According to Article 1 of the UN Charter, three of the UN’s primary purposes are to

1. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
2. To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and
3. To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.2

One approach that the UN has taken to achieve these goals in recent years has been to establish a dialogue on promoting intercultural and interreligious understanding and cooperation for peace.3

This issue has become significant in recent years as a result of globalization. Advancing technology has significantly decreased travel times to the extent that a person can travel almost anywhere on earth in a matter of days (or, in most cases, less). It has also permitted communication that is nearly instantaneous at even the international level. Although people often associate these changes with “Globalization of the Economy,” in which multinational corporations provide goods and services in numerous countries throughout the world, globalization impacts many other areas well, including areas such as politics, culture, and law.4

Cultural globalization is particularly pertinent to the UN’s efforts to promote intercultural and interreligious understanding. Today, increased travel and communication among individuals and groups of different countries means that interaction between people of different cultures is highly likely. In a globalized world, where increased interaction has occurred not only between governments but also between individuals, businesses, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cultural understanding will play an important role in preventing future conflicts, fostering economic and social development, solving global issues, and promoting human rights. What can the General Assembly and UN Member States do to further the UN’s purpose as it relates to this issue?

**History and Current Events**

To address the issue of promoting cultural understanding, one must first understand the definition of culture. One must also know how people have historically viewed cultural differences and the ramifications of these historical views of culture. Finally, one must recognize both the benefits and challenges encountered as people, organizations, and states attempt to promote intercultural understanding.

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1 This background guide was written by Nicholas M. Potratz. Copyright 2017 by Nicholas Potratz.


The definition of Culture
While culture initially seems to be a simple concept, its definition varies greatly and, as UNESCO notes, “has long been a controversy.” Even experts on the topic do not agree on a common definition for culture. The renowned anthropologist Clifford Geertz defined culture as

an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.6

Put simply, for Geertz, culture is rooted in the way people, as a society, conceptualize, value, and view the world, which is learned from previous generations, and manifested by people’s symbolic actions and communications.

Another view, developed by Ann Swidler, sees culture as a “toolkit.” In contrast to Geertz, this view frames culture not as something that defines how a person or cultural group thinks about and values the world, but as a set of behavioral instructions and rules that provide “strategies of action.” Thus, this perspective sees culture as a set of symbolic processes that facilitate people’s interactions and communication with others, particularly other members of their own culture. These strategies work in humans as lines of code work in computer programming. They provide people with behavioral choices and guidelines without which people would be incapable of acting.7

UNESCO’s definition aligns more with traditional views of culture, such as the one espoused by Geertz. UNESCO states that culture “is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.”8

Regardless of its definition, experts say culture is comprised of three layers. The first layer is the “body of cultural traditions that distinguish [a person’s] specific society.” This includes factors such as a particular society’s shared language, traditions, and beliefs. The second layer is sub-culture. Sub-cultures form in complex societies amongst people who identify with a more limited group of people within a broader culture. It includes aspects such as dialect, food, and shared identities. Sub-cultures can often be identified because they are expressed as a secondary identity (e.g. Vietnamese American) to another primary cultural identity (e.g. American). The third layer “consists of cultural universals.” This includes behaviors that are common to all people, such as using language for communication, making jokes, playing games, and creating art.9

Culture and subculture are pertinent to intercultural understanding in that they constitute differences that people must accept and tolerate to better understand other cultures and sub-cultures. Cultural universals are important in promoting intercultural understanding as it demonstrates that people have as many similarities as they do differences with other cultures. Recognizing this helps people to recognize the humanity of other people.

The Challenges Created by Cultural Differences
Because humans rely on generalizations and patterns to make sense of complexity in the world, people tend to simplify the cultures of others as a means of understanding the social phenomena they experience – especially when they are in unfamiliar circumstances. This can, however, lead people to overgeneralize. When this happens, people may rely on stereotypes to comprehend cultures that are different from their own, as well as engage in “othering,” in


8 UNESCO, “Cultural Diversity.”

which a person or group emphasizes the differences between themselves and another person or group instead of placing both themselves and others as part of a larger group of human beings. According to experts, “othering” has been a common characteristic of human perception for millennia. As Prof. John Mandalios notes, for instance, early philosophers such as Aristotle were amongst those who viewed cultural differences as “a great hierarchy of beings,” in which some people were viewed as inherently superior to others.

