

A Dialogue for Unity and Peace: Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future

April 7-10, 2025

Highlights Booklet





Introduction



The main goal of the event was to explore new strategies for maintaining global peace, understanding the evolving world order, and building stronger intercultural dialogue to address global challenges.

Topics discussed during the event included:

- Remembrance and reflection: learning from history
- Multilateralism and global peace
- The role of international organizations in peace building
- The role of China in multilateralism and global development
- The impact of Technology on global diplomacy
- Youth and inclusive leadership for a better tomorrow
- Strengthening dialogue for a shared future

Understanding the Key Discussions



01

Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future

The event reflected on the lessons of World War II and examined the continuing importance of historical memory, multilateral cooperation, and international institutions in promoting peace and preventing future conflicts.

02

Building an Inclusive and Peaceful Global Future

Discussions explored diplomatic cooperation, China's contribution to global development, the role of emerging technologies in international relations, youth leadership in diplomacy, and the importance of dialogue across nations and cultures.

From Dialogue to Action:



Distinguished Voices Shaping Global Perspectives

Bringing together former presidents, ministers, ambassadors, United Nations representatives, distinguished scholars, policy practitioners, and leaders from academia and civil society, the conference created a unique forum for dialogue across generations, cultures, and professional disciplines.

The high-level panels generated rich and forward-looking discussions on peacebuilding, multilateralism, intercultural dialogue, sustainable development, technological innovation, and youth engagement. Drawing upon decades of leadership and international experience, speakers offered valuable perspectives on navigating contemporary global challenges while advancing a shared vision of cooperation, stability, and human progress.

The pages that follow provide an overview of each panel discussion and the key themes that emerged throughout the event.



Plenary Session 1

“80 Years Since World War II: Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future”

This distinguished panel brought together former heads of state and senior international representatives to reflect on the enduring legacy of World War II and its relevance to contemporary global affairs. The discussion featured **Gjorge Ivanov**, President of the Republic of Macedonia (2009–2019); **Ivo Josipović**, President of the Republic of Croatia (2010–2015); **Boris Tadić**, President of the Republic of Serbia (2004–2012); and **Mladen Ivanić**, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014–2015, 2016–2017). The panel also included a video message from **Zlatko Lagumdžija**, Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations and former Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and was moderated by **Ivica Bocevski**, former Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration and diplomat.

Plenary Session 2

“Building a Future of Peace: UNAOC’s role in promoting dialogue and global unity”

This panel explored the vital role of intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and inclusive engagement in building more peaceful and cohesive societies. The discussion featured **Darko Kostadinovski**, President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia and former Special Envoy for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC); **Halit Eren**, renowned scholar and advocate for intercultural cooperation; and **Shener Bilali**, Advisor to the Prime Minister on interethnic relations.

The panel also included **Rashela Mizrahi**, Member of Parliament and former Minister of Labor and Social Policy, and **Milan Đorđević**, Professor at the Orthodox Faculty of Theology in Skopje. Moderated by **Ivan Ivanov**, Chairman of the ICAC Executive Board, the discussion highlighted the importance of dialogue across cultures, religions, and communities as a foundation for peace, social cohesion, and global unity.





Plenary Session 3

80 Years of Multilateralism: What it means for the next 80 years?

This panel examined the enduring lessons of World War II and their significance for addressing contemporary global challenges. The discussion featured video remarks by **Ismail Serageldin**, Founding Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and former Vice President of the World Bank, alongside insights from **Jovan Donev**, former Ambassador of Macedonia to the United Kingdom; **Gong Jiong**, Professor at the University of International Business and Economics; and **Rabi Sedrak**, Head of the Security Research Department at the Institute for International Strategic & Security Studies. The session was moderated by **Zoran Dabikj**, former Macedonian Ambassador to the OSCE, the United Nations in Vienna, and NATO.



In his special remarks, **H.E. Rafael Soriano Ortiz**, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain, underscored the importance of preserving historical memory and strengthening international cooperation in an increasingly complex global environment. His contribution highlighted the value of dialogue, diplomacy, and shared responsibility in shaping a more peaceful and resilient future.

Plenary Session 4

09

“The Role of China in Multilateralism and Global Development”

This panel explored China's evolving role in promoting multilateral cooperation, sustainable development, and international economic connectivity. The discussion featured **Shen Yujing**, Deputy Director of the Macro Research Department at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China; **Feng Zhongping**, Director-General of the Institute of European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS); **Igor Radev**, Chair Scholar at the Knowledge Centre of Sinology of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts and was moderated by **Zhidas Daskalovski**, Full Professor at St. Kliment Ohridski University in Bitola,





Plenary Session 5

"Tech-Driven Diplomacy: Can AI and New Technologies Bridge Global Gaps or Deepen Divides?"

This panel explored the transformative impact of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies on diplomacy, governance, and international cooperation. The discussion featured **Sam Daws**, Senior Advisor to the Oxford Martin AI Governance Initiative at Oxford University; **Milica Pejanović-Đurišić**, former Minister of Defense of Montenegro; and **Cai Yuezhou**, Senior Research Fellow and Professor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

The panel also included **Goran Shibakovski**, Dean of the Faculty of Applied IT, Machine Intelligence and Robotics; **Boris Petrović-Njegoš**, member of the House of Petrović-Njegoš; and **Anis Sefidanis**, Associate Professor at the University of Information Science and Technology "St. Paul the Apostle". Moderated by **Kriste Krstovski**, Associate Research Scientist at Columbia University's Data Science Institute and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Columbia Business School, the panel examined both the opportunities and challenges presented by technological innovation. Speakers discussed the role of AI in strengthening international dialogue, addressing global challenges, and shaping the future of diplomacy in an increasingly digital world.

Youth Panel Discussion

“Inclusive Leadership: The Role of Youth in Global Stability”

This panel highlighted the importance of empowering young leaders to contribute to diplomacy, innovation, and social progress in an increasingly interconnected world. The discussion featured **Gordan Jordanov**, Macedonia and Europe Director of United Macedonian Diaspora; **Anastasija Ilievska**, President of the Ivanov School for Leaders Alumni Association (ISLAA); **Happy Gilbert Mhango**, First Secretary for Development at the Embassy of the Republic of Malawi in Berlin and ISLAA member; **Monika Rizovska Tanevska**, Global Community Director at Women in Tech®; and **Jakov Pavlović Latas**, Financial Advisor and independent corporate consultant. Moderated by **Danche Azmanova Mirchevska**, founder of workingmom.mk and ISLAA alumna, the panel explored the role of youth engagement, leadership development, and cross-sector collaboration in strengthening global stability.



Closing session

“Strengthening Dialogue for Building a Community of Shared Future for Mankind”



Petar Stoyanov, President of Bulgaria (1997-2002)



Gabriel De Godoy, UNHCR Representative



Xu Lei, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of China, Skopje



Ivan Ivanov, ICAC Executive Board Chairman

Speakers and Panelists





Miguel Ángel Moratinos,
United Nations Under-Secretary-
General, High Representative
for the United Nations Alliance
of Civilizations



Lu Shaye,
Special Representative of the
Chinese Government for
European Affairs



Gjorge Ivanov,
President of the Republic of
Macedonia 2009-2019



Fang Jun,
Deputy Secretary-General,
Chinese Academy of
Social Sciences



Katica Kjulavkova,
Academic, Macedonian
Academy of Sciences and Arts



Boris Tadić,
President of the Republic of Serbia
2004-2012



Mladen Ivanić,
Chairman of the Presidency of
Bosnia and Herzegovina
2014-2015, 2016-2017



Ivo Josipović,
President of the Republic of
Croatia 2010-2015



Zlatko Lagumdžija,
Permanent Representative of Bosnia
and Herzegovina to the United
Nations; Former Prime Minister and
Deputy Prime Minister, and former
MFA of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Ivica Boceviski, Deputy Prime
Minister for European Integration
(2008-11) and former Macedonian
Ambassador to Brazil (2016-20),



Darko Kostadinovski,
President of the Constitutional Court
of the Republic of Macedonia



Halit Eren,
Professor of history at Tekirdag
Namik Kemal University



Rashela Mizrahi,
MP in the Macedonian Parliament,
Former Minister of Labor and
Social Policy of Macedonia



Milan Đorđević,
Full Professor, "St. Clement of Ohrid",
Orthodox Faculty of Theology –
Skopje



Shener Bilalli,
Advisor to the Macedonian Prime
Minister on Interethnic Relations



Ismail Serageldin,
Founding Director of the
Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the
New Library of Alexandria
(2001-2017), Emeritus Librarian,
Vice President of the World
Bank (1992-2000)



H.E Rafael Soriano Ortiz,
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain



Jovan Donev,
Former Ambassador of Macedonia to the United Kingdom)



Gong Jiong,
Professor of University of International Business and Economics



Rabi Sedrak,
Director General, Institute for International Strategic & Security Studies



Zoran Dabikj,
Diplomat, former Macedonian Ambassador to OSCE and to UN (Vienna 2009-13), and to NATO (Brussels 2014-18)



Shen Yujing,
Deputy Director, Macro Research Department of Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China



Feng Zhongping,
Director-General, Institute of European Studies, CASS



Igor Radev,
Chair scholar, Knowledge Centre of Sinology, Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts



Zhidas Daskalovski,
Full professor "St. Kliment Ohridski" UNIVERSITY, Bitola



Sam Daws,
Senior Advisor, Oxford Martin AI Governance Initiative, Oxford University, and Director of Multilateral AI



Milica Pejanović-Duric,
Minister of Defense of Montenegro 2012-2016



Cai Yuezhou,
Senior Research Fellow & Professor, Institute of Quantitative & Technological Economics, CASS; Vice Chairman, Chinese Association of Information Economics



Goran Shibakovski,
Dean of Faculty of Applied ITMIR, Professor of Political Science, University St. Paul the Apostle in Ohrid



Boris Petrovitch Njegosh,
A member of the House of Petrović-Njegoš



Anis Sefidanis, PhD,
Associate Professor at Faculty of Applied IT, Machine Intelligence and Robotics, University of Information Science and Technology "St. Paul the Apostle"



Kriste Krstovski,
Associate Research Scientist in the Data Science Institute and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Business at the Columbia Business School



Gordan Jordanov,
Macedonia and Europe Director of
United Macedonian Diaspora



Anastasija Ilievska,
President, Ivanov School for
Leaders Alumni Association;
Editor and Journalist at Alfa TV;
Specialist for Public speaking,
Body language and Etiquette



Happy Gilbert Mhango,
First Secretary for Development at
the Embassy of the Republic of
Malawi in Berlin, Germany; ISLAA
member generation 2024



Monika Rizovska Tanevska,
Top Employer Branding Voice,
Strategist & Consultant, Global
Community Director at
WOMEN IN TECH®



Jakov Pavlović Latas,
Financial Advisor, Wealth and
Portfolio Management, NLB Funds;
Independent Financial and
Corporate Advisor



Danche Azmanova Mirchevska,
ISLAA member generation 2016;
Founder @ workingmom.mk | Co-
Founder @ TrixieBox



Xu Lei,
Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the
Embassy of China, Skopje



Ivan Ivanov,
Chairman, International
Center Alliance of Civilizations
Executive Board



Petar Stoyanov, President of
Bulgaria (1997-2002)



Gabriel De Godoy,
UNHCR Representative

Insights for a Shared Future:



Perspectives on Dialogue, Innovation, and International Cooperation

Building on the rich discussions and exchanges that characterized the event, the contributions of the speakers continue to offer valuable perspectives on leadership, dialogue, innovation, and international cooperation.

Their reflections capture many of the ideas and aspirations that shaped the conference and inspired its participants.

The pages that follow bring together several speeches and reflections delivered by distinguished participants throughout the event, capturing diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities shaping our shared future.



Gjorge Ivanov

President of the Republic of Macedonia
(2009-2019)



Honorable participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Honorable former presidents, Ivanić, Josipović, Tadić,

Your Excellencies,

This year we mark 80 years since the end of the Second World War. Eight decades since the day when humanity said "never again" and when the victors of the greatest conflict in history laid the foundation for a new world – a world of peace, democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity for all.

It was then that the United Nations were created – as a pledge to guarantee peace.

But 80 years later, here, at this conference, we ask ourselves the question:

Has that pledge been fulfilled?

Do we live in a world free from wars, injustice, and fear? Or are the mistakes of history threatening us once again? Is the vision of the victors of 1945 already beginning to fade?

