

United Nations Academic Impact Newsletter

Third issue: 20 June 2011



Dear UNAI Friends,

Last Saturday 18 June marked the seventh month since our initiative was launched. Our global partnership keeps growing: as of today, 634 institutions in 101 countries have become part of UNAI. The latest countries to have joined are Malta, Iceland and Kazakhstan.

Our hubs are keeping busy! Following the launch of the Sustainability Hub portal during the Black Sea University Network Conference in March, the Global Citizenship Hub (Lehigh University) launched its portal in May. At the invitation of Handong Global University (HGU), the Hub for Capacity-building in Higher Education Systems, UNAI hubs will be able to meet this August, during a Conference organized in Seoul by HGU.

In terms of overall coordination, a UNAI web banner has been created for the hubs, and we are also working on developing a template that will allow for the description of all of the initiatives members will undertake as part of their commitment to UNAI.

Read on to discover the creative initiatives already under way by UNAI members around the globe and what UNAI in Action really means. And please make sure to continue sending us input and suggestions at academicimpact@un.org

Ramu Damodaran

Nathalie Leroy, Vivian Bernstein, Lilli Schindler, Vikas Sharma

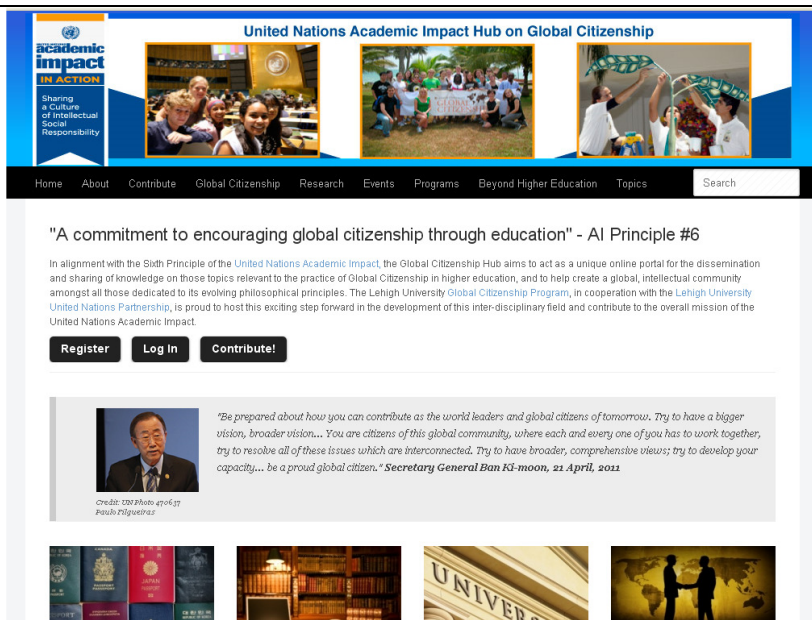
UNAI Hubs

Sustainability Hub

www.unai-sustainability.org

Global Citizenship Hub

<http://unai-globalcitizenship.org/>



"Universities play a crucial role in producing knowledge and promoting universal values. In our current era of global challenge and change, we need you more than ever. Transformations that we might not have imagined in our lifetime are happening in the blink of an eye... Everywhere, new challenges have emerged -- climate change, pandemic disease, food and energy shortages -- that underscore our mutual interdependence."

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 17 June 2011

UNAI EVENT AT UNHQ

Poor Poverty

A virtual panel discussion was organized on 15 June to discuss the book "Poor Poverty: The Impoverishment of Analysis, Measurement and Policies", edited by Assistant-Secretary-General Jomo Kwame Sundaram and Anis Chowdhury, both from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).



The two co-editors in New York were joined via video-conference by Professor Julian May, School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal and South African Research Chair in Applied Poverty Reduction Assessment. Students from the **University of KwaZulu-Natal, the UNAI's hub on addressing poverty**, were also in attendance. Watch the archived webcast of the event at: <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2011/06/book-launch-poor-poverty-the-impoverishment-of-analysis-measurement-and-policies-to-be-confirmed.html>

EVENTS and NEWS FROM UNAI MEMBERS



Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), the "Education Opportunity for All" Hub, reported an online initiative. In May, students from the School of Science and Engineering (SSE) co-piloted a distance-learning interactive science education project. The students tutored fifty middle school children on the importance of drinking clean water and how to create a biosand filter to purify water. The children were then asked to construct biosand filters on their own and to document their experiences in video format. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyyVvbUOUaM>

The Second International Conference of Alternative Perspectives in the Humanities and the Social Sciences will be held in San Jose, Costa Rica. It will be held at the Escazu Campus of the International University of Humanities and Social Sciences.

<http://www.iapss.org/Conference.html>

Second International Conference of Alternative Perspectives in the Humanities and the Social Sciences:

Culture: Heritage and Legacy

San Jose, Costa Rica (August 6-8, 2011)



University of Calcutta

The University of Calcutta, UNAI Hub for Peace and Conflict

Resolution is organizing a Student Conference scheduled for 18 August 2011 on the topic of 'Globalisation and development: Current Trends'. Indian Students are invited to submit paper abstracts by 7 July. Additional information can be obtained from ifps@caluniv.ac.in

Unlearning Intolerance – And Tolerance Too

Michele M. Vella

UNAI Principle 10 commits to inter-cultural dialogue, understanding and the unlearning of intolerance through education. What does it mean to unlearn intolerance? Is intolerance, tolerance, inside out? If so, is tolerance enough? How do UNAI member institutions engage Principle 10 and strive towards greater multicultural competence?

