



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Mission Permanente du Royaume du Maroc
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies à Genève



Ethics
Education

33RD HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SIDE EVENT

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER:

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

REPORT



**BRIEF REPORT OF THE SIDE EVENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE
33RD SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL:**

**"LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN
PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM"**

**26 SEPTEMBER 2016,
16:00 – 17:30
PALAIS DES NATIONS, ROOM XXII
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND.**

ORGANIZED BY:

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF MORROCO TO THE UNITED
NATIONS IN GENEVA
UNESCO - GENEVA LIAISON OFFICE
ARIGATOU INTERNATIONAL - GENEVA**

PANELISTS

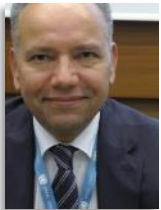


H.E MR. HASSAN BOUKILI

Deputy Permanent Representative and Minister Plenipotentiary,
Permanent Representation to the United Nations in Geneva, Kingdom of Morocco



MS. FATEN MADHI AL-HUSSAINI,
Founder,
JustUnity



MR. ABDULAZIZ ALMUZAINI

Director,
UNESCO Geneva Liaison Office
UNESCO Representative to the United Nations in Geneva



MS. MARIA LUCIA URIBE,
Director,
Arigatou International Geneva



FATHER LAWRENCE IWUAMADI,
Biblical Scholar Ecumenical Institute at Bossey
World Council of Churches



MODERATOR:

MS. TRISHA RIEDY,
Manager,
Peacemaking and Conflict Prevention Programme
UNITAR

INTRODUCTION

The Side Event “Learning to Live Together: the Role of Education in Preventing Violent Extremism”, convened by the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations in Geneva, the UNESCO Geneva Liaison office and Arigatou International Geneva brought together over 60 participants, including delegates from 15 Member States, representatives from other organizations in the United Nations system and civil society, religious leaders and technical experts.

The event aimed at discussing the role of education in preventing radicalization of young people and violent extremism, as well as sharing good practices and policy recommendations to support the work of governments, civil society and the United Nations in the implementation of the UN Secretary-General Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.



DISCUSSION

The discussion was moderated by Ms Trisha Riedy, Manager and Senior Trainer at UNITAR for the [Peacemaking and Conflict Prevention Programme](#). This programme delivers innovative training in negotiation and mediation with the goal to share the latest knowledge, tools and experience for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including training and knowledge resources to address root causes of conflict.

Mr Abdulaziz Almuzaini, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva stressed the fact that young people must be a priority and should be part of the solution against radicalization and violent extremism. He highlighted how education is key to prevention, and is a strategic response to the threats faced by young people. It is in this light, that the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism recognizes education as one of the seven priority areas to be considered when developing national plans of action and regional strategies for prevention.

However, the UNESCO representative emphasized how a specific type of quality education is needed, a type of education that equips learners to develop critical thinking, empathy, and respect for diversity: a type of education that



provides a positive sense of identity and belonging and fosters mutual understanding and respect, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue. UNESCO has been carrying out this work within the conceptual and strategic framework on [Global Citizenship Education](#) (GCED), one of the three pillars of the UN Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative, developing important guidance tools that include practical [guide for teachers and educators on the prevention of violent extremism](#).

Mr Almuzaini continued stressing the important role of religious communities and leaders in setting the example and outreaching to the youth promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue, to complement the actions undertaken within the

actions undertaken within the formal education sector. If we are to succeed in our efforts to prevent violent extremism, we need to be all involved and to work together.

Mr Hassan Boukili, Deputy Permanent Representative and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco in Geneva, continued the discussions highlighting the importance of education but as well the need to implement a comprehensive approach that while fostering dialogue and a culture of peace in our societies, also looks at the root causes of extremism trying to understand what are the factors that push so many young people to become extremists and violent. The representative of the Permanent



Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco presented a series of initiatives that the Kingdom of Morocco has been implementing to foster openness and dialogue, especially inter-faith dialogue and mutual understanding. He presented the National Institute, where hundreds of Imams from Africa, Asia and Europe are benefiting from training programmes on moderate Islam. He continued citing a famous TV programme in Morocco where Islamic religious leaders have the possibility to reach out to youth with positive and transformative messages, highlighting how important it is to also use alternative platforms to formal education to convey positive messages.

Concluding his intervention Mr Boukili mentioned several important initiatives that the Kingdom of Morocco has been coordinating at the UN level to prevent violent extremism, citing the establishment of a Group of Friends on Preventing Violent Extremism, in September 2016, under the joint leadership of the Kingdom of Morocco and the United States of America, as well as the Joint Statement of the Group of Friends on Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism supported by more than 40 countries, during the 33rd session of the Human rights Council.

Father Lawrence Iwuamadi, Biblical Scholar from the [Ecumenical Institute of Bossey](#) representing the World Council of Churches continued the conversation stressing how religion plays a central role in the prevention of violent extremism for several reasons; first of all religious communities can be part of the transformative change: often time religious institutions provide formal and informal education for children and young people, and religious leaders and religious communities are often role models and set the examples for the children and youth that trust and rely on them for advice. But also religious leaders are sometimes messengers of a negative rhetoric and this is why we need to work together to challenge their position and to make them active supporters and key players in the agenda to fight extremism and radicalization. Religious leaders need to be intentional about creating a conducive environment that promotes dialogue and understanding. He continued citing the work of the World Council of Churches – Bossey Ecumenical Institute that brings together youth from different faiths to learn, discuss and exchange ideas together.