It is evident that wars have not disappeared – they have merely changed their form. They have become quieter, but constant.

From Korea to Vietnam, from Yugoslavia to Syria, from Ukraine to the Middle East – conflicts continue.

Today we witness new geopolitical tensions, confrontations that remind us of old dangers.

Regrettably, we have not built a world without wars.

This conference is held not only to answer such difficult questions, but also to raise those questions whose answers are yet to be found.

With this international event we also mark 10 years of existence of the International Centre of the Alliance of Civilizations, which is a partner of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, a member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a partner of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin, and a co-founder of the Skopje Club.

We express our deep gratitude to the Chinese Embassy in Skopje, which came forward and helped us organize and realize this international dialogue on unity and peace – to remember the past and to share in the future.

Therefore, it is an honor for me to address you today – at a time of global challenges, but also of rare opportunities for a turning point.

We live in a world that is no longer unipolar, yet that world still questions what it wishes to be.

Within this contradiction lies our task: to rethink the international order. To create a framework in which every civilization, every culture, and every people will feel heard, recognized, and accountable.

This is precisely the role of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Today's world faces a polycrisis – not only as a crisis of systems, but of meanings as well. This is a signal that the old paradigms are exhausted. That the dominant worldview not only fails to offer solutions, but itself generates new problems.

One can sense mistrust, fatigue, and even resistance toward the Western vision of the world. But in that vacuum – new ideas, thinkers, and movements are emerging.

From both the West and the non-Western world, voices are being heard ever more clearly, calling for a more equitable, more poetic, and more inclusive world.

These thinkers do not call for confrontation – but for dialogue.

Dialogue not as a cultural exchange for the elites, but as a political necessity.

Dialogue that acknowledges that the world no longer has a single center.

Dialogue that builds a plural coalition of visions for human dignity.

Why is this important?

Because the existing model of hegemony, cultural domination, and economic imbalance – is already in crisis.

Because the world demands reform of its institutions: the UN, the IMF, the WTO – they must reflect the reality of the multipolar world.

Because we need a new ethics – universal in spirit, plural in expression.

In the long shadow of Western domination, non-Western societies developed their own worldviews, relational values, and holistic ideas about community and nature.

These alternatives are not ready-made solutions – but a source for new visions of humanity, society, and the planet.

At a time when old ideas are no longer sufficient, giving voice to these perspectives is not merely a matter of intellectual justice – but of survival.

These thinkers, together with activists, scholars, and artists, do not offer utopias – but spaces for reflection.

They are a compass – not a map. An invitation to journey through ideas, cultures, and disciplines

.
Their goal is not to offer definitive answers, but to raise the most essential questions.

We need a generation capable of living with all the complexity we face today – one that thinks with empathy and acts with vision.

Such a generation will be able to build a new order – not as a repetition of the old, but as an authentic response to our time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

History teaches us: civilizations do not perish when they lose power – but when they lose the capacity to listen.

If we want a world with more voices, we must also be willing to accept the truths of others.

We must abandon the logic of civilizational competition and embrace the logic of our common destiny.

Therefore, let us not ask which model will prevail – but how together we will create a new model. A new compact. A new language of cooperation – grounded in respect, understanding, and ethical equity.

Eighty years after the war, humanity has taken an enormous step forward. Yet at the same time, we face new challenges.

The pledge of the victors can still be fulfilled – but only if we choose the future of peace, solidarity, and dignity.

If we do not learn from the past – we will repeat it.

If we do not build the future – we will lose it.

The choice is ours.

I wish you a successful and fruitful academic debate. A dialogue that will depend on our capacity to think, feel, and act with responsibility – above all, toward future generations.

Thank you.

Miguel Ángel Moratinos

United Nations Under-Secretary-General, High
Representative for the United Nations Alliance of
Civilizations
(video message)



Excellencies and distinguished guests,

I thank His Excellency President Gjorge Ivanov for inviting me to address this important meeting, and I apologize for not being able to be present in person due to prior commitments.

My dear friends,

Building a future of peace through dialogue is particularly significant considering the existential challenges our world is facing today.

The global community is more divided than at any other time in the past 80 years.

Today's threats to the world order are more daunting and more complex, as an additional dimension has been added.

Climate change, control of artificial intelligence, and cyber weapons, just to name a few. Around the world, the ongoing wars and conflicts, from Gaza and Ukraine to Sudan, Yemen, Myanmar, the Great Lakes, and the Horn of Africa, are taking their toll on human life and the global economy.

The United Nations turns 80 this year. Born out of the ashes of World War II, the reason for that organization was "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

So, my dear friends, we succeeded in many cases, but we also failed in many more.

We failed in pushing hard enough for peace through diplomacy.

We failed in making dialogue prevail over the sound of guns.

This brings me to the Pact for the Future, which calls for peace processes and approaches rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Law, and the UN Charter.

The Pact charts a course towards a better world.

The action it proposes prioritizes conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding, including a commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict.

I am convinced that without peace there can be no security, development, or human rights. These core pillars of the United Nations system are interrelated and interdependent.

The United Nations will remain a universal platform for global dialogue. And the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations will continue to strengthen the platform it created two decades ago to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue to complement that universal platform.

That's why I'm planning to launch this month a new initiative: a call for peace, the end of wars, and respect for international law.

The movement will take place in Guernica, Spain, a town that has become a universal symbol of the horror of war and the enduring spirit of peace, timed to coincide with the 88th anniversary of the town's historic bombing.

The launch event will serve as a solemn yet hopeful moment to reflect on the past, while the initiative will bring together religious leaders, civil society representatives, politicians, and young women and men in round-table dialogue.

It's aimed at amplifying condemnation of war while fostering a message of peace and upholding respect for international law.

A town that has become a universal symbol for the whole world, and to do it in a spirit of peace. Distinguished guests, my dear friends, we may all acknowledge that peace is elusive.

The more we let it slip away, the further it gets out of reach.

Peace will not be attainable overnight.

A just and sustainable peace requires sustained effort.

Peace needs a genuine leap of faith and firm resolve to get to the finish line.

If countries fulfill their obligations under the UN Charter and international law, peace, stability, security, prosperity, and dignity for all will prevail.

There is always an opportunity to create a more effective and just world order based on international law and human rights law.

To turn challenges into opportunities requires leadership, wisdom, and courage.

Let's walk together on the path that leads to a world of peace throughout our days.

Let's thank again President Ivanov, the International Center Alliance of Civilizations, and the Ivanov School for Leaders.

You know that you can count on me, and you know I seek cooperation.

Let's hope that we can meet again in the fall in your beautiful country.

I thank you.



Lu Shaye

Special Representative of the Chinese
Government for European Affairs
(video message)



Your Excellency Dr. Gjorge Ivanov, former President of North Macedonia
Distinguished former leaders, scholars and guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning!

It is my great pleasure to attend this important conference via video link. First, I would like to extend my congratulations on the convening of the conference and my gratitude to ICAC for its efforts and thoughtful arrangements in this regard. ICAC, as an influential think tank in Central and Eastern Europe, has long committed to promoting cultural exchanges and values of peaceful development. It provides an invaluable platform of interchange of ideas for all parties, which I highly appreciate. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, as well as the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. In this context, a conference in Balkan region on the theme "A Dialogue for Unity and Peace: Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future" is timely and pivotal.

I am confident that our distinguished guests would make the best of this valuable platform in the coming days to share your thoughts and insights in an outspoken manner, and thus jointly contribute to the advancement of world peace, development and a global governance system that is fairer and more just. By learning from history, we can understand why powers rise and fall. Eighty years ago, the Chinese people, united with the people around the world, stand in triumph in the aftermath of the World Anti-Fascist War after arduous and ferocious struggles. Eighty years ago, the United Nations, bearing humanity's earnest hope of peace and prosperity, was founded out of the ashes wrecked by World War II and has since then become the foremost platform for safeguarding world peace and carrying out global governance. The world today has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, as the once-in-a-century profound changes continue to accelerate. It is the age of challenges. It is the age of hope. In the recent years, President Xi Jinping has put forward major initiatives such as Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative, presenting new solutions to the common challenges we face as mankind and a new blueprint for a better future. China will always stand as a builder of world peace, contributor to global development and defender of the international order. We will continue to work with all countries, making greater contributions to the cause of peace and progress of mankind.

Here, I would like to share four propositions.

We should work together for peaceful development through solidarity and coordination. In its modern history, China suffered tremendously from relentless aggression and colonial exploitation by foreign powers. The Balkan Peninsula has also seen its fair share of fumes and devastation of war. We all know too deep, too well how precious peace and stability could be. As history has repeatedly shown, the law of the jungle is no law in our time and might is not always right. Without peace, development is nothing but a castle in the air. China stands firmly against all forms of hegemonism and power politics and stands ready to work with all parties to advocate the correct historical view of World War II, to implement the Global Security Initiative, and continue to play a constructive role in promoting the political settlement of hot-spot issues, so that the torch of peace can be passed on from generation to generation. We should uphold fairness and justice and jointly advocate multilateralism.

The current international landscape is marked by transformation and turbulence, with unilateralism, power politics and global governance deficits on the rise. China believes that mutual respect and equality among all countries, big or small, is the primary principle of the Charter of the United Nations. International affairs should not be monopolized by a few countries. Instead, the strengthening of global governance should be handled through inclusive and extensive consultation. China firmly commits itself to safeguarding the international system with the United Nations at its core, and the international order based on international law. We advocate for an equal and orderly multipolar world and uphold the concept that global governance should be handled through extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. We also call for practicing true multilateralism.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China will remain a staunch stabilizing force in a turbulent world, work for the cause of unity and cooperation, and speak up for the Global South. We should uphold the principles of openness and inclusiveness and share opportunities in a win-win spirit. Development is the shared aspiration of all people around the world. China and Europe should grow together and achieve each other on the path of development.

In recent years, the economic cooperation between China and Balkan countries has continued to grow in all aspects, with bilateral trade, investment and connectivity developing rapidly. Next month, China will hold a series of important events such as the China-CEEC Expo to facilitate further expansion of export from CEE countries to China. Facing the reactionary trend of protectionism, China stays true to high standard opening up, advocates for an universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. China is willing to work with all parties to implement the Global Development Initiative, and endeavors to provide new opportunities for global development through Chinese modernization. We should encourage exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations and enhance people-to-people exchanges and mutual understanding. China and Europe are two great civilizations. The friendship between Balkan countries and China has withstood the trials of time and transcended mountains and seas.

Since the end of last year, China has piloted a unilateral visa exemption policy for all countries in the Balkan region, further facilitating people-to-people exchanges between the two sides. China advocates equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and stands ready to work with Balkan countries and other parties to implement the Global Civilization Initiative, promote the common values of mankind, and boost mutual understanding and amity among people around the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, Last month the National People's Congress of China and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference successfully concluded their annual session. It is proposed that China will strive to achieve an economic growth of around 5% this year. Through scientific and technological innovation, consumption promotion and deepening of reforms, the Chinese economy will enjoy new momentum for its high-quality development, enhanced and consolidated positive expectations, the Chinese economy will enjoy new momentum for its high-quality development, enhanced and consolidated positive expectations, and new advantages for a higher-level open economy.

Against the backdrop of an increasingly complex and severe external environment, China has put forward a series of progressive yet feasible goals and tasks. By doing so, China not only highlights its adamant intention to rise to the challenges but also vividly illustrates China's confidence in its own development. China will continue to empower the world with its high-quality development and high-level opening-up and provide a key driving force for global economic recovery and development. In its pursuit of peaceful development, China will always be an opportunity for the development of the world and a contribution to the force for peace.

In conclusion, I would like to return once again to the theme of today's conference. Remembering the past is about better shaping the future. Looking back, the cruelty of war and the haze of the Cold War are not far behind. Looking forward, the historical trend of peace, development and win-win cooperation is unstoppable. China is willing to join hands with countries around the world, including the Balkan countries, to jointly pursue the path of peace and justice, play the harmonious melody of unity and development, and create a better future for humanity. Once again, I wish this conference a complete success!

Darko Kostadinovski

President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of
Macedonia, Special Envoy of the Republic of Macedonia
for UNAOC 2015-2018



Dear all,

Not only today, but we are continuously at some kind of crossroads, at an important moment in the history of humanity. I belong to the generation that experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of globalization—the great transformation—during my early academic days. What followed were continuous global shocks with significant civilizational effects, such as September 11, the global economic crisis, the major migrant crisis, radicalism and religious fanaticism, the global crisis caused by the coronavirus, and so on.

