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Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

      The present report provides an overview of activities carried out by the main United Nations entities working in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/104. It covers a wide range of topics, including the recent focus of the main actors involved, namely the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Alliance of Civilizations, the continued work of United Nations entities on the promotion of interreligious dialogue through cooperation with faith-based organizations, and the important work carried out centred around indigenous cultures, as well as a rights-based approach to the issue.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/104, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace". It discusses the main activities that have been carried out by the United Nations system in support of the dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations since the adoption of the resolution.

2. As in the past, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) have played a leadership role in efforts to promote the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. This report shows how United Nations organizations have used the catalytic impact of culture to promote the United Nations development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals. Many United Nations entities tackled the issue of interfaith dialogue and its corresponding influence on youth, education, health, HIV/AIDS prevention and other challenges. As dialogues centred on the cultures of indigenous peoples also feature in the agendas of many United Nations organizations, this subject is also examined. The report concludes by focusing on the dialogue on cultures and faiths through the lens of a human rights approach.

3. The report is based on contributions from UNESCO, the Alliance of Civilizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (acting as the secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

II. The leading role of UNESCO in the implementation of the programme of action for a culture of peace and non-violence and the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures

4. The need to promote a lasting intercultural dialogue and identify the obstacles that hinder it (such as ignorance, indifference and prejudice), as well as to target special groups such as opinion makers, and particularly youth, becomes increasingly urgent. A more holistic view of interreligious dialogue — as an essential part of the broader intercultural dialogue, with a special link to human rights and dignity, ethics, and other social issues — is needed. UNESCO, through its multiple fields of competence — education, sciences, culture, communication and information — works towards implementing such an approach.

5. Since 2012, the long-standing engagement of UNESCO with intercultural dialogue has been reflected in its work on the programme of action for a culture of peace and non-violence, which provides a new framework for designing and testing innovative approaches and working methods so as to enhance the transformative powers of education, the sciences, culture, communication and information to create harmonious and inclusive knowledge societies in all the regions of the world. The strategy used to address this global concern in daily contexts as well as in policy

frameworks, and whose aim is to serve as an antidote to violence was organized under five thematic areas aligned with the following main axes of the work of UNESCO: (a) strengthening formal and non-formal education to achieve intercultural skills such as empathy, solidarity and hospitality reflecting the diversity of contemporary societies in a genuine and lasting dialogue; (b) fostering social cohesion and inclusion, pluralist and democratic participation and human rights, notably through the empowerment of women and youth; (c) harnessing the media and information and communications technologies (ICTs) to foster peace, non-violence, tolerance and intercultural dialogue; (d) promoting heritage and contemporary creativity as tools of resilience and harmonious interaction; and (e) reinforcing the role of education, the sciences, culture, communication and information in their capacity to create sustainable and inclusive knowledge societies in all regions of the world.[1]

6.   Among the key achievements was the support extended to member States, with a view to assessing national policies and resources in order to strengthen the promotion and integration of principles and values of peace and dialogue in formal and non-formal education. In this regard, mapping exercises were started or completed at different country levels. Regional consultations and campaigns were launched to fight violence in schools, notably through the open school programme in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Guatemala. Studies were undertaken and policy recommendations formulated on the situation of violence in schools in Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador, followed by Honduras and Panama. Youth remained the main target as key actors for peace, through capacity-building focusing on civic engagement and participation, notably in the context of the Arab Spring. The national youth strategy of Tunisia was strengthened through the creation of citizenship and human rights clubs, active in youth-led initiatives on participation in the democratic process. In Egypt, the focus was on the promotion of democracy and the fight against gender-based violence. In sub-Saharan Africa, the maintenance of peace before, during and after elections was a key activity. Capacity-building support was provided in Burundi, in preparation of the 2015 presidential elections, and in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as a follow-up to polls held in 2012. This also included strengthening of the role of media and ICTs as levers for intercultural dialogue, and training of media professionals in conflict-sensitive reporting and of community leaders in South Sudan and northern Uganda in the context of developing community radio programmes with content emphasizing reconciliation and peaceful settlement of disputes. In South-Eastern Europe, the focus was placed on the promotion of heritage and contemporary creativity, including cultural diplomacy, for reconciliation and peace. The exhibition entitled "Imagining the Balkans: identities and memory in the long nineteenth century" was developed in this framework.[2]

7.   Tapping its long-standing experience in promoting intercultural sensitivity and solidarity, with a view to fighting intolerance, stereotyping, discrimination and violence, UNESCO took an active part in the second World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue whose theme was "Living together peacefully in a diverse world" (Baku,

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[1] See the booklet entitled "UNESCO's Programme of Action: Culture of Peace and Non-Violence — A vision in action", in English- and French-language versions, and available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002177/217786e.pdf.

[2] See http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Venice/pdf/news/ leaflet_Imagining_the_Balkans.pdf.

29 May-1 June 2013). In this regard, UNESCO organized a workshop on building intercultural competences for the twenty-first century, which followed up on the expert meeting on building competences to develop policies and programmes for intercultural dialogue respectful of human rights, held at UNESCO headquarters in April 2013; and a new publication, entitled "Intercultural competences: conceptual and operational framework", was issued by UNESCO in 2013.[3] New guidelines and training tools designed to promote respect for human rights and cultural diversity through the acquisition of intercultural competences are under development in the context of this project, funded by the Government of Denmark.

