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**10<sup>th</sup> UNAOC Global Forum, Cascais, 25-27 November 2024**

**Plenary Session 2:**  
**“United in Peace: Restoring Trust, Reshaping the Future”**

26 November 2024, 15:00 - 17:00, Estoril Convention Centre

*Draft*

In today's interconnected world, the fabric of our society is fraying under the weight of growing mistrust and division. Increased polarization, inequalities, and the rapid spread of misinformation have contributed to a pervasive atmosphere of suspicion and fear eroding the foundations of trust that are essential for peaceful coexistence, leading to increased tensions and conflicts both within and between nations.

Trust is a fundamental component and a prerequisite of social cohesion. It allows individuals and groups to engage with one another, cooperate for common goals, and resolve conflicts through dialogue and other means of preventive diplomacy, rather than violence. Regrettably, in many parts of the world, trust is deteriorating. Communities are becoming increasingly fragmented, and the bonds that once held societies together are weakening. The rise of populism and nationalism in various regions has exacerbated these divisions, leveraging on fears and prejudices to gain support, often at the expense of social harmony. This has led to a climate of suspicion and hostility, where individuals are less likely to trust those who are different from them be it in terms of ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs. Moreover, the rapid advancement of technology and the proliferation of digital platforms have created new challenges for trust. While these platforms have the potential to bring people together, they have also been used to spread misinformation, amplify divisive narratives, fuel religious intolerance and violent extremism, and create echo chambers where individuals are only exposed to views that reinforce their own biases. This has further deepened societal divisions and contributed to the erosion of trust in media, governments, and even in fellow citizens.

The repercussions of mistrust are felt globally, undermining efforts of the international community to address shared human challenges across peace and security, development and human rights pillars of the United Nations. The Pact for the Future,<sup>1</sup> adopted at the Summit of the Future this past September, seeks to reaffirm and strengthen multilateralism, ensuring that global governance structures are equipped to handle the complexities of the 21st century. Central to this vision is the restoration of trust and solidarity between governments and their citizens, between nations, and within the international community. "Our Common Agenda,"<sup>2</sup> a comprehensive report developed by the United Nations Secretary-General, further emphasizes the need to rebuild trust

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Pact for the Future, 2024. Available at: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sof-pact\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_adopted.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sof-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General, 2021. Available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n21/217/01/pdf/n2121701.pdf>

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as a cornerstone for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting peace and security.

Against this backdrop, this session seeks to address the erosion of trust that hampers collective action and challenges the vision of a world “united in peace”. It also aims to inspire collaborative efforts that unite different communities and stakeholders in the shared pursuit of peaceful and positive coexistence. The insights gained from the session will also further inform the strategic direction for UNAOC, for the past two decades, has served as a pivotal United Nations platform for fostering dialogue, mutual respect, cooperation and collective action to promote inclusive and harmonious societies.

The speakers will address the following guiding questions:

- In what ways can governments, civil society, and international organizations work together to rebuild trust in multilateral institutions and promote greater solidarity among nations?
- What are the key factors contributing to the erosion of trust within societies, and how can they be addressed through inclusive dialogue and cooperation?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in bridging divides between different social, cultural, and political groups to create more cohesive and peaceful societies?
- How can we promote critical thinking, empathy, and understanding in future generations to counteract rising polarization?
- How can the principles outlined in "Our Common Agenda" and the Pact for the Future be effectively implemented to counteract pushback on human rights while promoting peace, security, and sustainable development?