MEETING REPORT

6TH MEETING OF THE ISTANBUL PROCESS

A cross-regional perspective on best practices and policies for promoting religious tolerance and strengthening resilience

20-21 July 2016 - Singapore

UNIVERSAL RIGHTS GROUP

On 20-21 July 2016, the Government of Singapore hosted the sixth meeting of the Istanbul Process, organised in collaboration with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). The meeting was entitled: 'A cross-regional perspective on best practices and policies for promoting religious tolerance and strengthening resilience.'

This was the first Istanbul Process meeting to be held in Southeast Asia, with a practitioner-centric focus.

The workshop provided a platform for practitioners from a cross-regional group of countries, civil society and academics to share best practices, practical policies and lessons learnt in the promotion of religious tolerance and strengthening resilience in the spirit of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18.

Participants included government officials, religious leaders, community leaders, academics, human rights NGOs, and civil society from Africa, Latin America, Europe, North America, and Asia.

Through panel discussions, the meeting focused on the following three key themes (extracted from the 16/18 'action plan'):

1. 'Efforts to encourage the creation of collaborative networks to build mutual understanding, promote dialogue and inspire constructive action towards shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration and media education,' (panel discussion I);

2. 'Promoting an open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels to combat religious hatred, incitement and violence,' (panel discussion II); and

3. 'Speaking out against intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence,' (also panel discussion II).

A final 'syndicated discussion' in small groups on the second day provided a platform for discussing 'future challenges, emerging trends, and ways forward' on these themes.

The session also included a community walk-about in Singapore's heartlands, and a visit to an inter-faith Harmony Centre at the An-Nahdhah Mosque, allowing participants to witness practical efforts to foster inter-racial and inter-religious harmony and understanding in Singapore.

This report seeks to summarise some of the key points made during each part of the meeting, and to collate some of the best practices shared in that context.

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PART I

CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE

Intolerance, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief is one of the most pressing challenges facing the international community today, with implications across all three pillars of the UN system (human rights, security and development).[1]

The main global policy framework for addressing the challenge is set down in Human Rights Council (Council) resolution 16/18. Resolution 16/18 was adopted by consensus in March 2011, and hailed by stakeholders from all regions and faiths as a turning point in international efforts to confront religious intolerance. After more than five decades of failure, UN member States had, it was hoped, at last come together to agree on a common, consensus-based approach and practical plan of action.

As noted by Eileen Donahoe, the former US Ambassador to the Council, in 2011, the strength and the importance of the 16/18 approach lies not just in the resolution itself, but in the fact that it is accompanied by a dedicated implementation mechanism: the 'Istanbul Process.'

Five years on from the adoption of resolution 16/18, and against the backdrop of heightened religious hostility worldwide, consensus around the '16/18 framework' remains fragile. Rather than working together to implement the 16/18 action plan, States have regularly returned to pre-2011 arguments over the nature of the problem, the correct role of the international community, and whether the solution to intolerance lies in strengthening the enjoyment of fundamental human rights or in setting clearer limits thereon. These divisions have re-emerged, in large part, because of conceptual confusion among policymakers about what the implementation of resolution 16/18 means in practice and what it entails. Linked with this, there has been a sense that Istanbul

Process meetings have lost touch with their original objective and focus: to provide a space for practitioners, domestic experts, community groups, etc. to share experiences and good practices.

Against this background, in early 2016 Singapore announced its intention to host the sixth meeting of the Istanbul Process. This was significant for two reasons:

First, as noted by Ambassador Choi Kyonglim, the President of the Council, in his opening remarks to the Singapore meeting, it would be the first meeting held outside of a country of either the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) or the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) - the two groups that have traditionally dominated UN debates on how best to combat religious intolerance.

Second, Singapore strongly encouraged a practitioner-centric focus to the sixth Istanbul Process meeting so as to provide a platform for national and local-level practitioners (in addition to diplomats) from all regions to share best practices and experiences in terms of implementing the resolution. A key objective, in that regard, was to move from intergovernmental debate to a more introspective process of reflection about national experiences - challenges, obstacles and solutions.

Over 100 individuals from all regions participated in the meeting, including representatives of governments from capital, Geneva permanent missions, and local embassies to Singapore; representatives of national and international civil society; academics; faith leaders; and other experts. No representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) or Special Procedures were present.

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[1] See URG Policy Report, 'Combatting global religious intolerance: the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18,' available online at http://www.universal-rights.org/programmes/in-focus-human-rights-and-religion/combatting-religious-intolerance-implementation-of-resolution-1618/, p.36-37.

Opening Session

The opening address of the meeting was delivered by Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, Singapore's Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Choi Kyonglim (Republic of Korea), President of the Council, and Ambassador-at-large Ong Keng Young (Singapore), Executive Deputy Chairman of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) also delivered remarks during the opening session.

Below are summaries of the key points made by each speaker.

DR. MOHAMAD MALIKI BIN OSMAN (SINGAPORE), SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Dr. Maliki noted that in the five years since the first Istanbul Process meeting, held in Washington D.C., 'the challenges that resolution 16/18 seeks to address have been magnified by global challenges such as rising nationalism, terrorism, rising inequality, armed conflict and unprecedented migratory flows.'

He expressed concern that identity politics is being used to play on the anxieties of citizens in different countries, and that inflammatory rhetoric for political expediency has given rise to xenophobia, bigotry and intolerance based on religion and ethnicity.

Social media and new communications technology have exacerbated these challenges, he suggested, noting that 'self-radicalisation' remains a real concern, and that young people are particularly vulnerable.

He said that Singapore was pleased to be hosting the first-ever Istanbul Process meeting in Southeast Asia, recalling that when Singapore was approached to host the sixth meeting of the Process, they agreed to do so because maintaining religious and racial harmony has been a national priority ever since Singapore's

independence in 1965. He noted that Singapore is one of the world's most religiously diverse nations, and had suffered from racial and religious riots in the 1950s and 1960s.

He reflected that 'Singapore's social harmony and racial integration did not happen by chance, but by deliberate choice, government policies and the collective will of our people.' 'Each community did not insist on the primacy of its race, religion, language or culture,' he explained, 'but was prepared to live together and accommodate others in the context of a multi-racial and multi-religious

society.'

He explained that at the national level, the Government actively engages ethnic and religious leaders and forms community organisations. Community and religious leaders have also stepped forward to counter the spread of extremist ideologies - 'ideologies that breed hate and violence.'