8.   To promote mutual understanding through music, UNESCO and its partners mobilized to celebrate, for the second time, International Jazz Day, on 30 April, in Istanbul, in order to build on the power of the art of jazz to unite people across the world. It is noteworthy that, since the first celebration in Paris and New York in 2012, the Day has been greeted with huge enthusiasm in many parts of the world. In the same spirit, the International Day of Nowruz — an age-old celebration of rebirth, marking a moment when societies pause to strengthen the ties of respect and solidarity which bring together peoples of different cultures, religions and languages — was observed on 21 March 2013 in different parts of the world. Further, pursuant to the proclamation of the General Assembly in its resolution 57/249, various UNESCO partners celebrated, on 21 May 2013, the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, while recalling the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)[4] and the importance of intercultural dialogue in creating unity in diversity.

9.   New dialogue-based operational modalities and tools were developed with extrabudgetary resources, such as the Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue, funded by Saudi Arabia. Experts, youth and civil society activists, as well as academia, were mobilized through the holding of conferences, capacity-building workshops and awareness-raising campaigns designed to promote learning to live together. Achievements include the production of the "Writing peace" touring exhibition, which stimulated debates on the contribution of different civilizations to peace;[5] the "UNESCO global contest for mutual understanding: pathways to peace", which mobilized more than 1,340 youth from 56 countries; and the launch in the Arab States of the "Learning to live together media campaign", aimed at spreading messages of peace and dialogue, as well as the elaboration of tools and guidelines to assist member States in the revision of textbooks and curricula free from content reflecting gender, cultural and religious stereotypes. Dialogue and e-training platforms were also created to advance media information literacy and intercultural dialogue and to nurture South-South philosophical dialogue. To improve certified resources for promoting intercultural dialogue in selected universities in the Arab States, resources on intercultural dialogue were inventoried, with diploma programmes currently being developed, in collaboration with l'Agence universitaire de la Francophonie. To further strengthen the role and contribution of youth as actors and volunteers for

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[3] Available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002197/219768e.pdf.

[4] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-first Session, Paris, 15 October-3 November 2001*, vol. 7 and corrigendum, *Resolutions*, chap. V, resolution 25, annex I.

[5] The exhibition catalogue is available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002176/217691m.pdf.

dialogue and peace, a "Youth volunteering and dialogue" conference will be held from 3 to 5 December 2013 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

10. Furthermore, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force integrated initiative for countering terrorism funded a UNESCO project in Nigeria which provides support in the areas of conflict prevention, peace education and the deradicalization of youth through the acquisition of relevant skills for socioeconomic development, self-reliance and confidence. Sensitization meetings, contextual studies, a training module and a manual on "Promoting a culture of peace in Nigeria through intercultural dialogue and education" formed part of this endeavour.

11. UNESCO leads the inter-agency implementation of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, 2013-2022, as pursuant to the invitation of the General Assembly in its resolution 67/104. This role harks back to that of UNESCO during the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. In this regard, UNESCO has launched an international consultation with member States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other relevant United Nations organizations and partners, with a view to elaborating an action plan as an appropriate framework. The objective is to reaffirm the ideals of unity in diversity and the conviction that cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are mutually reinforcing and can be enhanced through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information. It is expected that the launching event for this Decade will be held in Astana at the end of August 2013.

12. The comparative advantage of UNESCO in the area of intercultural dialogue was highlighted through the organization of joint events with relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and partners such as the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Anna Lindh Foundation and the World Public Forum "Dialogue of Civilizations". In this regard, it is worth mentioning, inter alia, the fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions on the theme "Peace and harmony as a choice of humankind" (Astana, 30 and 31 May 2012); the tenth Summit of Heads of States in South-East Europe on "Religious, cultural and historical heritage as a foundation for more intensive cooperation among States" (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2 and 3 June 2012); the International Forum for Reflection on the theme "A culture of peace in West Africa: a necessity for economic development" (Abidjan, 5 and 6 June 2012); the high-level debate on "Sustainable peace for a sustainable future" (United Nations Headquarters, 21 September 2012); the tenth session of the World Public Forum "Dialogue of Civilizations" (Rhodes Forum) (3-8 October 2012); the High Panel on Peace and Dialogue among Cultures (UNESCO, Paris, 19 November 2012); and the Panafrican Forum on "Africa: sources and resources for a culture of peace" (Luanda, 26-28 March 2013).

13. Cooperation was also reinforced with other United Nations entities such as the Alliance of Civilizations, specifically on media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue (MILID) under the UNESCO-UNAOC MILID university network, in particular on the occasion of the fifth Global Forum of the Alliance. Further, academia in particular has mobilized with UNESCO chairs to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue. This process has been reinforced through the establishment of two new chairs in India and Kazakhstan which have been

approved in 2013. The Associated Schools Project Network (ASPNet), UNESCO institutes and Categories 1 and 2 Centres are actively engaged, for example, in South Sudan with the International Institute for Peace co-founded by UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker, and the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development in New Delhi.

III. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations: a more direct orientation towards prevention and reconciliation

14.   In March 2013, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, former President of the General Assembly, succeeded Jorge Sampaio, the former President of Portugal, as High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. During his tenure, Mr. Sampaio developed a functional framework for action, an initial agenda for activities and a network of stakeholders. Mr. Al-Nasser has pledged to build on these successes with a more direct orientation towards prevention and reconciliation.

