



Concept note

II Youth Forum in Almaty

«Youth cooperation in the field of strengthening intercultural dialogue and prevention of violent extremism»

8 September 2017

Almaty, Kazakhstan

Background

Everyone lives their life in the midst of others. Their visions, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs and habits of living, are often different from our own. And sometimes this is a cause of curiosity and pleasure, and other times it can raise conflicts and the split of society.

The world is more and more interconnected but it does not mean that individuals and societies really live together – as reveal the exclusions suffered by millions of poor, women, youth, migrants and disenfranchised minorities. Today there is more information, technology and knowledge available than ever before, but adequate wisdom is still needed to prevent conflicts, to eradicate poverty or to make it possible for all to learn in order to live in harmony in a safe world.

The world of today witnesses a growing socio-political phenomena that makes all states and societies vulnerable to the outbreaks of violent extremism. The dynamic state of radicalization throughout the regions continue to undermine the joint efforts towards strengthening peace and security, promoting sustainable development, encouraging intercultural dialogue and protecting human rights.

Violent extremism, caused by radicalization and a choice to pursue violent action against governments and societies, is a fast growing concern for the modern world. It breaks apart social cohesion and weakens democratic states, which is why it poses a major threat to peaceful and inclusive societies.

No one is born a violent extremist. Each person's path towards coercive radicalization had been shaped by certain experiences, including social ones. That is why UNESCO says *it is not enough to counter violent extremism – we need to prevent it*. Social resilience has the power to affect the decision of youth and their family towards participation in radical violence.

This process must begin with human rights and the rule of law, with intercultural dialogue and with empowerment of all young women and men in activities aimed at preventing violent extremism, integration into decision-making process and foster trust between decision makers and the youth.

The crucial role of young women and men in advancing intercultural dialogue and understanding is increasingly recognized within the global development agenda. Today's large youth population, driven by a need for change, are requiring respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, including respect for their cultural identity and peaceful coexistence, and looking for new opportunities to learn to live together in a globalized world for a better future.

Youth's inquisitiveness and creativity, as well as their natural energy and leadership, position them as a powerful agents of positive social change. Youth, who will soon become the decision-makers of tomorrow, are not only beneficiaries, but also essential actors in finding solutions and advancing social resilience. Their capacity to act in the name of global values is very important in building a mutual trust and understanding and strengthening community cohesion to tackle the threat of violent extremism.

Objectives and expected results

Within the framework of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) and the International Youth Day, which is celebrated annually on 12 August, the second Youth Forum is planned to be held in Almaty on 8 September, 2017.

The main idea of the Youth Forum is to bring together young researchers and activists from different countries to discuss main challenges of intercultural dialogue and to develop collectively recommendations for policy makers on prevention of violent extremism in the region.

The objectives of the Youth Forum are to give an opportunity to young women and men to voice their concerns about challenges of intercultural dialogue in everyday life and to propose their ideas on prevention of violent extremism, as well as to raise the awareness of decision-makers, media and civil society about the importance of youth engagement in building peaceful societies and promoting sustainable development.

This Youth Forum is committed to:

- Encouraging youth to participate actively in prevention of conflicts and the consolidation of peace, strengthening mutual understanding;
- Fostering the exchange of knowledge and best practices on prevention of violent extremism;
- Sharing ideas about religion and human values to show that religion is not always the cause of radicalization;
- Combating ideological polarization and social stereotypes, improving understanding and cooperation among people from different cultures;
- Building capacity of tomorrow's decision-makers in the relevant fields by conducting discussions in different spheres;
- Promoting intercultural dialogue among the youth, ensuring opportunities for them to learn to work together and to build networks;
- Engaging youth in UNESCO's programme activities/work.

The expected results of the Youth Forum would include youth-initiated recommendations on prevention of violent extremism in local communities and strengthening intercultural dialogue. This document will be targeted at national governments, in particular Mayor Offices, NGOs and civil society.

Additionally, the Youth Forum is expected to become a starting point of creation of youth networks in Kazakhstan in the relevant fields and allow young participants to engage with decision-makers in creation of inclusive, tolerant and cooperative society, based on mutual respect, human rights and freedoms.

Format of the Youth Forum

The UNESCO Office in Almaty aims to foster an enabling environment and promote skills to stimulate youth-led grassroots initiatives to support vulnerable individuals and groups, thus contributing to forging a stronger civil society equipped with the opportunities, tools and knowledge to:

- make decisions based on positive values;
- launching new forms of intercultural literacy and diplomacy among youth;
- openly talk about the dangers of sympathizing with extremist ideology;
- foster youth creativity and innovation for prevention of violent extremism.

The Youth Forum will consist of three sessions. The first session will give an opportunity to the participants to experience and to become more aware from experts about current activities in the field of existing cultural barriers, intolerance, xenophobia, hate speech, religious fundamentalism, racism and marginalization. Meanwhile, in the second session young participants will share their experience and ideas on prevention of violent extremism. In the final session participants will be separated in the several groups for brainstorming and collective formulation of recommendations.

Participants

About 80 young people between the ages of 17 and 30 will take part in the Youth Forum.

The applications will be accepted through the [UNESCO.org/Almaty](https://unesco.org/Almaty) website. The organizers of the Youth Forum will conduct a final selection of participants, based on criteria such as the experience of candidates in social activities, promoting intercultural dialogue and prevention of violent extremism.

Potential participants can be local and international students or representatives of youth organizations in Central Asia.

Please note that the Organizers do not cover the expenses of participants for arriving in Almaty.

Draft Programme Overview

8 September 2017	
09.00 – 10.00	Registration of participants
10.00 – 10.20	Opening Ceremony
10.20 – 11.30	Session 1: Efforts of Governments and International Organizations to Strengthen Intercultural Dialogue and Prevent Violent Extremism with the Involvement of the Youth.
11.30 – 11.45	Coffee-break
11.45 – 13.30	Session 2: Youth Approach for Fostering Intercultural Dialogue Prevention of Violent Extremism. (How youth can act for building peaceful communities?)
13.30 – 14.30	Lunch
14.30 – 16.30	Session 3: Brainstorming among the participants and development of recommendations for youth and government agents: (How can youth, NGOs and government act together to support vulnerable communities and strengthen ideological resilience?)
16.30 – 16.45	Coffee-break
16.45 – 17.00	Presentation of recommendations
17.00	Closing ceremony. Certificate awards.