Every nation will have to chart its own way forward, and advance human rights in its own way, he noted, taking into account its unique and evolving social and cultural context.

He noted Singapore's strong belief in the value and wisdom of learning from one another, and having conversations and exchanging insights on what works best on the ground and within communities. That is why, he explained, the meeting was designed to be a practitioner-centric workshop, and one that would provide cross-regional perspectives.

He noted that the broad, cross-regional representation at the meeting reflected the continuing relevance of the Istanbul Process to UN Member States and the

wider international community.

Finally, he hoped that the practitioner-centric focus of the workshop would provide new insights and fresh impetus to the Istanbul Process and the implementation of resolution 16/18. He urged all participants to continue their conversations with each other even after leaving Singapore, perhaps forming a 'community of practice' to capitalise on the rich experience and diversity of participants.

AMBASSADOR CHOI KYONGLIM (REPUBLIC OF KOREA), PRESIDENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Ambassador Choi Kyonglim (Republic of Korea), President of the Council, underscored the significance of the Singapore meeting as the first time that a session of the Istanbul process has taken place in a non-Western and non-OIC country. He added: 'it is all the more meaningful given that Singapore, a country of great religious diversity, clearly has a great deal to share with us in terms of best practices in the protection of religious minorities and nurturing a tolerant society.' 'Of the many resolutions that the Council has adopted,' he noted, resolution 16/18 is 'unquestionably a major achievement.' This resolution has been a consensual guiding tool for collective action to counter religious discrimination and intolerance.

While recognising that the full implementation of the resolution will not be easy for States, he warned that 'the cost of inaction is always higher.'

He recognised that, according to reports presented by the UN Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a number of States are taking

a comprehensive approach to dealing with the issues of freedom of belief and combating intolerance. However, in general, he noted, the record so far has been, 'to say the least, modest.' As is the case with numerous other Council resolutions, he observed, there is a clear gap between what the resolution stipulates should happen and what actually is happening on the ground.

The challenge we face now, he said, is to give practical effect to this resolution, placing equal importance on all parts of the action plan contained in resolution 16/18 and ensuring a balanced discussion about implementation across all States and all regions.

Resolution 16/18 and subsequent resolutions, as well as the Rabat Plan of Action, the Istanbul Process, and relevant Council mechanisms, should, he urged, be fully utilised in the fight against religious intolerance. Moreover, he underlined the importance of maintaining international consensus on the text of the resolution.

AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE, ONG KENG YOUNG (SINGAPORE), EXECUTIVE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (RSIS)

Ambassador-at-large Ong Keng Yong suggested that the key to engaging and empowering communities lies in the promotion and embrace of diversity through a '3-H approach' of: Heart, Head and Hand.

As he explained, the 3-H approach includes: the heart to appreciate and have a sense of belonging within our communities; the head to explore, evaluate and understand strategies and policies undertaken; and finally the hand, emphasising the need for leaders to create an effective way forward and contribute towards the promotion of religious tolerance and the building of resilience in communities.

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I am returning home with … a lot of lessons learnt and energised to do more in the field of religious tolerance.

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Rev Dr Usman Jesse Fornah, General Secretary of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone

Panel Discussions

The two panel discussions held on the first day of the meeting provided a platform for sharing experiences, good practices and challenges. The panels included a mix of representatives from civil society, governments (local and national), religious leaders and academics - from all regions.

FIRST PANEL DISCUSSION

The theme of the first panel discussion was: 'efforts to encourage the creation of collaborative networks to build mutual understanding, promote dialogue,' and 'inspire constructive action towards shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration and media education,' (resolution 16/18, operative paragraph 5a). Panellists from Argentina, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Turkey and the USA, spoke about their national experiences, good practices and challenges faced in these areas.

Participants shared information on a wide range of government and civil society-led initiatives aimed at promoting tolerance and mutual understanding.

> "...this dialogue […] was an occasion to go beyond the binary [i.e. a conversation between the West and the OIC] and get other States involved. What better State to do that than Singapore, given its history, given that it has addressed these issues domestically." Moreover, we welcome "the focus on the practical, on the pragmatic – how do practitioners address these issues in countries, and what can we learn from other peoples' experiences.

Ambassador Keith Harper, Permanent Representative of the US to the UN Human Rights Council

Some focused on the importance of increasing daily interaction - which can lead to better understanding - between religious and ethnic groups within a society, with one panellist noting that 'research [shows] that lots of positive interaction on a daily basis is essential for [social] harmony.'

Experiences were shared with regards to the development of networks of religious leaders, with panellists emphasising the important role that inter-religious dialogue among faith leaders can play in combatting religious intolerance, and fostering inter-religious understanding. Some of the case studies related to civil society initiatives (e.g. the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone - IRCSL), while others recounted government-led projects. Regarding the latter, participants heard about Singapore's National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony, the Cabinet of Malaysia's Committee for Promoting Religious Understanding and Harmony amongst Religious Adherents (JKMPKA), and Argentina's National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI).

Some panellists were keen to highlight the importance of broader civil society-led initiatives in the promotion of inter-religious understanding and dialogue. One panellist noted that civil society is often best placed to deal with inter-religious discord and deepening intolerance, and that governments should make use of their input 'to deepen and make more effective their prevention and prosecution efforts.' One participant, speaking from the floor, noted that much of the discussion had focused on religious civil society organisations. He urged participants not to ignore the role of non-religious civil society organisations.

Panellists presented information on a range of inter-faith collaborative networks and activities involved in taking 'constructive action towards shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration and media education' (resolution 16/18, operative paragraph 5a). Two panellists also reflected on the role of religious leaders in mediating political and labour crises. One panellist noted that such inter-faith networks, working together on a broad range of issues, help 'create a solid basis of friendship and mutual trust,' without which subsequent 'inter-cultural dialogue and understanding would be more challenging.'

Some panellists shared information on government training and education initiatives designed to promote religious tolerance. One noted the importance of 'integrated training' in the US, bringing law enforcement, religious leaders, activists and others

together. Another noted how in Buenos Aires, the municipal government's Office for Worship has set up programmes to educate government officials on religious practices.