One of the implications of perceiving people of other cultures as inferior, was that it created a justification for the subjugation and oppression of people in other societies. This was visible in Europeans attitudes towards much of the world in the 17th and 18th centuries, for example. As Mandalios states,

By stressing the native’s differences rather than his similarities with the European, the other was placed in a conflictual rather than a meditative relationship... It was this ‘mode of relationship’ that both justified and underscored the practices of ‘war and extermination which the Europeans followed throughout the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth century.’ As something other than fully human, the native came to be objectified into an object to be used, transformed or destroyed as desired by his or her superiors.

The cultural misunderstanding that results from stereotypes and othering can also make cooperation among cultures difficult. Scholars such as Marc Ross posit that cultural conflicts can often be hard to resolve when “each side interprets the other’s motives as very hostile,” creating a situation whereby “negotiation over interest differences and searches for mutually acceptable constitutional agreements are doomed to failure.” While Ross states that he is referring to societies with conflictive “dispositions,” his findings demonstrate how culturally distinct groups often misinterpret each other’s intent, causing communication to break down. This makes it necessary to overcome misinterpretations in order to promote cooperation between groups.

Cultural differences do not merely lead to poor cooperation between groups, however; they can also exacerbate tensions to the point of armed conflict. This has been particularly true since the end of the Cold War. While interstate conflicts (conflicts between countries) have decreased since the end of the Cold War, intrastate conflicts (civil conflicts between members of a country) have increased. Many of these have been ethnic conflicts. Although ethnic conflicts arise for a variety of reasons, including political, economic, and social causes, cultural problems such as “problematic group histories, stereotypical perceptions, and grievances over cultural discrimination,” as well as state-imposed restrictions on religious, cultural, or linguistic practices, have contributed significantly to ethnic conflicts. For instance, ethno-religious differences in Iraq have been a primary source for tensions and violence amongst Iraqis, especially as some groups feel marginalized by other groups in power.

10 Welsh, “Avoiding Stereotyping.”


Still, some scholars have critiqued the view that cultural differences lead directly to conflict. Instead they argue that elites sometimes use culture, which is in some cases based on fabricated or altered histories and identities, to convince people of certain ethnic groups to engage in violence for ulterior political or economic motives. In the case of Iraq, clashes between ethnic groups center largely around power struggles and territorial control. During the Rwandan genocide, the Rwandan government used propaganda to convince Hutus that the Tutsis were “foreign invaders,” who did not share the Rwandan identity and needed to be eradicated. From this view, efforts to increase cultural understanding will not only need to reinforce more accurate depictions of other cultures and their actions, but also overcome intentional misrepresentations of other cultures by elites.

The Benefits of Intercultural Understanding
Due to historic problems with cultural subjugation and misunderstanding, promoting intercultural understanding (in which the people of one culture accept cultural diversity, as well as comprehend, appreciate, tolerate, and learn from the cultures of others) offers several benefits to the international community. The first benefit of increasing understanding among cultures is the establishment of peace between people who might otherwise engage in conflict. Since misinterpretations of the motives of others can contribute to conflict, “successful peacemaking in the most intransigent situations requires first taking seriously the parties’ culturally-rooted interpretations and the fears and threats underlying them.” Hence, once cultural groups better understand each other, they can begin to view each other as more than stereotypes. This allows them to view issues from another culture’s perspectives, which reduces misinterpretation and facilitates cooperation between cultural groups instead of fueling conflict.

For this reason, the UN has incorporated intercultural dialogue and understanding into the broader category of creating a “culture of peace.” The UN defines a culture of peace as one in which there exists “a commitment to peace-building, mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, peace education, education for non-violence, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect, intercultural and interfaith dialogue and reconciliation.”

