

## INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR COUNTERING HATE SPEECH

Human Rights Council Side Event in Palais des Nations, Room XXII, on 18 June 2024 at 13:00 CET

"The Role of Youth Faith Actors in Combating Hate Speech and Creating More Inclusive Societies"

### DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE:

#### BACKGROUND

*"Religious differences have been weaponized and manipulated for political gain, feeding off the dangerous claim that one group is superior to another.<sup>1</sup> Social media platforms continue to be vehicles for the spread of hateful messages, with unparalleled speed and reach, nourishing the echo chambers of ignorance and incitement to hatred against religious or belief minorities, with harmful repercussions both online and offline."*

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, in the 2024 report in follow-up to Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 (UN Doc. [A/HRC/55/74](#), para. 58)

Hate speech has been an issue of rising global concern. Incitement to violence, hostility and discrimination contributes to a growing fragmentation and polarization of society, exacerbating cultural divides, and lowering the threshold to engage in human rights violations, including atrocity crimes. This is exacerbated through the ever-growing importance of the Internet and social media as a source of information and communication.

Although digital platforms have given voice to the voiceless, they are beholden by business models and algorithms designed to monopolize attention which has moved hate speech from the margins to the mainstream of politics and social interactions in many parts of the world. The [UNESCO Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms](#), launched in late 2023, serve as a tool to counter online hate speech against vulnerable and persecuted groups and entities through a multistakeholder approach, including engaging youth who now access information through social media in majority and play a crucial role in addressing these issues as they hold the potential to combat hate speech, and promote more inclusive societies.

In its [resolution 75/309](#), the General Assembly invited all Member States, organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations and civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, the private sector, individuals and other relevant stakeholders to observe annually the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, 18 June, as appropriate.

#### KEY OBJECTIVE

Framed by [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) and the ["Faith for Rights" commitments](#), this side event on 18 June 2024 at Palais des Nations aims to explore the vital role that youth faith actors can play in countering hate speech within their communities and beyond, while fostering the foundations of peace and respect for human rights, in particular freedom of expression. By highlighting successful initiatives to promote digital citizenship, media and information literacy, freedom of expression and to foster intercultural and interfaith dialogue, the event seeks to generate actionable strategies for empowering them in this critical endeavor.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/07/turk-calls-states-combat-weaponization-religious-differences>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/10/religious-hatred-turk-urges-renewed-social-contract-based-trust-and>

## KEY THEMES

- **Understanding the Impact of Hate Speech:** An exploration from behavioral science of the detrimental effects of hate speech on individuals, communities and societies at large.
- **Harnessing the Power of Youth Faith Actors:** Discussing examples of initiatives to counter hate speech and promoting cultural diversity.
- **Promoting Intercultural and Interfaith Engagement through Peer Learning:** Showcasing initiatives that facilitate dialogue and understanding among diverse cultural and religious groups, emphasizing the importance of empathy and mutual respect.
- **Building Resilience Against Hate through Education:** Identifying policies, practices, tools and resources to equip youth with the skills needed, especially media and information literacy, to act as responsible and engaged global digital citizens resisting and responding to hate speech effectively.
- **Engaging Stakeholders on the Governance of the Digital Ecosystem to Prevent Hate Speech:** Providing insights and viewpoints of youth as those coming of age through the use of these platforms as a main source for information and communication.

## FORMAT

The side event during the 56<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council will feature a combination of keynote speeches, panel discussion and interactive debate, providing participants with opportunities to engage with experts, practitioners and youth faith actors. Additionally, a virtual exhibition will showcase innovative projects and campaigns aimed at combating hate speech and promoting human rights and cultural identities.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Increased awareness of the role of youth faith actors in combating hate speech and creating more inclusive societies.
- Promotion of educational strategies and practices to address the roots and manifestations of hate speech, formal and non-formal.
- Identification of best practices and innovative approaches for empowering youth faith actors to address hate speech within their communities.
- Establishment of partnerships and networks to support youth-led initiatives in this field.
- Developing a set of recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to enhance efforts in combating hate speech while defending freedom of expression and promoting cultural diversity.

## SPEAKERS

- **UNESCO:** Ana Luiza Massot Thompson, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva
- **Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:** Ibrahim Salama, Chief of HRTB
- **Organization of Islamic Cooperation:** Dr. Hacı Ali Açıkgül, Vice-Chair of the OIC-IPHRC
- **European Union:** Marleen Steenbrugghe, Permanent Delegation of European Union in Geneva
- **Youth perspectives:** Leen Haidar and Dr. Hala Hamze, Director of Helping Hands Foundation
- **Faith perspectives:** Dr. Boumédiène Benyahia, Institut de la Parole Kalima
- **Moderation of Q&A:** Michael Wiener, OHCHR Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch
- **University for Peace:** H.E. David Fernández Puyana, Permanent Observer of UPEACE