Early education was identified as being vital in the fight against intolerance (resolution 16/18, operative paragraph 5g). Some panellists reflected on the importance of education and youth initiatives as a platform for promoting interaction and dialogue among children from different religions. In Singapore, for example, formative social institutions such as schools are designed to 'create bonds that transcend religion and race,' and English is the working language in schools despite the fact that Singapore is a multi-racial society with a Chinese majority. In Argentina, the Inter-Religious Youth Network (RIJBA), set up by the Office for Worship in Buenos Aires, offers a platform for young people from religious communities to engage in discussion and debate, and to identify practical solutions. Other panellists focused on the importance of using school curricula to promote tolerance and understanding. In Indonesia, for example, religious teaching is a compulsory subject from primary school to university, and aims to promote understanding of other religions, based on the notion that 'intolerance often comes from ignorance.' In Malaysia, 'Unity Education Programmes' are held in learning institutions from kindergarten to university. These try to 'nurture unity through the appreciation of the national philosophy (Rukun Negara).'

Some panellists highlighted the existence of specific government departments or bodies formed under national constitutions aimed at fostering inter-religious and inter-cultural harmony and ensuring freedom of religion or belief. For example, the National Unity Department in Malaysia (established in 1969); the Secretariat of Worship within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina; and the Presidential Council for Minority Rights in Singapore.

While much of the discussion focused on preventative measures aimed at promoting tolerance, harmony and understanding, some panellists reflected on conflict mediation and resolution strategies at local and national level (resolution 16/18, operative paragraph 5b). Two panellists reflected on community mediation initiatives that offer voluntary and confidential dispute resolution procedures (including in the area of religion). Singapore provided information on its national-level government mechanism to build trust, to create space for dialogue on religious harmony, and to facilitate communications during inter-religious conflict and tension: the National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony.

One panellist highlighted the importance of leaders speaking out against acts of intolerance, recalling that within one hour of the '9/11' attacks in New York and Washington, the Indonesian Government issued a statement 'condemning the attacks, and reiterating the fact that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance.' The Indonesian President was one of the first leaders from the Islamic world to 'convey [their] position with regards to such heinous acts of terrorism.'

The importance of ensuring female participation in inter- and intra-religious dialogue, and broader efforts to combat intolerance (including the Istanbul Process), was emphasised by a number of panellists. One panellist noted with concern that women's voices are often silenced when it comes to discussions over freedom of religion or belief. One civil society participant noted that the Istanbul Process itself would benefit from greater gender balance.

Two panellists reflected on bilateral and multilateral inter-governmental collaboration and experience sharing networks that have proved useful. The Argentinian Institute for Religious Dialogue (IDI), for example, is currently helping the Organisation of American States (OAS) to create an Institute for Religious Dialogue of the Americas. Also, in Indonesia, different European heads of government and ministers have undertaken visits, in part to learn about and work with the country's Islamic community, in order to help guide their own domestic policy reforms.

CASE STUDY

NEIGHBOURLINESS PROGRAMMES, MALAYSIA

Malaysia's Neighbourliness Programmes are designed to 'promote the spirit of neighbourliness among [people from] diverse backgrounds,' and follows a '3 Es' strategy of: 'educate, engage and empower.'

The initiative includes:

- The creation of over 7,000 neighbourhood committees ('Rukun Tetangga'). These are 'social organisation(s) established by the Government under the Rukun Tetangga Act 2012 (Act 751),' and 'have a significant role in ensuring the welfare of the community and in preserving unity at grassroots level;'
- The creation of 19 Unity Squad teams, which play a 'front line' role in disaster management at community level;
- 'Love your community' programme (Sayangi Community);
- Community economy programmes;
- Community voluntary patrolling schemes, organised by volunteer residents to ensure safety through regular patrols. The number of groups has risen from 1,780 in 2009 to 4,653 in 2015.

CASE STUDY

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In the US, 'Shoulder to Shoulder' is an inter-/intra-religious civil society initiative that deals with inter-religious discord, intolerance and tensions.[3] Founded in 2010 by over 20 national religious groups, Shoulder-to-Shoulder operates not only at a national level, but also offers support to local and regional efforts to address anti-Muslim sentiment.

The initiative emerged in the context of growing prejudice against Muslims in the US, as demonstrated by the controversy over the decision to build a Muslim community centre a few blocks from Ground Zero in New York City, and by threats to burn the Book of Qur'an in Florida. In this context, nearly 40 senior religious leaders convened at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. on 7 September 2010 for an emergency interfaith summit to challenge the recent increase in anti-Muslim sentiment and rhetoric. They released a powerful joint statement to stand in solidarity with their fellow Muslim Americans and held a press conference that was broadcast live by C-SPAN and CNN, covered by multiple national and international media outlets, and attended by White House staff. In order to continue this successful work, Shoulder-to-Shoulder emerged as a coalition of national religious organisations dedicated to confronting anti-Muslim sentiment.

THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF SIERRA LEONE (IRCSL), SIERRA LEONE

The IRCSL is an interfaith organisation working on a wide range of issues – including national reconciliation, health and religious harmony. The IRCSL came into existence to facilitate interfaith collaboration as part of efforts to end the country's civil conflict. Inaugurated in 1997, it is composed of adherents of the two main religions in Sierra Leone – Christianity and Islam. The organisation has a network of clergy and imams in every part of the country, from village, town, chiefdom, and district, to national levels. They are entrusted with undertaking sensitisation, awareness-raising and community education.

The main responsibilities of the IRCSL are: (i) to provide a platform for religious communities to share information on their respective traditions, principles and values; (ii) to plan and implement collaborative action programmes based on shared moral commitments; (iii) to support religious communities in Sierra Leone and galvanise areas of convergence in their respective traditions, moral commitments and promotion of religious rites.

The IRCSL has made positive social contributions across a range of issues including, inter alia, health, education, and conflict-resolution.

In terms of its contributions in the health field, the IRCSL has played an important role *vis-à-vis* Ebola, malaria, teenage pregnancy, female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage of the girl child:

- Through its subsidiary organisations – Christian Action Group (Christag) and Islamic Action Group (Islag) – IRCSL helped mobilise a 'mass sensitisation drive' to encourage parents to allow their children to be immunised, using 'health messages backed by strong scriptural passages/quotations.' This earned the country a Global UNICEF and World Health Organisation (WHO) award, after [immunisation] jumped from 6% in 1986 to 76% in 1990.
- The IRCSL membership was likewise mobilised to help end the Ebola outbreak, again using 'Biblical and Quaranic references.'
- The IRCSL worked with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation to help defeat malaria in Sierra Leone.[2]
- The IRCSL runs a 'sensitisation campaign to end teenage pregnancy, FGM and early marriage of the girl child with support from UNICEF.'