A second benefit of intercultural understanding is that it would further human rights globally. Intercultural understanding has a cyclical relationship with human rights. Before intercultural dialogue can occur, people must have the basic political, civil, economic, and social rights that allow them to speak freely, exercise their cultural and traditional practices, and have the resources to engage in those practices. Yet, it is also through intercultural understanding, especially at the national level, that people can learn to accept and tolerate other cultural practices, and therefore become more willing to extend rights, including “cultural rights,” to other groups that may not have previously received them.

The third benefit to promoting intercultural understanding derives from its potential to promote innovation and to enhance economic cooperation between people of different cultures. Evidence suggests that while cross-cultural differences can impede successful task completion in both public and private work, cultural diversity can benefit businesses and organizations by fostering innovative thinking and combining unique experiences for new

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17 Ollivant, “Renewed Violence in Iraq.”
19 Ross, “Culture and Conflict.”
solutions to problems. This only happens, however, when organizational and business leaders are culturally sensitive and encourage “creativity and motivation through flexible leadership.”

According to UNESCO, cultural understanding goes beyond strengthening innovation at work, though. It also represents an integral part of the success of sustainable development. This is observable in the role that culture plays in sustainable developments three dimensions: environment, society, and economy. Environmentally, cultural diversity can provide resources and best practices for protecting the environment and biodiversity. Societally, people of different cultures must learn to respect and understand each other if they are going to work and live together in the increasingly multicultural societies predicted to exist in the future. Economically, intercultural understanding helps to ensure that economic benefits are distributed more equitably by reducing barriers between cultural groups within society. In addition, culture understanding benefits economies by integrating local cultural practices into economic activities, such as farming and international aid, which make them more acceptable to local people.

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity emphasizes the interaction of these variables:

Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.

Thus, Member States of the UN have integrated culture into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 with the aim of reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development by 2030. According to UNESCO, “[f]rom cultural heritage to cultural and creative industries, Culture is both an enabler and a driver of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.”

**Approaches to Promoting Intercultural Understanding**

The primary means by which UN Member States currently promote intercultural understanding is through intercultural and interreligious dialogue. This is the process by which people from varying cultural and religious backgrounds agree to listen and learn from each other. These interactions often occur between cultural groups who disagree, and therefore require groups to go “far beyond mere negotiation,” in which people discuss their political and economic interests. Instead, it is a process that involves “an open and respectful exchange of views.”

The other means for cultivating intercultural understanding involve using education and the media to develop people’s knowledge of cultures and direct interaction between people of different cultures. Education involves more than merely sharing information or raising awareness of other cultures. According to Joy de Leo, an expert on using education for intercultural understanding, promoting intercultural understanding through education requires students to understand their own culture, to explore personal and cultural values, to gain respect for the rights of others experientially, and to translate their lessons into new behaviors and actions. This means that students must learn to think critically about other cultures, and involves a willingness to listen to others, as well as having the skills necessary to compare and contrast the cultures of others with their own.

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27 Joy de Leo, “Education for Intercultural Understanding.”
Given the importance of education in intercultural understanding, some states have incorporated intercultural understanding into their national curriculums. Australia, for instance, has incorporated intercultural understanding into its curriculum through the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The inclusion of intercultural understanding in its educational system is based on the “fundamental role that education plays in building a society that is ‘cohesive and cultural divers and that values Australia’s Indigenous Cultures.”

The effects of direct intercultural interaction were visible as early as the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC, when cultures interacted along a major trade route that connected Asia and Europe known as the Silk Road. The Silk Road not only prompted cultural interaction, but helped to form some of the first cultural meccas in early human history. According to recent studies, cultural interaction is not sufficient, however, to ensure intercultural understanding (and can even damage it). Many who participate in international exchange programs do not become more culturally competent. This is because many exchange students shy away from interactions with the members and activities of other cultures visiting their countries. Thus, according to experts, maximizing the benefits of cultural interaction through, for example, exchange programs, requires that one adopt a “multicultural interaction strategy.” Students can achieve this by participating in educational opportunities prior to international experiences that prepare students to learn from other cultures effectively, and that help them to process the experiences they have while abroad.