15.   During 2012, various programmes were further developed and activities in the areas of education and youth (the fellowship programme, summer schools, PLURAL+ and the Media and Information Literacy project) expanded and secured recognition by the international community, as was also the case for the Global Expert Finder in the media field and multi-stakeholders initiatives: the Youth Solidarity Fund, the Intercultural Innovation Award programme and training sessions organized by Media and Migration Programmes. The Alliance of Civilizations has the support of many Member States and international organizations in its Group of Friends, which currently has 138 members. It boasts programming in the areas of media, youth, education and migration.

16.   The Alliance has continued to be a key platform, one that works actively with civil society, operates in partnership with a wide range of actors and focuses on project-based activities, while organizing its annual Global Forum.

Fifth Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum, Vienna, 27 and 28 February 2013

17.   The Vienna Global Forum, under the theme of Promotion of responsible leadership in dialogue and diversity, convened over 1,200 participants from over 100 countries. Heads of State, ministers, leaders of intergovernmental organizations, and representatives of the corporate sector, academia, philanthropic organizations, youth and media discussed how responsible leadership can make a difference in respect of the following three major issues: (a) promotion, protection and full enjoyment of the right to religious freedom in a context of religious pluralism; (b) media pluralism and diversity of media content and their contribution to fostering public debate, democracy and awareness of diverse opinions; and (c) shaping a new narrative for migration, integration and mobility in the global economy.

National and regional strategies

18.   Support to national and regional strategies retains its importance in the work of the Alliance of Civilizations as evidence of commitment to the values of the Alliance. In that regard, the Alliance needs to continue to develop cost-efficient means of tracking their progress.

19.   In the period under review, progress was made in a number of areas. New ideas for a second generation of national plans were developed and presented at the annual meeting of the focal points; the first action plans for South-Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean were evaluated, while their second versions were prepared; the first regional strategy for Latin America was discussed and endorsed among partners; the second regional consultation for Asia and the South Pacific was organized; and preparatory discussions on the framework of the African region consultations were held.

20.   The Alliance has also called upon groups of countries facing shared challenges to generate common actions in cooperation with civil society through the creation of regional strategies. They have continued to gain traction, as more Member States express interest in regional coordinating mechanisms, while regional multilateral organizations, such as the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, are increasingly taking the lead in their respective areas.

21.   Following a process initiated in Peru in 2012, several consultations were held with the Latin America group, with a view to reaching an agreement on and finalizing the text of the draft strategy. The final preparatory meeting was held in New York in February 2013.

22.   In November 2012, regional consultations for the Asia-Asia Pacific strategy were held in Shanghai, China, bringing together more than 150 participants, representing Governments, academia, corporations, non-governmental organizations and cultural organizations. The event was organized with the United Nations Association of China, in partnership with other regional civil society organizations.

Public awareness campaigns

23.   In the wake of the posting of the trailer for the film *Innocence of Muslims* on YouTube, on 14 September 2012, the Alliance of Civilizations launched a social media campaign on Twitter using the hashtag #Represent Yourself. The goal of the campaign was to provide a channel for conversation which could counteract efforts by extremists, and to draw attention to the presence of large numbers of peaceful protesters following the attacks on the United States Embassy in Libya. The Represent Yourself campaign reached 3.2 million people on Twitter and over 1,200 people on Facebook.

24.   In 2013, the "Do one thing for diversity and inclusion" campaign (the social media component of the United Nations World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, celebrated on 21 May), was organized. For 2013, 110 partners from 40 different countries joined the campaign. Partners included Sodexo, Deloitte, Television America Latina, the British Council, French Institute Alliance Française, Vivendi, the World Bank, Education First, Columbia University, Akili Dada, Amara and the Global Dialogue Foundation, among others.

Civil society recognition and capacity-building

25.   In 2012, the Alliance of Civilizations, in partnership with the MIT Educational Arcade and the Learning Games Network, launched the "Create UNAOC — apps/games for intercultural dialogue" challenge. Over 70 proposals from around the world responded to the call. Five winners and five honourable mentions were

selected by an international jury. With the support of the Alliance's outreach partners, the winning apps/games are now available for download. In addition, the initiative caught the attention of media outlets, facilitating further outreach of these apps/games, which take intercultural dialogue as their frame of reference.

26. Over 160 entrants from 63 countries around the world sent their videos to the PLURAL+ 2012 youth video festival on migration, diversity and social inclusion. Twenty-five videos were selected by the international jury and PLURAL+ partner organizations, and presented at the awards ceremony, held at the Paley Center for Media (December 2012). They have since been distributed, to a variety of platforms, throughout the world.

27. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the BMW Group launched the "BMW Group award for intercultural innovation, in support of the Alliance of Civilizations, under the auspices of the United Nations" (the intercultural innovation award) in 2011. Winners of the award become members of the "World Intercultural Facility for Innovation" (WIFI), a programme initiated by the Alliance in cooperation with the BMW Group, which helps winners become more efficient and expand the scope of their projects. Ten winners have already been supported, seven of whom were able to expand their operations considerably, thanks to the support provided. The total number of project beneficiaries had increased from 72,210 to 141,569 by the end of 2012 and projects were replicated in 49 cities and regions. The Alliance and the BMW Group have renewed their partnership and extended it through 2013.

