INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE OF LEADERS AND YOUTH

THEME

Cultural and heritage diversity of Africa and its Diasporas: brand of conflict or breeding ground for peace?

04 October 2021

Concept note
INTRODUCTION

« My heart has become capable
To welcome any form
It is grazing for gazelles
And abbey for monks!
It is a temple for idols
And the Ka'ba for who walks around
He is the Tables of the Torah
And also the leaves of the Koran!
The religion that I profess
Is that of love
Wherever his mounts turn
Love is my religion and my faith! »

Ibn Arabi (12th century Sufi mystic)

In itself, this slam, young people would say today, is a happy and pretty poetic digest of the problem underlying the theme of this intergenerational dialogue: Cultural and heritage diversity of Africa and its Diasporas: brand. of conflicts or breeding ground for peace?

A central element of any cultural heritage, religion (whether revealed or animist; imported or endogenous) is, without a doubt, very decisive in the construction of individuals' identity. This self-identity construction historically tends to be done in opposition to the other, the one who is not us: the different. This different is, par excellence, the one that does not share our faith. This difference from others therefore becomes a sign of threat to our faith and hence a threat to our culture, our civilization. Everyone has their faith, their culture by which they define themselves as a being, so no one wants to give it up at the risk of disappearing. This is how religious; cultural and heritage diversity becomes a source of conflict.

Anchored in his faith, and therefore in his culture, Ibn Arabi, the author of this poem, nevertheless sings a message of peace by making us understand that there is always a dialogue possible where there is cultural diversity and religious. It is always possible for us without renouncing our cultural and religious identity, without denying ourselves as an identity, to open up to the other, to enrich ourselves by his side, with him and to build a coexistence. For Ibn Arabi, with murderous cultural and religious identities, it is necessary to oppose and build weaving cultural and religious identities. This is the whole meaning of intercultural and interreligious dialogue which is based on the idea and the promise that cultural and heritage diversity is in itself a fertile ground for building fertile social links, for the germination of peace.

This call for intercultural and interreligious dialogue for living together and for peace, UNESCO has launched and reiterates through a number of standard-setting instruments such as the

It must be noted, however, that this salutary call for intercultural and interreligious dialogue is not always heard on the ground. Almost everywhere on the continent, identity differences are not always experienced in a harmonious way and intercultural and interreligious dialogue is, in fact, severely tested, for example, by the actions of many jihadist groups against other cultural communities, religious and against state authorities. Often inspired by Salafist Islam, these fundamentalist and radical groups are resistant to any intercultural and interfaith dialogue by advocating a symbolic break with other communities and displaying a rejection of other cults.

This refusal of intercultural and interreligious dialogue is also the result of certain Evangelical Churches, where a good number of leaders and faithful see other beliefs as diabolical forces to be fought and consequently engage in combative proselytism targeting these other beliefs, whether they are non-native or native.

Faced with this challenge posed by the identity question on the continent, there are, however, and fortunately, many initiatives (public authorities and / or civil society) which promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue for social cohesion and peace, all over the continent. Some of these initiatives are the work of young people and their organizations.

This intergenerational dialogue will also be an opportunity for UNESCO to announce the launch of a global initiative to create a Ministerial Network on Youth. Platform of high-level decision-makers and young people and their organizations, the said network will aim to be a forum for reflection and sharing of experiences and good practices between countries and regions of the world likely to inspire, in terms of appropriate responses, effective public policies to solve common problems in education, employment, health, welfare, etc. young people.

**GOALS**

For the participants in this dialogue, it will therefore be:

1) to discuss how to promote, in African States and the Diaspora, with the involvement of young people and their organizations, respect for cultural and heritage diversity for a peaceful coexistence of the multiple cultural identities of the Africa;
2) to highlight activities testifying to the daily commitment of young people and their organizations to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue for living together and for peace;
3) to present the Program “Young people committed to the Pan-African Movement for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence”.
PARTICIPANTS

Regarding the leaders, the participants of this forum will be:

- Heads of State and Government;
- The Ministers in charge of Youth / Culture;
- The Commissioners of the AUC and the Regional Economic Communities in charge of Youth;
- UNESCO Representatives;
- Representatives of the United Nations, ICESCO, international organizations and technical and financial partners invited to the Biennale;
- Representatives of the Directorate of Citizens and Diaspora (CIDO) of the AUC;
- Religious and traditional leaders.

As for young people, one hundred and fifty (150) young people (from all AU countries and 21 Diaspora countries) will be invited to take part online in this forum, 50% young women and 50% young men, (a woman and a man) per country. These young people will be selected from among the members of National Youth Councils, National Coordinators of the Pan-African Youth Network for the Culture of Peace (PAYNCOP)\(^1\), AU Youth and ICESCO Youth networks for Peace and Security, Youth from the diaspora and other youth leaders and organizations through a call for candidates’ process. The call for applications and the selection process will be led by an ad hoc Youth Committee.

However, a small number of ten young people will still participate live in this dialogue and make the trip to Luanda. They will be chosen, on one hand, under the responsibility of the three Organizations, from among young association leaders recognized by the UN, UNESCO, AUC and ICESCO; and, on the other hand, under the responsibility of the Ad Hoc Youth Committee, among the 150 young people who will be selected following the call for applications.

This list of ten young people will take into account the gender balance and representation of the Diaspora.

\(^1\) Officially launched in December 2014, under the aegis of UNESCO and the AU, with the support of the Government of the Gabonese Republic, as part of the call for the creation of a "Continental and sustainable movement in favor of peace “of the“ Action plan for a culture of peace in Africa / Agissions pour la paix “, adopted in 2013, at the Pan-African Forum on“ Sources and resources for a culture of peace “, the PAYNCOP is a continental organization present in some forty countries. Its Permanent Secretariat is hosted by Gabon.