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UNAOC ASIA SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL CONSULTATION

Harmony through dialogue and diversity Rooting the Alliance of Civilization in Asia Pacific Region

Shanghai International Convention Centre

November 29-30th, 2012

Report on session5: 'how can Chinese traditional culture contribute to the spirit of 'Many Cultures, One Humanity?'

Facilitator: Helena Barroco (UNAOC)

Rapporteur: Prof Fethi Mansouri (Deakin university, Australia)

Presenters:

- Lai Shilun (China)
- Li Tiangang (China)
- Angela Xu (USA)

1. The session started by offering insights into the way:

- traditional Chinese medicine in the west offers a potential cultural connector to the west (in particular when practices in the west for western patients)
- there was discussion on how the Chinese conception of harmony with nature offers hope to many of humanity's current malaise. This can be harnessed in the context of intercultural rapprochement.
- there was a Need to recognize the importance of traditional Chinese culture, its deep underlying vitality and its implications for contemporary problems and tensions elsewhere.

2. The session then discussed the issues pertaining to:

- cultural diversity and Chinese society development: it was conceded that CD is a Challenge for china as it is elsewhere; but there was recognition that
- different cultures will ultimately 'converge' and come together as has been already reflected in the spirit of the UN and in particular the AOC.
- we need to recognize that Chinese culture has been eternally diverse going back to the dynastic eras; indeed
- china holds a tolerant attitude towards not only CD but also 'religion' and can, therefore, offer a different perspective on these issues to other societies
- but the challenge remains that people in post-industrialist cities long for CD and are demanding from state/authorities to build 'cultural precincts' which may not be seen always as 'authentic'.
- in the context of china, linguistic diversity is also a necessary dimension in CD; yet this very diversity can also become a source of inter-communal conflict.
- CD should be approached as a key dimension of a broader Eco-diversity and a core aspect of humanity as a whole ;

-CD must be nurtured by individuals, the state and civil society. It should be promoted for its own sake rather than for other pragmatic, materialist or instrumentalist goals.

- in Chinese traditional culture, 'ethics and morality' require harmonious relationships and tolerance of difference. This can be a source for engagement with CD within china and between china and other societies.

3. There is also a need to connect Chinese culture to world cultural traditions through linguistic connections and understandings.

- foreign languages, indeed, can promote collaborative engagement, cross-cultural literacy and intercultural understanding.

- English language for example which has become an important tool for global relations, is playing an important role in engendering cross-cultural communication within and across states.

- linguistic literacy is therefore a critical dimension of cultural literacy

Two very concrete recommendations from these sessions are:

- to take advantage of the rich history of Chinese culture and civilization as a foundational basis for promoting an ethical engagement with cultural diversity in the region and globally. This can be implemented through 'sharing of cultural repertoires' at the grassroots level and in particular among youth.

- following on from the first recommendation above, build strategic partnerships with the many Confucius academies in the region to promote the values of tolerance, peace, respect and solidarity among the people's of the region and indeed the world. Here the concrete proposal is for the UNAOC to partner with Confucius institutes to offer educational and leadership training for youth with an emphasis on the shared values and visions of Confucius traditions and the AOC.