

Seventh ASEM Interfaith Dialogue

***“Harnessing the benefits and addressing
the challenges of migration through
interfaith and intercultural dialogue”***

13-14 October 2011

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

I. Background

Since its launching in 2005 in Bali, Indonesia, the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue (IFD) has been instrumental in promoting constructive exchange of ideas among government representatives, academics, and civil society actors, particularly religious leaders, from Asia and Europe. These dialogues, conducted in the spirit of respect and mutual understanding, have greatly contributed in bridging peoples of different faiths and cultures in the two continents.

The 7th ASEM IFD will build on the successes of the past, especially the 6th and 5th ASEM IFDs, by carrying on and further enriching the discussion on some issues highlighted in both dialogues. The Madrid Declaration of the 6th ASEM IFD noted that “the growing interaction among people with different cultural and religious backgrounds in the era of globalization has brought about both opportunities and challenges” and that “the lack of interreligious and intercultural tolerance, understanding and respect can often lead to tensions and conflicts”. And as underscored in the 5th ASEM IFD, these tensions can be exacerbated in a period of great economic difficulties.

Migration is one of the contributing factors to the increasing cultural and religious diversity of societies in Asia and Europe. Diversity presents advantages as well as challenges because when people move, they bring with them the entirety of the way of life they have known in their place of origin – their faith, language, culture, and world view. This meeting of faiths and cultures in the context of migration poses adjustment challenges for both the migrant and host community. And, while this can be mutually enriching and beneficial, it could also be a source of tension and conflict, especially in times of great social and economic stresses. The 7th ASEM IFD will focus on the issue of migration. Through interfaith and intercultural dialogue, it is hoped that ASEM would be able to collectively explore and discuss ideas and best practices on how to better address the challenges of diversity arising from increased people mobility and people-to-people interaction, with the view to maximizing the benefits of migration.

II. Working Group Themes

Working Group I. “Fostering social harmony and mutual understanding between migrant and host communities through interfaith and intercultural dialogue”

Culture and religion could either be a unifying or divisive force in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. For countries hosting migrant communities, the challenge is in finding the right balance between the interest of social cohesion

and national harmony and the right of migrants to uphold their cultural identity, including the practice of their religion and use of their language. While there may be no model approach to integration, the sharing of experiences of how societies in Asia and Europe are addressing this issue would be most valuable. The goal is to promote a better understanding of the vital interests and concerns of both communities from the lens of culture and religion, in the hope of finding common grounds on which harmonious and mutually reinforcing relationships could be strengthened or forged anew.

Working Group II. “Promoting dialogue among migrant communities of different faiths”

As more and more people move from one country to another, migrant communities in host countries have become increasingly diverse as well, thereby posing some challenges to migrants themselves as much as to the host country. Individuals may experience feelings of psychological insecurity arising from their status as migrants in a foreign culture, which may be aggravated by tense relationships or absence of healthy interaction amongst them. Fundamentally, both situations feed on lack of knowledge, respect and acceptance of the *Other*. This working group therefore aims to discuss how migrant communities can come together and get to know each other better so that they may be able to transcend the limits of their respective imagined communal boundaries.

Working Group III. “Utilizing new media in forging mutual trust and confidence in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies”

Innovations in information and communications technology (ICT) have engendered the rise of new media such as blogs, networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Friendster, and Twitter), online newspapers, and other ICT-based media that facilitate the transfer of data and information.

These new media practically defy the traditional concept of time and space. And as such, if they are utilized in promoting mutual trust and confidence among peoples of different cultures and faith, instead of sowing seeds of fear and hatred, they can become a powerful tool in the effort to positively influence the hearts and minds of the people in the interest of peace and harmony. Thus, this working group aims to explore the means by which new media can be maximized to support the aims of interfaith and intercultural dialogue, bearing in mind the basic principle of freedom of thought and expression.

III. Date and Venue

The ASEM-IFD7 will be held on 13-14 October 2011 at the Sofitel Hotel Manila, Philippines.

IV. Format

The ASEM-IFD7 maintains the format of previous editions. It will be a two-day event that will commence with an Opening Ceremony followed by the first plenary session, simultaneous working group sessions, drafting of working group statements, and consolidation of said statements in order to come up with the 7th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue Declaration and Dialogue of Action on “Harnessing the benefits and addressing the challenges of migration”.

In addition to the usual program of ASEM-IFDs, **the ASEM-IFD7 will have a pre-event, which will be hosted and organized by the Religions for Peace Philippines, on 12 October 2011.** The pre-event entitled “**The Interfaith Youth Roundtable on Migration**” will convene young religious leaders from Asia and Europe to partake in an interreligious dialogue on migration. During the roundtable, religious youth will offer their unique perspectives on harnessing the benefits and addressing the challenges of migration through interfaith cooperation. Additionally, participants will meet with senior religious leaders to share their perspectives and engage in thoughtful dialogue on the various issues pertaining to migration. After their robust dialogue sessions, youth participants will adopt and present an interfaith youth statement on migration during the main forum.

ASEM partners are welcome to send a delegation to the pre-event, if they wish to.

