intercultural media Resource Person: Dr. Farag ElKamel</li></ul>
3.30 - 4.00	COFFEE BREAK
4.00 – 5.30	<b>Panel II. Journalism – Continued</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Session B:</b> Media as actors of intercultural dialogue Resource Persons: Mr. Fadi El Halabi / Mr. Firas Al-Kateeb</li></ul>

**DAY II – 7 March, 2012**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>
<b>9.00 – 10.30</b>	<b>Panel III. Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Session A:</b> The literature of learning Resource Person: Dr. Mohamad Faour / Ms. Eva El Assadi</li></ul>
<b>10.30 – 11.00</b>	<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>
<b>11.00 – 12.30</b>	<b>Panel III. Education – Continued</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Session B:</b> The certification of qualified programmes Resource Person: Dr. Malak Zaalouk</li></ul>
<b>12.30 – 1.45</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
1.45 – 2.15	<b>Al Fayha Choir</b> – A message of Peace from Lebanon
<b>2.15 – 4.30</b>	<b>Panel IV. Concluding Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recommendations</li><li>• Guidelines</li><li>• Messages</li><li>• Closing Remarks</li></ul>
4.30 – 6.30	<b>Working Group Session / by Invitation ONLY</b>  Common Human Values – Pilot Project in Lebanon

## **Annex 3: Guiding Questions for Discussion**

### ***Panel I. FRAMING THE CULTURE OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE***

- What is dialogue? A culture of dialogue? An intercultural dialogue? An intercultural issue?
- Would core values sterilize the cultural dimension of dialogue?
- What is the link between culture and conflict? Social, political or violent conflict?
- Could a culture frame a conflict? Could a conflict be beneficial for dialogue?
- What is the impact of culture on conflict resolution?
- What are the roles of identity? Religion? Development? Issues of Governance?
- Issues of Governance, mainly: the human rights, democracy, technology and transparency, the civil state, the citizenship, the participation in governance...?
- Could Dialogue work in all phases of a conflict? Pre-conflict? During a conflict? In post conflict?
- How to isolate the cultural dimension of a conflict, a potential conflict, a transformation of a conflict?
- How to obtain recognition of the diagnosis of the issue?
- How to get the major stakeholders commitment to transformation of the existing situation?
- How would a process be designed?
- How to institutionalize the promotion of the culture of intercultural dialogue?
- How to integrate the findings at the different implementing levels? Social level, policy level or constitutional level?
- What are the roles of the different stakeholders, i.e., the government, the civil society, the private sector?
- Why do you consider Youth participation important?
- How can the equal participation of men and women in intercultural dialogue be ensured?
- Could Media be an independent actor for the promotion of culture of intercultural dialogue?
- Is the absence of available knowledge, literature or resources an issue for the promotion of such a culture?
- Should the learning process be institutionalized? If yes, how far? If no, why? And then what are the alternatives?

## **Panel II. JOURNALISM**

### **A. Youth as actors of intercultural dialogue**

- Is citizen media a concept well defined? Could any citizen be responsible? Who is a citizen journalist? What is the code of ethics applied? Could citizen journalism be unionized? Are there differences between social media and citizen journalism? If yes, what are they?
- How does citizen journalism reflect the state of democracy and cultural diversity in our region?
- What are the means of independence of Youth journalism?
- What is the responsibility of the state, if any, to foster and promote Youth journalism?
- How institutionalized Youth and citizen journalism could go? Otherwise what are the means of its sustainability?
- What is the responsibility of the media institutions, if any, to recognize and acknowledge or even to protect and promote the Youth or citizen media?
- How could universities, both as incubators of Youth ideas and action plans and as providers of learning systems, deal with Youth and citizen journalism?
- Good practices: universities? Citizen social media? Youth oriented media?
- Is there a need for guidelines to training the Youth journalists? If yes, what should they be? If not, why?
- What are the criteria of success for social media projects? The future of social media/citizen journalism in view of new technological advances

### **B. Media as actors of intercultural dialogue**

- Is there a need for a code of ethics reflecting core values?
- How critical thought could be expressed?
- How tolerance is perceived across cultures?
- How much religious leaders could play a role in promoting a culture of intercultural dialogue? What are the risks? How could they be addressed?
- What are the best tools to promote a media campaign? TV? Radio? Internet? Social media? Leaflets? Outdoor public?
- What is the role of the private sector? The government? The civil society?
- Good practices?
- Guidelines?
- Criteria of success?

### **Panel III. EDUCATION**

#### **A. The literature of learning**

- Is there a genuine culture of education on intercultural dialogue?
- How history is written? Is there a consensus on its content? Is diversity respected? Are there other means to build the collective memory?
- Is there a need for a civic education book? If yes, what are the guidelines and norms for civic education at local/regional levels? Who should be involved in the process of developing guidelines of civic education?
- What is a good approach to promote common human values in education?
- Which common human values are considered to be fundamental for the promotion of a culture of intercultural dialogue?
- How should mapping of resources be conducted?
- What are the criteria of selection of a short list of materials to review, translate and develop?
- How are skilled people identified? What are the criteria for their selection?
- Good practices?

#### **B. The certification of qualified programmes**

- Is there a need for an independent regional authority to accredit norms, programmes or persons in “culture of intercultural dialogue”?
- Is the label important?
- How do you evaluate the creation of a UNESCO chair in the field? Should it be limited to few, many or all involved countries?
- Is there a need for a national action plan for training? If yes, who or what should be the authority responsible for its implementation?
- What are the incentives to the universities to create curricula related to the field?

