

## A glossary of terms to start the discussion

In order to even start dialoging in a productive way, we need to explore the terms we are using and the concepts we hold as shared values. Thus, in elaborating the theme of Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum: “Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue to Ensure Peace” we need to recognize that what constitutes intercultural issues and interfaith issues is open to discussion and debate, as are, in fact, the very concepts of “culture” and “faith.” The following descriptions of terms should not be thought of as “definitions” in the sense that they are authoritative, but as a jumping off point to start the discussion.

*Culture:* Culture is not a homogenous entity, with one paradigm of what is the real or true culture. It is rather, a “way of living” and because ways of living are as different as the people who live them, culture is the “fruit of diversity.” (Meeting of the Network of UNESCO chairs on Inter-religious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding, March 2006) Culture includes all forms of artistic expression and creativity; it is the language you speak, your place of worship, the issues that move you emotionally, the sources of meaning in your life. It is in fact the language through which we learn to read the world and our way of living together.

*Civilization:* Just like the concept of culture, civilizations are not monolithic. They are inherently intercultural, and thus are “the end result of various opportunities of cultures encountering each other” (Levi-Strauss). Moreover, the tangible and intangible aspects of civilizations spring from the cultures, peoples, traditions and faiths within them and those they interact with. Thus we can see civilization as “entities of faith, historical memory, moral imagination and human connection.” (Vilnius Declaration, 2001)

*Faith:* Perhaps faith, religion, and spirituality are terms that are the hardest to characterize because they are nuanced in meaning and often carry profoundly personal definitions. While Paul Tillich notably defined religion as that which is of “ultimate concern,” debates and reflections on the essence of religion and faith are timeless. Thus, what it means to be a person of faith or a religious or spiritual person is often varied, as are the spiritual and cultural traditions of the world.

A dialogue on faith and religion need not be restricted to belief as such, but can deal with ethical values that are not belief based. It can also serve to gain knowledge of how faith and belief affect our civilizations and cultures. (Meeting of the Network of UNESCO chairs on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding, March 2006)

*Dialogue:* The word dialogue is a translation of the Greek word, dialogos, which is comprised of two parts: “dia” which means trans (not two as it is sometimes thought), and “logos,” which means logic. So dialogue means a comparison of logics between more than two people. Thus it is more than a conversation, because it is an exchange across and among several diverse interlocutors. Yet dialogue need not be restricted to logic or reason only. Because dialogue is essentially between people, it comprises emotions and feelings as well. (Meeting of the Network of UNESCO chairs on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding, March 2006)