

TOWARDS COP-21 “INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND CLIMATE CHANGE FOR A SUSTAINABLE MEDITERRANEAN”

A position paper to support the preparation of the UNFCCC COP-21

PURPOSE

This position statement summarizes (i) the basis for the linkages between intercultural exchange and the environmental challenges caused by climate change; (ii) the significant effects on humans and ecosystems; (iii) identifies anticipated conclusions from the “Intercultural Dialogue and Enhanced Cooperation for a Sustainable Mediterranean” event; and (iv) advocates to the COP21 UN summit from a Mediterranean perspective for policy decisions guiding mitigation and adaptation strategies designed to address the current and future impacts.

It establishes the Anna Lindh Foundation as providing expertise and leadership in establishing intercultural dialogue as a central component of mitigation and adaptation measures to address climate change and for a sustainable Mediterranean future.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Climate change has been the focus of extensive international efforts over the last 20 years. The results of this indicate that the earth’s climate is changing and will continue to change in the future. Projections include an increase in global air temperatures and sea surface temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns and a rise in mean sea level.

The prospect of major changes in the earth’s environment as a consequence of climate change and human actions presents one of the most demanding challenges facing humankind in the decades to come. The challenge has to be jointly tackled by science, policy, industry, civil society and the general public. The poorest people are likely to suffer the most from climate change since they are already living in marginal locations and have unable to make necessary adaptations.

The impacts of climate change will be widespread and will vary from country to country, affecting water supplies, ecosystems, food and forest products, health, industries, settlements and society. Almost every sector is likely to be significantly impacted by climate change including, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, construction (particularly in coastal areas), energy and insurance.

Climate change impacts disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations. Community resilience can be assessed in terms of technological; economic; behavioural; and managerial vulnerability contexts, such that layers of resilience can be established. In some cases the groups considered most vulnerable may also contain culturally based practices and skills and a wealth of knowledge about how best to develop community resilience.

MITIGATION, ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

There are three overarching challenges to addressing climate change, mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

- i) Mitigation relates to efforts being made to limit and reverse changes in global climate by reducing the greenhouse gas emission and to improve the ability of natural systems to store carbon.
- ii) Adaptation relates to how best to live with the environmental challenges caused by climate change. It concerns initiatives made in response to existing or anticipated climate changes. Adaptation measures can moderate threats and provide a net environmental, social and economic benefit. It involves an understanding of risks, vulnerabilities and potential impacts associated with climate change.
- iii) Resilience concerns the challenge of increasing the capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with the effects of climate change while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation.

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Culture is an essential component of human development; it is a source of identity, innovation and creativity. The way people learn and transmit knowledge varies according to their different geographical, historical and linguistic backgrounds and, therefore, education strategies that are responsive to local cultures, contexts and needs are the most likely to be effective in fostering more cohesive societies¹.

Dialogue emphasizes ongoing interactions and suggests two-way interactions between people reaching either a commitment, or agreement or a compromise. It provides a way of balancing an appreciation of diversity with the importance of finding shared, collaboratively adopted principles for cooperation. In terms of global issues such as climate change, it develops through communications and occurs when the exchange is part of a process of engagement and when it addresses questions of power and control.

For the purpose of this position paper, intercultural dialogue is understood as a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others².

Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other.³

Intercultural dialogue is an essential feature of inclusive societies, which leaves no one marginalised or defined as outsiders. It is a powerful instrument of mediation and reconciliation: through critical and constructive engagement across cultural fault-lines, it addresses real concerns about social fragmentation and insecurity while fostering integration and social cohesion. Freedom of choice, freedom of expression, equality, tolerance and mutual respect for human dignity are among the guiding principles in this context. Successful intercultural dialogue requires many of the attitudes fostered by a democratic culture – including open-mindedness, willingness to engage in dialogue and allow others to express their point, a capacity to resolve conflicts by peaceful means and recognition of the well-founded arguments of others.⁴

¹ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/culture-and-development>

² http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/WhitePaper_InterculturalDialogue_2_en.asp

³ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1283135&Site=CM>

⁴ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1283135&Site=CM>

Intercultural dialogue is a key instrument for building bridges between people and to safeguard society based on mutual respect. Successful future societies will be intercultural⁵.

THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

European and the Mediterranean countries are connected by history, geography and culture. The region is of vital strategic importance in both political and economic terms. The Mediterranean region is approaching 500 million inhabitants⁶ and available resources are under increased pressure. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Mediterranean region is very vulnerable to climate variability and extreme events⁷. It is expected to be one of the most prominent climate change “hot spots”⁸. Hazards like heat waves, fresh water shortages, droughts, forest fires, an expansion of desertification and the prevalence of vector borne disease are already being felt in susceptible regions. Sea level rise endangers natural ecosystems and the living conditions of millions of people living close to the Mediterranean coast.