ENSURING THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF OF MIGRANTS, TURKEY

One participant reflected on the Turkish Government's efforts to guarantee the right to freedom of religion or belief of the recently arrived 3 million Syrian refugees. He recalled the experience of a group of Assyrian Christians who wished to be settled around the Assyrian church in Midyat, Mardin. Despite the fact that this was a 'legally complicated request,' government officials were able to respond favourably.

BRIDGE BUILDERS, ARGENTINA

The 'Bridge Builders'[4] initiative in Argentina, created by three women (one Muslim, one Jewish and one Christian), focuses on 'building respect for diversity and improving capacity for dialogue.' They provide advice to 'school principals, students, security forces and other key actors.' In 2016 they 'helped the City of Barcelona, in alliance with UNESCO, to set up a similar program.'

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[2] See http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/foundation/news/groundbreaking-interfaith-programme-tackle-malaria-sierra-leone.

[3] According to the website, http://www.shouldertoshouldercampaign.org, 'Shoulder-to-Shoulder is an interfaith organization dedicated to ending anti-Muslim sentiment by strengthening the voice of freedom and peace. Founded in November 2010 by over 20 national religious groups, Shoulder-to-Shoulder works not only on a national level, but offers strategies and support to local and regional efforts to address anti-Muslim sentiment and seeks to spread the word abroad.'

[4] https://www.facebook.com/ConstructoresDePuentesArgentina/.

MULTILATERAL SHARING OF EXPERIENCE, INDONESIA

Indonesia has received visits from Western leaders interested in fostering pluralism and inter-faith harmony at domestic level. In 2007, the then Foreign Minister of Germany visited Indonesia to understand the country's approach to pluralism, having realised that Germany needed to adopt a more proactive approach towards the integration of their Turkish migrant and Muslim communities, who had been largely ignored until 9/11. Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair also visited Indonesia to learn and work with the Islamic community, and to help inform the UK's own approach.
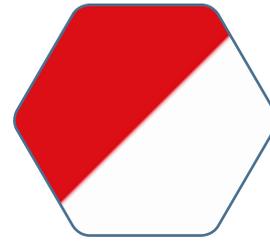
MAXIMISING AND PRESERVING THE COMMON SPACE, SINGAPORE

Singapore is a highly diverse nation, both in terms of race and religion. According to a 2010 census, the population is 33% Buddhist, 18% Christian, 17% no religion, 15% Muslim, 11% Taoist, 5% Hindu and 1% 'other religions.'

Secularism, meritocracy and multi-racialism are core principles to ensure equal standing and opportunities for all Singaporeans.

The Singapore Constitution affirms that all are equal before the law regardless of race, language and religion. The Presidential Council for Minority Rights scrutinises bills before Parliament to ensure that they do not unfairly discriminate against any race or religion.

At the national level, the government takes a pragmatic and non-ideological approach to maximising the common space for all Singaporeans and to proactively foster understanding between communities. A strong legal framework comprising the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, the Penal Code, the Sedition Act, and the Public Order Act is in place to preserve social harmony and to deter individuals or groups attempting to cause racial and religious conflict. The Government works closely with all community and religious leaders to preserve racial and social harmony in a pragmatic way.

At the community level, for example, the Ethnic Integration Policy ensures a balanced mix of ethnic communities in public housing estates, mirroring the national ethnic composition, while Group Representation Constituencies ensure that minorities will always be represented in Parliament. English is the working language in Government and schools, so as not to favour any particular ethnic group, and social institutions such as schools provide shared experiences and opportunities for interaction.

To foster better understanding between communities, a National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony provides a 'platform to build close relationships and networks of trust among top-level community, government and faith leaders.' It provides a 'safe space for dialogue on issues such as religious harmony and common space in Singapore,' and facilitates communication during crises. 'Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles' (IRCCs) – local-level inter-faith platforms in all 89 constituencies – aim to build friendships and trust between local community leaders. They are able to 'respond quickly to crises with racial and religious overtones and project communal solidarity.'

> " As one of the pioneers of the Istanbul Process, the OIC is happy that more and more countries from different regions are participating and becoming partners. That indeed is the real spirit of resolution 16/18: implementation of the action plan … in its real sense. "

Marghoob Saleem Butt, Executive Director of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the OIC

SECOND PANEL DISCUSSION

During the second panel discussion, panellists from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and international civil society reflected on the importance of (i) promoting open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels to combat religious hatred, incitement and violence (resolution 16/18 operative paragraph 5h), and (ii) speaking out against intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (resolution 16/18 operative paragraph 5e).

One panellist reflected on the problems caused by discriminatory laws, noting that in his country proselyting is a crime, but only when it is directed at Muslims. He identified this unequal treatment as a source of mistrust, and a limit on the willingness of groups to engage in an open and frank discussion about religious intolerance. A participant from the floor also raised concern over 'apostasy laws,' and 'how [they] square with toleration and the idea of freedom of religion or belief.'

A wide range of initiatives - led by government and civil society - designed to encourage interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels were shared. Examples included the UK's Government-sponsored 'Near Neighbours' scheme, Singapore's Harmony Centre, Malaysia's National Interfaith Committee (JKMPKA), and Indonesia's Inter-Religious Society Communication Forum. At the international level, participants at the meeting heard about an Indonesian initiative called the International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS), which works to combat misperceptions about Islam (among both Muslims and non-Muslims).

One panellist highlighted the importance of adopting a universal approach to speaking out against intolerance. She said that people should be ready to 'condemn all forms of hate crime and not just the particular strand they are working on.' For example, the panellist noted, those that are happy to challenge anti-Muslim hate crime should also be happy to challenge anti-Semitism and all other types of hate crime.

As in the morning session, participants also reflected on initiatives aimed at encouraging inter-faith and inter-cultural collaboration on practical issues of broader community interest. In the words of one panellist: 'if people get to know each other they are less likely to perpetrate hate crimes.' One panellist stressed the importance of 'practical co-operation between faith groups,' and having 'people from different backgrounds [...] work together for the common good and to tackle shared social problems.'

One participant stressed the importance of developing 'standing networks that facilitate transnational cooperation between civil society actors,' which would allow such actors to 'benefit from each other's experience, both positive and negative,' and allow 'lessons to be shared.' One civil society panellist stressed the importance of ensuring safe civil society space, to allow an open dialogue to take place without threat or fear of harm.