Today, once again, we live in a time when globalization is facing a challenge—a time when division, wars, conflicts, and polarization seem to define our lives. Civilizations are facing permanent crises and challenges. Change is happening too quickly. The fear of change is growing. The question is: how do we restore hope?

In my monograph "Testimonies from the Presidential Office," I describe each of the three Macedonian presidents I served under in a single sentence. For the late President Trajkovski, that sentence is: "Better 1,000 days of negotiations than one day of war." President Trajkovski truly meant this—it wasn't a cliché or an empty phrase. That was who he was—his character and his deeply humane nature. He acted accordingly and played a historic role during those turbulent times in Macedonia.

Allow me to share with you a few excerpts from my book that I have written.

Speaking about the future of the Macedonian state, in August 2003, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising, President Trajkovski stated that Macedonia is a state for all who live in it:

"Differences should unite us, not divide us. We should focus on what gives life, and not lock ourselves into outdated concepts rejected by the entire progressive world. All misunderstandings should be overcome through mutual understanding, through dialogue, within the institutions of the system, and with respect for democracy and its rules. This is a free country, and the freedom of every citizen can only be limited when it threatens the freedom of another."

From Kruševo, he also announced the upcoming international forum, which would later take place in Ohrid at the end of August 2003 under the theme "Dialogue Among Civilizations." "In Europe, one cannot enter without identity and without dignity," said Trajkovski, adding, "The truth that began here a hundred years ago will be fulfilled only when the whole world recognizes our right to identity, our name—Republic of Macedonia. Without that, the great Europe will rest on principles that are not truly European."

According to Trajkovski, the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which pulled Macedonia back from the brink, was essentially a European agreement—an agreement whose core idea of authentic and real integration followed the subtle thread of the Kruševo Manifesto. "It is our duty," he emphasized, "to promote it to the world as an authentic Macedonian model of coexistence and to show others the historical truth about Macedonian cosmopolitanism. Universalism and humanism are the Macedonian destiny," said Trajkovski.

On August 28, 2003, the “Dialogue Among Civilizations” began in Ohrid. This forum became a true and lasting legacy of President Trajkovski. His decision to embrace the initiative launched by Iranian President Khatami, which had been endorsed by the UN designating 2001 as the “Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations,” was both sound and justified. Trajkovski believed that Macedonia was uniquely relevant to this topic—that it had something to say and offer not just to the region, but to Europe and the world.

The summit was originally planned for 2002 but was postponed to 2003 for objective reasons. I was actively involved in all segments of organizing the summit, which was a genuine success—not only a major promotion for Macedonia but also a vital contribution to a region striving to move past a troubled history. Supported by UNESCO and the Council of Europe, nine such summits followed: Tirana 2004, Varna 2005, Opatija 2006, Sibiu (Romania) 2007, Athens 2008, Chisinau 2009, Belgrade 2010, Budva 2011, and Mostar 2012, up until 2013. That year, together with the SEECP (South-East European Cooperation Process), we were meant to mark the 10th anniversary of the Dialogue. Unfortunately, due to Balkan stubbornness and prejudice, President Ivanov rightfully canceled both events. From then on, the Dialogue ceased. Sadly, I participated in nearly all of them. At the two-day Dialogue Among Civilizations conference, there were eight presidents from the region and around ninety distinguished figures from political, religious, cultural, and business sectors worldwide.

The goal of the conference was to contribute to peace and stability in the region, to expand cultural cooperation, and to promote the principles of tolerance and equality. The idea was for regional leaders to sit at the same table—which, in the Balkans at the time, was considered an achievement in itself—and to discuss “neutral,” non-political topics (if such topics can even exist in the Balkans, where everything tends to be political). Among the attendees in Ohrid were the presidents of Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia, the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Director-General of UNESCO Koichiro Matsuura, the head of UNMIK Harry Holkeri, and the Secretary-General of the Arab League Amr Moussa, among others. With an appeal to silence the weapons on all meridians of the planet, President Trajkovski opened the conference, stating: “Affirming the principles of dialogue today is more urgent than ever before. Unfortunately, dialogue has not always been the only way civilizations have communicated, and Southeastern Europe is, without a doubt, still one of the world’s sensitive hotspots.”

“Dialogue Among Civilizations” could become part of the new global diplomacy, emphasized Giandomenico Picco, representative of the UN Secretary-General.

That very Dialogue became the forerunner of the Alliance of Civilizations, where, thanks to President Ivanov, I served as Macedonia’s special envoy.

Closing the forum, President Boris Trajkovski said that it was one of the most important events in the constructive international activity of our country:

“For the Republic of Macedonia, holding the Forum in Ohrid is a top-tier political event. Through this dialogue, we are not only drawing closer to each other but also moving together toward the already integrated part of Europe. Ohrid has always been—and will remain—a place from which messages of universal and lasting value are sent, messages turned toward the future,” said Trajkovski.

In that historical context—which was undoubtedly complex for Macedonia and for the Region—dialogue was the element that brought the leaders of opposing sides to the same table to establish communication. In my opinion, that was when the Region began to change.

Twenty-two years have passed since then. Despite the undeniable progress made in each of our regional states, just as it was back then, dialogue is once again essential today. If at that time President Trajkovski said it was urgent, today it is indispensable. Then, as now, Macedonia has something to offer the world: its authentic model of coexistence, a unique model of multiethnic democracy.

Today's complex civilizational reality also calls for dialogue. It is precisely through dialogue—whether cultural, political, or legal—that we can progress as states and as a global community. And it is law that can guide and protect this process, ensuring that peace, justice, and equality are not just ideals, but reality.

It is widely acknowledged that peace does not merely mean the absence of war, but the presence of justice and cooperation.

I cannot help but briefly address this topic through the lens of my current role as President of the Constitutional Court. Through dialogue, law is created—with all its principles that recognize and protect differences and unite us around universal values. The existence of differences should not scare us, because differences are the reason for unity and cooperation. If there were no differences, there would be no need for unity or mutual respect.

The fundamental freedoms and rights of individuals and citizens, recognized in international law and established by the Constitution, are not coincidentally the top-ranking foundational value of our constitutional legal order.

They are the foundation upon which the Constitution rests—they represent the meaning and essence of the integrity of the written Constitution.

The positive aspect of constitutional rights is just one side of them—their actual or practical dimension. Alongside that, these rights possess an ideal dimension as well. The reason for this is that constitutional rights, especially those related to human freedoms and rights, are rights that are written into the Constitution with the intention of being realized to “the greatest possible extent.”

The ideal nature of human rights does not disappear after they are transformed into positive law—it remains even after they are codified.

It is precisely the pursuit of that ideal dimension, whether through demands for optimization to the greatest possible extent, or through alternatives such as “guarantees for a minimum position” or “prohibitions against excessive disproportionality,” that requires us to properly understand both the ideal and real dimensions of law.

The ideal nature of human freedoms and rights is a subject that is constantly evolving and changing—a subject that gains new meaning and demands over time. This is exactly where dialogue is essential—and this is precisely the matter that concerns the Alliance of Civilizations. If at the national level this is a supreme imperative for Constitutional Courts, then whose imperative is it on the international level? It lies with global and regional organizations, which, unfortunately, have failed in their primary task!

We face a serious challenge, a handicap in the rule of law, both domestically and—especially—internationally! And without the rule of law, everything that dialogue can achieve and provide cannot be guaranteed or secured.

Perhaps the time has come—and the need has matured—for new energy, a new San Francisco, a reexamination of the essence and purpose of regional organizations: the EU, African Union, ASEAN, Organization of American States, Arab League. A new civilizational agreement is necessary.

No matter how or where we search for the solution or the way forward, the first and only step common to all is dialogue. The alternative to dialogue is monologue and shouting matches. Monologue is material for the walls we build to divide ourselves. Dialogue for the sake of dialogue, as a means without an end, is a waste of time. But substantial dialogue is the essential material for the bridges we build to unite—to unite by respecting differences, to unite around fundamental values.

I often quote Chinese President Xi Jinping: “Only the wearer knows whether his shoes fit.” And I agree with him. I also agree with Presidents Giorgio Napolitano and Václav Klaus, who, during a meeting in Warsaw, responded to President Obama by saying: “You cannot simply copy-paste your value system and your democratic system into societies like Iraq, Afghanistan, North Africa, and the Middle East. Such efforts are doomed to fail.” But I also agree with President Obama’s reply: “That’s true, I’m aware we can’t—but at least we’re saving lives and helping those societies affirm basic human rights and a minimum level of human dignity.”

What matters to me, in these three examples—where I said each one is right in their own way—is that there is dialogue! Without dialogue there is no unity, without unity there is no peace, and without peace there is no prosperity or progress.

At this stage of our civilization, the complexity and multiplication of problems are so great that perhaps the only right thing is to return to the beginning:

To dialogue in the basic unit of civilization—within the family—then in the local community, in society, regionally, globally, and civilizationaly.

I sincerely hope that the clash of civilizations, which inspired the Dialogue among Civilizations and led us to the Alliance of Civilizations, will eventually lead us to a Covenant between Civilizations. There’s an old saying: “The path of reason is one—if it exists, we will find each other on the road; if not, we’ll pass each other by.”

I hope that civilizations are not headed for a passing each other by!

H.E. Rafael Soriano Ortiz

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain



Good afternoon to you all. It is a great pleasure to be part of this Conference. An initiative which is linked to the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC), a project that promotes dialogue and understanding globally. As you all know, UNAOC is currently chaired by Miguel Ángel Moratinos, former Foreign Minister of Spain.

I have been invited to share with you some thoughts concerning the title of this third plenary session: "80 years of Multilateralism: What it means for the next 80 years". My remarks to the subject in question are presented in the programme as "special remarks". I do not know if what I am about to say can be considered "special", which, according to the dictionary, relates to someone or something that is better or more important than other people or things. When I look at the profile of speakers gathered at your Conference, I realize it is not going to be easy to make "special remarks". I can only guarantee my remarks will be necessarily brief as I have been kindly asked by the organisers to speak no more than ten minutes.

Sometimes time constraints have advantages. In this case, it forces me to focus my intervention on three points that I will briefly develop. First, is Multilateralism still the best way to face the challenges of globalisation?. Second, what role do we Europeans play in today's world?. And third, Diplomacy as the art of peace-making.

1. Globalisation and Multilateralism

Globalisation is a fact, multilateralism is a choice.

We do not question the idea that we live in a globalised world. Actually, it has been so since the circumnavigation of the world completed by Magallanes and Elcano between 1519 and 1522. The interdependence and exchanges among nations, people, economies or cultures are part of our daily life. Today globalisation is driven by an accelerated convergence of interaction and integration, knowledge and information, trade and business, science and technology, tourism and migrations. Some challenges are actually global challenges like climate change or the threat of pandemics.

After the Second World War the international community set the basis for world architecture with the creation of the United Nations. The UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights became two pillars of a new world based on multilateralism. It is now 80 years later and we might wonder, what's next? In 2025 there are more uncertainties than clarity, and also the feeling that the old order is about to crumble. How do we face this challenge? To begin with, allow me to say that my country Spain believes firmly in a world based on rules where the contents of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not just historical documents but still an inspiration and a road map for a better world. There is no doubt that the UN system was born with limitations and flaws, and that the evolution of international relations demands a reform of our international architecture. However, there is no better option to foster globalisation than by strengthening multilateralism. It represents both a method of collaboration based on rules, and a form of cooperation that seeks global welfare.

Spain is committed to multilateralism and to the 2030 agenda of sustainable development goals that not only apply to developing countries but to the entire international community. Some people say, and they are happy with that, that when you do not know where you are going, any road will take you somewhere. But, in my case, I do want to know where I am going to! The 2030 agenda is a global roadmap that provides guidance for the future.

From June 30 to July 3, the Spanish city of Seville will host the UN Conference on Financing for Development. The fourth edition of this global gathering is this time more important than ever as the financing gap for development reaches more than 3 trillion US dollars a year. A new international financing architecture is needed and this UN Conference is the right place to address the question.

In brief, more multilateralism to face the challenges of an accelerated globalisation.

2. The role of Europe and the European Union

It is not unusual to read or hear that Europe, and in particular the European Union, is becoming a minor player in the world, that the US, China, Russia and the emerging nations of the Global South make Europe sometimes irrelevant. Allow me to disagree.

