

[Baku Forum: Time to find 'magic formula' for peaceful coexistence, says UNESCO chief](#)

6 May 2017 – It is time to find that “magic formula” that will encourage people to live together in peace, the head of the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization ([UNESCO](#)) urged earlier today at the end of a UN-backed conference on intercultural dialogue in Baku, Azerbaijan.

In her closing remarks at end of the event, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova expressed hope and optimism that the world is “on the right path” towards building “inclusive and resilient” societies.

Hundreds of delegates, experts, academics, business and civil society leaders from 120 countries took part in this year’s [4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue](#), which aimed at further promoting and sustaining understanding and dialogue within and between cultures.

The UN-backed intercultural dialogue ended on a high note with the UNESCO chief calling on participants to act now to stamp out extremism and “build peace in the minds of men and women,” echoing the UN agency’s own timeless message about the need to make the most of the opportunities to bolster peaceful coexistence provided by our globalized world of increasing interconnections and diversity.

I think we all feel a certain sense of urgency, that we have to act [...]the world is very fragile, and peace is very fragile

The past three days were a flurry of debates, panel discussions, exhibits and concerts held by renowned artists working to bring people of different walks of life closer together, what UNESCO has called “a rapprochement of cultures.”

Preventing terrorism in cyberspace, educating girls to combat violent extremism, and changing people’s negative perception of migrants in cities were some of the topics broached at the Forum. The agenda also included such topics as the role of faith, religions, human security, sport, education, art, sustainable development, preventing violent extremism, and business in building trust and cooperation among cultures and civilizations.

Ms. Bokova urged the participants to try and establish an intercultural dialogue in their respective countries.

“I think it’s a moment of commitment, of engagement, I think we all feel a certain sense of urgency, that we have to act [...] but outside this beautiful country [...] the world out there is very fragile, and peace is very

fragile,” she said, emphasizing that: “How to sustain peace, how to build these inclusive, resilient societies, and how to prevent, in certain cases this extremism, and find this magic formula of living together [...] deserves all our efforts and all our commitments.”

Reflecting on the outcome of the Baku Forum, Maher Nasser, Acting UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, said it is too early to “cry victory” or dismiss the event as a failure because that can only be determined by what will follow.

Baku Forum spotlights importance of culture as a way to connect societies

“The discussions that I have seen bring back the importance of dialogue and using culture as a way to connect and to connect societies – sometimes within the same country. How culture bring us together as humans. We may see things differently, but there are also, sometimes, things that can bring us together. Culture and art are important elements of that,” he explained.

Speaking to *UN News*, Mr. Nasser also highlighted the important connection between tourism and culture. “Tourism today is one the top employers around the world,” he said. “Tourism depends on stability. No one wants to go to a region in conflict, unless you are war reporter. So tourism has a vested interest in promoting peace.”

The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is one of the organizing partners of the Baku Forum, along with UNESCO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), the Council of Europe, the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Nasser concluded by saying that the conference was “timely” and that he was optimistic moving forward.

The UNESCO Director-General praised the Government of Azerbaijan for hosting the World Forum for the fourth time, praising the country as an example of a nation where people of different faiths and cultures can live in peace.