



Image credit: Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC).

16 April 2015 – On April 14, the “Europe and the Islamic World Conference” was held in Brussels. Emphasizing, “there’s more that unites us than divides us”, the conference powerfully showcased the work of various organizations, including the [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations](#) (UNAOC), whose High Representative, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, delivered the keynote speech.

Set against the critical backdrop of the recent attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, the conference was organised by [LiNKs \(Dialogue, Analysis and Research\)](#) and the [Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation](#) (ICYF-DC).

A critical analysis of the relation between Europe and the Islamic World

Through its panel discussions, the conference addressed common challenges for building a common future – focusing on islamophobia, radicalization and seeking partnerships – as well as the role played by the media in talking about these topics.

One of the main concerns was the widespread misconceptions on Islam. Dennis Sammut, LINKS Director, asked whether the West has been conditioned by propaganda against Muslims.

H.E. Ms. Ismat Jahan, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Belgium and Head of Mission to the EU, shared personal anecdotes to illustrate the specific misconceptions on women's empowerment and Islam.

Conceptually, the very idea of there being “two sides” was discussed, with Dr. Ahmad al Dubayan, Director-General of the Islamic Cultural Centre and London Central Mosque Trust, asking whether this construction is religious or geopolitical/social.

Other points and debates between panellists centred on e.g. the role of law, anti-discrimination laws, the right to create offense and the misperceptions forged by media.

Belgian civil society activist Mehdi Karimi pointed out that the struggle against islamophobia should be set within a wider context of initiatives against hate speech, so as to prevent polarization and stigmatization.



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