

INTRODUCTION TO THE CORDOBA FORUM

Challenge

We all suffer from the consequences of one of the most widespread problems of our time: lack of understanding and mutual acceptance at all levels. Confronted with disputes, differences and injustices, our world has a great need for a "minimum common ideal", an ideal that allows us to live together: convivence.

Nature of the Project

Our project consists of establishing a yearly meeting in the historic city of Cordoba, gathering together international organisations and personalities who endeavour, among other things, to promote a world of "convivence": the ability of human beings and their communities to live together peacefully, respecting and embracing their differences, ideally with an element of solidarity.

The city of Cordoba owes its renown as a role model for "living together". Based on both this reality and its myth, how can we help to promote a universal contemporary reality, a "realistic utopia"?

How do we provide universal contents to the beautiful word "convivencia" ("convivance" in French, "convivence" in English and ta 'ayush in Arabic)? It goes above and beyond the notions of tolerance, co-existence, harmony, understanding, acceptance or comprehension, which are all prerequisites for "living together in peace". Convivence is the perfect expression of the ideal and spirit with which the name of Cordoba is associated; indeed, the city aspires to become a world symbol of this concept of "living together in peace", not only among the Abrahamic communities, but among people of the world's full diversity of cultures, faiths, ethnicities and convictions.

Target Audience

The Cordoba Forum reaches out to organizations and individuals with a common denominator: each in its own way and field strives for a more brotherly world, a world with greater convivence. This Forum is designed for those institutions and individuals, especially youth, convinced of the necessity to create not an organization but a network: a "federation of consciences" in the spirit of Cordoba, dedicated to the acceptance of others and of their differences.

Youth Focus

In the hope of creating a movement with a strong and lasting impact, the Cordoba Forum seeks to involve a significant number of young participants who are championing convivence, and offer them the opportunity not only to exchange with experienced actors

and institutions, but to gain a skill set to support their initiatives. To this end, the Cordoba Forum will be preceded by a Dialogue for Peace Seminar, aimed primarily, though not exclusively, at participants under thirty. This two-day training will be led by world experts in mediation and dialogue and will equip learners with the theory and techniques for engaging diverse interlocutors. As participants will subsequently join the Forum and some will present their work there, a common language as well as an exchange between generations will be fostered.

Objectives

The Cordoba Forum aims to contribute to a world of greater convivence and to more effective work on the part of organizations working toward this goal. It is designed to be held every year in order to become a key occasion for intercultural dialogue, a privileged meeting point to be pencilled into the agenda of those who work for this common ideal of achieving a more universal convivence.

It has two general and permanent objectives:

1. To share and disseminate positive examples of actions promoting convivence, by:
 - a) Identifying the obstacles to the promotion of convivence;
 - b) Describing and analyzing how these obstacles have been overcome;
 - c) Sharing and hearing inspiring experiences to motivate others;
 - d) Gathering and disseminating such inspirational material;
 - e) Facilitating connections and the coordination of participants' initiatives for greater impact;
 - f) Equipping participants with a methodology for engaging diverse interlocutors.
2. To implement the "International Day of Living Together in Peace" proclaimed by the UN General Assembly by celebrating outstanding positive examples and initiatives every May 16th.

Principles of the Forum

The practice at the Forum will be a version of "diapaxis" that builds its dialogue on positive – and therefore inspiring– action-oriented "success stories". The focus of the Cordoba Forum is not only what each participant brings to it but also what they take home from it and what it contributes to their work when back at base, as well as the bi- or multilateral links established at the Forum between participants.

1. The Cordoba Forum aims at collecting, sharing, discussing and disseminating concrete « success stories » of contributions towards a world of greater convivence, of better living together in peace and harmony. It aims at constituting a thriving network of such examples and also functioning as a public loudspeaker for them.

2. The Forum does not aim at taking resolutions of a general nature on any subject (including convivence) unless there is an urgent consensus amongst its participants to take such a decision, to be then taken without opposition.
3. Participants to the Cordoba Forum are invited to see themselves first and foremost as members of a network in which they are encouraged to create bi-or multi-lateral links and even adopt collective projects, learning from each other's positive experiences. Negative experiences are only to be shared if important general lessons can be learnt from them.
4. The sharing of positive experiences at the Forum is encouraged to take the form of audio-visual presentations that can be later shared on the web; but this is not a prerequisite for a sincere oral testimony can be equally inspiring.
5. What matters in and with the Cordoba Forum is what each participant takes home from it and then puts into practice in its own sphere of influence, be it alone or jointly with one or more members of the network.

In sum

The *long term* aim of the Cordoba Forum is to create an expanding "Spirit of Cordoba", through an informal annual gathering of organisations who are already committed to the same struggle, gathered voluntarily in a spirit of permanent research of consensus. It is not to be yet another interreligious gathering, and its concerns go well beyond the strictly religious. It does not aim to pass formal resolutions nor to solve current crises or conflicts, but only to look worldwide for positive examples of convivence *worthy of being disseminated*. "Education is example!"

The idea is to generate a critical mass, which is annually recharged and which will contribute to a less divided world and help its peoples to live together, in full respect of their differences