

UN Alliance of Civilizations

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) is an initiative that seeks to facilitate a platform where extremism is brought under control through international, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation.

The initiative was first proposed by the Prime Minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, at the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations in 2005. It was co-sponsored by the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

This article will further elaborate on the UNAOC within the context of the IAS Exam.

Overview of the UNAOC

The UN Alliance of Civilizations reason that fear, misunderstanding between different faiths and cultures have been increasing throughout the years. The heightened inability of groups to coexist has given fertile ground for exploitation by extremist groups around the world, which in itself manifests as terrorism.

To quell such manifestations of terrorism, political leaders believed that a common ground must be reached between ethnic and religious groups based on mutual respect for each other. Through this a comprehensible framework could be established between diverse groups of people around the world ultimately supporting international stability.

Keeping this in mind the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations initiative was proposed by the 59th United Nations General Assembly in 2005.

To fulfill the objective of the initiative, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan assembled a High-Level Group (HLG) consisting of 20 eminent persons drawn from policy making, academia, civil society, religious leadership, and the media. A full range of religions and civilizations were represented.

Structure of the United Nations Alliance of Civilization

The primary leadership of the UNAOC is the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations” who functions as political facilitator and lead spokesman. He/she consults directly with the Secretary-General of the UNGA.

In February 2013, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser assumed the post of High Representative, succeeding President Sampaio in the position. In January 2019, he was succeeded by Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain.

The offices of the UN Alliance of Civilisations are located in the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

Focus Areas of the UN Alliance of Civilizations

The focus areas of the UNAOC are as follows:

1. **Media:** Both offline and online media play a critical role in moulding public perception, narratives and attitudes, thereby holding the potential to bridge cultural divides. Thorough new-age media tools like blogs, social media platforms, UNAOC media projects focus on building critical media literacy skills required to process the volume of information without any mistakes in the process.
2. **Youth:** The young are critical agents of social change, development and technological innovation. Through education and training, the UNAOC empowers youths to become global agents for social change.
3. **Education:** The education program of the UNAOC helps in acquiring intercultural competencies which will foster sensitivity needed for cross-cultural dialogue overcoming stereotypes and intolerance. In addition its education program helps in preparing young people for an interdependent world.
4. **Migrations:** In a globalised world, borders are becoming porous, through rapidly evolving modes of transportation and communication. Such an environment facilitates migrations and this in itself presents a challenge as culture clash is inevitable. The UN Alliance of Civilisations takes steps to address such issues by fostering inclusive societies that respect human rights.

Relevant Questions for UNAOC

What are some of the programmes initiated by the UN Alliance of Civilizations?

Some of the UNAOC programmes are as follows:

- UNAOC Youth Solidarity Fund
- UNAOC Fellowship Programme
- UNAOC Young Peacebuilders

What is the latest focus area of the UNAOC?

High Representative Mr. Moratinos intends to propose adding “women as peace mediators” to the areas of focus of UNAOC. This will also help fulfill the additional objective of women empowerment.