According to the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), modern tourism also provides an opportunity to promote intercultural understanding through interaction with other cultures. Because most people travel with the intent of experiencing other cultures, tasting new foods, and visiting culturally-relevant sites, it offers unique opportunities for “host communities” to share their cultures with others. In doing so, it “can contribute in incredible ways to tolerance, respect and mutual understanding – the building blocks for a more peaceful world.” According to the UNAOC, approximately 1 billion tourists travelled internationally in 2012.

The Challenges of Promoting Intercultural Understanding
Increasing intercultural understanding is not always easy. According to experts, in order to acquire the benefits of cultural diversity, the people who share a culture must have the capacity to recognize their own culture’s strengths and limitations, as well as the insight to realize how other cultures can complement their own. As UNESCO states,

When a culture is critically aware of its own strengths and limitations, it can extend its horizons and enrich its intellectual and spiritual resources by learning from alternative visions in epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and worldviews.

If members of a culture do not recognize their culture’s strengths and limitations, however, they will be unable to perceive and incorporate the benefits of cultural diversity into their economic, political, and social activities.

There is also a tension between pressures for a global culture and the retention of cultural heritage and cultural diversity. While globalization is unlikely to erase cultural borders (especially among sub-cultures), according to some, it has already begun to blur the lines between cultures. Thus, although increased dialogue may

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32 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002197/219768e.pdf

promote social integration and understanding between people of different cultures, some fear it may also have a homogenizing effect on the world. This would “bring with it a loss of uniqueness of local culture, which in turn can lead to loss of identity, exclusion and even conflict.” According to UNESCO, addressing this problem requires that one balance the benefits of integrating with the protection of local culture. It suggests that the best way to achieve this is to encourage development that does not require rigid external structures, but investing in “local resources, knowledge, skills and materials to foster creativity and sustainable progress.”

States also face the problem of promoting cultural diversity vis-à-vis cultures with practices that violate human rights. In some cases, the traditions, values, and practices of certain cultures have impeded the rights of individuals such as women and indigenous peoples. In Saudi Arabia, for example, leaders have denied women and girls the ability to participate in sporting activities on the basis of cultural norms and religious teachings. Another example comes from Kenya, where some leaders have argued in favor of women’s exclusion from property ownership and inheritance based on societal tradition.

To deal with this challenge, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity notes specifically that “[n]o one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope.” Still, this leaves the UN and Member States with the challenge of promoting the tolerance and acceptance of cultures generally, while finding ways to exclude traditional practices that violate human rights from economic, social, and political practices. How can states, for example, define culture in a way that protects people’s cultural practices and activities, but also ensures that culture is not used as a pretext to violate human rights?

**Previous Committee Work on This Topic**

In 1999, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/243 on a Declaration on a Culture of Peace. The resolution established the UN’s definition and vision for the concept of a Culture of Peace, including the promotion of values such as democracy, human rights, and conflict resolution. The document also stresses the importance of understanding and respect among people despite their differences, as well as the need to eliminate “racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.” The UNGA subsequently declared the year 2000 as the Year for the Culture of Peace, and 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

In 2001, UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. The Declaration defined culture as a “set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.” UNESCO divided the body of the document into four primary sections:

1. **Identity, Diversity, and Pluralism**, which recognizes that “[c]ulture takes diverse forms across time and space,” that diverse cultures must learn to live together, and that pluralism can contribute to increasing creative capacities and economic “intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual” development.

2. **Cultural Diversity and Human Development**, which states that “Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent.” It places particular importance on protecting the cultural

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36 UNESCO, Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.


Montana Model UN
High School Conference

rights of minorities and indigenous peoples.

(3) Cultural Diversity and Creativity, which holds that cultural diversity and intercultural interaction are vital to creativity, and thus that cultural heritage must be protected. It further emphasizes the recognition of the rights of authors and artists of culturally-originated works, which it states should "not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods."

