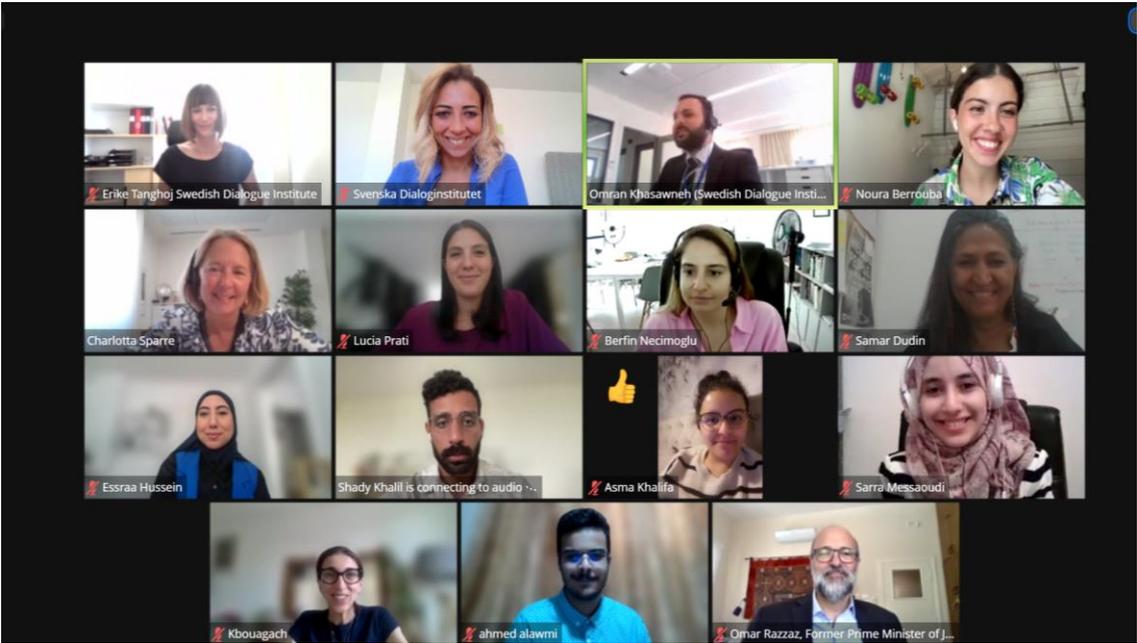


Virtual Roundtable Meeting on Intergenerational Dialogue

4th July 2023



Swedish Dialogue Institute
for the Middle East and North Africa

Executive Summary

On July 4th, [the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa](#) arranged a virtual roundtable discussion, bringing together 14 young peacebuilders and peace and security experts from both the MENA-region and Europe. The purpose of the meeting was to advance the Institute's work on intergenerational dialogue by soliciting feedback from a diverse set of actors on the preliminary conclusions drawn from the knowledge-creating process on intergenerational dialogue that the Institute has engaged in since the beginning of 2023.

Members of the Institute's [Advisory Committee](#) served as key-note speakers during the first part of the meeting and the Institute's Deputy Director gave a detailed presentation over the results and conclusions.

In the second part of the meeting, the participants shared complimentary insights and reflections on the content of the presentation. The meeting resulted in a set of recommendations and ideas on how to ensure that a dialogue across generations can be meaningful.

This included for example:

- a recommendation of not only engaging in one-off dialogues but engage more long-term to build trust and develop ideas.
- a stress on the importance of acknowledging how power dynamics based on age affects participants opportunities to participate on equal terms.

Detailed report

On July 4th, [the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa](#) arranged a virtual roundtable discussion, bringing together 14 young peacebuilders and peace and security experts from both the MENA-region and Europe. The participants represented civil society organizations, think-thanks, regional youth networks and government agencies (such as the Folke Bernadotte Academy¹).

The purpose of the meeting was to advance the Institute's work on intergenerational dialogue by soliciting feedback from a diverse set of actors on the preliminary conclusions drawn from the knowledge-creating process on intergenerational dialogue that the Institute has been engaged in since the beginning of 2023. The meeting also served as a follow-up to the regional conference titled "[Overcoming Obstacles to Inclusivity in Peace and Development in the MENA region](#)", hosted by the Institute in November 2022 and during which intergenerational dialogue, among other topics, was addressed. As such, the majority participants of the virtual roundtable discussion constituted of previous attendees of the regional conference.