Education on peace for youth

28. With grants provided by Brazil, Malta, the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Abdul Aziz Al-Babtain Foundation and two private companies — Mota-Engil and the André Jordan Group — the Alliance organized two summer schools in 2012. One summer school, entitled "Bridging hearts, opening minds, and doing things together", was held in Coimbra, Portugal, in August 2012. As in previous years, it was a multi-stakeholder initiative in partnership with the League of Arab States, the University of Coimbra and the Aga Khan Development Network. A total of 135 youth, representing 69 countries, explored themes such as religion and politics, conflict prevention and resolution, facilitating dialogue, and media and information literacy. From 3 to 7 September 2012, a special "Guido de Marco UNAOC summer school" was held in Valletta, organized in partnership with the University of Malta and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies. It brought together 35 youths from the region and focused on "Building peace around the Mediterranean". The course was designed to foster a process of mutual learning, with a practical focus on youth work and conflict transformation.

Youth Solidarity Fund

29. In January 2013, with funding provided by the Governments of Australia, Finland and Spain, the third edition of the Youth Solidarity Fund was launched. Through the Fund, the Alliance provides technical support to youth-led organizations and offers awards for youth projects that contribute to fostering mutual respect, understanding and long-term positive relationships among peoples of different cultures and religions. The 2013 call for applications covered 67 developing countries of the Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Middle East and North Africa

(MENA) regions. A total 581 applications were received from youth organizations and evaluated by the Alliance and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), in consultation with representatives of six youth organizations and a representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Migration-media joint training events

30.   In January 2013, in Paris, the UNAOC Media and Migration Programmes, in partnership with the Global Editor's Network and with the support of the Gulbenkian Foundation, organized a high-level seminar convening 35 editors-in-chief, journalists, and media and migration experts from Europe and the Mediterranean (27 countries were represented) to discuss challenges, best practices and opportunities in respect of media coverage of migration. The seminar led to the elaboration of 17 recommendations for media, which were then disseminated internationally. In May 2013, an edition in Switzerland of the above-mentioned seminar was organized in Bern to tackle similar issues at the national level.

31.   The Alliance facilitates studies on how the media covers cross-culturally sensitive issues presented in today's news. Featuring innovative data visualizations (data presented through state-of-the-art "infographics"), the results of the studies shed light on media practices and coverage of a given issue. In partnership with the European Journalism Centre and five academic institutions (King's University College, Deutsche Welle Akadamie, the Missouri School of Journalism, Christelijke Hogeschool Ede, and l'Institut national de l'audiovisuel), and funded by the Open Society Foundation, the Alliance launched a data journalism project whose focus of study was how the media covers migration. The researchers analysed the coverage of migration in the context of national elections and presented their quantitative findings at the Fifth Global Forum in Vienna.

Media training events on digital tools for news-gathering and reporting across cultures

32.   During the reporting period, the Alliance, in partnership with Google and the World Bank Institute, developed a series of media training sessions under the rubric entitled "Digital tools for news-gathering and reporting across cultures". The training teaches journalists how to communicate with their audience appropriately through social media, and how to develop strategies to improve their online information gathering and processing skills. After a pilot in Tunis, in November 2012, a major training session was organized at the Jordan Media Institute in Amman in April 2013.

Fellowship programme

33.   In the fourth quarter of 2012, the Alliance organized two exchange sessions for 24 fellows. The session for the Middle East and North Africa was held in Egypt, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates, for a period of two weeks, and included the visit of 40 organizations. Twelve fellows from the West participated. Subsequently, 12 fellows from the Arab world travelled to the United States of America and Europe (Belgium, France and Germany). During June 2013, a two-week programme was organized for 12 fellows from several Arab countries who visited United States and European organizations.

34.   The Alliance of Civilizations created a network of fellowship programme alumni which, at the end of 2012, had 85 participants. It facilitates online exchanges through a dedicated website, blogs and social media. The alumni meeting held in Baku in May 2013 agreed on the creation of a loose but vibrant network of committed emerging leaders.

Interreligious dialogue

35.   From 7 to 21 April 2013, an Alliance representative participated in a conference of Syrian religious leaders, convened to explore possibilities for establishing an interreligious/interfaith council in the Syrian Arab Republic, which could, following the current conflict, act to limit violence between groups. The event was organized by the Alliance partner Religions for Peace in Istanbul.

36.   In February 2013, the Alliance discussed areas for cooperation with the leadership of the newly inaugurated King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, headquartered in Vienna.

IV.   Promoting interreligious dialogue through cooperation with faith-based organizations

37.   The United Nations system promotes interreligious dialogue by engaging with faith-based organizations and involving them in its policy and advocacy activities, as acknowledged by the General Assembly in paragraph 14 of its resolution 67/104. Such activities bring together peoples of different faiths to enable them to find solutions to common issues, such as those related to maternal health, childcare and HIV/AIDS. At United Nations Headquarters, UNFPA chairs the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for the Millennium Development Goals, convening policy consultations with academia, faith-based organizations and United Nations entities centred around common developmental challenges.

A.   United Nations Population Fund

38.   Globally, UNFPA engages members of its 500-strong Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development in its 20-year review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development[6] and consultative efforts centred around the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. UNFPA partners with the United Nations System Staff College in Turin, Italy, to provide training for United Nations managers centred around the nexus of faith and development and humanitarian efforts; and collaborates in a joint learning initiative on faith and local communities, which convenes international faith-based organizations and their counterparts, to engage, within the context of critical evidence on faith-and-development interventions. Two milestone reports on interventions by faith-based organizations, in the areas of maternal health and HIV/AIDS, and on building resilience in humanitarian intervention, have thus far been produced.