(4) Cultural Diversity and International Solidarity, which states that Member States should cooperate to ensure that all countries, especially developing countries, can create viable and competitive cultural industries. It also calls upon states to use public policy in conjunction with the activities of private actors to achieve this goal.39

In 2002, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 57/249, titled Culture and Development, in which it established May 21 of each year as the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. The UN states that “[t]he day provides us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to advance the four goals of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.”40

UNESCO passed the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005. The four goals of the Convention are to:

- Support sustainable systems of governance for culture
- Achieve a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and increase mobility of artists and cultural professionals
- Integrate culture in sustainable development frameworks
- Promote human rights and fundamental freedoms41

In 2005, then Secretary-General Kofi Annan, working with Turkey and Spain, created the United nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). The purpose of the organization is to create “a more peaceful, more socially inclusive world, by building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities, and highlighting the will of the world’s majority to reject extremism and embrace diversity.” Thus, the UNAOC aims to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue between states through activities related to its four pillars: youth, education, media, and migration.

The UNAOC aims to accomplish its goals specifically by (1) creating dialogue between major international actors, including governments, intergovernmental organizations, and private actors; (2) advocating for intercultural understanding though public statements and appearances from UNAOC high representatives; (3) development projects; and (4) reducing religious and cultural tensions through the use of third-party mediators, such as “religious leaders, grassroots organizations, youth leaders and women leaders.”42

The organization thus offers a platform for states, non-governmental organizations, civil society, intergovernmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to share best practices and ideas regarding its objectives of promoting intercultural understanding and cooperation. Today, the UNAOC partners with 146 members of its “Group of Friends,” which is comprised of 119 UN Member States, 1 non-member state, and 26

39 UNESCO, Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.


41 UN Department of Public Information, “Word Day for Cultural Diversity.”

international organizations. The members of the UNAOC Group of Friends assist the UNAOC by organizing local and regional activities aimed at promoting intercultural understanding.  

To date, the UNAOC has sponsored seven Global Forums since its inception. The most recent of these took place in Baku Azerbaijan in 2016. The resulting document, known as the Baku Declaration, called on states to make a renewed commitment to promoting inclusive societies amongst their citizens.

In 2007, UN Member States held a High-Level Dialogue on interreligious and intercultural understanding. In general, states called upon the international community to embrace diversity and the “free and honest exchange of ideas.” Srgjan Kerim, the General Assembly President at the time, also stressed the need for religious tolerance. Specifically, he called for individuals not to use religious as an excuse for war, noting that “a crime committed in the name of religion is the greatest crime against religion.”

UNESCO also sponsors an Interreligious Dialogue Programme as part of its effort to promote intercultural dialogue. The program emphasizes communication between groups and calls for religious groups to be open and to develop skills in engaging in dialogue. This program is intended to “challenge ignorance and prejudices and foster mutual respect” in order to reduce religious conflict.

In 2011, UNESCO and the UNAOC celebrated the World Day for Cultural Diversity by forming the “Do One Thing for Diversity and Inclusion” campaign. The campaign challenged people and organizations to take concrete action to (1) combat polarization and stereotypes in order to increase understanding and cooperation across cultures; (2) increase awareness of the importance of intercultural dialogue, diversity, and inclusion; (3) and establish a community of people who can bolster cultural diversity with “real and everyday-life gestures.”

That same year, UNESCO began a global initiative called Culture: A Bridge to Development. The initiative aims to use culture as a “powerful and unique tool” to promote social, economic, and human development, as well as “job-creation opportunities social cohesion, education and mutual understanding.” It thus brings together a variety of actors, such as artists, intellectuals, teachers, creators, and think tanks to create novel ideas for fostering intercultural understanding and cooperation in an effort to achieve development.

In 2012, through resolution 67/104, the General Assembly established 2013-2022 as the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures. The resolution also established UNESCO to be the lead agency in the UN system for implementing measures related to the decade.