The European Union is not just a market, a space for the free movement of goods, services, capital and people, but a political project that was born to make war impossible in this continent and to promote welfare among its nations and citizens. It is also a community of ideas and values, based on democracy and the defense of human rights. In the EU we strongly believe in multilateralism because this is precisely the way in which we have built our project. Only that we have gone a step further by creating common institutions and policies that serve all European citizens. It is a paradox of today's world, but we Europeans believe that we regain sovereignty by pulling forces together. Because, if the EU did not exist, how would we be able to address the turmoil of the financial markets, the consequences of a global pandemics or the challenges to security and peace on the continent?

The EU is a driver of change for nations and citizens. This was certainly the case for Spain when we joined the former European Community in 1986. There has been a before and an after since our accession to the European project. This is also why I acknowledge the importance of the European aspirations of North Macedonia and the countries of the Western Balkans. The enlargement of the EU will not only benefit the candidate countries but our project as a whole. A larger and better integrated EU will give us the chance to play a significant role in globalisation, for the welfare of our citizens and in making a European contribution to global challenges.

I fully understand the frustrations of the people in this country when it comes to this already 20-year long path towards accession. We know the obstacles and the complexities of the case, but we also know the importance of perseverance and courageous decisions.

More and better Europe to respond to globalisation

3. Diplomacy is peace-making

The most noble task of Diplomacy is to contribute to peace and welfare. In Europe, in Spain or in North Macedonia, a well-functioning democracy translates also into a good functioning of diplomacy. For us, diplomats, our job should be a wise combination of interests and values. In my case the defence of the interests of Spain and my fellow citizens runs parallel to the pursuit of a more integrated Europe. In my capacity as Ambassador of Spain to your country, my goal is simply to bring our countries and societies closer than ever. Building these bridges of understanding among nations is also a democratic value.

On the one hand, we must admit that we are facing serious threats, from war to economic crisis, climate change or global pandemics. On the other hand, our principles must always be the same. We can only win together and we can not leave anybody behind.

And when facing threats to our democracies such as fake news, disinformation or polarisation we must fight back with more democracy, more transparency and more commitment to our basic principles. This is important in the context of this Conference and especially for the young leaders of this country and the region that are here this afternoon. We must not take things for granted. Each generation has a duty to perform. Young leaders, you are the peacemakers, the diplomats of your societies. Because a leader is precisely a person that shows the path to follow in times of uncertainties.

My closing remark is this: let us keep working together in building an international order based on multilateralism, rules and cooperation. Let us promote European integration and the community of values that Europe represents. Let us, each and every one, play an outstanding role as peacemakers in our communities.

Thank you for your attention.



Zlatko Lagumdžija

Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, Former Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and former MFA of Bosnia and Herzegovina
(video message)



Dear Gjorge, my dear friend,
Mr. President, President Ivanov:

First, I want to congratulate you for putting together such a great group of people, and I wish I am with you, of course. The topic that you are putting together—that is devoted to dialogue for unity and peace while remembering the past and shaping the future—is the key topic of today's world and, of course, us in the region.

We live in a world that is so complex, so unpredictable, and the speed of change is so big that it's very hard to actually catch up with it. But it is very important to do foresight—foresight of what's going to happen in the future. What are the inevitable things, and what are the things that we can make a change of and be a change ourselves?

That—the reason why I think that your creation of alumni of the young people, and us as well, who are sharing the same values, who are sharing the goals of unity and diversity based on dialogue, based on respect, based on learning and mutual understanding—is something that will definitely have a dividend, not maybe today, but in the future.

And, of course, a world which is so powerful economically and technologically, in which we are so powerful to destroy each other, but also giving us hope that that power and that might we can use for building, not destroying ourselves and our future.

International law—respect of international law—is one of the major pillars which is now confronted by the principle of "might is right." That has to be stopped, and that has to be challenged by us—us who are part of an alliance of like-minded people and entities, and who want to be stopping the world and our parts of the world going in the wrong direction.

That requires leadership. Leadership is based on shared values, shared prosperity, shared societies. And not any type of leadership, but leadership with a purpose—that's what we have to promote in the world that is around us and that we are part of today.

So, dear Gjorge, in that respect, I really salute you and congratulate you for not giving up and keep fighting. Keep fighting with your ideas, with your friends, with your alliance of like-minded people and entities, which I'm so proud of to be part of.

There are a lot of challenges in front of us. What can you, Gjorge, myself, Gjorge Jr., Ivanov Jr., my dear friend and colleague—what only three of us can do? And any three of you that are here? We can do a lot.

If three persons who are the mightiest and most wealthy persons in the world—if three of them are having wealth that is collectively bigger than the budget of the United States defense army and might, if they're trying to change the world and they are not able to change the world the way they really do want, but they are still tempted by people who really have in mind to fight for a better world—so any three of us, any three of you can do a lot.

So, congratulations, and let's fight against the people who think that the might is right. The might is not right; the values, the real values, are what is right. Shared values that humanity can bring to prosperity and be a better world than we are living in today.

Congratulations, and hope to see you soon.



Ismail Serageldin

Founding Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the New Library of Alexandria (2001-2017), currently the Emeritus Librarian, Vice President of the World Bank (1992-2000)



Ladies and gentlemen,

Your gathering is particularly timely. For we live in turbulent times, and clear heads and sound minds are needed to recognize the reality of the challenges we face, and understand the drivers of the forces that we confront, as we continue to pursue the goals of a just order among nations and a proper path for peace and prosperity for all humans ...

The history of the world is a history of empires that rise and fall, of civilizations that wax and wane, and of great misery as wars and conflicts claim lives, ravage lands and heap miseries upon the survivors. New technologies made for more devastating weapons, until in a paroxysm of destruction in the first half of the 20th century, more than 90 million people died in the two World Wars that ended with the nuclear explosions on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That was the legacy of the system of empires, hegemons and spheres of influence.

Out of the ashes of WWII rose a new world order, designed around the UN and the specialized International Agencies, that sought to install a rules-based system of global governance, with the UN at the center, whose charter starts with the phrase "we the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ..."

That rules-based order created the framework for Multilateralism, to achieve human rights and human security for all, in a just and equitable system of international law... and the practice of Multilateralism reinforces that rules-based order. And despite its ups and downs, the system helped avoid WW3 and even enabled us to agree on the priorities that should guide global action first in the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) that governed our collective path from 2000 – 2015 and subsequently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that should be guiding our collective path from 2015 until 2030...

So

Multilateralism is THE diplomatic approach that fosters cooperation among nations to address global challenges through inclusiveness, dialogue, and consensus-building.

It promotes a rules-based international order to tackle issues such as peace, security, trade, human rights, and environmental protection.

By leveraging shared resources and perspectives, multilateralism enhances collective decision-making, enabling nations to address problems beyond their individual capacities.

And we need that... for in that hyperconnected world in which we live, the specter of global challenges is never far off: Climate change, pandemics, water management, biodiversity loss and much more... all require global action, as they cannot be confronted by local or national action alone.

However, setbacks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, exposed weaknesses in global solidarity, hindering progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while weakness in pursuit of the commitments on climate change further emphasize how much we need a strengthened multilateralism.

And today, Multilateralism faces significant threats, including geopolitical tensions, rising nationalism, and the erosion of trust in international institutions. Power rivalries complicate consensus-building, as seen in conflicts like the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the US-supported Israeli war in Gaza.

The perceived inefficiency and bias of international organizations discourage engagement, particularly among developing nations. Moreover, the increasing complexity of global challenges, such as climate change and artificial intelligence governance, demands swift and coordinated responses that existing multilateral frameworks struggle to deliver.

Despite these challenges, multilateralism remains crucial due to the interconnected nature of **global issues**. Climate change, pandemics, and cybersecurity require collaborative solutions. Multilateralism also amplifies the voices of smaller nations, promoting inclusivity. Civil society and non-governmental organizations can push governments towards cooperative solutions. Strengthening institutions to enhance transparency and engagement, while addressing power imbalances, will be key to ensuring the future relevance of multilateralism.

Multilateralism is also manifesting through **regional alliances**, such as NATO and ASEAN, which address specific security and economic concerns. Also associative cooperative organizations created to strengthen cooperation and solidarity between the Member States, to protect the rights and interests of their shared legacy, like the 57 countries of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Arab League (22 countries). These alliances and organizations highlight the need for tailored approaches to regional cooperation while recognizing the challenges of diverse interests and commitments among member states.

The European concept of **variable geometry**, which allows for different levels of integration, could serve as a model for the manifestation of a global multilateralism in regional configurations... Countries could engage in specific multilateral initiatives based on their capacities and interests without committing to an overarching single unitary global governance. This flexible approach acknowledges the diversity of nations and facilitates collective action on pressing issues while respecting national sovereignty. However, global implementation is more complex due to geopolitical divergences and competing priorities. And on some level, our interconnected world absolutely needs the global all-inclusive structures that the UN and the specialized agencies represent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, however, Multilateralism faces a different set of challenges. Today, the powerful are determined to revive the era of empires, hegemons and spheres of influence,

- Where... Might makes right and the strong do what they want and the weak suffer what they must.
- Where ... the powerful brazenly defy the collective demands of the community of nations as expressed in UN general assembly resolutions
- Where the mighty, protected by the veto, go on to ignore international law and flout the international courts
- Where ... they consider themselves above and beyond any accountability

And so...

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 [...]
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.
 -- W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)

The voice of reason is drowned by the shouts of the demagogues: The worst who are indeed full of passionate intensity, which they magnify using the technology of our times, from control and intimidation of dissenting views to the use of social media to expand their reach...

They are recreating a world where conflicts abound, injustice is everywhere, and

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.
 -- Mathew Arnold (1822-1888)

In that world, the poor and destitute are almost losing hope...

But we cannot lose hope for as the poet said:

History says, Don't hope
 On this side of the grave,
 But then, once in a lifetime
 The longed-for tidal wave
 Of justice can rise up
 And hope and history rhyme.
 -- Sheamus Heaney (1939-2013)

Yes, we shall overcome, even in facing these new and destructive tendencies coming from the powerful and the uncaring...

Ladies and gentlemen,

And so, if multilateralism is now 80 years old, what about the next 80 years?

It can and should continue and grow from strength to strength, despite the power of those who want to destroy it...

The future is not determined, it is created.

The future is not a gift, it is earned.

The future is not given, it is invented.

Let us not be overawed by the power of the current hegemons who seem determined to destroy multilateralism and the rules-based international order...

Look back at our history: everything that is valuable and precious was once an idea that was supported only by a minority against much more powerful protectors of their vision of the prevailing order that should prevail:

- Limits on the divine rights of kings
- That government power is derived from the consent of the governed
- Equality before the law
- Universal suffrage
- The equality of women and men
- Human rights belong to one and all by virtue of being human
- And so much more...

Meetings like this are very important, for through your discussions you are defining the desirable, exploring the bounds of the possible, and you are inventing the future, this very instant, right now, in the crucible of your minds.

So let our imaginations soar.

Let us live by the immortal words :

To the wrongs that need resistance,
To the right that needs assistance,
To the future in the distance,
Give yourselves.

-- Carrie Chapman Catt (1859-1947)

Thank you.

Halit Eren

Professor of history at Tekirdag Namik Kemal University



Your Excellency Gjorge Ivanov,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you in this important meeting, in this beautiful city of Skopje.

I would like to start my speech by thanking H.E. Gjorge Ivanov for inviting me to this important meeting.

This conference is being held at a truly appropriate time and place. We are living in a period when the bells of wars are ringing in different parts of the world and there are ongoing wars and bloodshed in different places. The peace period after the World War II. was very short. Lessons should have been learned from two world wars in which millions of people lost their lives.

Unfortunately, we see that pain is forgotten in a short time. We cannot see the progress that humanity has made in science and technology, equally in morality and human values. We cannot see the elevation of the spiritual values of humanity.

When we look at the events taking place in the world today; we see people killing each other mercilessly,

In an environment where the strong tries to destroy the weak and massacres turn into genocide and the powerful states, instead of stopping it, they are throwing gasoline on the fire and supporting it.

All these causing us to despair. It is as if it points to even greater disasters awaiting humanity. That is why everyone must work hard to prevent the coming danger. In this respect, this conference is being held at an opportune time.

Secondly, I said that the conference was held in the right place. Skopje is one of the most proper places for the subject of the alliance of civilizations.