One panellist shared information on the UK's national experience of developing legal and policy frameworks to monitor and respond to hate crimes. She reflected on the UK's 'strong legal framework [...] which protects all individuals against racial and religious discrimination, and racially and religiously aggravated hate crime,' and has led to 'enhanced sentencing for perpetrators.' She noted that the UK approach recognises that 'it is important to have robust data [on hate crime] to ensure we shine a light on the problem.' To that end, the UK has an advanced system of disaggregated police data, as well as online police and community sponsored reporting platforms.

That panellist also reflected on a number of important civil society initiatives in the UK aimed at recording, monitoring and responding to hate crimes, and offering support to victims. This includes initiatives like the No Hate Speech UK initiative; Tell MAMA; and the Community Security Trust. The latter is an organisation that looks after the safety and security of the Jewish community and monitors anti-Semitism in the UK. It recorded over 900 anti-Semitic incidents in 2015.

Echoing comments made on the first panel, a range of participants reflected on particular challenges associated with the Internet and social media, specifically with regards to hate speech and abuse. One participant noted that the development of global communication technology '[makes] States' borders seem blurred,' which can pose a challenge in terms of efforts to counter religious intolerance and violence. Another noted that in the UK, 'social media was awash with appalling incidents of xenophobia and racism following the EU referendum.' Similarly, it was noted that there is often a 'backlash against the Muslim community' voiced through social media after major incidents

like the November 2015 Paris attacks, and a backlash against the Jewish community following incidents in the Middle East. For example, during the Gaza conflict of 2014, there was the highest recorded number of anti-Semitic incidents (online) since records began in the 1980s.

One panellist offered a more positive assessment of the importance of communication technology. While negative messaging was disseminated by 'a very loud [but] very small minority,' in today's context, because of the Internet, 'we can now hear a myriad of [counter] voices and opinions from people around the world, and we can take part in relevant conversation on an equal basis - whoever we are.' While 'we can and should report abusive tweets and posts,' she said, social media users should also be encouraged 'to drown out that negativity' with positive posts and re-tweets. She gave the example of positive hashtags like #MoreInCommon. She also noted how faith communities and local community organisations in Birmingham have mobilised around the #LoveYourNeighbour hashtag. The 'No Hate Speech UK' initiative was also held up as a good example of a project designed to protect individuals from online abuse.

An Indonesian Islamic religious leader on the panel was keen to emphasise the importance of the promotion of moderate values, particularly within Islam, 'to avoid extreme and intolerant behaviour.' He noted that he 'regularly visit[s] regions in Indonesia and promotes moderate values.' He also elaborated on the dangers of extremism, intolerance, radicalism and terrorism, 'which not only [threaten] the country and society, but [...] Islam itself.' For such efforts to be effective, he underscored the importance of using 'language understood by society,' and using 'persons trusted by society' to spread the message. He underlined the importance of 'providing Muslim religious leaders with adequate information on radicalism, terrorism and intolerance threats,' and noted the importance of strengthening 'moderate dogmas among [...] Muslim believers and forming some sort of immunity within society against penetration by radical dogmas.' Another panellist stressed the importance of scholars explaining the historical context of the Quran.

An inter-faith activist on the panel stressed the importance of governments ensuring that people 'receive the right religious teaching.' Such religious teaching should stress 'correct Islamic values and character,' rather than focusing solely on 'dos, don'ts and punishments.' He suggested that all Muslim governments should focus on 'Tasawwuf' - i.e. building good character. Another participant noted the work of a group of Muslim scholars in Singapore, who are part of the Religious Rehabilitation Group, committed to countering radical religious ideology and providing religious counselling in detention centres and elsewhere 'to ensure that we do not produce the next generation of terrorists and extremists.'

One panellist noted the need for more preventative action with regards to combatting terrorism. Another emphasised the importance of 'counter-terrorism measures and efforts to prevent violent extremism' being 'coherent with effort to promote tolerance and combat intolerance,' noting that 'the forces leading to them and us distinctions contribute to alienation and, in some cases, to violent extremism.'

One panellist noted the shared responsibility of civil society, governments and the UN secretariat 'to disseminate information about the 16/18 framework, its plan of action, the Istanbul Process and the Rabat Plan of Action, to stakeholders at the national level. He reflected that while 'few national civil society actors will promote tolerance because the UN has established the 16/18 plan of action,' many of those 'already active in the promotion of tolerance could benefit from the added legitimacy it provides.'

He suggested that 'civil society actors working at domestic level should be given opportunities to share their experiences in promoting tolerance [...] at future meetings of the Istanbul Process [...] Local organisations familiar with resolution 16/18 should be invited to contribute to the Istanbul Process and future Human Rights Council discussions, to explain how the resolution supports their efforts and to suggest additional measures that the Council could take.'

RECORDING AND RESPONDING TO HATE CRIME, UK

The UK panellist's intervention during the Istanbul Process meeting was both self-reflective and self-critical - in line with the supposed spirit of the Istanbul Process. Recognising the 'spike in hate crime in the UK and racist incidents taking place in communities following the vote to leave the European Union,' the speaker noted that such spikes often follow 'international events, and misinterpretations around them.'

In order to better understand, and therefore to develop effective policy responses to, such hate crimes, she emphasised the importance of gathering robust and disaggregated data, in order to inform public debate and policy responses.

In 2014/15, UK police recorded over 50,000 hate crimes;[5] of which over 3,000 were classified as religious hate crimes. They are currently working towards being able to disaggregate religious hate crime data, to understand which groups are most persecuted, and in what manner. At the moment, civil society organisations such as Tell MAMA and the Community Security Trust are also doing important work in this area.

The UK also supports broader initiatives to address all forms of intolerance and hatred, 'to ensure that [they] reach as wide a group of people as possible.' One example given was the website 'True Vision,' an online reporting facility for the victims of hate crime run by the Association of Chief Police Officers.[6] True Vision is also used 'to send targeted reassurance to communities who may feel particularly vulnerable,' including via social media.