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[6] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

39.   At the field level, UNFPA-Burkina Faso and UNFPA-Guinea collaborate with religious and customary leaders, to combat female genital mutilation, promote family planning, eliminate gender-based violence, advocate against child marriage and promote maternal health. Joint public statements were made announcing the abandonment of excision in 25 villages in Burkina Faso and in 92 culturally diverse communities in Guinea. In Burkina Faso, a national coalition combating violence against women and girls was formed, which elaborated guides for customary and religious leaders, and successful efforts were undertaken to provide education on family planning.

40.   UNFPA-Chad is engaged in a policy dialogue with three religious groups (Muslims, Catholic and evangelicals) to build consensus on sensitive issues, such as family planning, early marriage and gender-based violence, with the historic creation of a common agreement and a multi-stakeholder platform for information and advocacy purposes.

41.   UNFPA-Côte d'Ivoire and the Ministry of Solidarity, Family, Women and Children collaborated with the Alliance of Religious Leaders against HIV (ARSIP) on community outreach activities centred around prevention of gender-based violence and HIV, including the development of a manual on gender, human rights and reproductive health. UNFPA works with the United Nations country team to promote inter-ethnic dialogue for national reconciliation, particularly in the west of the country, whose communities have been most affected by severe crisis. UNFPA applies women's empowerment and male engagement strategies to promote collaboration among different ethnic groups, in particular multi-ethnic women's groups.

42.   In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the intercultural efforts of UNFPA include involving religious leaders in a national multisectoral family planning coalition and supporting health facilities managed by faith-based organizations, which constitute a major part of the health system.

43.   UNFPA-Ethiopia continues to work through the Developmental Bible manual elaborated with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church since 2009. Using the manual, which was printed and disseminated to 204 churches, nine theological colleges and clergy training centres in six regions, more than 2,000 clergy were trained on how to mainstream the Developmental Bible in their daily teachings. Adaptation of the manual for daily teachings within youth-friendly Sunday schools is ongoing. Two national and eight regional dialogue forums conducted with 1,680 members of the clergy, pastors and imams from six religious denominations, enabled the nurturing of strong cooperation and a sharing of best practices on peacebuilding, maternal, child and adolescent health, and HIV/AIDS.

44.   UNFPA-Sierra Leone partnered with senior Christian and Muslim leaders, who agreed to be champions for reproductive health advocacy, through an interreligious organization promoting family planning and including contraception.

45.   In the Asia-Pacific region, UNFPA partners with World Vision to produce a mapping of faith-based efforts aimed at combating violence against women and supporting the implementation of activities in this field in humanitarian settings.

46.   UNFPA-Afghanistan collaborates closely with the Ministries of Public Health and Haj and Religious Affairs, strengthening strategic alliances and partnerships designed to improve access to and utilization of family planning and advocate against early marriage. Two national and regional consultations were undertaken in

2012 with the participation of Islamic religious leaders and scholars, which concluded that family planning is in line with Islamic principles.

47. UNFPA-Georgia is partnering with the Theological Academy at the Patriarchate to prepare national consultations on gender equality, prevention of gender-based violence and reproductive health and rights. Cooperation with Radio Iveria at the Patriarchate is ongoing, with 16 radio programmes providing information on related issues.

48. UNFPA-Guyana convened a faith leaders forum (including the Bishop of the Catholic Church, Hindus, Muslims, Bahai and Rastafarians). The outcome was a declaration that urged that every effort be made to ensure that all Guyanese have access to sexual and reproductive health services and the capacity to make choices regarding their lives, including their sexual and reproductive rights, and are protected from gender-based violence.

49. UNFPA-Morocco, with the Rabita Mohammedia of Ulemas, organized the first training workshop on sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and gender equality with adolescents from traditional Islamic schools. Boys also participated in the workshop. All of the students and teachers received a jointly developed toolkit entitled "Introducing gender equality, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health in religious discourse".

50. UNFPA-Sudan and the Ministry of Religious Affairs celebrated the Prophet's birthday along with International Women's Day. Key religious leaders and Government representatives combined the religious messages with an affirmation of the role of women in Islam and the importance of ending violence against women and girls. This followed significant United Nations joint programming work, including faith-based organizations at both national and local levels, centred around issues of female genital mutilation, early marriage and maternal health.

51. UNFPA urges the United Nations system-wide collaboration needed to draw lessons from the existing social mobilization tools and ongoing engagement among faith-based organizations. More documentation is needed to emphasize the functionality and strategic use of assets of faith-based organizations. Consistent follow-up and capacity-building is needed both within the United Nations system so as to strengthen networks among regional and international faith-based organization development partners, and with national interfaith partners.

B. Local United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

52. UNAIDS has strengthened the engagement of faith-based organizations in the AIDS response, building on partnerships established in recent years among UNAIDS, networks of faith-based organizations and religious leaders, government ministries, people living with HIV and key populations. At the country level, UNAIDS has piloted a tool for generating dialogue among networks of faith-based organizations, religious leaders and people living with HIV. The initiative brings UNAIDS together with its partners, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS and INERELA+, a network of religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS. This collaboration utilizes data derived from the HIV Stigma Index, which measures and documents stigma faced by people living with HIV.

53.   In Malawi, UNAIDS convened a forum of religious leaders and people living with HIV to discuss HIV-related stigma and discrimination and to develop a framework outlining future actions for increasing communication and understanding between faith groups and people living with HIV. Similarly, in Myanmar, a group of religious leaders, people living with HIV and representatives from networks of key populations initiated a process that would enable religious leaders and people living with HIV to strengthen together the national AIDS response. The Myanmar Positive Group, the Myanmar Interfaith Network on AIDS, and the UNAIDS country office organized the first face-to-face meeting with a balanced representation of people living with HIV and religious leaders from the country's four main faith traditions.

