10th UNAOC Global Forum, Cascais, 25-27 November 2024

Thematic Panel 4:
"Igniting dialogue for peace through inclusive transformative education"

27 November 2024, 11:30 – 13:00, Estoril Convention Centre

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Education plays a central role in building inclusive and peaceful societies in an increasingly fragmented world. The challenges of racism, xenophobia, and hate speech continue to deepen societal divides, making dialogue across cultural, religious, and ethnic lines essential for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Inclusive transformative education provides a pathway to ignite dialogue for peace by equipping individuals with the tools to understand and respect diversity, engage in critical thinking, and contribute to intercultural dialogue.

Transformative education moves beyond knowledge acquisition, fostering socio-emotional and behavioral competencies that help students become global citizens who actively create peaceful and inclusive communities. It nurtures shared values, empathy, and respect for human dignity, essential for overcoming cultural and social divides. This aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4.7,[1]which emphasizes the need for education to promote global citizenship, human rights, gender equality, peace, and sustainability.

Since its inception, UNAOC has recognized the importance of education as a tool for peacebuilding and dialogue. Through initiatives such as the Young Peacebuilders, Fellowship Programme, Empowering Dialogue and Interfaith Networks (EDIN), #YouthWagingPeace, News Generation Against Hate, Digital Games for Peace, and Summer Schools, UNAOC has successfully promoted the use of education to strengthen cross-cultural understanding and solidarity.

This session will not only highlight good practices in inclusive transformative education but also explore how education systems can evolve to address new challenges, such as social inequalities, political polarization, and global crises. The recently adopted UN Pact for the Future[2] stresses the importance of providing safe, inclusive, and quality education which must equip learners with the necessary skills to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. Additionally, the Global Digital Compact[3]—to be discussed at the summit—underscores the importance of integrating digital tools into education to foster inclusive dialogue and combat rising misinformation and hate speech online. Participants will share insights on how education can prevent conflict, promote dialogue, and foster social cohesion, drawing from successful approaches that bridge divides and build a sense of shared humanity.

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[1] United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 4: Quality Education, 2015. Available at: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4
[2] United Nations, Pact for the Future, para. 60, p. 25-26,2024. Available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf
[3] United Nations, Global Digital Compact, 2024. Available at: https://www.un.org/techenvoy/global-digital-compact

The speakers will address the following guiding questions:

- What are the competencies that education systems need to cultivate for individuals to thrive in an increasingly diverse, digital, and multi-polar world?
- What successful approaches have been used to foster respect for diversity, solidarity, and shared humanity through transformative education, and how can they be scaled or adapted globally?
- How can education programmes integrate intercultural and interfaith dialogue to promote shared values and mutual understanding, fostering collaboration between different cultural and religious groups?
- How can digital tools, including AI, VR, and social media platforms, be used to foster global citizenship, facilitate intercultural dialogue, and counter the spread of hate speech and misinformation?
- What role should youth play in transforming education systems and in shaping education policies that promote inclusive, peace-oriented learning environments, particularly in the context of the upcoming Summit of the Future?
- How can successful practices in inclusive transformative education be translated into transformative policies that are aligned with global frameworks like SDG 4.7, the Global Digital Compact, and Our Common Agenda?
- What are the key obstacles in implementing inclusive transformative education, particularly in marginalized or conflict-affected communities, and how can they be addressed?