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47 UN Department of Public Information, “World Day for Cultural Diversity.”


In July 2015, the General Assembly passed resolution 69/312 on the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which served as a follow-up resolution to resolution 64/14, in which the UN General Assembly formally expressed support for the UNAOC. Resolution 69/312 reaffirmed the UN General Assembly’s support for the UNAOC, and provided it the “institutional status and the political guidance necessary to pursue its goals.” It also notes, however, that the UNAOC is “supported by a voluntary trust fund with no financial implications for the regular budget of the United Nations.”

For many years, the General Assembly has passed an annual resolution on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. It last passed a resolution under this title in December 2016. Resolution 71/249 broadly reaffirmed many of the UN’s activities related to the topic, and endorsed recent documents such as the Baku Declaration. It also recognized the importance of intercultural dialogue for social cohesion, peace, and development, and “called upon” states to use it as a vital tool for achieving peace, stability, and development.

Conclusion

Promoting intercultural understanding remains a complex and challenging issue that intersects with many of the UN’s objectives. What can the General Assembly Plenary do to facilitate intercultural understanding in order to foster an environment that bolsters peace, human rights, and development globally?

As you write your position paper on this topic, consider the following questions:

- Does your country have its own definition of culture?
- What is the cultural demographic composition of your country? Specifically,
- Does your country have any culturally or religiously based conflicts with other states? Does it have any culturally, religiously, or ethnically based conflicts within its borders?
- Does your country have educational opportunities related to intercultural understanding? E.g. has it incorporated intercultural understanding into its national curriculum?
- Does your country offer opportunities for exchange programs and other intercultural interactions? If so, are its approaches to these consistent with current research on making cultural interaction more effective?
- Is your country a member of the UNAOC? If not, why not?
- Does your country permit open dialogue with members of minority cultures or sub-cultures within its borders, and does it otherwise ensure that they have rights to freely exercise cultural traditions and other activities?

Recommended Reading


This UNESCO publication includes discussion of the importance of culture in sustainable development, but, more specifically discusses how education can be used to promote understanding between cultures.


This site from Polamar College includes some brief but useful links to pages that discuss the definition of culture, its characteristics, and a glossary of terms related to culture from an anthropological perspective.

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This is the website for the UN Alliance of Civilizations. It provides numerous resources on the topic of intercultural and interreligious understanding, such as news reports, information on existing UNAOC programs, press releases, and research and other resources that may help you with background information on the subject. To view their recent work, see their 2016 annual report at [https://www.unaoc.org/wp-content/uploads/UNAOC_AnnualReport2016_N1624014.pdf](https://www.unaoc.org/wp-content/uploads/UNAOC_AnnualReport2016_N1624014.pdf), and to see if your state is currently a UNAOC Member State visit their Group of Friends page at [https://www.unaoc.org/who-we-are/group-of-friends/members/](https://www.unaoc.org/who-we-are/group-of-friends/members/).


This press release from the UN discusses the High-Level Dialogue on Interreligious and intercultural understanding. It includes a number of statements by states on the issue. Search the document to see if your country made a statement on the issue.


This report from UNESCO discusses intercultural competence, which is the possession of knowledge and understanding of other colleges. It includes definitions of some useful concepts related to intercultural understanding, and a five step plan to promoting intercultural competence.


This link includes an overview of the Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development released in 1995, titled *Our Creative Diversity*, and a link to the full document. As one of the earliest discussions of the relationship between culture and development, the document makes the case that culture is not merely a tool for promoting development, but also a vital part of the goal of development, which is to have the opportunity to experience a “full, satisfying, [and] valuable” life.


This report discusses the importance of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue to intercultural understanding and development. While long, it contains detailed information on many of the subjects touched upon in this guide, including the important relationships between intercultural understanding and dialogue, education, sustainable development, and human rights.


This theme page on Intercultural Dialogue from UNESCO includes “related links” to relevant activities and organizations related to the topic of intercultural understanding. It also includes information on recent news and upcoming events related to the topic, as well as access to numerous associated publications.