Opening remarks

The virtual roundtable started with opening remarks made by Charlotta Sparre, Director of the [Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa](#). Sparre noted that "*Intergenerational dialogue can be a method to ensure meaningful participation and inclusion of both older and younger generations. It is therefore important to develop a deeper understanding of the concept and what it entails in practice*".

The meeting was then framed by a recap of the [outcomes and recommendations](#) from the regional conference in 2022, by introductory key-reflections from Noura Berrouba, President of the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations and member of the Institute's Advisory Committee and Dr Omar Razzaz, Former Prime Minister of Jordan and Chairman of the Institute's Advisory Committee.

In her key-note reflection, Ms Berrouba, acknowledged that generational gaps are closely interlinked with power structures based on age and that they constitute challenges to peace and security and sustainable development. In regard to youth participation in peace and security related matters in particular, she stressed the need of not only providing safe spaces for youth-led initiatives, but also of helping to link these initiatives to ongoing decision-making and policymaking processes, through e.g. intergenerational dialogues. She further underlined the significance of applying dialogue practices that are inclusive of youth and that address aged-based power structures

¹ [Start | Folke Bernadotte Academy \(fba.se\)](#)

regardless of the dialogue being framed as intergenerational or not. Building on this she ended by taking note of the importance of understanding how intergenerational dialogue relates to and complements other forms of dialogues, such as intercultural and interreligious dialogues.

Dr Razzaz, started by saying that *“Intergenerational dialogue is about mutual understanding and appreciation of the other generations. It is about understanding where the other generation comes from and about exchange of experiences and bridging exciting gaps”*. He highlighted the importance of active listening and the need of avoiding monologues in which youth simply are being spoken to. He took note of the fact that some of the gaps between the generations may be widening more than other because of rapid changes in societies – due to e.g. the advancements in technology. Connected to this, Dr Razzaz suggested that some topics may be more relevant or suitable to address through intergenerational dialogue than others. Apart from dilemmas surrounding new technology, such as artificial intelligence, issues related to climate security and environmental degradation was highlighted as particularly relevant to address from a generational perspective.

Presentation by the Dialogue Institute

To further frame and focus the roundtable discussion the Deputy Director of the Institute Erike Tanghøj made a presentation of the results of the Institute’s work on increasing the understanding of what intergenerational dialogue is and what makes it conducive and inclusive. She stated that one of the key findings so far has been that there is a general tendency among stakeholder to understand intergenerational dialogue as the same practice as “youth consultations”. She argued that this is a problem and exemplified how this not only may dilute the meaning of dialogue per se but also can widening gaps between parties by creating different expectations. Hence, she underlined the importance of regarding intergenerational dialogue as a separate method and suggested the following “definition”:

“A (conflict mitigating) communication method/process for the purpose of 1) breaking stereotypes on age seek understanding, build trust, resolve conflicts and increase intergenerational solidarity and equity, and 2) seeking and potentially finding collective agreements, goals, actions and/or solutions that suits old and young”.

Concerning identified promising practices for ensuring the conduciveness and inclusiveness of a dialogue across generations, Ms Tanghøj highlight, among others, the following practices as key:

- Support participants in **reflecting on their generational identity, age-based stereotypes, and potential prejudices** and how they may affect the possibilities for the parties to approach each other.
- Agree on a **code of conduct** with a focus on how a safe space for young and old alike can be ensured
- Encourage **active listening** and make room for **personal stories** in the dialogue.

Reflections and recommendations

In the following discussion, the participants contributed with their inputs, insights, and concrete suggestions on how to enable successful dialogues between generations. The key reflections and identified recommendations included:

- The need of recognizing that there may **not be “one way” of doing intergenerational dialogue** but several due to differences in context, between target group and dynamics of topics.
- The importance of not only focusing on the generational differences, gaps, and inequalities in a dialogue, but to also give room to **reflect around similarities** such as shared values, experiences, and cultural practices.
- The acknowledgement that the purpose or the end goal of an intergenerational dialogue does not need to be identifying agreements, solutions or joint actions given that **dialogue across generations is a value in itself**. Hence, an intergenerational dialogue should not per default be regarded as a failure just because it has not resulted in joint agreements etc.
- The importance of **identifying relevant topics, issues and challenges** that can and should be addressed through intergenerational dialogue – such as climate and environment, economic sustainability, and technological development (including artificial intelligence).
- The need to acknowledge and **understand how power dynamics based on age influence the opportunities** to engage in meaningful dialogue between generations on equal terms.
- The value of **not only engaging in one-off dialogues** and the importance of having a “post dialogue phase” that includes follow-up on potential agreed actions and/or responsibilities.