V. Tentative Programme

Date	Schedule
12 October 2011 (Wednesday)	Day 1
9:30 – 13:00	Interfaith Youth Roundtable on Migration: A pre-event of the 7 th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue (Please see separate schedule)
9:00 – 17:00	Registration of ASEM-IFD7 participants
14:00 – 15:00	Co-hosts Coordination Meeting (PH, EU and Finland)
15:00 – 16:00	Co-sponsors Coordination Meeting (Austria, Italy, Russia, and Thailand)
16:00 – 17:00	Coordination Meeting of Moderators and Rapporteurs
19:30 – 21:00	Welcome Dinner (with cultural presentation)
13 October 2011 (Thursday)	Day 2
8:00 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:15	Keynote Speech by H.E. Benigno S. Aquino III
9:15 – 9:30	Message from the European Union (Co-Host)
9:30 – 9:45	Message from Finland (Co-Host)
9:45 – 9:50	Peace Dance
9:50 – 10:00	Inspirational Messages/Prayers of 3 Filipinos from different religious sectors (1 minute each)
10:00 – 10:20	Coffee Break
10:20 – 10:25	Adoption of the Agenda
10:25 – 11:45	Plenary Session 1
11:45 – 12:00	Official Photograph (Heads of Delegations)
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:00	Parallel Working Group Session 1 WG I. “Fostering social harmony and mutual understanding between migrant and host communities through interfaith and intercultural dialogue” WG II. “Promoting dialogue among migrant communities of different faiths” WG III. “Utilizing new media in forging mutual trust and confidence in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies”
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30 – 17:00	Parallel Working Group Session 2 WG I. “Fostering social harmony and mutual understanding between migrant and host communities through interfaith and intercultural dialogue” WG II. “Promoting dialogue among migrant communities of different faiths” WG III. “Utilizing new media in forging mutual trust and confidence in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies”
19:30 – 21:00	Dinner
14 October 2011 (Friday)	Day 3
9:00 – 10:30	Drafting of statements (by each Working Group)

10:30 – 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 – 11:30	Plenary Session 2 : Presentation and Adoption of the 7 th ASEM-IFD7 Statement
11:30 – 12:00	Closing Ceremony
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 15:00	Visit to places of worship

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Interfaith Youth Roundtable on Migration: An Official Pre-event of the 7th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue

9:30-9:50

OPENING REMARKS:

Dr. William Vendley, Secretary General, World Conference of Religions for Peace
Senior Official from the Government of the Philippines

9:50-11:10

ASIA-EUROPE INTERFAITH YOUTH PANEL - “ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF MIGRATION THROUGH INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION”

Moderator

Professor Pablito Baybado Jr., Institute of Religion, University of Santo Tomas

European Youth Representatives

Ms. Lama Mahmoud Azab, Muslim, France, Member of the International Youth Committee, and the European Interfaith Youth Network

Mr. Daniel Barton, Christian, Czech Republic, Member of the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe, the International Youth Committee, and the European Interfaith Youth Network

Mr. Nirankar Bansal, Sikh, United Kingdom, Member of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, and the European Interfaith Youth Network

Asian Youth Representatives

Mr. Lawrence Chong, Christian, Singapore, Moderator of the *Religions for Peace* Asia and Pacific Youth Network, and Member of the International Youth Committee

Mr. Azril Mohd, Muslim, Malaysia, Member of Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), and *Religions for Peace* Asia and Pacific Youth Network

A Youth Representative from the Philippines

11:10-11:30 - Coffee Break

11:30-12:50

DIALOGUE BETWEEN YOUTH AND SENIOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Moderator

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, Assistant Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*

European Senior Religious Leaders

Bishop Gunnar J. Stalsett, Protestant, Norway, Bishop Emeritus of Oslo, Church of Norway, Moderator, European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL), and Former Vice Chair, Noble Peace Prize Committee

Dr. Maria Voce, Roman Catholic, Italy, President, Focolare Movement

H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel, Christian Orthodox, Belgium, Moderator, Conference of European Churches, Director, Patriarchate Liaison of the European Office

Asian Senior Religious Leaders

H.H. Most Venerable Tep Vong, Buddhist, Supreme Patriarch of Cambodia

Dr. Vinu Aram, Hindu, India, Director, Shanti Ashram

Dr. Din Syamsuddin, Muslim, Indonesia, President, Muhammadiyah and Moderator, Asian Conference of *Religions for Peace* (ACRP)

Senior Religious Leaders from the Philippines

Representative, The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP)

Representative, National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP)

Representative, Muslim

Representative, Indigenous

12:30-13:00

CLOSING REMARKS:

Dr. Lilian J. Sison, Secretary General, Religions for Peace – Philippines

**ADOPTION AND PRESENTATION OF INTERFAITH YOUTH STATEMENT ON
MIGRATION TO SENIOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND ASEM FORUM**

VI. Participants

The participants are expected to include faith/religious leaders, government representatives, academics, and civil society actors who are experts in interfaith, intercultural dialogue and/or migration issues, as well as new media practitioners who have a keen interest in the topics to be discussed.

Moderators, rapporteurs and panelists will come from ASEM partner countries who wish to be co-host or co-sponsor of the ASEM-IFD7.

ASEM partners may send their proposals or inquiries to:

Luningning G. Camoying (Ms)

ASEM Focal Point

Office of European Affairs

Department of Foreign Affairs

2330 Roxas, Boulevard
Pasay City
Republic of the Philippines

Email: oea-6@dfa.gov.ph

Tel: (632) 834-3153

Fax: 831-4422

For inquiries concerning the **Interfaith Youth Roundtable on Migration: An Official Pre-event of the 7th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue**, ASEM partners may contact:

Mr. Pablito Baybado Jr.
Religions for Peace
2/F Thomas Aquinas Research Complex
University of Santo Tomas
Manila, Philippines

Email: baybado@religionsforpeaceph.org
pabaybado@yahoo.com

Mobile: (+63) 917-2070857