54.   UNAIDS is supporting similar collaborative initiatives in several countries aimed at addressing stigma and discrimination by engaging faith-based communities and religious leaders. In Gabon, education for faith-based communities on stigma and discrimination is under way, drawing from the findings of the Stigma Index. In Cameroon, UNAIDS is helping to map faith-based organizations with the development of a plan for partnerships which will advance the national HIV response.

55.   In Morocco, UNAIDS is partnering with the aforementioned Rabita Mohammedia of Ulemas, a council of religious scholars, to implement the national strategy on human rights and AIDS. UNAIDS in Djibouti is working with the National AIDS Commission to integrate faith-based organizations into efforts to eliminate new HIV infections among children and keep their mothers alive.

56.   In Latin America, UNAIDS has worked to include faith-based organizations in the development of national HIV strategic plans, particularly in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, where HIV-related stigma and discrimination are creating barriers to the implementation of the AIDS response. In Jamaica, UNAIDS partnered with the United Theological College of the West Indies to broker a structured partnership between faith-based organizations and key stakeholders in the AIDS response, including the National AIDS Programme.

57.   In Indonesia, UNAIDS supported an interfaith dialogue on AIDS with the National AIDS Commission, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, aimed at educating the wider community about HIV and involving religious leaders strategically in encouraging communities to move away from behaviour associated with risk, eliminate stigma and discrimination and ensure access for everyone to HIV services.

58.   Dialogue between faith communities and civil society brings to the fore some highly sensitive issues, such as sexual orientation, drug use, sex work and human rights, and may be contentious as a result. UNAIDS, as a neutral broker and global advocate, can create a positive entry point for dialogue on these delicate issues. Since it is important to document the crucial lessons imparted by these dialogues, UNAIDS has partnered with UNFPA and a number of faith-based partners and academics to form the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities. UNAIDS and UNFPA also co-chaired a learning hub on HIV and maternal health, which explored the broad experience of faith communities. Its effects will contribute to future partnership work, action and investment in this important area of the global AIDS response.

C. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

59. As part of its outreach efforts, FAO is discussing with faith-based organizations, in particular the International Congregations of Religious (ICR) and Religions for Peace, to explore possible ways in which their presence and outreach in the developing world might support the mission and goals of FAO, for example, through advocacy and awareness-raising activities on the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of land, fisheries and forests. FAO has also signed a global memorandum of understanding with World Vision International which seeks to strengthen collaboration between the two organizations, which will draw upon the experience of FAO in emergencies and development programmes and the strengths of World Vision International in humanitarian assistance and food aid.

60. In the framework of its best practices contest, FAO is piloting a new competition for grants, which has been conceived to identify, disseminate and replicate successful experiences of projects involving cooperation between FAO and civil society organizations over the past five years. This competition is open to faith-based and indigenous peoples' organizations, with a view to promoting the recuperation of traditional crops and agricultural practices.

V. Promoting dialogue centred around indigenous cultures

61. The indigenous dimension is a cross-cutting focus of the work carried out by the United Nations system to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, whose secretariat is part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, helps to keep these issues in the agenda and promote their visibility. Several United Nations organizations have also developed specific policies designed to address the needs of indigenous populations, within the context of respect for their cultures and efforts to promote them as an engine for development.

A. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

62. Culture is one of the six mandated focuses of work of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Further, the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005-2014), proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 59/174 is underpinned, inter alia, by the objective of redefining development policies in such a way as to ensure that they stem from a vision of equity and that they are culturally appropriate, including through respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity of indigenous peoples.

63. In line with its mandate, and in view of the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,[7] the Permanent Forum has reaffirmed in its recommendations that culture is a defining element of indigenous peoples' identity, since it encompasses their traditional knowledge and the spiritual relationship with their natural environment. Cultural practices and traditional values and beliefs — as long as they are in line with human rights principles — can play a critical role in advancing equality, including gender equality.

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[7] General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.

64. The Permanent Forum has emphasized the role of indigenous women as the custodians of indigenous peoples' cultural expression and identity, as well as of sacred knowledge and power. It has also recognized indigenous women's instrumental role as educators, healers and specialists.

65. The Permanent Forum has underlined the urgent need for States to develop intercultural public policies so as to enable the implementation of the United Nations Declaration and to strengthen, in an equitable manner, local cultures as a means of eliminating all forms of discrimination and segregation, which have deepened historic inequalities. Therefore, the Permanent Forum has advocated for incorporating an indigenous understanding of health and well-being in policies and guidelines on health at the national and international levels, while recommending that a rights-based approach to health be fostered. The Permanent Forum has also focused continuously on indigenous peoples' rights and their access to intercultural and multilingual education.

66. At its twelfth session in 2013, the Permanent Forum, in line with its previous recommendations affirming the principle of development with culture and identity,[8] recognized culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, together with economic viability, social inclusion and environmental balance, in order to reflect the complexity of indigenous peoples' societies and to encompass the cultural and spiritual traditions of humanity.[9]

67. On 9 August 2012, the commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, with the theme "Indigenous media, empowering indigenous voices", highlighted the enabling role of the media in raising awareness and educating people on the rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration. The media can also enhance the capacity of indigenous peoples to realize the right of self-determination, and of free, prior and informed consent, and can support indigenous peoples' models of development that are in accordance with their priorities, cultures and values. The Day also centred on the role of indigenous media in creating a space for interchange and dialogue between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples, and between indigenous peoples and governments, for the purpose of achieving mutual respect and understanding within national societies, with a view to promoting intercultural education and overcoming stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes.