Skopje is a place where different nations and people of different religions have lived together peacefully for centuries. I think it would not be wrong to say that the concept of the nation system (Millet Sistemi) from the Ottoman period still continues. This practice can also be an example for communities living in other parts of the world.

The Topic of this session is: Building a Future of Peace: UNAOC's Role in Promoting Dialogue and Global Unity".

Is it possible? Let's see first the aim of the UNAOC as it is mentioned in their website:

"The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) is a United Nations entity that builds bridges between societies, promotes dialogue and understanding, and seeks to forge the collective political will required to accomplish these tasks. UNAOC works as a convener and facilitator to bring all sectors of society together to strengthen intercultural and interreligious dialogue to diminish hostility, and promote mutual respect and harmony among the people and cultures of the world.

With its motto, "Many Cultures, One Humanity," UNAOC embraces and promotes cultural diversity, religious pluralism and mutual respect."

Very good, this is what we need, this is what humanity needs today.

When UNAOC was established and why? What was it founded for? What is the reason for its establishment? And what was the reason behind it?

Let's go back and try to find the answers to these questions.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, New ideas were put forward across the Atlantic; First, Fukuyama's exclusionary article called the end of history.

Followed by Huntington's Clash of Civilizations.

Huntington tried to find new enemies to Western civilization and brought the idea of the clash of civilizations to the agenda. In response to this, the alliance of civilizations emerged.

Turkey's then Prime Minister, current President, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan put forward the idea of "Alliance of Civilizations" together with the Spanish Prime Minister Mr. Zapatero.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) was established in 2005, as the political initiative of Mr. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General and co-sponsored by the Governments of Türkiye and Spain.

Global Forums:

UNAOC has convened several Global Forums since 2008, bringing together international leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to discuss and promote intercultural understanding. These forums serve as platforms for sharing best practices, forging partnerships, and reaffirming commitments to UNAOC's mission. Notably, the 9th Global Forum was held in Fez, Morocco, in 2022, under the theme "Towards an Alliance of Peace: Living Together as One Humanity," attracting over 2,000 participants from 136 countries.

UNAOC's goals and objectives are very good; it appeals to a wide audience as it includes civil society organizations. However, governments and politicians rule the world. UNAOC is a voluntary movement, it has no coercive aspect. The United Nations Security Council is the one that directs the world. The power is in it.

The United Nations (UN) was established in 1945 to ensure international peace and security, to support friendly relations between states, and to promote development and human rights.

The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) have veto power, they bore the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. However, this situation today leads to various criticisms regarding justice and representation.

Reform Suggestions and Developments:

The view that the veto system in the UNSC is unfair has been discussed for a long time. Many countries argue that the veto power of permanent members should be limited or abolished.

Although the veto right in the UNSC was created for the purpose of ensuring international peace and security, it today causes various criticisms on issues of justice and representation. This situation leads to calls for reform and restructuring in the international community, but challenges for fundamental changes remain.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statements that the world is bigger than five, point to the unjust system in the United Nations Security Council.

From time to time, they disturb and offend the public conscience of the world by using the right of veto. A decision taken by a seventy-five percent majority in the General Assembly is blocked by a veto of one state in the Security Council and cannot be implemented. This issue creates unrest in the world.

In fact, the role of UNAOC in promoting dialogue and global unity depends on the credibility of the United Nations Organization.

We can approach to our topic from two perspectives:

The first is a negative approach; since the power and authority is in the Security Council, those who rule the Security Council control everything. Voluntary activities have no effect. This is a hopeless perspective.

If we take a positive approach, I can say the following; Since everything depends on people, if conscientious, honest and moral people and generations are raised, the injustices in the world will disappear and There can be no veto that creates injustice and unfairness.

So, first we need to improve human quality. We need to raise generations that respect each other, respect each other's rights and do not hurt anyone.

If we are successful in this, the Alliance of Civilizations will be successful in achieving dialogue and global unity.

The dialogue and global unity are the fundamental elements of building a future of peace. UNAOC's efforts to build bridges between different civilizations and break down prejudices show us how vital common values are in building the future.

Each of us is responsible for living and spreading these values. Social peace is possible not only by ending conflicts, but also by bringing hearts, minds and societies closer to each other. We can take important steps towards creating more inclusive and understanding societies by transferring the knowledge, experience and inspiration we have gained here today to our own environment.

Finally, I would like to thank H.E. President George Ivanov for their kind invitation and generous hospitality. I wish success to this international conference.

Thank you for your attention.

Sam Daws

Senior Advisor to the Oxford Martin AI Governance Initiative, Oxford University; and Founding Director, Multilateral AI.



I am most grateful to the International Center - Alliance of Civilizations – to President Dr. Gjorge Ivanov, and Board Chairman Ivan Ivanov, and their whole team – for their very kind invitation to Macedonia. It is a great privilege to be speaking in your beautiful country today.

As we have heard these last two days, both the world, and our international order, is facing rapid change. Into this, throw AI, which is set to revolutionise almost every aspect of what it means to be human. AI will add complexity to this world, but AI tools will also help us decipher and navigate it.

AI will bring significant positive contributions: in economic productivity to transform the prospects for our young people, in education and legal services, in materials research including nanotechnology, and in atmospheric modelling of climate change, food security, genomics and medicine. In diplomacy, Generative AI can reduce asymmetry in negotiations for small states, help mediators in identify negotiation pathways; and real time virtual meetings in the metaverse - can build cross cultural trust and dialogue among citizens of warring nations.

But it also brings challenges:

- To ensure the benefits of AI are equally shared with the global south. Accessing AI benefits on the African continent is possible only if it rests on a pyramid of reliable electricity, ICT platforms, and connectivity.
- The challenge of job displacement from AI automation.
- Data centres using growing - amounts of energy (and water for cooling), although the net contribution of AI to climate change will be incredibly positive.
- Bias in AI algorithms magnifying existing social inequalities.
- As we all know, current AI chatbots hallucinate (make up answers) and are unreliable. There is much discussion of AI becoming too good in the future (achieving AGI and ASI meaning AI becomes no longer aligned with human priorities) but we also need to be awake to the negative impact of AI remaining too bad for too long!
- Deep fakes and disinformation undermine elections and democracy.
- AI can empower terrorists and organised crime.

AI has proved difficult to govern and regulate at an international level for three reasons:

1. Geopolitical competition between states with the US seeking a competitive advantage over China, reducing willingness to cooperate on AI restrictions. US export controls on China of high-end chips, and lithography machines from the Netherlands, have exacerbated tensions, and in turn spurred Chinese domestic innovation and innovation.
2. Commercial sensitivity. Companies are reluctant to share the inner workings of their models. The huge resources of large companies give them significant regulatory influence.
3. The nature of the technology itself:
 - Constantly evolving - regulators can't keep up.
 - Technologists within leading companies often can't explain how the black box of their LLMs comes up with its answers, making it hard to regulate to prevent unintended safety risks.
 - It is intrinsically a general purpose and dual use, with a blurring of civilian/military uses.

These factors mean that AI regulation is first and foremost at the national and regional level, such as the EU AI Act, and China's three rounds of national legislation. The direction of travel for AI in 2025 will be first, a growth in open source models, and in AI agents, semi-autonomously executing tasks; second, an increased national security framing for AI governance, and third, a growing focus on Sovereign AI for nations and regions across compute capacity, algorithms and data.

Thus, while AI regulation will continue to be operationalised first and foremost at the national level, notable progress has been achieved last year through UN channels:

- There were three UNGA resolutions on AI in 2024. An initial US-sponsored resolution on safe, secure and trust-worthy AI, a Chinese resolution on AI capacity building, and a Netherlands-RoK resolution on responsible AI in the military realm. It was very positive that both the US and China supported each other's resolutions, which were then passed by consensus. This took place however, during President Biden's administration, and there is now uncertainty over President Trump's AI policy approach, after he rescinded President Biden's Executive Order on AI, and reduced the focus of the US National Institute of Standards and Technology on AI safety.
- ITU's leadership (with IEEE, ISO, and IEC) on standards and with UNDP on capacity building, and UNESCO's leadership on AI ethics.
- The UN is unlikely soon to be the venue for global regulation of AI risks, and there is no current appetite for an international enforcement mechanism for AI risks (no IAEA for AI yet). But the Global Digital Compact has led to four useful international pathways (science, policy dialogue, standards exchange, and capacity building) with potential for gradual progress on policy coordination and interoperability in AI governance.

What do we need to do:

- Avoid bifurcation of AI governance into Western and Chinese blocs.
- Prioritise UN and inclusive universal multilateral and multistakeholder processes that also give voice to smaller countries. As Ivan Ivanov suggested in his opening remarks empowering the UN General Assembly to lead in AI, as well as a role for the UNSC.
- Establish dialogue channels between China and the OECD-GPAI partnership (which currently excludes China), between Western and Chinese AI safety and security institutes, and through REAIM (next summit is in Spain in September) and US-China bilaterals on military aspects of AI.
- There could be an important role for small and medium-sized AI bridge states such as Singapore, UAE, KSA, Brazil, India, Kazakhstan, and consortia such as the Digital Forum of small states and the Digital Cooperation Organisation. Macedonia can also play a potential bridge role on the cultural dimensions of AI governance, as it lies at the crossroads of civilisations.
- Revitalise Chapter VIII of the UN Charter for AI governance and capacity building: This can be done within existing regional orgs such as ASEAN, GCC, AU, CICA in central Asia, the SCO, the OAS, OSCE etc. And also within trans-regional forums such as BRICS+, G20, La Francophonie, the BRI, OSCE etc. We can usefully apply confidence-building mechanisms to AI that have progressed in other areas such as outer space, cyber, the BWC and arms control. We can also build on existing cooperation pathways – focussing on how AI can help accelerate progress on climate, biodiversity, health security, counter-terrorism, and the SDGs.

- The next UNSG will be appointed next summer to start on 1 January 2027. We need someone who can update the UN; harness new technology in service of humanity. And most importantly a person who can articulate a vision of multilateral cooperation in the national interest of all countries large and small. Successful multilateralism, as the Spanish ambassador reminded us earlier, requires reconciling interests and values across 193 diverse countries.

Finally, we must ensure that global AI enables humanity to flourish (rather than just helping us become more efficient). To do this it must draw on the wisdom of diverse civilisations:

- Western and Eastern philosophy, Confucianism, Insights from Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism,
- from indigenous people who by definition have one of the smallest digital footprints.
- Diverse cultural insights, including from the Baltic region, from central Asia and the Caucasus, from the Organisation of Turkic States, and the OIC.

In the course of establishing Sovereign AI capabilities (in compute, algorithms and data) there is considerable value in building national or regional LLMs infused with specific cultural and linguistic data. Examples include in India – the Bharat GPT Consortium, in Africa – examples include CDIAL, Lelapa AI, Toucan, and Serengeti – which aims to cover 517 African languages, Singapore has been incubating ASEAN models, built on Malay, Tamil, and other regional languages. The UAE’s Falcon championed Arabic dialects, as did Mistral’s Saba. But we must also avoid the emergence of a BRICS+ and separate Western AI ecosystems, in the way that the red and blue social media ecosystems during US elections polarised voters and reduced their exposure to the views of others.

The humanities and AI. There has been much focus on the need in AI policy for social scientists to work alongside technologists to understand the impact of behavioural economics and psychology. But often neglected is the value also of the humanities – history, mythology, philosophy, religious wisdom, the arts, and music. These are essential inputs in the design of AI algorithms, and the data it is trained on, if AI is to truly help us individually and as societies to flourish and live our best lives.



Katica Kjulavkova

Academic, Macedonian Academy of Sciences
and Arts



Narcissistic Memory

The events unfolding in recent years on the world stage will likely alter the way in which certain important categories are interpreted, among them the category of the narcissism of small differences, collective memory and trauma, crime and punishment.

The phenomenon that Sigmund Freud termed in 1918 the “narcissism of small differences”, citing several European examples of interethnic and interreligious rivalries and conflicts, has today assumed striking proportions.

Let us recall that the ‘narcissism of small differences’ denotes extreme intolerance between closely related peoples living in the same or in neighbouring territories. History demonstrates that such peoples are prone to irreconcilable conflicts with a tragic outcome.

At first glance, the narcissism of small differences manifests itself as something irrational and absurd — for example, in the form of excessive self-love, accompanied by the narrative of the “oldest people in the world”, the “chosen people”, a unique people, a people cast as victim.