Rising temperatures will impact marine biodiversity, fisheries, coastal protection and ecotourism. From these few examples, it is clear that climate change represents a major obstacle to sustainable development in the Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean coastal zone is densely populated and highly urbanized. The socio-economic costs of climate change in the region have not yet been fully assessed. However, major sectors such as agriculture and tourism are predicted to suffer as a result of drought, water shortage and increased occurrence of storms. The rise of sea level impacts on ports, coastal settlements and related infrastructure.

Climate change threatens to cause regional instability, conflict and considerable human disruption, as a result of environmental degradation. Increasing pressures on natural resources, like water and food, forcing mass movements of population and significant restructuring.

Mediterranean environments and the societies that rely on them will face important challenges as a result of projected changes in climate and the search for sustainable development. This is due to the inherent physical sensitivity of the ecosystems and the traditional socio-economic, cultural and amenity values located there. The need for action is now a consensus view in light of the inevitability of impacts on the region^{9 10}.

MAKING THE LINK BETWEEN INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change obliges all of us to take urgent action. It requires a rethink about how we channel imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship into creating a sustainable world. Each segment of society must contribute to ensuring a sustainable future of our planet¹¹.

Science enriches dialogue as part of the knowledge base of any society. Scientific discussion informs issues that require intercultural dialogue. In this respect, intercultural dialogue can be used as source of transformation, change, knowledge and innovation to help address the search for positive solutions to the impacts of climate change. The scientific community can be a forum for dialogue

⁵ <http://www.beate-winkler.net/dateien/solutions-for-our-future.pdf>

⁶ http://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/upload/files/Concept_Note_Session_Eau_Foret_EN.pdf

⁷ <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg2/index.php?idp=514>

⁸ <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1029/2006GL025734/abstract>

⁹ <http://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/transnational-regions/mediterranean>

¹⁰ <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/planet-2/report/2006/3/climate-change-and-the-mediterranean.pdf>

¹¹ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-08-676_en.htm?locale=en

through networking, publications, dissemination of information and exchanges.

Intercultural dialogue has a unique part to play in responding to climate change by helping create a sustainable environment in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Its outcomes lead to trusted, collaborative, interactive and transformative environments that can establish and shape and behavioural change.

Society must be empowered to engage in intercultural dialogue in order to exploit the potential of cultural diversity to stimulate sustainable development through creativity and innovation and thus generate a better quality of life¹². Recent advances in communications technology can be employed to facilitate dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue can take place everywhere in all communities, in rich and diverse shapes and forms. It can involve people, institutions and enterprises in many diverse areas. In different ways identity can be expressed, communicated and shared, while bringing sustainable and resource efficient perspectives alive in practice, through a spectrum of collective approaches¹³ that result in:

- i) a common understanding of the issues
- ii) confidence in the process and social cohesion
- iii) dialogue rather than monologue and
- iv) an expression of tolerance and openness to different ideas.

THE ROLE OF THE ANNA LINDH FOUNDATION AND ITS MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

The purpose of the Anna Lindh Foundation is to bring people together from across the Mediterranean to improve mutual respect between cultures and to support civil society. Since 2005, the ALF has launched and supported action across fields impacting on mutual perceptions – education, culture and media – as well as in developing a region-wide Network of over 4000 civil society organisations.

ALF considers the climate change issue, in the context of sustainable development, as a critical dimension to be urgently addressed for the successful future of the Mediterranean region.

ALF recognises the centrality of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and COP21 in moving forward the global discussion on cooperative multilateral action to address climate change. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of intercultural dialogue in enabling rapid advances in the implementation of mitigation, adaptation and resilience measures in more vulnerable areas to the effects of climate change.

ALF acknowledges that all major social, economic and environmental sectors are sensitive to climate change and that there are significant factors in their sustainable development. To this effect, it seeks to encourage improvements in operational decision-making by intercultural dialogue leading to more widespread use of climate knowledge and information in managing risks and exploiting opportunities.

ALF emphasizes that climate-related action requires intercultural dialogue, as part of multidisciplinary collaboration that can be achieved through its actions and processes. Communication on intercultural dialogue adaptation to environmental challenges in the Mediterranean needs to become mainstreamed.

ALF acknowledges the effectiveness of climate actions can be enhanced when they are integrated

¹² http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/default_en.asp

¹³ <http://www.wandrenpd.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/OptionsforInfluence.pdf>

with broader strategies designed to make national and regional development paths more sustainable.