68. The commemoration, on 9 August 2013, of the Day, having as its theme "Indigenous peoples building alliances: honouring treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements", emphasized the partnership based on mutual recognition, good faith, respect and consent between States and indigenous peoples needed in order for them to live in peace and establish constructive relationships. The discussions also focused on specific good political practices reflecting a vision of a world where different sovereign nations and peoples live together on the same land in friendship, cooperation and peace. The right of self-determination exercised

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[8] This principle refers to a process that supports development initiatives and organizational systems unique to indigenous peoples in order to improve their living conditions through their own leadership and in a manner consistent with each community's specific sociocultural situation and vision. See *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 09.VI.13), p. 64.

[9] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2013, Supplement No. 23* (E/2013/43), chap. I, sect. B, para. 21.

by these nations or peoples provides the framework that allows them to decide upon their own means of development, underpinned by the holistic visions of harmony among human beings, and between them and nature. Interculturality and environmental sustainability play a central role in enhancing these holistic visions, which also encompass the concept of the spiritual, cultural and historic relationship between indigenous peoples and their lands and natural resources. The International Day further underlined the importance of strengthening partnerships and building alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples directed towards the achievement of a life based on dignity and social justice.

69.   States and the United Nations system are called upon to assist in the realization of the aspirations of indigenous peoples, for example, by providing support to alternative views of development, such as is embodied in the term *buen vivir* (living well), which has emerged in the Andean countries of South America. The innovative aspect of *buen vivir* lies in its introduction of the concept of interculturality, based on which different cultures interact in dialogue and in practice for the promotion of an alternative form of development, where the objectives of economic growth make way for considerations of well-being of the individual in the social context of a community and in a unique environmental situation.

B.   Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

70.   FAO has recognized the critical role that indigenous and tribal peoples' organizations play in the fight against hunger, given their technical expertise, their proximity to and representation of the hungry and poor, and their increasing presence in the field. FAO appeals to their knowledge and capacity on a variety of issues related to food security. With the aim of maintaining a horizontal, two-way flow of information between FAO and its partners, a web portal (http://www.fao.org/partnerships/civil-society/en/) was launched in January 2013, which provides for direct interaction and exchange with civil society organizations at large.

71.   FAO has also engaged in specific activities designed to mark international celebrations, such as the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, on 9 August 2013, to which it submitted a written message by its Director-General. An event entitled ''The International Year of Family Farming and the Voluntary Guidelines on the governance of tenure: opportunities for indigenous people's engagement'' was organized during the twelfth session of the Permanent Forum, for the purpose of addressing the linkages between the governance of tenure vis-à-vis indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems and traditional agricultural practices, and to sensitize the audience in respect of the Voluntary Guidelines developed by FAO in this field (see para. 59), which are of great relevance for indigenous peoples. An event was also organized to launch a new FAO publication entitled *Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems and Well-being: Interventions and Policies for Healthy Communities*,[10] which is the result of 10 years of research on community health promotion interventions based on local and traditional food systems.

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[10] Harriet V. Kuhnlein and others, *Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems and Well-being: Interventions and Policies for Healthy Communities* (Rome, FAO, 2013).

C. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

72.   UNEP promotes the dialogue among cultures on environment-related issues through various activities, including through its engagement as the convener of the Environment and Climate Change thematic window under the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F). Its programmes underline the importance of "knowledge dialogues" between different stakeholders in a given area. For example, the management of the Yasuni Biosphere Reserve of Ecuador, supported by UNEP, promoted a local management committee through which 120 indigenous groups were able to find a common vehicle for communicating their concerns at the national level and to ultimately influence policymaking.[11]

73.   During the World Environment Day 2013 (5 June), under the theme "Think. Eat. Save", special emphasis was given to the traditions and customs of various indigenous communities regarding food preservation as a means of reducing waste. In this context, UNEP conducted an official visit with members of the international media to a traditional herder family in Mongolia to witness the practice of such techniques.[12]

74.   As a partner in the Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) Consortium, UNEP has developed an interactive registry for such areas worldwide. The objective of this activity is to build a knowledge base for ICCAs which increases the scope of information on these special areas needed to document their value and to understand their impacts. This should increase the visibility of local communities and eventually lead to their stronger participation in policy discussions about biodiversity and conservation. A toolkit for the management of conservation areas by indigenous communities has also been released.[13]

75.   UNEP continues to support, through its collaborating centre GRID-Arendal, based in Norway, partnerships such as the Nomadic Herders Project, which aims at assessing the impacts of land use and climate change on reindeer and yak herders and on their resilience and adaptation opportunities.[14] Another UNEP-GRID-Arendal project, entitled "Many strong voices", links people in the Arctic and small island developing States, with a view to moulding their resilience with respect to climate change, including through education and cultural activities with children.

76.   These activities underline the importance of intercultural dialogue in regard to adaptation to and mitigation of global environmental changes. In general, involving local stakeholders directly does not only boost the spread of information on environmental issues but also fosters mutual understanding and respect for other cultures. Additionally, it enables the sharing of experiences and technologies which can ultimately lead to improved resilience and decreased vulnerability. Establishing clear-cut responsibilities and rules allowing for the participation of these communities in such efforts has proved to be a prerequisite for effectively unlocking their potential.