Such a narrative is nourished over the years by media and political discourses, and itself becomes a “discourse of power”. It generates megalomania, rivalry, and chauvinism, and subsequently serves as a pretext for civil conflicts along ethnic and religious lines.

Ultimately, historical examples demonstrate that narcissistic narratives are exploited for political ends with hegemonic and colonial underpinnings. They constitute a serious indicator of significant geostrategic and geopolitical ambitions. Irrational verbal rivalries frequently culminate in fierce conflicts, in culturocide and ethnocide, and even in genocide, ultimately resulting in a revision of the existing geopolitical map of a given region. Such regional change heralds a shift in the global map of spheres of interest.

For this reason, the narcissism of small differences has been and remains a factor of destabilisation at the state, regional, and broader level. I shall not dwell on specific examples, merely recalling the case of Ukraine and Russia, in which many other states also play a role — states not directly implicated in the initial Ukrainian-Russian narcissistic narrative. Equally traumatic is the example of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which transcends not only narcissistic but also local frameworks.

There is no doubt that the narcissism of minor differences between peoples and religions possesses not only a historical and narrative dimension, but a geopolitical one as well. When identity conflicts become radicalised, what in fact comes to the fore is some form of cultural hegemonism and territorial colonialism. The problem lies in the fact that the paths of the colonisation of a space are paved with blood. The very act of colonising a space — both mental and territorial — is a tragic act that calls into question the very concepts of humanism and civilisation. Aspirations towards a territory treated as “property” and “real estate”, which marginalises the human factor, reveal in and of themselves the brutal face of the contemporary world.

Precisely at a time when the world is acquiring a new face in the guise of Artificial Intelligence, precisely when not only new technologies but also a new consciousness is being forged — a new “superhuman” consciousness — humanity finds itself confronted with a profound inner crisis of identity. Today, a battle is being waged between civilisation and humanism; today it is evident that to be civilised does not necessarily mean to be humane. The drive for power today reveals its darkest face: that of tyranny.

This raises the question: what memories shall we carry away from this contemporary world? What is the power of trauma here and now? What are the consequences of a distorted perception of reality? Is silence naive? What are the consequences of suppressed truths? How great is the power of the subconscious, and how great that of consciousness? The subconscious destroys; consciousness builds. It therefore seems that today the role of the intellectual avant-garde — one that holds fast to high ethical and humanistic principles — is pivotal. It must act preventively, through the power of public discourse, so that the darkest of scenarios may be averted.

I cannot fail to mention the Macedonian case. For almost two centuries, Macedonia has been the target of the narcissism of small differences exercised by closely related and neighbouring peoples. Today it is gradually becoming a victim, because that narcissism has acquired an international dimension and an ultimative character. This is reflected even in the freedom of speech and in the freedom of science to conduct research objectively and independently of political dogmas. The Macedonian question is fundamentally one of identity, but what lies behind it? When will the transition occur from the ethnocultural identity narrative to the territorial one? That is a question which, for the time being, has no answer — though this does not mean that scholarship should not seek one.

Ivan Ivanov

ICAC Executive Board Chairman



Your excellencies, distinguished guests, dear friends,

Before we conclude, allow me to express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who made this gathering possible.

To all our distinguished speakers—thank you for sharing your wisdom, your experiences, and your vision. To the heads of state, esteemed dignitaries, the diplomats, scholars, and, of course, the young leaders who brought energy and fresh perspectives—your contributions enriched this dialogue immeasurably.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Embassy of the People's Republic of China and to the Chargé d'Affaires for their generous support and partnership in making this event a reality. We are equally grateful to the representatives of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences for their presence and for offering valuable insights that broadened our perspectives.

On behalf of the International Center alliance of civilizations, allow me first to sincerely thank you for your presence here today and, above all, for your willingness to contribute to this dialogue—a dialogue for unity and peace, at a time when both often feel more like distant dreams than a tangible future. Thank you for your courage to listen, to speak, and to act.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the entire team and staff of the International Center Alliance of Civilizations for their dedication and hard work, as well as to the Ivanov School of Young Leaders Alumni Association for their continued support. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Embassy of the People's Republic of China for their valuable support in making this event possible.

The theme that brings us together today—"Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future"—is not only a reflection on history; it is a call to conscience. Eighty years after the horrors of the Second World War, we must ask ourselves: What have we truly learned?

Yes, we remember. We build monuments and hold commemorations. But war... war never truly left us. It has transformed, disguised itself, and taken on new forms—in proxy conflicts, in sanctions, in rhetoric filled with fear and division.

We gather here today at a time of profound transformation—some may call it a time of crisis, some, time of opportunities, some might call time of morbidity, uncertainty or they might call it interregnum better known as time between two epochs. The world order that once promised stability now wavers under the weight of uncertainty that's for sure. Democracy, that democracy that once flourished as the voice of the people, is facing a steady decline. According to Freedom House, democracy has been in retreat for the past 17 years, with nearly 60 countries experiencing democratic backsliding just in the last decade. Or as Larry diamond defines it – democratic recession. Wars and conflicts continue to erupt, displacing millions. Mistrust grows among nations, among institutions and international organizations and instead of unity, we see division.

Today, we speak of peace, yet Europe is rearming. We are not naïve—we understand that every nation has the right, even the obligation, to defend itself. But before Europe can speak of defense, it must first know what it stands for. It must first develop a coherent foreign policy—one rooted not in reaction, but in vision.

This generation of politicians, regrettably, appears more afraid of peace than prepared to pursue it. What we witness today is not a deficit of resources, but a deficit of vision—an absence of moral imagination and strategic courage. They pale in comparison to the generation of leaders who emerged from the devastation of the Second World War. Those men and women, scarred by the brutality they had endured and witnessed, understood the true cost of conflict. And precisely because they had known war in its most horrifying form, they dared to imagine peace—not as a utopian fantasy, but as a shared, necessary project. They knew what war meant, and that is why they knew how to value peace.

They built institutions not for convenience, but for conscience. Their decisions were driven by a sense of historical responsibility. Today's leadership, in contrast, seems trapped in a cycle of short-term calculations, sterile bureaucracy, and hollow rhetoric—unable, or unwilling, to rise to the demands of our time.

Today's leaders have become fluent in the language of empty phrases—expressions of concern without consequence, declarations without depth. But hollow words do not build bridges. They do not resolve conflicts or inspire trust. On the contrary, they often serve as a smokescreen for indecision, a convenient substitute for action. Worse still, these platitudes, repeated without conviction, do not calm tensions—they aggravate them. They erode public trust, alienate citizens, and widen the very divides they pretend to close. In an era that demands clarity, courage, and leadership, vague rhetoric is not harmless—it is dangerous.

Dear friends,

And as we gather to mark 80 years since the end of the war, we also mark 80 years of multilateralism. But here too, we must ask: what have we achieved? The institutions built in the aftermath of the war—the United Nations, first among them—were born of a deep desire to ensure that global cooperation would prevent global catastrophe. And yet, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres himself noted, the Security Council is paralyzed. Stalled by rivalries, trapped by the very vetoes meant to prevent abuse, it now too often stands silent in the face of grave injustice.

But do we have the luxury of replacing it? I am afraid not. I am deeply concerned that this generation of global leaders lacks the political will—and the moral consensus—to build for an example a new Charter for the United Nations, or to forge a new, universal Declaration of Human Rights. But that does not mean we are helpless. We can repair what has been broken. As Miguel Ángel Moratinos has argued, perhaps the way forward is to strengthen the role of the General Assembly, to shift influence away from paralysis and toward collective will, and to apply pressure where it is most needed—on the Security Council, to restore its credibility and capacity.

And yet, even as we confront these challenges, we must not forget what has been achieved. The last 80 years have not been defined by failure alone. Globalization has lifted millions out of poverty. Former enemies have become allies—look at the European Union, born from ashes of war, now a testament to reconciliation. International cooperation has eradicated deadly diseases, sent humans to the moon, and forged the Paris Agreement in a collective bid to save our planet. Despite imperfections, global institutions have helped maintain a fragile peace in many regions. Progress may not always make headlines, but it is real—and it is worth defending.

But progress is not a destination—it is a journey, and one that must constantly adapt to new realities. The world that enabled these achievements has changed dramatically.

And we must recognize the new global reality: we no longer live in a unipolar world. The international order is becoming increasingly multipolar—defined by competing powers, competing interests, and competing narratives. In this emerging landscape, the challenge is no longer just to maintain balance, but to avoid fragmentation. Multipolarity can be a strength, if anchored in respect, cooperation, and mutual accountability. But without trust, it risks becoming a world of hardened blocs and permanent mistrust.

Ladies and gentleman,

Sadly, Huntington was right. The clash of civilizations is not just a theory—it's a reality we are witnessing all around us. But that is precisely why we are here. Not to echo predictions, but to offer responses. What can we do—here, today? How do we build unity when peace feels so far away?

I believe the answer lies in dialogue—genuine, honest, human dialogue. Dialogue between nations, yes—but also between cultures. Between generations. Between different visions of the world. This conference is exactly such a space—where voices do not compete, but compose a shared melody.

The world cannot be changed through declarations, but through connection. Through trust. Through shared values, and shared memory. To remember is not enough—we must also learn. Empathize. Act.

Let this gathering be more than a discussion. Let it be the a common vision. Not of a perfect world—but of a world where people do not fear one another. A world where we dare to believe in peace, even when it seems out of reach.

Thank you.



Shener Bilalli

Advisor to the Macedonian Prime Minister on
Interethnic Relations



Building a Future of Peace

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and shifting political landscapes, the pursuit of peace remains a paramount objective for humanity. Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, equity, and mutual respect among individuals and nations. Building a future of peace requires a collective effort from governments, communities, and individuals to foster understanding, resolve conflicts, and promote sustainable development.

Understanding the Foundations of Peace

Peace is built upon several fundamental pillars, including dialogue, education, economic stability, and justice. Dialogue is essential in bridging differences and finding common ground among diverse communities. Open communication fosters trust and helps prevent misunderstandings that can escalate into conflicts.

Education plays a crucial role in cultivating a culture of peace. By teaching values such as empathy, tolerance, and cooperation from an early age, societies can instill a mindset that prioritizes peaceful solutions over aggression. Schools and educational institutions must emphasize critical thinking, conflict resolution, and respect for diverse perspectives to nurture future generations committed to harmony.

Economic stability is another vital component of peace. Poverty and lack of opportunities often fuel discontent, leading to social unrest and violence. Sustainable economic development, job creation, and equitable resource distribution contribute to a stable society where individuals can thrive without resorting to conflict.

Justice is the backbone of any peaceful society. Fair legal systems that uphold human rights, protect minorities, and ensure accountability for wrongdoing help build trust in institutions and prevent grievances from escalating into violent disputes.

Steps Towards a Peaceful Future

1. **Promoting Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution** - Governments and international organizations must prioritize diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts through peaceful negotiations. Strengthening international institutions that facilitate dialogue, and mediation can prevent tensions from escalating into full-scale conflicts.
2. **Investing in Education and Awareness Expanding** - Access to quality education and incorporating peace studies into curricula can empower individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster peace in their communities. Media outlets also have a responsibility to promote accurate information and counter divisive narratives.
3. **Encouraging Community Engagement** - Grassroots movements and community initiatives play a significant role in building peace. Encouraging local dialogues, intercultural exchanges, and volunteerism strengthens social cohesion and reduces prejudice.

4. **Advancing Economic and Social Equity** - Addressing economic disparities and promoting inclusive policies can prevent social unrest. Governments and businesses should work together to create job opportunities, improve access to healthcare, and reduce systemic inequalities.
5. **Strengthening International Cooperation** - Global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and pandemics require collaborative solutions. Nations must work together to tackle these issues while ensuring that cooperation is based on mutual respect and shared benefits.

Conclusion

Building a future of peace is not an unattainable dream but a realistic goal that requires commitment, collaboration, and continuous effort. By fostering understanding, prioritizing justice, and promoting economic and social stability, humanity can move towards a world where conflicts are resolved through dialogue rather than violence. Every individual has a role to play in this endeavor—whether through education, community service, or advocating for policies that uphold peace and justice. The future of peace is in our hands, and our actions today will determine the world of tomorrow.

