INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR PEACE, SECURITY & PROSPERITY

Alumni Newsletter

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Dear IFPSP alumni and friends,

Following on from our launch in July, fall has arrived, and apart from the exciting announcement of next year's conference, we can look back on two important happenings in the past few weeks: we celebrated the International Day of Peace and our first ever Alumni event "Culture as a Bridge" successfully went underway. We are delighted to share with you the highlights of both of these incredible events of this fall, and the announcement of your new editors! We look forward to growing the remarkable Forum community.



Get to Know the Alumni Steering Committee: A Message from Ali Lasheen

Following our Fall Alumni Meeting, I would like to thank everyone who joined us, particularly our guest speakers, for taking the time to share their experiences and perspectives. Our discussion on Culture as a Bridge highlighted the importance of cultural understanding, international cooperation, and the relationships we build throughout our careers.

Coming from a military background, I often approach issues from a military perspective, but hearing from academics and practitioners during this event broadened my horizons and encouraged me to consider different viewpoints. It was also a great opportunity to reconnect with fellow alumni from different editions of the forum and strengthen the connections that make our network valuable.

As our alumni community continues to grow, I encourage everyone to stay involved, share their experiences, and contribute ideas for future events. I look forward to building on the success of this meeting and seeing more of you at our upcoming activities."

-OCdt Ali Lasheen, Chair and Leader of the IFPSP Alumni network

The 'new and improved' IFPSP website

We turn your focus again to the IFPSP website to remind you that it has been completely redesigned and relaunched at psp-forum.org. Available in English, French, and Italian, the new site brings together everything the Forum community needs in one place: information on the annual in-person Forum in Sicily, the international high school essay and video contest, the university poster competition and Martello Papers, our UN International Day of Peace programming, and photo archives from every Forum since 2022. Explore the new site and share it with your networks.

Culture as a Bridge: A Panel on the Role of Cultural Understanding in Peace-Building Collaboration

On 21st September 2026, marking the United Nations International Day of Peace, the IFPSP Alumni Network explored the vital role of cultural understanding in peacebuilding collaboration through an online panel discussion titled "*Culture as a Bridge*".
Bringing together perspectives from diplomacy, academia, and international peacebuilding practice, the discussion examined how cultural awareness can strengthen cooperation between individuals and institutions working across professional and cultural boundaries on a national level.

A central theme was the importance of recognising how cultural differences shape communication, leadership, decision-making, and even approaches to disagreement. In international peacebuilding, where diplomats, military personnel and civilian organisations frequently work vis-a-vis, misunderstandings can easily arise when differing cultural assumptions go unrecognised. The discussion highlighted the value of moving beyond these differences to build trust, foster mutual respect and establish longlasting professional relationships.
The panel also considered the role of sport and media in shaping intercultural relationships. It was discussed that while sport can create opportunities for shared experiences and cooperation, national rivalries may also reinforce divisions. In a similar vein, media representations and online echo chambers can influence perceptions of other cultures, underlining the need for critical engagement and cross-cultural dialogue. These reflections prompted broader consideration of how cultural understanding can be developed and embedded in military and professional training.

Particularly relevant to the IFPSP Alumni Network, whose members represent more than twenty countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, the discussion emphasised that peace-building is not solely the responsibility of international institutions or political leaders; it is also shaped by everyday interactions between people with different experiences and perspectives.

Held in recognition of the 2026 UN International Day of Peace theme, "*Invest in Peace for Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day*", the event reinforced the importance of practical everyday efforts to build understanding across cultural divides. Ultimately, "*Culture as a Bridge*" highlighted cultural awareness as an essential foundation for effective collaboration, sustainable relationships and lasting peace.

A Video Message for the International Day of Peace

We are honoured to have received a video message from Elisabeth Spehar, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Peace building and Peace Support, on the occasion of the 2026 International Day of Peace.

In her message, she introduced this year's competitions topic: 'Invest in peace, for Everyone, Everywhere, Every day', and its increasing relevance in today's world, where we are faced by increasingly complex conflicts through disinformation, climate pressure and rapid technological changes.

This is why peace cannot merely be an issue when conflicts become violent. Ms Spehar emphasised the importance of conflict prevention for peace, including the need for trusted institutions and the inclusion of young voices in decisions that shape our future.

She concluded her message with the reminder that prevention of conflicts is an investment in peace and therefore both a responsibility and opportunity for everyone, encouraging us all to consider: 'What will you invest in today to help build the peace you want to live in today and tomorrow? '

Upcoming Events

Annual International Forum - 14-17 March 2027 - Palermo, Sicily & Online
Students, officer cadets, academics and practitioners come together from around the world for the upcoming annual IFPSP forum in Palermo, exploring the topic "*Building Sustainable Peace in a Rapidly Changing World*". Further info can be found on our website psp-forum.org and our social media channels.

About the editors

Introducing your co-secretaries of the Alumni Steering Committee, Marleen and Marlene! Having met at the 2026 IFPSP forum in Sicily, and quickly bonding over the passion and interest in peace, security and prosperity within the armed forces on an international level, as well as very similar first names, we decided to take on the role of co-secretaries to uphold the notability of this exciting forum.

Back in March, we both participated in the forum and hugely benefitted from the panels, exchanging perspectives with other students and cadets from various military academies, and both wish to give something back for the opportunity to partake in such a forum.

Marleen is currently a part-time Masters student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Birmingham, alongside being an officer cadet at the University Royal Naval Unit (URNU), focusing on social and cultural history of language and linguistics, and tying it in with research and collaboration skills.

Marlene is currently studying a double degree in European Governance in Constance and Utrecht to learn more about collective decision-making and the intersections of european policies and security.