ALF stresses the importance of strengthening networks that can showcase best practices and influence national and institutional efforts to understand and address climate change impacts that meet human needs, improve well being, and bring other environmental benefits.

ALF will foster regional dialogue and the exchange of best practices as its basic element. The purpose is to create a mosaic of successful adaptation approaches for climate change and sustainability for the Mediterranean.

ALF supports the engagement of civil society organisations and strengthening their contribution at local, national and international levels.

ALF confirms its members are involved in actions and initiatives across the region. They enable dialogue across knowledge domains and improve the capacity to interpret conditions, develop change responses and in some cases contribute new evidence leading to innovation and the identification of desirable trajectories or pathways into the future.

ALF recommends that collaborative mechanisms should be developed to facilitate intercultural dialogue to improve the quality and efficiency of adaptation, mitigation and resilience practices to the benefit of all.

ALF will work with governments and other agencies to plan for post COP21 dialogue on climate change and a sustainable future for the Mediterranean.

ALF works to accommodate both the needs of human society and the natural environment, respecting the cultural landscapes of the past, and planning sustainably for the future.

ALF has played an integral role in the coordination and support of North-South interaction across the Mediterranean. ALF and its member organisations and networks have developed partnerships in capacity building, training, education and public awareness at all levels. This will be used to mobilizing support for international action to address climate change and sustainable action for the future of the Mediterranean.

It falls to ALF to provide leadership that mitigates the onset of a changing climate, protects our natural environment and assists Mediterranean communities in adapting to our changing circumstances.

OUTCOMES OF THE “INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND ENHANCED COOPERATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE MEDITERRANEAN” EVENT

In the framework of the UN COP-21, the Anna Lindh Foundation, in partnership with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat and the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, is co-organising the event “Intercultural Dialogue and Enhanced Cooperation for a Sustainable Mediterranean”.

The event will provide an opportunity to give enhanced visibility to the work that is being carried out by ALF members in the field of climate change and intercultural dialogue and provide a forum to consider future high impact initiatives, taking into account that the UNFCCC COP 21 will be held in Paris in December 2015 and that Morocco will host COP 22.

The event will demonstrate how intercultural dialogue can directly contribute to the development of adaptation options, actions and initiatives at regional, cross-border, national and local levels.

This initiative expresses a commitment to establish intercultural dialogue as a key element in responding to environmental challenges. The main objective is to raise awareness of the important role of InterCultural Dialogue in facing Environmental Challenges (ICDEC).

ALF will demonstrate leadership on developing intercultural dialogue as a tool for the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, both within its networks and the communities they serve.

To increase visibility, as a result of the event ALF will:

- establish a forum where stakeholders from the region will exchange views with a specific focus on transition for climate change adaptation and community resilience, awareness raising on environmental challenges
- assist in the identification and exchange of information between its own community and others to ensure accessibility to the best available examples on intercultural dialogue and climate change impacts and issues.
- encourage its members to explore and integrate options to mitigate and/or to adapt to climate change for a sustainable future within their intercultural dialogue projects

To invest in large-scale activities with high profile impacts, as a result of the event ALF will seek to:

- embed the initiative in existing activities, high profile events and regional actions such as Mediterranean Climate Week¹⁴, the Mediterranean Climate Conference (MEDCOP)¹⁵ and the UfM Climate Change Expert Group¹⁶
- identify opportunities within its own framework and existing successful actions, like Young Arab Voices¹⁷ to utilise intercultural dialogue as a tool building resilience from climate change to sustainable development
- integrate climate change and sustainable development into intercultural education and citizenship activities and ongoing training¹⁸
- initiate collaborative networking action in order to collect, maintain, share and disseminate best practices employed
- establish its own specific programmes and initiatives, for example in Intercultural Dialogue in Education for climate change, knowledge transfer schemes, networking developments and communications in terms of mitigation, adaptation and resilience to climate change.
- participate in other relevant initiatives, like SWITCH-MED¹⁹ and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development²⁰
- actively collaborate with other actors and stakeholders to create an Alliance (for intercultural dialogue) for a sustainable Mediterranean
- advocate, where needed, for changes to policy.

¹⁴ <http://ufmsecretariat.org/regional-dialogue-and-cooperation-on-climate-change-towards-a-new-global-agreement-at-cop-21-in-paris/>

¹⁵ <http://cmimarseille.org/ar/node/2016>

¹⁶ <http://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-climate-change-expert-group/>

¹⁷ <http://www.youngarabvoices.org/>

¹⁸ <http://www.annalindhfoundation.org/education>

¹⁹ <http://www.switchmed.eu/en/>

²⁰ <http://www.unepmap.org/index.php?module=content2&catid=001017002001>