Though many interventions focused on reactive measures, the UK panellist noted that the soon-to-be-published Hate Crime Action Plan would place prevention at its heart. The new Action Plan had been developed on the basis of the aforementioned aggregated data. On the one hand, it will focus on the internet and public transport, where there have been 'a number of very public incidents targeting Muslim women.' It will also 'focus on the night time economy where many taxi drivers and take-away workers are from ethnic minorities and are often subject to racial and religious abuse because customers have had too much to drink.'
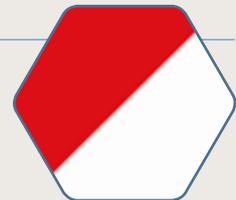
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS (ICIS), INDONESIA

Indonesia has played a key role in promoting mutual understanding within Islam (between Sunni and Shia, and different interpretations and teachings within Sunni). For example, they initiated the ICIS, which held its most recent meeting in November 2015, with the aim of trying to forge a common understanding on issues such as how the Islamic world should respond to growing violence and radicalisation, and how to counter growing misperceptions of Islam.

At the national level, the ICIS 'serves to decrease local conflicts all over Indonesia by cooperating with' inter-religious authorities 'It also serves to restore religious values to a more productive position in supporting the country's development rather than become problems and threats to the country and society.'

At the international level, ICIS 'serves to [position] Islam as rahmatan lil'alamin (blessing for the universe)' and to confront misunderstandings, inside and outside of Islam.

[5] *She noted, however, the estimate that only one in four hate crimes are reported, and noted the government was working to increase levels of reporting.*

[6] *http://www.report-it.org.uk/home.*

INTER-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY COMMUNICATION FORUM, INDONESIA
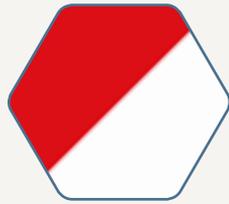
The Inter-religious Society Communication Forum 'serves the purpose of building mutual understanding between religious leaders nationally, engaging the authority to disseminate information to enlighten society throughout Indonesia.'

THE NATIONAL INTERFAITH COMMITTEE (JKMPKA), MALAYSIA

The JKMPKA is made up of 8 'working committees,' one of which is called the 'Committee for the Promotion of Harmony and Understanding Among Religious Adherents.' Its two main goals are to: (i) address sensitive issues that require urgent attention/intervention, and important current issues; and (ii) conduct research on inter-religious understanding.

Some of the key challenges addressed by the Committee include: conversion (usually into/out of Islam); custody rights of children when one parent converts (to Islam); disputes over burial rights, especially when conversion (usually to Islam) is only discovered after death; sites of places of worship; religious insults; proselytisation (usually to Muslims); and the use of Islamic religious terms.

Reflecting on some of the successes of the Committee, the panellist noted that 'religious leaders are now in constant dialogue with one another;' that 'religious leaders have established strong bonds of respect and friendship with one another;' that 'there is a ready communication channel between the religious leaders (and organisations) with the relevant government agencies, including to the Ministers;' and 'a mechanism is in place to address sensitive issues.'

In terms of challenges, the panellist noted that there is still disagreement over the meaning of the position that 'Islam is the Religion of the Federation,' and the 'special position of the Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak.' He also noted apprehension among non-Muslims over increasing 'Islamisation' of government policies and administration, and the increasing role of Shari-ah courts.

FOSTERING UNDERSTANDING AND DISPELLING MYTHS, SINGAPORE

In Singapore, there are a number of important grassroots initiatives designed to provide a platform for inter- and intra-religious dialogue, and for dispelling myths and misconceptions, particularly surrounding Islam.

The Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) is a voluntary group of Islamic teachers and scholars in Singapore that was officially formed in 2003. The RRG seeks to counter radicalisation and extremism with the ideals of moderation through the spirit of loving, caring and sharing for a cohesive Singapore. The RRG was initially formed to rehabilitate detained Jemaah Islamiah (JI) members and their families through counselling. It has since broadened its scope to help correct misinterpretations promoted by self-radicalised individuals and those in support of ISIS. The RRG's mission is to correct the misinterpretation of Islamic concepts, and dispel the extremist and terrorist ideologies they have been indoctrinated with.

Another important feature of the rehabilitation programme is to help foster a better understanding of Islam in the Singapore context. Besides its primary counselling and rehabilitation work, the RRG is also committed to building social resilience in the community through its outreach programmes. Since 2005, the RRG has organised conferences, forums, dialogue sessions and briefings to educate the community about key Islamic concepts which have often been misinterpreted by terrorist and extremist groups such as JI, Al Qaeda and ISIS.

NEAR NEIGHBOURS, UK

The UK's 'Near Neighbours' initiative – supported by the government – has funded over 1,100 small projects allowing people of different faiths to work together by 'creating community gardens and allotments, establishing community cafés in deprived areas, putting on plays exploring difficult issues like extremism, and providing meals for homeless people.' One project involves bringing together 'young women from Muslim, Jewish and Christian schools around a common interest – coding.' Other UK initiatives mentioned included the Mitzhav Say, Nisa-Nashim and the Inter-Faith Network.

Community visit

During the morning of the second day, participants went on a 'community walkabout' in Ang Mo Kio town, and visited the Harmony Centre at the An-Nahdhah Mosque. During the visit, participants had the opportunity to learn about Singapore's approach to promoting integration and inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony.

Ang Mo Kio town is a typical public housing estate in Singapore, where about 80% of its residents live in public housing. Participants witnessed how Singapore tries to integrate the different ethnic and religious communities by ensuring that the distribution of people in public housing mirrors Singapore's national ethnic composition; by sharing common spaces and amenities in the estate; and having places of worship and other religious buildings sited within the community (and sometimes in close proximity to each other). The guide also explained how schools play a role in fostering inter-religious harmony. For example, on Racial Harmony Day, pupils are encouraged to wear ethnic costumes, while teachers may wear each other's ethnic dress. This provides an opportunity to learn about, and celebrate, diversity.

The Harmony Centre at the An-Nahdhah mosque is a community-based project, and one of the key initiatives of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS). The Harmony Centre seeks to promote a better understanding of the true teachings of Islam and about Muslims in Singapore; enhance inter-faith dialogue and engagement at all levels 'community, grassroots, youths and students - through activities such as seminars, workshops, experiential learning journeys; and to strengthen the social bonds between the communities of different faiths so as to build a more cohesive and resilient society. The Harmony Centre has three floors of exhibition space to showcase Islamic art and architecture from around the world, discoveries by Islamic

scholars, and insights into the religious practices of Muslims. The Harmony Centre also provides visitors with information on the other major religions and highlights the importance that Islam places on pluralism. The Harmony Centre also serves as an integrated hub for the promotion of greater understanding and engagement of all faith communities. The Harmony Centre was officially opened by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on 7 October 2006.