### **Panel IV. CONCLUSIONS**

- What are the messages you would like absolutely to see present in the recommendations?
- Do you think the finances for the pilot project are appropriate? Why?
- Are there certain indicators/methodologies that can be used to evaluate the impact of such activities?
- What are the main factors that shall ensure the sustainability of the project activities?
- What are the three main expected successes of this project?
- What are the three main risks to avoid in this project?
- Do you have any idea of a follow-up of this meeting?

## Annex 4: UNESCO Project Profile

### Fostering a Culture of Peace and Dialogue in the Arab States

On 11 May 2011, the Saudi Vice-Minister of Education, Mr Faisal bin Muaammar, and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Ms Irina Bokova, have signed an agreement for the implementation of activities related to the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Programme for the Culture of Peace and Dialogue, to which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has appropriated \$5 million.

### BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Arab regional programme for a culture of peace and dialogue is a very central initiative, given the present situation in this region, in which we witness ongoing youth revolution, conflicts and civil strives, mistrust and tensions among communities, and violence within countries and/or cultures including those in Lebanon, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain, and Palestine .

Such existing conditions violate children's rights to life, freedom of expression, family unity, health and education, protection from violence and abuse, and the right to receive humanitarian assistance. Extremely high levels of internal and external displacement are associated with these complex emergencies.

Generations and Youth living in such environments are in lack of developing appropriate social and emotional skills and positive attitudes toward self and others. Here comes the vital role of education, where it helps to prepare young generation and youth to cope with social, cultural, and political differences.

While several Arab states are either in conflict or in post conflict situation, and while other states are working seriously in integrating active learning approaches, shared values and human rights in school curricula, UNESCO has always emphasized the fundamental role of education in promoting the culture of peace and dialogue among cultures.

Based on this standpoint and on the UNESCO's mission "to Build Peace in the Mind of People", UNESCO and the King Abdul Aziz Center for National Dialogue, a partnership between both parties has developed to promote and foster a culture of Peace and Dialogue in the Arab States. Intercultural dialogue is, implicitly and explicitly, a common objective and purpose for both UNESCO and the "Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue" in addition to a range of national and civil as well as other stakeholders.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

- To spread the concept of a culture of peace and dialogue, its mechanisms and its methodologies, especially among the youth, so as to shape life styles and to help address contemporary, regional and global challenges.
- To advocate the principles of a culture of peace and to foster greater intercultural understanding and cooperation with the other through meaningful intellectual dialogue.
- To rectify approaches prevailing in societies that hinder cooperation, rapprochement, understanding, and dialogue.
- To enrich the cultural life of people around the world by fostering respect for cultural diversity.
- To give the chance to people, both men and women, from all walks of life to know one another through dialogue.

The UNESCO Regional Office for Education (Beirut, Lebanon) is responsible for the design and the implementation of cross-sectoral field activities aiming at developing a culture of dialogue and strengthening attitudes geared towards openness, tolerance, mutual understanding and the promotion of common human values.

## TARGET

The scope of these activities will be the Arab States as a whole, and more specifically 10 countries and territories, including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and Occupied Palestinian Territories.

## COMPONENTS – Project B

FOUR main components will be implemented by UNESCO BEIRUT

- **Building certified resources for regional intercultural dialogue and piloting of service learning university programme in the Arab States**

The main aim of this component is to build regional capacity to establish and sustain a certified training system for intercultural and intercommunity dialogue in selected countries in the Arab region.

- **Development and dissemination of material on intercultural dialogue in the Arab States**

The main aim of this component is to improve the quality of intercultural and intercommunity education opportunities for children and youth

in selected Arab States, particularly those in conflict or post-conflict settings. This project will seek to establish national and regional databases that can offer trainers, teachers and facilitators access to high-quality intercultural dialogue materials that are age, culture, situation and language appropriate both online and offline.

- **Learning to live together media Campaign**

The aim of this component is to raise awareness among youth and general public about commonality of shared human value systems and range of common ground within national and regional context; to promote and provoke critical thought and interactive discussion on issues related to common human value systems in the public sphere in the Arab Region; and to build capacity of regional media professionals in relation to principles and practice of intercultural dialogue in the Arab States through the Learning to Live Together Technique.

- **Reporting to others – youth, journalism and dialogue**

The main aim of this component is to build the capacity of youth in relation to intercultural dialogue in the Arab States. To this end it is expected that this component will a) build the capacity of youth in selected Arab States to understand, produce and participate in traditional and new media related to intercultural dialogue. B) Raise awareness of the importance of intercultural dialogue through the implementation of Youth-led media projects around intercultural dialogue in selected Arab States. C) Develop and disseminate guidelines for training of youth journalists on intercultural dialogue in the Arab region.

These field activities related to the above components will include, among others, the design of innovative resources and methodologies aiming at disseminating a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding within the region; new empowering initiatives for making profit of these resources and developing intercultural skills through training and capacity-building (for several target groups, including youth, women, journalists, teachers and religious authorities); the promotion of the culture of dialogue and mutual understanding through public campaigns (in the media, schools and communities) and volunteering initiatives.

A first phase for the implementation of the activities will start in February 2012 and develop until February 2014. The activities for the second phase will be decided after the review of the results achieved in the first phase.