UNAOC Fellowship Alumni – Coming Together
To Fight Radicalization and Xenophobia

December 8th to 10th – New York U.S.

Participants Biographies
**Workshop 1 – Migration**  
*“Engaging Migrant communities”*

Bashar Salem Eltalhi (Libya, 2013 MENA) was born and raised in Benghazi, Libya, and is a current country manager in Libya for Peaceful Change Initiative. Bashar plays an important role in supporting more effective and coordinated action by national leaders to manage conflicts in Libya. This includes building the capacity of local authorities to promote social peace through the delivery of services; supporting community leaders to develop practical initiatives to reduce tensions in their community; and providing regular analysis of conflict and peace trends in the country, and forums for ‘peace-builders’ to work together. Prior to that, Bashar was a National Professional Officer within the Security Sector Advisory and Coordination Division at UNSMIL. Bashar had a prominent role in providing the team with local perspective on the Libyan security situation, and in enhancing the quality of support to Libyan counterparts. He started his political involvement in 2011, during the early days of the Libyan revolution. He assisted different organizations such as Human Rights Watch and the New York Times to understand the situation on the ground. He joined the first team who documented the Libyan regime’s use of cluster bombs against civilians in Misrata. He then decided to join the NTC's media committee as an information analyst. He also collaborated with Marie Colvin from Sunday Times on two articles ‘Killing rooms plot bloody retreat of troops loyal to Tyrant Jr’ and chic ‘in Jufra Libya’, both published. Finally, he was on the first ship to dock in Tripoli, August 2011 with IOM where he participated in the evacuation of 200 foreigners. Bashar holds a Masters degree in information system from the Arab academy for science and technology.
Daniel Overskott (Norway, 2015 EUNA) is the managing director of "Christian Intercultural Association among Youth" (KIA Ung), a national youth network dedicated to improve intercultural collaborations in different parts of Norway. He is also a full time bachelor student in Economy and Administration at Hauge School of Management and a part time bachelor student in Communication and Worldviews. On his free time, Daniel is engaged in different activities related to immigration and knowledge about worldviews and apologetics.

Rouba Mhaissen (Lebanon, 2015 MENA) is an economist and development practitioner. She is an expert on the Syrian refugee crisis generally, and its implications for Lebanon in particular. She has participated in conferences, consultancies and research focus groups on the humanitarian crisis of Syrian refugees, issues of migration and displacement, activism in the Arab world, and building solidarity. Rouba is also the founder and director of Sawa For Development and Aid, a grass-roots non-profit organization supporting Syrian refugees in Lebanon, which works with women, youth and children in the areas of economic projects, education, psychosocial support, and development. Rouba is a PhD candidate in Gender and Development at SOAS, University of London. Her academic work has focused on women in labour markets in lower-income Beirut, with issues pertaining to household economics and marital negotiation dynamics, rethinking notions of 'empowerment' in this context. She has also worked in the areas of violence, conflict, and development; gender and development; and the political economy of development and has participated in several research networks/consultancies about women during civil war, women refugees, gender and practices of faith, gender and violence, and forced migration among other issues.
Zein Tayyeb (Jordan, 2015 MENA) is an education Officer at UNICEF Jordan. She joined UNICEF in May 2013 and has been working in Zaatari refugee camp, and other Syrian refugee camps in Jordan. Her work focuses on providing quality education, psychosocial support, and life skills development for all the Syrian children in and out of schools. Zein holds a Master’s degree in International Relations and Human rights from the University of East London, UK. Her research interests focus on human rights-based issues, especially children rights, Migration, Education, and Youth. She has always been very concerned by humanitarian work and now that she is part of the global effort, she hopes to help improve the future of every child. More recently, Zein participated in an intensive training course in Brown University on Human Security and Humanitarian Response. It has allowed her to develop a better understanding of the global issues and challenges that the world is facing. It has also broadened her horizons regarding the span of humanitarian actions to be taken in situations of emergency. During her free time, she loves travelling to new adventures, she is passionate about all kinds of food, and enjoys reading. She is hoping to expand her experience in the humanitarian field within the United Nations team.
Workshop 2 – Education
“Educating and Empowering”

Asma Cherifi (Tunisia, 2014 MENA) is the project manager of “Tunisia for Nobel Price 2015” and the founding CEO of TACID Network, a network of 253 local Tunisian NGOs focusing on civism and development with the mission to build new local governance based on democratic values, accountability and transparency. Asma is also the co-founder and a member of the Arab Network for Social Accountability (ANSA), a World Bank project in the MENA region. She is also a mentor for the Youth entrepreneurs in the FORSA program G8UK Deauville, a trainer in local governance, participative democracy, social accountability, and an advisor on open governance and open government partnership. She holds an MBA in Leadership Transformation and Governance, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Science of Mind and Creation of Civilization. Asma holds a trainer certificate from the PMI institute in project management, social accountability and local governance.

