

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LIVING TOGETHER

## Concept note

Today's world is marked by civilizational and religious fault lines. It is currently experiencing destructive conflicts driven by ancient suspicions and persistent mistrust. Besides causing tremendous human suffering and huge economic losses, these conflicts pose serious challenges to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between countries, regions and communities.

These conflicts are fueled by, and themselves fuel, xenophobia, intolerance, violence, racism and exclusion, as well as by ethnic, religious and linguistic discrimination. All of these are based on rejection and aloofness from others.

New extremist ideologies and forms of hatred are now fostering violent extremism and terrorism in various parts of the world and nobody is safe or immune from them. This situation can, to a great extent, be explained by the absence of dialogue, the lack of understanding and tolerance between religions, cultures and civilizations.

This promotes isolationism, erects barriers and walls of all kinds between social and religious groups, communities and nations. This retreat into isolationism poses an obstacle to peace, fraternity and solidarity, as well as to development.

In order to cope with the harmful effects of negative and misguided prejudice about others and with the growing phenomenon of violent radicalization, the United Nations has demonstrated resolve in promoting tolerance and the values of the culture of peace, in encouraging dialogue and mutual understanding between peoples and in fighting discrimination in all its forms. The United Nations is the crucible of this dialogue.

Notwithstanding the above, what is missing in order to foster dialogue and rapprochement, to bring people closer together and for mutual enrichment, is the notion of "Living Together". Indeed, since we all live on the same planet, the idea of peaceful and harmonious coexistence and cohabitation as well as environmental respect must be made to prevail the world over. The need to "Live Together" has become imperative.

This notion is actually at the very heart of the Charter of the United Nations, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. Moreover, through its Goals, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the perfect embodiment of the collective desire of the international community to "Live Together". It is in this vein that in May 2016 in Istanbul, during the first World Humanitarian Summit, Sheikh Bentounes made a deep impression on the Assembly by promoting in his speech the idea of one "humanity based on the culture of ties and a citizenship imbued with the essential values of "Living Together" where no one is left behind".

The initiative to promote the “Living Together” first appeared in 2014 during the International Women’s Congress for a Culture of Peace organized in Oran (Algeria) by AISA (the Association Internationale Soufie Alâwiyya, an international NGO) under the high patronage of H.E.Mr Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of Algeria. The 3200 participants from 25 countries and dozens of NGOs from all over the world who attended the congress strongly recommended in the Oran Declaration the establishment of an International Day of “Living Together”.

This project was presented by AISA during the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the ECOSOC, held in New York in March 2015, in the framework of its active contribution to global efforts to promote the culture of peace, by collaborating among others with the International Scouting Movement.

In order to further promote this new concept, in September 2016 AISA organized an Award Ceremony for the presentation of the “Emir Abdelkader International Award for the Promotion of ‘Living Together’ and Peaceful Coexistence in the Mediterranean and the World”. This award recognizes natural and legal persons having made a substantial contribution to the practice of “Living Together” and peaceful coexistence between peoples. The 2016 Award went to three eminent persons: Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria and United Nations Mediator, Mr Federico Mayor Zaragoza, former Director General of UNESCO, and Ambassador Raymond Chrétien, President of The International Observatory of Mayors Living Together.

In continuing his efforts, in October 2016, AISA’s spiritual guide and Honorary President, Sheikh Khaled Bentounes, met in New York with the President of the General Assembly, H.E.Mr Peter Thomson, and a number of Permanent Representatives to explain the scope and meaning of his initiative to declare an International Day of Living Together.

In May 2017, AISA also organized a workshop at UNESCO (Paris). It brought together qualified individuals, international experts, representatives of States and regions, religious leaders, academics, delegations to UNESCO and international NGOs. The event resulted in the adoption of the Paris Declaration inviting all Member States of the United Nations to present the General Assembly and the United Nations with a proposal to establish an **“International Day of Living Together”**.

At the United Nations in New York, in July 2017 Sheikh Bentounes took part in the launch of the Fez Plan of Action aimed at religious leaders to prevent incitement to violence, recalling the importance of youth, education, the culture of peace, as well as the central place that must be given to women, encouraging their peers to look into their scriptures to identify possible seeds of violence and offer the clarifications required for the human family to reconcile and rebuild its future.

Having succeeded in putting an end to the ravages of terrorism with the National Charter for Peace and Reconciliation, Algeria strongly believes in “Living Together” and is committed to promoting it to the other Member States of the United Nations with a

view to its consecration in a General Assembly resolution establishing an “International Day of Living Together”.

Fighting violent radicalization and discriminations based on religion, religious beliefs or convictions is vital. The onus is thus upon all of us to encourage and promote the culture of peace and the values of “Living Together” at the national, regional and international levels.

Living together makes it possible to know others and acknowledge their differences and similarities. In our globalized world, we must capitalize on these differences to serve the cause of development for all. It provides opportunities to raise awareness on the devastating consequences of terrorism and allows us to take the time to put our heads together to mount a global response to this phenomenon which spares no country in the world. “Living Together” also implies tolerating differences, respecting others and living in peace, fraternity and solidarity.

The establishment of an “International Day of Living Together” is viewed as a means to regularly galvanize the efforts of the international community in order to promote peace, tolerance, understanding and solidarity.

The celebration of this “International Day” will also provide the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to live and act together, united in our differences and our diversity, to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony.

As Sandford Fleming said in 1884 during the International Meridian Conference held in Washington: “The whole world is drawn into immediate neighborhood and near relationship. We have but one earth, but one universe, whatever its myriad component parts”.

**We should build the future with one another, not against each other.**