Father Lawrence concluded his remarks by reminding how important it is that governments recognize the role of religious leaders and actively engage and collaborate with them,



including in alternative and constructive ways with the goal to prevent violent extremist, precisely in a comprehensive way that takes into account the positive contribution that religions can make.

The third panelist, a youth representative from Norway, Ms Faten Madhi Al-Hussaini, took the floor and opened her remarks by mentioning some of the concrete initiatives that her organization JustUnity (<http://www.justunity.no>) carries out in Norway to support different sectors of the society in their work to prevent radicalization. She mentioned how often they support teachers in learning how to talk about extremism in their classroom as well as. In detecting the signs that can hint.

if a young person is at risk. She cited their work with over 70 young people in Norway that intended to join the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group in Syria, trying to understand the reason why they wanted to turn to violence and extremism. She highlighted how young boys and girls are often driven to join ISIS in Syria because they feel totally isolated by the society they live in, without safe spaces. These young people are marginalized and rejected by their religious communities and their families that perceive them as “too modern” to fit in. In turn, they are welcomed by the radical groups that “erase” their past and take them in as new comers that now found a new sense of belonging in extremism and violence.



What JustUnity provides is a safe space for discussion among friends that care and try to understand.

Ms Al-Hussaini concluded her remarks by highlighting the importance of including the families, and particularly parents in the programs that are designed to counter the emergence of extremism and radicalization. This will help bridging the intergenerational gap and support parents in understanding their children more, including detecting signs of radicalization.

Ms Maria Lucia Uribe, Director of the Arigatou International Office in Geneva, continued the conversation looking beyond education into other measures that together with education need to be implemented to respond to the structural causes that lead individuals to adhere to violent extremist groups. Therefore, she emphasized that the focus of education is not on the individuals but on the conditions that lead to violent extremism. Therefore, not developing programs and policies for those who we believe are at risk but creating conducive environments to tackle conditions that can breed extremism. We need to design education programs to prevent violent extremism that are for everyone and not for certain groups of

the population, because there is no linear pathway to extremism. Ms Uribe continued her intervention mentioning several of the conditions that can breed violent extremism including the need for belonging, acceptance and recognition, the need to feel included and part of a society and group and the lack of spaces and means to make young people's voices heard, as well as the lack of exposure to dialogue processes.

She continued stressing how the challenge for education is fostering individuals who are aware, care and respond to global problems, but are rooted in their deepest sense of who they are, are allowed to be and become, and can express and develop their individual identities. To do this it is not enough to talk about formal education, when the development ecosystem of a child is composed of the family, religious institutions, school, media, social media, and the neighborhood where they grow. Therefore, it is necessary to address these places and promote education that goes beyond the school setting.

Ms Uribe continued presenting the work of Arigatou International in collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF citing the ["Learning to Live Together - An inter-cultural and](#)



[Inter-faith Programme for Ethics Education";](#) a program now implemented in more than 30 countries around the world with the goal for educators (teachers, youth leaders, social workers) to nurture ethical values and spirituality in children and youth that will help them strengthen their identity and critical thinking, ability to make well grounded decisions, respect and work with people of other cultures and religions, and foster their individual and collective responsibilities in a global community. An example of this work is the current partnership of Arigatou International with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kenya and the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa to work in Tana River county. This initiative reached more than 600 students, teachers as well as

curriculum developers and trainers, and have helped promoting interfaith learning, developing children's critical thinking and challenge their stereotypes and prejudices between ethnic groups.

She concluded reflecting on the important roles that teachers have to play in creating the spaces in the classroom to dialogue, embrace diversity and allow for questioning, and that is why enough resources need to be channeled to for teacher in-service training. Finally, echoing the message of Father Lawrence, she highlighted the importance of connecting religious education and religious communities with global the citizenship agenda.

The interventions of the panelists were followed by an open discussion. Several interventions stressed the importance of designing policies and programmes that while targeting the youth at risk, also include education programs to prevent violent extremism that are for everyone and that bring together parents, families and the communities, including religious leaders.

During the debate, an emphasis was put on the important role that religious leaders and religious communities can play and on the need to connect formal education programmes aimed at encouraging dialogue and respect, with informal education initiatives led by the religious communities.

The discussion also looked at new and alternative ways for implementing meaningful partnerships on this topic that while creating awareness, can also contribute to push for action and the dissemination of good and emerging practices for implementation.



WAY FORWARD

The Side Event highlighted a strong commitment and a sense of urgency for Member States, UN agencies and civil society organizations to join forces and work together on this topic.

Member States have created in 2016 a Group of friends on Preventing Violent Extremism under the joint leadership of the Kingdom of Morocco and the United States of America.

Arigatou International together with the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations in Geneva, the UNESCO Geneva Liaison office and UN Agencies, are fully committed to continue working on this topic, exploring concrete ways for partnerships and actions as we move forward.

It is imperative that we move the agenda forward when it comes to the implementation of the UN SG Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. At the same time, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals provide a greater framework for working together on this topic in a comprehensive manner tackling the conditions that can breed violent extremism.

The upcoming Human Rights Council in March 2017 also provides an opportunity for awareness raising and action that the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations in Geneva, the UNESCO Geneva Liaison office and Arigatou International will take to build political will, accelerate action and strengthen partnerships to prevent radicalization and violent extremism.



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