Fatoumata Kebe (France, 2015 EUNA) was trained in Space Engineering for a year at the University of Tokyo, and is currently finishing her PhD in astronomy at the Observatory of Paris, on space debris which are the vestiges of human activity accumulated in space over time. Passionate about astronomy, Fatoumata has also invested herself in other areas such as agriculture. With a cooperative of women in Mali, she leads "Connected Eco" – a project focusing on the need for a new model of agriculture that could ensure both quality and quantity in food production where it is needed most, while preserving the natural environment. Her project also empowers women through digital training. Sensors powered by solar energy analyze the soil drought level and
send the collected data by SMS to farmers so they can irrigate their fields properly and in due time, using a watering system connected to these sensors. Her project was awarded by the Young Innovators Competition, an initiative led by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a United Nations agency focusing on the potential of Information and Communication Technologies in solving issues. Fatoumata also dedicates her energy to inspire vocations through "Ephemerides", the association she founded in order to provide astronomy courses to high school students from disadvantaged suburbs. Her goal is to help young people embrace their ambitions and accomplish their dreams.

Sofana Dahlan (Saudi Arabia, 2011 MENA) attorney at Law, is one of the first Saudi female lawyers who have been granted the permission to practice law in KSA. Sofana has applied her social and entrepreneurial expertise to revive and develop the creative industries in the Middle-East. Thus, she founded the Tashkeil Global Company, Kayan Space, and launched the Saudi National Creative initiative (SNCI) – an initiative that aims at developing, rehabilitating and researching the local creative scene. Sofana was the first Saudi to serve as a fellow for the UNAOC Fellowship Program in a tour of Europe and the U.S. and has also been selected as one of the Young Global Leaders at the World Economic Forum. She is a motivational speaker and has given many speeches at TEDx and BOLDtalks. Additionally, she has won many awards, such as Female of the Entrepreneur in MENA by the Stevies Awards, and the Arab Woman Awards. Sofana holds an MBA Degree from AUT in Lebanon, LLB and LLM Degrees from Cairo University.
Workshop 3 – Youth
“Engaging Youth”

Anas Dharweesh (Syria, 2011 MENA) is a dynamic professional with solid business background and a 16-year successful track record in delivering projects that empower individuals to achieve their potential and maximize their opportunities. With a highly tenacious outlook, his programmatic approach towards youth unemployment triggered tens of economic-empowerment programs across the MENA region, resulting into a few hundred thousands of jobs for youth especially those with the most vulnerable status such as refugees and youth in conflict areas. Demonstrating robust leadership qualities, solid functional and cross-functional background, he has always managed to create self-directed teams to boost organizational productivity, grow field operations at the bottom-line including outreach, jobs, entrepreneurial activities and green-field micro finance programmers. Initiatives he launched to provide logistical, relief and psychosocial support to Syrians in displacement and diaspora have been adopted and sustained until now. Other programs designed and implemented were locally and regionally replicated and mainstreamed by public and private entities. This includes the Kafoo relief Project, DardaChat dialogue & reconciliation program and the Business Clinic Career Centres. Tech-savvy with decent knowledge in building web and mobile platforms reinforced with strong content management expertise both in Arabic and English Out of passion towards unlocking potentials, he launched Spaces Virtual social start-up aiming at creating web, mobile and social media mobile platforms for organizations, individuals and social initiatives.
Khalil El-Masry (Egypt, 2014 MENA) is a software development consultant, and peace activist. He is the co-founder of "Selmiyah" (Peacefully) movement – established in 2012 – promoting culture of peace and building bridges of trust within the Egyptian society and across its divides, and coordinating the efforts of the different stake holders. Khalil is also member of different international peace-building organizations and intercultural exchange networks such as Initiatives of Change, MER, Caux Scholars Program Alumni, and United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Alumni. He worked as a consultant in different projects promoting civic engagement, peace, and co-existence in partnership with international organizations such as GIZ, Save the Children, and UNHCR. He also facilitated many workshops promoting citizenship, non-violent communication, and peaceful conflict resolution. In 2010, Khalil founded "Madad for Information Technology" a company which main mission is to provide IT support to the civic society in Egypt. Now he's managing "El-Midan" (The Square) portal, an online platform dedicated to support the efforts and activities promoting a culture of peace all over the world.

Lorenzo Kihlgren-Grandi (Italy, 2012 EUNA) is an officer of the City of Milan’s Department of International Relations, in charge of relations with international organizations, MENA countries and foreign media. Lorenzo is also involved in a dual doctorate at EHESS in Paris and LUISS in Rome, where he worked as teaching assistant in Techniques of International Negotiation and in Mediterranean Studies. Lorenzo’s thesis, “Scope and challenges of the youth activism conveyed by art and culture”, benefits from his experience as founder and chairman of Il Tamarindo, an Italian NGO devoted to intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, creative economy and youth empowerment. Lorenzo has been the head of several projects implemented by Il Tamarindo, such as its multilingual cultural magazine, international seminars, concerts and exhibitions, artistic and entrepreneurial competitions. Lorenzo studied International Relations at the University of Bologna, Sciences Po Paris,
Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale in Milan and LUISS. He gained his first professional experiences at the European Commission in Brussels, the UNESCO Culture Sector in Paris, the Italian Embassy in Tehran and Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome.