Syndicated discussion

The closing session of the meeting was held in a 'syndicated discussion' format, designed to inject a forward-looking element into the discussion, with the aim of feeding into the next Istanbul Process meeting. Participants split into seven break-out groups - made up of a diverse mix of government representatives, religious leaders, civil society and others - to brainstorm on emerging trends, key challenges, and possible ways forward. This format allowed for in-depth and solution-focused discussions. Each break-out group then reported the key points of their discussion back to all conference participants for further discussion and comments.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

A number of groups expressed concern over people becoming 'more closed' during the current 'time of crisis,' and more prone to the influence of 'growing nationalism,' 'stereotyping,'and populist politics on one side, and 'extremism' and 'radicalisation on the other.' A few groups noted a trend towards rejecting 'expert views,' and a 'lack of interest in academic studies.'

One group noted that politicians are exploiting religions - and intolerance of them - for their own ends. They reflected that such tactics can be difficult to challenge, but that it is important to 'hold them to international agreements, or pledges.' On the latter

point, it was proposed that authority figures - including media, business and political leaders - should be asked to sign pledges to say that they will not exploit divisions.

One group noted the challenge posed by the 'increasingly transnational nature' of religious intolerance, hatred and conflict.

A few groups identified the current migration crisis as a particular source of tension. One group noted that the common negative response 'is based on ignorance, and fear stemming from that ignorance,' and a 'tendency to blame the migrant to hide social and economic failures.'

SOCIAL MEDIA

Most groups discussed the increasingly significant role - both positive and negative - that can be played by social media platforms.

One group noted the difficulty of drawing a line between freedom of expression and incitement, particularly 'in the face of the changing environment of the Internet and social media.' One civil society participant noted that international instruments, in particular the Rabat Plan of Action, provide 'very specific'guidance for States that apply equally to on-line speech, and that the use of new technologies do not justify departure from well-established international human rights norms.

Another group noted the challenges inherent in monitoring social media posts, and the manpower needed to do it, especially in different languages. Another noted that one problem with social media is that people tend to get stuck in a silo/feedback loop, whereby they only listen to like-minded people.

In terms of solutions, one group suggested the need for better education on the use of new media.

There was some discussion between groups over access to information from technology companies to facilitate prosecutions. One State representative noted that one of the biggest hurdles can be the different standards in different countries when dealing with servers located abroad. Another State representative noted that 'where you press the button is where you commit the crime, not where the server is located,' and listed some successful prosecutions on this basis. One civil society participant noted that it could be useful to engage social media companies (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) in subsequent meetings to facilitate further conversations on this issue.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

One group noted that newspapers can make big news even from small stories - on both traditional and new media platforms - by distorting facts. The media therefore has a particular responsibility to avoid fuelling intolerance.

EDUCATION

A number of groups highlighted the importance of education as a tool to combat religious intolerance. In the words of one group spokesperson: 'one of the main problems is the lack of education, and one of the main solutions is education.'

Most groups reflected on the experience of the site visit to the Harmony Centre, and underscored the importance of learning about other faiths. A number of groups noted that the Harmony Centre model provides an 'excellent platform to overcome ignorance, and a lack of education and knowledge.' One group added that: 'knowing more about traditions and cultures, different religious contexts and historical backgrounds is essential for inter-faith tolerance.' Having this knowledge can mean that individuals and communities are less likely to react negatively to 'certain comments and statements of another religious group.'

One group focused on the need for 'more platforms and safe spaces' for migrants specifically, to allow them to 'better understand local culture, religions and social and cultural norms in their new country.'

RESOLUTION 16/18 AND THE ISTANBUL PROCESS

A number of groups recognised the importance of the Istanbul Process, and of maintaining consensus on resolution 16/18. 'First and foremost,' one group noted, 'the Istanbul Process must continue.'

A number of groups highlighted the need to improve transparency and continuity. Suggestions included the development of a dedicated Istanbul Process website, secretariat and/or a monitoring body or observatory. One group said it would be useful for each meeting to begin with a recap of what was discussed at the previous meeting, for the sake of continuity and to ensure that good suggestions do not 'fall through the cracks.'

A few groups stressed the importance of increasing the visibility and accessibility of 16/18 and the Istanbul Process among civil society actors at national level. 'How many organisations at national level know about 16/18?' asked one participant, suggesting that the answer was very few. The question arose as to 'how to get that information out?' 'Allowing civil society to leverage 16/18 is key,' noted one participant, to 'making States accountable for the pledges they make at the international level.'

A number of participants welcomed the concrete and practical focus of the Singapore meeting, and underscored its value as a platform for sharing best practice. It was suggested that this approach should be maintained for future meetings. One group noted how useful the smaller group syndicated discussion had been for generating ideas and fresh thinking. Another group noted that discussions could be more specific, so that key questions can be adequately addressed. That group suggested that the next meeting could look at a single specific topic in more detail.

A few groups noted the need to broaden participation in the Istanbul Process: for it to involve more States, and more representatives of local civil society, and to engage more practitioners. One group argued: 'civil society has a key role to play in promoting religious tolerance,' and should be more involved in Geneva and New York discussions. One group suggested that inter-sessional regional preparatory meetings might allow for more voices to be fed into the process.

Some drew attention to the need 'for more genuine participation of women in debates around tolerance.' This would allow for more substantive discussions on the different experiences of men and women with regards to intolerance.

Some groups noted the importance of engaging private sector actors in future meetings, to allow for a more nuanced discussion on the role they can play, particularly with regards to hate speech and intolerance online.

RESPONDING TO HATE SPEECH

While the issue of how to deal with hate speech, and what restrictions are appropriate, has tended to dominate previous Istanbul Process meetings, the issue did not emerge until the very end of the final session in Singapore.

One group noted the 'need to recognise that there are perils in going in both directions on 16/18,' and asked 'how do we have tricky conversations without losing common ground, for example on hate speech?' They noted that the equal and non-discriminatory application of laws against hate speech is essential.

Another group decided to address (rather than answering the specified questions) 'one of the most contentious paragraphs of the resolution - on incitement to imminent violence.' They suggested that the resolution should attempt to develop an agreed definition of incitement. They asked whether soft laws criminalising hate speech could be developed at national or international level. They cited Singapore's law on religious harmony as a best practice in this regard, noting that it is used only as a last resort against hate speech. They said that 'people should feel safe enough to report hate crime they have suffered,' and that 'States should report on the number of hate crimes taking place and what they are doing to counter them (like in the UK).'