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[11] See http://www.wiki.mdgfund.net/Managing_Ecuador%E2%80%99s_Yasun%C3%AD_ Biosphere_Reserve.

[12] See www.unep.org/wed and www.thinkeatsave.org.

[13] C. Corrigan and T. Hay-Edie, "A toolkit to support conservation by indigenous peoples and local communities: building capacity and sharing knowledge on indigenous peoples' and community conserved territories and areas (ICCAs)" (Cambridge, United Kingdom, UNEP-WCMC, 2013). Available from www.unep.org/dewa/portals/67/pdf/ICCA_toolkit.pdf.

[14] See www.nomadicherders.org.

77. UNEP recognizes indigenous peoples' rights, vulnerabilities and contributions to caring for the environment and acknowledges the importance of their participation in the planning and implementation of development processes and the valuable contributions to environmental assessments and sustainable ecosystem management that can be provided by the holders of traditional knowledge. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to UNEP at the Forum's fifth session in 2006[15] and a process of external and internal discussions within the organization, UNEP endorsed its Indigenous Peoples' Policy Guidance in November 2012, which will support the inclusion of indigenous issues in the UNEP programme of work effectively.

78. In February 2013, the Tunza International Youth Conference, hosted by UNEP, provided a platform for 300 youth from 75 countries to learn and exchange information on environmental and societal issues, with a special focus on "Health and the environment", allowing for dialogue among youth from different cultural backgrounds on their role in working towards responding to environmental trends.

D. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

79. In its resolution 18/8, of 29 September 2011, the Human Rights Council requested the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to prepare a study on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples. This study (A/HRC/21/53), issued on 16 August 2012, outlines international and regional standards on indigenous peoples' rights to language and culture, describes the relationship between indigenous cultures and languages and their self-determination and rights to their lands, territories and resources, and analyses challenges faced in the promotion and protection of indigenous languages and cultural rights.

VI. A rights-based approach to intercultural and interreligious dialogue

80. A major development in the rights-based approach to intercultural and interreligious dialogue has been the launch in October 2012 of the Rabat plan of action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. The Plan of Action recommends, inter alia, that to tackle the root causes of intolerance, a much broader set of policy measures is necessary, for example, in the areas of intercultural dialogue — reciprocal knowledge and interaction — or education for pluralism and diversity, as well as policies empowering minorities and indigenous people to exercise their right to freedom of expression (para. 25 of the plan of action).

81. Moreover, the plan of action provides that States should promote intercultural understanding, including on gender sensitivity, and assume both the responsibility for building a culture of peace and the duty of putting an end to impunity. Furthermore, States should promote and provide teacher training on human rights values and principles by introducing or strengthening intercultural understanding as

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[15] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 23* (E/2006/43), chap. I.B, para. 15.

part of the school curriculum for pupils of all ages. Last, non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions are called upon to create and support mechanisms and dialogues designed to foster intercultural and interreligious understanding and learning.

82. Following the establishment of a United Nations network on racial discrimination and the protection of minorities, coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in March 2013, the Secretary-General endorsed a Guidance Note on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. It contains 19 recommendations for the United Nations system on how to address racial discrimination and protection of minorities in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[16] the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities[17] and other key standards, and in this regard, draws from effective practices. The Guidance Note sets out guiding principles and a framework for coherent United Nations action at Headquarters and in the field, including through enhanced intercultural, inter-ethnic and interreligious dialogue. An action plan to support the implementation of the Guidance Note is being developed.

83. The 2013 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Fellowship Programme for People of African Descent was held from 15 April to 3 May 2013. This is the third year of operation of the Fellowship Programme which provides the fellows with a learning opportunity to deepen their understanding of the United Nations human rights system, while focusing on issues of particular relevance to people of African descent. This year, seven fellows, from Australia, Costa Rica, France, Panama, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, participated in the three-week-long Fellowship Programme. The fellows also participated in the twelfth session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (Geneva, 22-26 April 2013).

84. As far as human rights special procedures are concerned, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on freedom of religion or belief has participated in a wide range of events relevant to the cultural and religious dimensions of human rights protection, including those related to the launch of the Rabat plan of action; the fifth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, where he presented recommendations on measures to be taken to protect and promote the rights of minorities; the fifth Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations and the Dialogue on Protection Challenges of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, devoted to the theme "Faith and protection", held in Geneva in December 2012.

85. The Special Rapporteur held a seminar on gender equality and freedom of religion or belief on 17 and 18 January 2013, in collaboration with the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice. The seminar was devoted to exploring the possibilities for enhanced cooperation in respect of the special procedures mandates associated with these two issues.

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[16] General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).
[17] General Assembly resolution 47/135, annex.

VII. Conclusion

86. **This report demonstrates the commitment of a large number of United Nations entities to taking fully into account the *cultural* dimension, in the broad sense of the word, in their activities and policies, through a diversity of means. The promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue is linked to other important aspects of the work of the United Nations, such as the rapprochement of cultures, peaceful coexistence, human rights and development. It should therefore be recognized in all efforts directed towards enhancing the work of the Organization**.

87. **Interreligious and intercultural dialogue is one dimension of a broader *problematique* which touches on the work of many United Nations system entities. The proclamation by the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/104, of the period 2013-2022 as the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures provides a framework for these interconnected activities. Further, given the close connection between intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the programme for a culture of peace, which are considered under the same agenda item, the Assembly may wish to streamline reporting requirements. A single report could therefore be prepared in future that fully recognizes the interconnectedness of these issues, while building on their multiple dimensions.**

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