Mohammad Al-Shami, (Yemen, 2012 MENA) is a civil society activist and freelance consultant/trainer and is currently an independent scholar with Wilson center as part of a program called “Leader of Democracy Fellowship”. He has experience working for large development organizations such as Saferworld and USAID. Since 2010, he has focused on empowering youth to play an active role in reforming Yemen’s policies, and founded youth organizations and movements like Resonate, Life Makers Foundation, Yalla Shabab and Youth Media in Yemen. He has a particularly strong experience in advocacy and campaigning, as well as organizing and leading workshops, debates, and policy forums in and outside of Yemen, including in Berlin, Washington DC and Brussels. Over the last four years, he has trained over 200 young activists from across Yemen, organized more than ten advocacy campaigns, conducted multiple public debates and produced short documentary videos.

Saida Ibrahimava (Belarus, 2014 EUNA) has more than ten years of successful experience in the nonprofit sector and more than five years working experience for governmental institutions. She has implemented a number of projects in the sphere of social inclusion, youth development, education, sports and volunteer movements. She holds a BA in International Relations from the Belarusian State University, and a MA in International Economy and Politics from the Charles University in Prague. She is the one of the co-founders of "Youth to Youth Initiative"(Y2Y) a non-profit umbrella organization that aims to construct effective frames for youth participation in the decision
making process and in solving global challenges locally. Currently, she serves as a Director of Projects Development under Y2Y Action Hub (an interactive online incubator for socially beneficial ideas, concepts, startups, projects and initiatives created by youth and for youth). She enjoys focusing on the topics of youth leadership, Human Rights and dignity, deradicalization of youth, peace-building, social entrepreneurship, arts and culture, and has a strong passion for sustainability education. At the moment she works on the first global graffiti festival of both Western and Eastern civilizations, aiming to build an intercultural dialogue and understanding between them through new forms of art.
Workshop 4 – Media
“Promoting a narrative of dialogue and tolerance”

Aaron Morrison (United States, 2013 EUNA) is an American journalist working as a social justice and diversity writer for the International Business Times in New York City. Before IBT, he worked for several U.S. newspapers and a global news wire service covering local governments, social justice issues and the United Nations. Aaron is a leader of the New York Association of Black Journalists, an organization that advocates for diversity in U.S. newsrooms and fair coverage of African-Americans in the media. He received his bachelor’s degree in journalism from San Francisco State University in California.

Taras Dzyubanskyy (Ukraine, 2015 EUNA) holds a B.A. in Philosophy and studied at various papal institutes in the Vatican. He obtained his PhD in Theology and Interreligious Dialogue in 2012. Taras has deepened his involvement in interfaith dialogue by working in Kazakhstan and in Eastern Ukraine, and by teaching religion courses at St. Maurice Catholic School in Stamford. In 2010, he received a prestigious Russell Berrie Fellowship in Interreligious Studies, which enabled him to pursue his doctoral degree and to get acquainted with the study of Judaism and other religions. Since October 2012, Taras has been working as an adviser to the mayor of Lviv for religious and ecumenical issues. In May 2013, he inaugurated an interfaith center “Libertas”, the first of its kind in Ukraine. Since its creation, the center has held over 30 ecumenical and interreligious events in view of promoting dialogue and understanding among different religious groups. Taras has been awarded with several distinctions related to his innovative approach on interfaith dialogue and social issues. He is now an adviser to the President of the Lviv Chamber of
Commerce and Industry on social issues. Taras is strongly committed to promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue. He believes that people of different faiths have a lot to offer to humanity.

Victoria Martín de la Torre (Spain, 2011 EUNA) is a Spanish journalist working as a press officer for the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament since 2008. Before arriving in Brussels, she worked as a reporter at the weekly magazine Tiempo for over a decade, covering EU-Arab World relations. She was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 1998 and she got a MS degree at Columbia University School of Journalism (New York) in 1999. In 2003, she specialized in EU Foreign Policy at the College of Europe (Bruges). She is the author of two books: "Viaje a la ciudad de Belén. Cuna del amor, semilla de intifada" (A trip to Bethlehem, cradle of love, seed of intifada) published in 2008 and "Europe, a Leap into the Unknown", published in 2014. She is also the founder and president of the Abraham Forum for Inter-Religious and Intercultural Dialogue in Madrid, which was launched in 2009.