United Nations and Culture of Peace

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India has expressed concerns over the UN resolutions that portray only three religions as victims of religious hatred. It has urged that UN resolutions should be broadened to include every community that faces religion-based violence. From UPSC point of view one should understand the concept of 'Culture of peace'.

In news: Recently the UNESCO Culture of Peace session was held.
Placing it in syllabus: Society
Static dimensions

1. History of Culture of Peace and UNESCO's role in it
2. Importance of the concept of Culture of Peace

Current dimensions

1. Debates at the recent Culture of Peace Session

Content:

Debates at the recent Culture of Peace Session:

- While discussing resolutions of the **UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** on the 'Culture of Peace', India criticized UNGA for its **stance of "selectivity"**, that is, in seeking to **protect Abrahamic religions, Islam, Christianity and Judaism over others.**
- The Indian delegate pointed out that previous resolutions of the UNAOC dating back to 2006 had repeatedly decried the hatred against those religions, **Islamophobia, Christianophobia and anti-Semitism** but didn't condemn attacks on other religious groups

including Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists.

- The shattering of the iconic Bamyan Buddha by fundamentalists, the terrorist bombing of the Sikh gurdwara in Afghanistan where 25 Sikh worshippers were killed and the destruction of Hindu and Buddhist temples and minority cleansing of these religions by countries, call for condemning such acts against these religions also.
- India said that though the UNGA statement welcomed the Kartarpur Gurdwara corridor agreement between India and Pakistan, it had failed to note that Pakistan's government has taken over the management of the Sikh shrine, which it called a contravention of the agreement and a violation of Sikh beliefs.
- Pakistan was accused for a **"culture of hatred" against "religions in India"** and fostering cross-border terrorism.
- UNAOC though was set up in 2005 to prevent polarization between societies and cultures and to bridge differences between them, due to its selectivity policy, now only serves to further the theory of an inevitable 'clash of civilizations' instead.
- India has asked the United Nations to expand its criticism of hatred and violence against religions beyond the three Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The United Nations however has condemned such acts. E.g. in 2001, the UNGA adopted a resolution without a vote condemning the Taliban for destroying cultural artefacts. Pakistan and the Philippines co-sponsored a resolution on 1st December on inter-religious dialogue while Bangladesh with other countries had co-sponsored a resolution (India supported this resolution alone) on the programme for the Culture of Peace.

History of Culture of Peace and UNESCO's role in

it:

- United Nations consideration of the culture of peace began in 1992 with the adoption by UNESCO of a Culture of Peace Programme.
- The Programme was adopted by the UNESCO Executive Board in the fall of 1992, in order to *"heal the social wounds of war by local activities of reconciliation and co-operation in countries where Security Council peace-keeping operations are already being implemented or may be anticipated because of developing violence."*
- The **first major test of the Culture of Peace Programme was in El Salvador** using the methodology of "cross-conflict participation" by which the reconciliation of those who had been fighting against each other in the past was promoted by their joint participation in the planning and implementation of projects designed to benefit all.
- The national culture of peace programmes did not receive the needed political and financial support from the UNESCO Member States, and were all discontinued.
- In 1997, the most important year in the development of UNESCO/UN culture of peace initiative, three separate initiatives converged:

the proclamation of the International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000);

the proposal for the UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace;

the initiative of the Nobel Peace Laureates "Campaign for the Children of the World" that would eventually become the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010);

- The UN requested UNESCO to submit a draft Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, which the

General Assembly adopted on September 13, 1999.

- In recent years UNESCO has continued to actively promote the culture of peace in Africa with programs coordinated by its field office in Gabon and in cooperation with governments and foundations in Angola and Côte d'Ivoire.

The concept of Culture of Peace:

- As defined by the United Nations, "Culture of Peace" is a "*set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals groups and nations.*"
- Since its founding, UNESCO has asserted that, "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."

According to UN, for peace and non- violence to prevail, one should-

1. **Foster a culture of peace through education** by revising the educational curricula to promote qualitative values, attitudes and behaviors of a culture of peace,
2. **Promote sustainable economic and social development** by reducing economic and social inequalities, by eradicating poverty and by assuring sustainable food security , and social justice,
3. Promote **respect for all human rights**
4. Ensure **equality between women and men** through full participation of women in economic, social and political decision-making, elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women,
5. Foster **democratic participation and practices** in all sectors of society, a transparent and accountable governance and administration, the combat against terrorism, organized crime, corruption, illicit drugs and money laundering,

6. **Advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity** to abolish war and violent conflicts ,
7. Support **participatory communication and the free flow of information**,
8. Promote **international peace and security**