The Role of Inter-communities in building peace

UNAOC's Role in Promoting Dialogue and Global Unity

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) is a vital international initiative dedicated to fostering intercultural dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among diverse societies. This paper explores UNAOC's strategic efforts in promoting global unity, emphasizing its key initiatives, partnerships, and impact on peacebuilding. It also examines the challenges UNAOC encounters and proposes strategies to enhance its role in a rapidly evolving global landscape characterized by geopolitical tensions, digital misinformation, and rising cultural polarization.

Introduction

In an era of increasing globalization, cultural and religious differences continue to be sources of both enrichment and conflict. Established in 2005 under the co-sponsorship of Spain and Turkey, UNAOC was conceived as a means of addressing divisions and fostering mutual respect between cultures and civilizations. By focusing on dialogue, media literacy, education, and interfaith cooperation, UNAOC aims to bridge divides and mitigate conflicts that arise from misunderstandings and stereotypes. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of UNAOC's mission, major initiatives, and its contribution to fostering global peace and unity.

UNAOC's Mission and Objectives

UNAOC's primary mission is to promote inclusive societies by encouraging dialogue between cultures, religions, and civilizations. Its objectives include:

- Enhancing intercultural and interfaith dialogue to strengthen social cohesion.
- Empowering youth as agents of change in peacebuilding efforts.
- Promoting responsible media practices to combat misinformation and stereotypes.
- Supporting educational initiatives that reinforce mutual respect and diversity.
- Encouraging policies that foster inclusive and tolerant societies at national and global levels.

Key Initiatives and Strategies

UNAOC operates through several flagship programs aimed at fostering global unity and cooperation:

1. Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue Initiatives

- UNAOC organizes Global Forums, bringing together policymakers, religious leaders, scholars, and civil society representatives to discuss pressing global challenges.
- The organization collaborates with religious institutions to foster mutual understanding and reduce interfaith tensions.

2. Youth Engagement and Leadership Programs

- Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF): Provides financial and technical support to youth-led projects that promote peace and social cohesion.
- Young Peacebuilders Program: Equips young leaders with skills to prevent violence and promote intercultural understanding.
- Fellowship Program: Offers exposure to different cultural and political contexts to young professionals and leaders.

3. Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Programs

- Conducts workshops for journalists and media professionals to encourage ethical reporting on interfaith and intercultural issues.
- Develops toolkits and resources to help communities critically analyze media content and counter hate speech.

4. Education for Peace and Diversity

- Works with UNESCO and educational institutions to integrate peace education into national curricula.
- Develops resources to help educators teach intercultural understanding and tolerance.

Impact on Global Unity

UNAOC's initiatives have had a significant impact on international peace efforts:

- Reducing Stereotypes: By promoting responsible media and information literacy, UNAOC helps counter misinformation and reduce biases that lead to discrimination and radicalization.
- Strengthening Social Cohesion: Youth programs have empowered thousands of young leaders to promote dialogue and reconciliation in their communities.
- Enhancing Policy Frameworks: UNAOC has successfully influenced national and international policies to integrate inclusive practices into governance.

Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite its successes, UNAOC faces several challenges:

- Geopolitical Resistance: Some governments prioritize nationalistic policies over international cooperation, making dialogue initiatives difficult.
- Limited Funding: Resource constraints limit the scalability of UNAOC's programs, hindering their long-term sustainability.
- Digital Misinformation: The spread of hate speech and misinformation online presents a growing challenge to fostering unity.

To address these challenges, UNAOC should:

- **Strengthening Regional Collaborations:** Partnering with regional organizations can enhance program reach and impact.
- **Expand Digital Initiatives:** Leveraging social media and digital platforms can counter misinformation and promote peace narratives.
- **Secure Sustainable Funding:** Diversifying funding sources can ensure the longevity of UNAOC's initiatives.

Conclusion

UNAOC plays a critical role in fostering dialogue and global unity through its various initiatives in education, media literacy, youth empowerment, and interfaith collaboration. While challenges remain, innovative strategies and stronger partnerships can enhance its impact, ensuring that UNAOC continues to serve as a bridge between cultures and a catalyst for global peace. Strengthening its efforts will be essential in an increasingly interconnected world where mutual understanding and cooperation are paramount for sustainable peace.

Goran Shibakovski

Dean, Faculty of Applied IT, Machine Intelligence and Robotics, University of Information Science and Technology “St. Paul the Apostle”, Ohrid



Good afternoon. It was a true honor to take part in this timely and essential dialogue on diplomacy and emerging technologies. As someone who works at the intersection of political science and digital innovation, I've witnessed how artificial intelligence (AI) and new technologies are reshaping diplomacy—not only in how states communicate, but also in how global trust, influence, and narratives are constructed.

The fundamental question before us is this: Will technology make diplomacy more inclusive and effective, or will it widen the existing gaps between nations, cultures, and communities?

Today, AI has become a strategic asset in international relations. Governments and international organizations use it to monitor trends, assess risks, and simulate potential crises. For example, AI tools that analyze social media in real time can detect early signs of unrest or disinformation—serving as key instruments of preventive diplomacy. Natural language processing tools also enhance multilingual communication and reduce misinterpretation during sensitive negotiations. These are significant advancements, showing that technology can be a powerful enabler—but also a potential disruptor.

Yet, we must acknowledge the imbalance in access. The development and control of AI technologies are largely concentrated in the hands of a few nations and corporations. This growing disparity is what I refer to as the “AI sovereignty gap.” Many smaller or less digitally developed nations risk becoming dependent consumers of external technologies—unable to shape their own digital futures. This dependency risks reinforcing a global digital hierarchy, undermining the very principles of equitable diplomacy.

At the same time, there are inspiring success stories. Estonia, for instance, stands out as a remarkable example of a country that has leveraged technology to strengthen its global standing. By strategically investing in digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and e-governance, Estonia has built a national brand rooted in innovation, transparency, and digital trust. From its AI-powered public services to its digital embassy in Luxembourg, Estonia demonstrates that a small country can achieve global influence not through hard power, but through smart, ethical, and future-focused tech diplomacy. This model is both aspirational and adaptable, especially for countries in the Western Balkans and beyond.

Countries that embrace innovation with purpose—by investing in digital skills, ethical AI practices, and cross-border collaboration—can redefine their roles on the global stage. In this sense, technology is not only a driver of economic development, but a growing source of diplomatic relevance and soft power.

However, the risks remain urgent. The proliferation of deepfakes and synthetic media represents a serious threat to diplomatic credibility and stability. AI-generated fake speeches or videos can mislead, provoke, or destabilize if not identified swiftly. We need to act now to develop global standards for digital content transparency—a concept I call the “diplomatic chain of authenticity.” We must also ensure that diplomats and policy professionals are trained in digital literacy and AI awareness to navigate these complex challenges.

Despite these concerns, I remain optimistic. AI also holds great potential to democratize diplomacy. AI-powered platforms can give a voice to youth, women, and marginalized communities in global forums. Virtual diplomacy tools can reduce barriers related to cost, geography, and access—making participation in international dialogue more inclusive than ever before.

At our university in Ohrid, we're already taking steps in this direction. Our students engage in global policy simulations enhanced by AI, learning to analyze complex data, draft strategic briefings, and engage in ethical decision-making. These are the skills that tomorrow's diplomats will need.

To bring this vision to life, we need courageous leadership—investing in peace-tech hubs, open-source diplomatic tools, and ethical governance frameworks for emerging technologies. We need to build bridges between governments, universities, civil society, and the tech sector. It's time to move past fear and toward collective intelligence, where humans and machines work together to promote peace and cooperation.

In conclusion, technology is not neutral—and it is not destiny. It mirrors the values of its creators. Let's ensure the technologies guiding diplomacy in the 21st century reflect values of equity, inclusion, and peace. Countries that align their innovation agendas with these principles will not only navigate the digital age—they will lead it.

Thank you.

GONG JIONG

RABI SEDRAK

Professor of University of
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Rabi Sedrak

Director General, Institute for International
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Eighty years after the establishment of the post-Second World War international order, multilateral institutions remained central to the promotion of peace, security, economic development, and international cooperation. Organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have played significant roles in addressing global challenges and supporting state-building efforts in fragile and conflict-affected regions.

Despite these efforts, corruption continues to undermine the effectiveness of international interventions and development programs. In regions such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and the Balkans, corruption has weakened governance structures, eroded public trust, hindered economic development, and compromised the objectives of international assistance. The persistence of corruption raises important questions regarding the effectiveness of multilateral institutions and their capacity to promote sustainable governance reforms.

This paper examines the relationship between corruption and multilateralism, analyzes selected cases where international efforts have produced limited results, and explores possible reforms that could strengthen international anti-corruption mechanisms in the decades ahead.

Corruption and the Erosion of Multilateralism

Corruption represents one of the most significant challenges facing contemporary multilateral institutions. Beyond the direct financial losses associated with corrupt practices, corruption weakens institutional legitimacy, undermines public confidence, and reduces the effectiveness of international programs.

First, corruption damages the credibility of international organizations. When institutions involved in peacekeeping, reconstruction, or development assistance become associated with corruption scandals, public trust declines. The United Nations Oil-for-Food Program remains one of the most frequently cited examples, demonstrating how governance failures can affect the reputation of international organizations and weaken their moral authority.

Second, corruption reduces the effectiveness of international aid and investment. Large-scale development assistance often fails to achieve its intended objectives when funds are diverted through patronage networks, political elites, or weak oversight mechanisms. As a result, substantial financial resources may produce limited long-term improvements in governance, infrastructure, or economic development.

Third, corruption contributes directly to political instability and security challenges. Weak institutions and corrupt governance structures create opportunities for organized crime, political manipulation, and extremist movements. In several Balkan states, concerns regarding political patronage, state capture, and organized criminal influence continue to complicate reform efforts and impede democratic consolidation.

Lessons from International Anti-Corruption Efforts

The experiences of Afghanistan, Ukraine, and the Western Balkans illustrate the limitations of existing international anti-corruption strategies.

Afghanistan represents one of the most significant examples of the challenges associated with international state-building efforts. Between 2001 and 2021, the United States and its allies invested substantial financial and military resources in reconstruction and governance programs. Despite these efforts, systemic corruption remained deeply entrenched within state institutions. The inability to establish accountable governance structures contributed to institutional fragility and played a significant role in the collapse of the Afghan government in 2021.

Ukraine presents a different but equally important case. Since 2014, the country has received extensive political, economic, and security assistance from Western partners. Although important reforms have been introduced, corruption remains a persistent challenge. Progress has been achieved in several areas, yet the continued influence of oligarchic networks and institutional weaknesses demonstrates the complexity of implementing sustainable anti-corruption reforms.

The Western Balkans continue to face similar obstacles. Despite sustained engagement by the EU, NATO, and other international actors, corruption remains a major concern across the region. Political patronage systems, weak institutional oversight, and insufficient judicial independence have often limited the effectiveness of reform initiatives. In many cases, reforms have been adopted formally while implementation has remained inconsistent.

These examples highlight a common pattern: external support alone cannot eliminate corruption without strong domestic institutions, political commitment, and effective accountability mechanisms.

Failed States and the Crisis of Multilateral Intervention

The persistence of corruption is closely linked to the broader challenge of state fragility. Over the past two decades, several international interventions have failed to produce stable and self-sustaining governance structures.

Libya provides a notable example. The NATO-led intervention in 2011 successfully contributed to the removal of Muammar Gaddafi's regime but failed to establish a viable post-conflict governance framework. The absence of long-term stabilization planning contributed to political fragmentation, the emergence of competing armed groups, and prolonged instability.

In Iraq, the dismantling of existing state structures following the 2003 invasion created conditions that facilitated political instability, sectarian tensions, and the eventual rise of the Islamic State. The experience demonstrated the risks associated with intervention strategies that insufficiently account for local governance realities and institutional resilience.

Somalia represents another example of the limitations of prolonged international engagement. Despite decades of international assistance, peacekeeping missions, and development programs, the country continues to face significant governance challenges. While progress has been achieved in some areas, the persistence of political fragmentation and security threats illustrates the difficulty of building effective institutions in fragile environments.

These cases reveal several recurring shortcomings in international intervention efforts. Bureaucratic inefficiencies often delay responses to emerging crises. Divergent geopolitical interests among international actors can undermine coordinated action. Military interventions are frequently prioritized over long-term governance planning. Corruption and weak oversight reduce the effectiveness of international assistance, while local political dynamics are often insufficiently understood or incorporated into intervention strategies.

Why Anti-Corruption Reforms Frequently Fail

Despite growing international attention, anti-corruption reforms frequently encounter significant obstacles at the national level.