One civil society representative responded by noting that the Rabat Plan of Action provides a useful tool for identifying the fault-line between hate speech/incitement and freedom of expression. The Rabat Plan of Action offers a series of policy recommendations and is the result of 'one of the most extensive consultation processes the OHCHR has ever been involved in.' He suggested that it would be more constructive to build further on the Rabat Plan of Action, which is based squarely in

international human rights law, rather than reopening the 16/18 resolution. Another civil society participant expressed his view that 'the discussion over the threshold belongs in Geneva,' and noted that 'the real strength of the Istanbul Process is practical discussion, feeding back into Geneva.'

One participant noted the need to address and acknowledge differences on this issue, even among States within particular regions. He noted that some States still do not accept the Rabat Plan of Action, and called for greater clarity. The most important point, he said, was that 'whatever law is in place should be applied equally, universally and without discrimination.'

One state representative expressed concern that the issue of incitement could quickly become a theological discussion, and that the strength of the Singapore meeting had been the move towards a pragmatic approach - sharing good practice and experience.

HOW TO BETTER SHARE BEST PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES?

A few groups reflected on the importance of developing platforms or tools to better capture and share best practice, beyond the Istanbul Process meeting, including for those not in attendance.

One solution proposed was to have regional gatherings that would feed into the annual Istanbul Process meeting.

Another idea was to have an online 'clearing house' - or platform - of contacts, institutions and best practices in many languages. For example, the UN secretariat in Vienna has built such a platform to share model laws and points of contact on the issue of corruption: 'This has proved to be a useful and inexpensive exercise.'

INTER-SESSIONAL WORK

A few groups stressed the need for more work to be done between the annual Istanbul Process meetings. One group encouraged bilateral visits between meetings, and 'pairing up' to share experiences and lessons. They encouraged practitioners who had established contact in Singapore to continue their engagement inter-sessionally.

MONITORING

One group called for some sort of international body to monitor and respond to grievances, while another called for more States to report to the OHCHR under relevant Council resolutions. One group suggested that civil society should also be able to feed into that reporting process, and provide their experience and feedback on progress. Another suggested: 'the reporting process should be improved, with the Office providing a reporting template with specific questions, leading to more nuanced and rich responses than we have seen to-date.'

Closing remarks

Closing the session, Singapore's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva Ambassador Foo Kok Jwee said that he was glad that the sixth Istanbul Process meeting had achieved one of its primary objectives, which was to allow practitioners, government officials and civil society from all over the world to share their practical experiences and policies in combatting intolerance and promoting tolerance on the ground. He found the range of initiatives shared by the practitioners' including Bridge Builders (Argentina), Tell MAMA (UK), Shoulder to Shoulder (USA) - to be especially illuminating and that there were many similarities in approach even though they were implemented in different parts of the world. Ambassador Foo hoped that this meeting would serve as a starting point for further conversations and collaborations between the participants. Some of the participants could even form 'communities of practice' on this subject or more specific aspects of this issue. To this end, the organisers of this meeting would share the contact details of all participants to allow them to stay in touch and continue the fruitful dialogue.

The Council President, Ambassador Choi Kyonglim, followed by expressing gratitude to Singapore for the hard work organising the meeting. He welcomed the notable shift away from ideological debate, towards a practitioner-focused discussion, which allowed for the sharing of 'many useful, practical ideas.'

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The practitioner-oriented focus of the sixth meeting of the Istanbul Process in Singapore allowed for a pragmatic cross-regional exchange of views on what works best on the ground, and concrete policies and programmes for overcoming real-life obstacles to promoting religious tolerance and strengthening resilience.

Panellists and participants at the meeting welcomed the opportunity to learn about different national experiences and good practices. One participant particularly noted that 'in a world of religious violence, in a world of xenophobia, in a world with disturbing trends towards hatred towards minority groups, the work that Singapore has done, the work that the Istanbul Process does, is more and more important every day. An issue or a focus which I found perfectly useful, was the focus that Singapore placed on practical experiences and practical solutions.' A religious leader said he was 'returning home with [...] a lot of lessons learnt and energised to do more in the field of religious tolerance.'

There was general consensus that practitioners should continue to be involved in future Istanbul process meetings. Some participants were also keen to explore building communities-of-practice as a way to systematically document and share best practices. The meeting also helped socialise Resolution 16/18 and its action plan to practitioners who were not too familiar with the work the HRC has done on this important issue. This will enhance the relevance and impact of the HRC on the ground.

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> ...the focus that Singapore placed on practical experiences and practical solutions [was particularly useful]. Participants were not government officials, but practitioners, people on the ground working to foster greater tolerance among different groups.
>
> "

Dr Ivan Petrella, Secretary of Federal Integration and International Cooperation of the Ministry of Culture of Argentina

Annex I: Agenda

09h00
Opening Ceremony

Welcome Remarks
Ambassador-at-Large Ong Keng Yong
Executive Deputy Chairman, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

Opening Address by Guest of Honour
Dr. Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman
Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Mayor, South East District

Remarks by the President of the Human Rights Council
Ambassador Choi Kyonglim

10h30
Panel Discussion I

Cross-regional perspective of efforts to encourage the creation of collaborative networks to build mutual understanding, promote dialogue and inspire constructive action towards shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration and media education (16/18 OP 5a).

Panellists from Argentina, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Turkey, USA.

14h30
Panel Discussion II

Cross-regional perspective on: (i) promoting open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels to combat religious hatred, incitement and violence (16/18 OP 5h) , and (ii) speaking out against intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (16/18 OP 5e).

Panellists from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and international civil society.

Thursday 21st July 2016

09h00

**Visit to Harmony Centre at the An-Nahdhah Mosque and Community Walkabout
in Ang Mo Kio Town**

15h00

Syndicated Discussion Session: Future challenges, emerging trends and way forward

Participants broke into seven small groups to consider three key questions:
1. Emerging trends/developments at national/international level that would make it harder
to promote religious tolerance and social resilience?
2. Are there policies/programmes that can address them to prevent them from becoming
bigger problems?
3. How can practitioners and policy makers from across regions better share best prac-
tices, new ideas and exchange notes on combatting extremism and promoting religious tolerance going
forward?

Closing Remarks
Ambassador Foo Kok Jwee, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations
Office at Geneva