On May 5th, Under-Secretary-General Kiyo Akasaka, Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Former President of India R. Venkataraman's daughter Lakshmi Venkatesan, a distinguished panel of inter-generational Indian literary scholars, and UNAI representatives participated in the 8th Department of Public Information Symposium Series "Unlearning Intolerance" at UN Headquarters. Throughout the discussion, the audience was reminded of the symbiotic relationship between academics and member states - academics informing the political landscape, the political landscape driving scholarship.

Symposium moderator, filmmaker Muriel Peters, opened up the discussion with a poignant reflection question for panelists: "Do you have a personal incident of intolerance that you would like to describe to the audience?" Most panelists answered the question through a meditation on how their artistic form strives towards equity and captures lived inconvenient truths with words, language, and imagination. "Literature promotes a creative intolerance towards injustice and oppression...the dreaming of a new society where human beings can live as human beings," said poet and critic Dr. K. Satchidanandan.

Poet, fiction writer, and translator Meena Kandasamy spoke of literature as transformative for both the individual writer and the community she or he represents. Writing against the caste system, female oppression, and linguistic nationalism, Kandasamy's writing is a reaction to the oppression and intolerance codified in texts of dominant/majority groupings. As a writer, she celebrates the use of language without compromise, the questioning of pathologies justified in the name of culture, the ability to generate dialogue as a foundation for social mobilization, and the power of words to "make the revolution irresistible."

With excerpts from texts of international religionists and philosophers, author, government representative, and academic Dr. Aziz Hajini noted that cultures converge in their reverence for the word as a vehicle for enlightenment. If literature is a reflection of the divine, then "divinity and intolerance can never go together" said Hajini.



The final panelist, professor and writer Dr. Bharati Mukherjee directly responded to the opening question of moderator Peters describing how painful memories and experiences of discrimination are to the individual life. As an immigrant woman with intersecting identities, Mukherjee recalled how personal experiences of discrimination inspired her writing of the essay "An Invisible Woman" (1981). Writing about experiences of intolerance, occasions the reader to transcend dichotomous thinking, blurring the lines and neat categorization of victim and victimizer in an intolerant/oppressive society. Mukherjee affirmed that literature jumpstarts the dialogue of "peace through provocation."

Is tolerance merely enough? Does UNAI Principle 10 transcend the realm of tolerance and ask its members to enter into the uncomfortable yet honest territory of personal biases and stereotypes, the ingredients creating intolerant systems? After the symposium, I started to see literature almost as the mirror that an individual, a reader, a society holds up to itself. The reflection that glares back in the mirror is full of the imperfections of what is but maintains the faith and imagination necessary to envision what we would like ourselves, and the world, to become.

To view a virtual recording of the symposium "Unlearning Intolerance: Can Literature Effect Change " please use the following link:

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2011/05/symposium-on-can-literature-effect-change.html>

This article authored by UNAI Intern Michele M. Vella was edited by Jim Luce and published in the "Daily Kos"

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/06/11/984086/-Unlearning-Intolerance-%E2%80%93-And-Tolerance-Too>

**Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Message to Triennial Conference of
The International Association of University Presidents**

It is a pleasure to greet the International Association of University Presidents.

September 21 of this year marks the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Peace. Earlier this week as we began the traditional 100-day countdown to the observance, we recalled how the IAUP proposed this annual day in 1981, and how the United Nations General Assembly endorsed that proposal.

The IAUP's partnership with the United Nations has diversified and grown since then, most notably and recently in its contributions to the United Nations Academic Impact, in which more than 630 members in 101 countries are taking part.

Just this week, students from KwaZulu Natal University in South Africa -- the initiatives' global hub for issues related to poverty -- joined senior United Nations officials by video-conference to discuss the challenges of determining who is poor, and why. Last month, students from the Lahore University of Management Sciences -- our global hub for "education for all" -- co-piloted an interactive distance-learning project and tutored fifty middle school children on the importance of drinking clean water and how to create a biosand filter to purify water.

These are just two examples of what the Academic Impact was created to do -- promote a culture of intellectual social responsibility. We have also launched ASPIRE -- Action by Students to Promote Innovation and Reform through Education.

Universities play a crucial role in producing knowledge and promoting universal values. In our current era of global challenge and change, we need you more than ever. Transformations that we might not have imagined in our lifetime are happening in the blink of an eye. People in the Middle East and North Africa are raising their voices for freedom and democracy. Elsewhere, new economic powers have risen. And everywhere, new challenges have emerged -- climate change, pandemic disease, food and energy shortages -- that underscore our mutual interdependence.

I am certain that under the wise leadership of my good friend, President Michael Adams, the relationship between the United Nations and the IAUP will find many new forms of strength and expression. As someone who has always seen himself as a bridge builder, I am heartened by the theme that you have chosen for your triennial conference -- building bridges through education. In that spirit of shared purpose, I wish you a most successful conference.

100 Day Countdown to International Day of Peace, 21 September

In his 100 Day Countdown message, Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General For Communication And Public Information issued a call to people around the world: "Make your voice heard"

September 21, 2011, marks the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Peace. As we begin today a 100-day countdown to the observance, we pay tribute to the many civil society activists who lent the strength of their imagination to the institution of this Day.

The United Nations General Assembly declared in 1981 that the Day shall be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples. It invited all Member States, the United Nations system, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, peoples and individuals to commemorate the Day in different ways, especially through all means of education, and to cooperate with the United Nations in the observance of that day.

Education, and the fruits of education, have been central to this observance.

Young women and men everywhere are demonstrating the power of connection by reaching out to each other, and rallying together, in the common cause of the dignity and human rights to which their peoples aspire.

It is in tribute to them, and the spirit they represent, that we have chosen this year, under the overall idea of Peace and Democracy, the theme of "Make your voice heard."

The United Nations stands ready to work with the peoples in whose name the International Day of Peace was established to secure a world ready for, and worthy of, the peace that is essential to all creative human endeavour.