One of the primary challenges is the existence of entrenched political patronage systems. Political and economic elites often benefit directly from existing arrangements and therefore possess little incentive to support meaningful reforms. In such environments, anti-corruption initiatives may threaten established networks of power and influence.

A second challenge involves weaknesses within judicial institutions. Courts, prosecutors, and anti-corruption agencies may themselves be subject to political influence, limiting their ability to investigate and prosecute high-level corruption effectively. Selective enforcement can further undermine public confidence in reform efforts.

A third limitation concerns the enforcement capacity of international organizations. While institutions such as the EU, NATO, and international financial organizations frequently promote governance reforms, their ability to enforce compliance remains limited. Conditionality mechanisms often lack sufficient consistency or political backing to generate lasting institutional change.

Reforming Multilateralism for the Next Eighty Years

Addressing corruption requires a fundamental reassessment of how multilateral institutions approach governance, development assistance, and post-conflict stabilization.

International assistance programs should incorporate stronger accountability requirements and more rigorous oversight mechanisms. Financial support should be linked to measurable governance benchmarks, transparency standards, and independent monitoring processes.

Greater cooperation among international intelligence, law enforcement, and anti-corruption agencies is also essential. Enhanced information-sharing can help identify transnational corruption networks, illicit financial flows, and organized criminal structures that operate across borders.

Multilateral organizations should strengthen enforcement mechanisms and develop more effective responses to persistent non-compliance. Anti-corruption frameworks must move beyond recommendations and declarations toward practical systems capable of generating tangible consequences for institutional misconduct.

International interventions should also adopt longer-term planning horizons. Stabilization efforts require sustained commitments to governance reform, institutional development, and economic recovery. Short-term military objectives cannot substitute for comprehensive state-building strategies.

Equally important is the inclusion of local actors. Durable reforms are more likely to succeed when local governments, civil society organizations, independent media, and community leaders are actively involved in the design and implementation of reform initiatives. Local ownership strengthens legitimacy and increases the likelihood of long-term success.

The Balkans offer a particularly important context for such reforms. Regional cooperation mechanisms strengthened judicial institutions, independent oversight bodies, and support for investigative journalism can contribute significantly to reducing corruption and strengthening democratic governance.

Conclusion

Corruption is not merely a legal or economic concern. It represents a fundamental challenge to international security, democratic governance, and the effectiveness of multilateral institutions. By weakening state institutions, undermining public trust, and reducing the impact of international assistance, corruption threatens the very objectives that multilateral organizations seek to achieve.

The experiences of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Ukraine, and the Western Balkans demonstrate that corruption remains one of the principal obstacles to successful governance reform and sustainable peacebuilding. These cases also illustrate the limitations of existing international approaches, particularly when interventions lack long-term planning, effective oversight, and local ownership.

As multilateral institutions prepare for the challenges of the coming decades, combating corruption must become a central strategic priority. Success will require stronger accountability mechanisms, deeper cooperation among international actors, greater support for local institutions, and a renewed commitment to transparency and the rule of law.

The future credibility and effectiveness of the multilateral system will depend, to a significant extent, on its ability to address corruption in a consistent, credible, and enforceable manner. If global institutions cannot combat corruption effectively, then who will?

Anastasija Ilievska

ISLAA President; Editor and Journalist, Alfa TV;
Specialist for Public speaking, Body language and
Etiquette



Distinguished guests, esteemed colleagues, friends of peace and dialogue,

The title of this conference asks us to do two things at once: to remember and to build. I want to begin by suggesting that these are not opposite tasks. In Macedonia today, they are the same task and the people doing both most urgently, most honestly, and with the most at stake, are the young.

I stand before you as the voice of a survey, a national study conducted in early 2025 by the Ivanov School of Young Leaders Alumni Association and the International Center for the Alliance of Civilizations, it reached 78 young people across every region of our country. Their ages ranged from 18 to 35. They came from cities and villages, from Skopje and the Eastern region, from Polog and Pelagonia. They are students, workers, entrepreneurs, and dreamers.

Let us begin by remembering, as this conference invites us to do.

In June 2018, Macedonia signed the Prespa Agreement. It was framed as a gateway - to NATO, to the European Union, to belonging. But it came at a price that young people were not asked whether they were willing to pay. A referendum was held. Fewer than 37% of registered voters participated, far below the threshold required for it to be binding. Yet the constitutional amendment went forward anyway.

For a generation already skeptical of institutions, that moment carried a lesson they could not forget: that democracy can be performed without being practiced.

"We were told our voice mattered. Then they changed the name anyway." — Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

NATO membership followed in 2020. EU accession has not. Corruption remains entrenched - Macedonia ranked 85th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index. Youth unemployment stands at 28.9%, while brain drain accelerates. Tens of thousands have left, as World Bank data confirms, out of exhaustion.

And yet: those who remain have not surrendered. They have something to say. And today, I am here to say it with them.

The five biggest challenges these young Macedonians identified deserve to be named plainly, not softened, not translated into the comfortable language of policy reports, but spoken as they were given to us.

Seventy-one percent cited political instability as the soil in which every other problem grows. When governments change but policies do not, when ministers rotate but ministries do not reform, it is young people who absorb the cost.

“Young people are apathetic, and to change that, concrete changes are needed. There must be motivation for them to stay — and to know that what they do, learn, and strive for is not in vain. A merit-based system is essential.” — Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

Sixty-nine percent cited the emigration of their peers. This is not just a statistic. It is the hollow feeling of a friend's empty chair. It is a generation whose social fabric is thinning with every departure.

“Listen to the youth and give them what they're asking for. They need it — and the country needs them too. Otherwise, we will disappear.” — Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

Sixty-four percent cited the lack of internship and practical opportunities. They are told to gain experience, yet offered no pathway to acquire it. What they are requesting is not charity. It is structure. A national framework that gives merit a chance over connection.

Sixty-two percent cited poor-quality education—a system that teaches memorization, not creation; exam-passing, not problem-solving. They want classrooms that function as launchpads.

And more than a third named unemployment and the absence of dedicated youth spaces — places where they can gather, build, and belong. The physical absence of such spaces deepens their sense of marginalization. What they need is more than employment. They need infrastructure that says: you matter here.

Now let us turn to what shaping the future requires.

Despite everything, despite the instability, the corruption, the broken promises, the watching of friends leave — 67.5% of young Macedonians surveyed said they want to start their own business. This is not naivety. This is strategy. When the formal labor market excludes you, you build your own entry point.

But they cannot do it alone. Fifty-five percent cite lack of financial support as the primary barrier. Eighteen percent lack access to mentorship. They are asking for incubators, local grants, co-working spaces in smaller towns — not just in Skopje.

“One specific measure I would propose is the creation of a state-supported fund for young entrepreneurs: interest-free loans for startups, mentorship in entrepreneurship and digital skills, priority access to workspaces, and connection with investors. Such a measure would not only encourage young people to stay — it would stimulate innovation, self-employment, and economic growth.” — Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025)

On civic participation: 61% of respondents feel that young people have no meaningful voice in policymaking. One respondent proposed that at least three individuals under the age of 30 be placed among the top ten candidates on parliamentary lists. Another wrote: mandatory inclusion of young people in decision-making processes that directly affect them. These are not slogans. They are blueprints.

And on rural revitalization: nearly 73% of respondents said they would consider living in a rural area if the conditions allowed them to thrive. A cleaner environment. Better infrastructure. Affordable housing. Quality education for their children. What young Macedonians are asking for is not Skopje for everyone. They are asking for equity across geography — for a country that does not require you to leave your village in order to live with dignity.

So what, in the end, are they asking for?

Not privilege. Let me be precise about this. They are not asking for advantages they have not earned. They are asking for systems that actually function. For degrees that mean something in the marketplace. For job advertisements that do not demand ten years of experience from a 25-year-old. For public institutions that work for everyone not only for those with family in the ministry.

They are asking for fair starting lines.

And perhaps most powerfully: this generation has not given up. Despite the disappointments, the broken promises, the missed opportunities, they voted in the 2025 elections in higher numbers than in previous cycles. They filled out this survey. They are standing, in some measure, at this podium today.

They are not asking to be saved. They are asking to be partnered with.

“Young people aren’t asking for privileges — we’re asking for a chance. We need access to quality education, affordable public transport, and spaces where we can express ourselves, learn, and work. We need opportunities within our own communities so we don’t have to leave just to survive or grow. We are ready to work, to create, to stay — but first, you must see us and include us in the decision-making process. Without youth, there is no future.” — Survey respondent (ISLAA & ICAC, 2025).

The young people of Macedonia are neither apathetic nor passive. They are deeply aware of the opportunities and challenges that shape their future. They have written the blueprint. They are waiting not with hope alone, but with plans.

The question this conference must help us answer is not whether youth have a future in this country.

The question is whether this country has the courage to deserve them.

Thank you.

About the International Center Alliance of Civilizations



The International Center Alliance of Civilizations (ICAC) is a foundation dedicated to fostering respect and tolerance among people, embracing the diversity of their beliefs, personalities, and languages.

Its core mission is to counteract harmful divisions, polarization, and extremism prevalent within societies and among them.

The ICAC pursues its mission through a three-fold approach: fostering inclusive dialogue among diverse actors, developing tools and platforms for conflict prevention and reconciliation, and contributing to global initiatives that promote understanding, cooperation, and harmony among nations.

The work of the ICAC extends beyond mere contemplation and theorizing; it operates as a “do-tank,” engaging in practical actions rather than being limited to a “think-tank” that only generates ideas. As a result, the ICAC serves as a crucial meeting point for state leaders, religious figures, politicians, civil society representatives, academics, and media professionals on both regional and global scales.

While the ICAC operates globally, its primary focus is on the Balkans, with comparative perspectives from the Middle East and the Caucasus. By addressing the complexities of these regions, ICAC contributes to advancing peace, dialogue, and unity in societies shaped by historical divisions.

The ICAC's key endeavors are:

Promotion of the Macedonian model at micro, macro, and regional levels

Advocating for a culture of peace

Fostering collective societal, religious, civil, and political will

Promoting changes in political frameworks and intercultural strategies

Preventing intercultural tensions and crises

Supporting innovative initiatives for intercultural dialogue

Raising awareness and mobilizing public support

Research and promotion of models for peaceful conflict resolution

Cultivating generations of young advocates for civilizational dialogue

Promoting cultural and religious heritage

Addressing radicalization and extremism

Education for Civilizational Dialogue

Training and Collaboration

Alignment with UNESCO

Alignment with UNAOC

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AND PEACEFUL GLOBAL FUTURE

From April 7–10, 2025, the event "A Dialogue for Unity and Peace: Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future" successfully brought together global leaders, diplomats, scholars, and young changemakers.

Marking 80 years since the end of World War II, this gathering focused heavily on learning from history and examining the continuing importance of historical memory.

Participants explored new strategies for maintaining global peace, understanding the evolving world order, and strengthening multilateral cooperation through international institutions.

Key discussions closely examined the role of international organizations, China's contribution to global development, and the impact of emerging technologies on international relations.

Furthermore, the event highlighted the crucial role of youth and inclusive leadership in building intercultural dialogue across diverse nations and cultures.

By capturing these vital speeches, panels, and ideas, this booklet outlines our collective pathways for a peaceful and united tomorrow.

Ultimately, the insights gathered here reinforce our shared, enduring commitment to remembering the past, shaping the future, and building an inclusive and peaceful global future.

"This dialogue has not given us all the answers. But it has asked important questions. And perhaps more importantly, it has reminded us of something essential: that unity is not uniformity, and peace is not passivity. Both demand effort. Both require vision. Both begin—always—with dialogue. Not debate, dialogue. Dialogue crash your opponent. In dialogue, we are learning from each other.

Let us leave here not with conclusions, but with commitments. To listen. To learn. To build. Not a perfect world—but a better one. One where memory informs action. One where difference does not divide. One where we dare to believe that unity and peace are not naïve aspirations—but necessary goals. And we should not be afraid to dream and imagine."

Ivan Ivanov, ICAC Executive Board Chairman,
"A Dialogue for Unity and Peace: Remembering the Past, Shaping
the Future" ,
April 10th, 2025



**A DIALOGUE
FOR UNITY AND PEACE**
REMEMBERING THE PAST, SHAPING THE FUTURE

7-10 April, 2025

Supported by the Embassy of the
People's Republic of China in skopje

