



August 12, 2016

Dear Sir/Madame,

International Student/Young Pugwash (ISYP) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) would like to invite students and young scholars to participate in a conference to discuss regional security issues within the framework of **"Reassessing Beliefs and Belief Systems in the Middle East."**

The theme of "Reassessing beliefs and belief systems" is intended to challenge participants' beliefs and assumptions, and to collaboratively develop tools for challenging the beliefs of young people in their home countries, in order to give participants a framework for exploring new ideas about diverse sources of conflict in the region. A group of approximately 35 participants will contribute to discussions on regional security and forced migration (refugees, internal displacement).

The purpose of the conference is to exchange views on important challenges to peace and security in the region and to explore what young academics and professionals can do in their countries and across borders to enhance positive dynamics in the MENA region. In formal and informal settings you will develop answers to the question of how young people in the MENA region can become agents of change and peace.

The conference will:

- *Provide a neutral environment* for the participants. This will provide you with the opportunity to engage openly with each other, exchange ideas and explore solutions without the need to "toe" any particular line.
- *Engage participants in structured discussions.* The organizers will structure the discussions around key themes, ensuring that key questions are explored, that key (mis) perceptions and beliefs are challenged, and that the conversation is grounded in fact. Facilitation will also ensure that discussions are respectful and inclusive, and guided towards constructive outcomes.
- *Promote awareness and discussion of key relevant security topics.:* The conference will enhance discussions on regional security in the MENA region by introducing ideas of vital strategic importance to the region, such as forced migration, ongoing conflicts and lessons learned from conflict-resolution initiatives, and proposals for regional arms control (the Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone, Nuclear Free

Testing Zone, and the Chemical Weapons-Free Zone, the International Arms Trade Treaty, etc).

The conference will be held between November 25 and 26, 2016 in Cyprus. All sessions will be conducted in English and participants will be invited to prepare a presentation before the conference.

The conference organizers require that interested students and young professionals submit a statement of interest to participate in this event. The statement should briefly address the following questions:

1. Please state the nature of your area of expertise / main field(s) of study, as well as any other professional interests and/or motivations that you consider relevant to your participation. As a guide, please consider (1) What can you contribute to the conference on reassessing beliefs and belief systems? and (2) What do you hope to take away from participating in the conference?
(250 words max)
2. Why are you interested in meeting students from neighboring countries of the region to discuss regional security and belief systems?
(150 words max)
3. What could you concretely do in your country in your country or the Middle East to contribute to the change of beliefs and belief systems?
(150 words max)

The application form can be found at <https://goo.gl/xQl2ih>, and includes a space for your statement of interest. All applications must be submitted no later than September 23, 2016. The conference organizers will send out acceptance letters no later than October 3, 2016. The conference organizers will cover all travel, accommodation and meal costs of the participants during the Conference. For those participants that require a visa to travel to the European Union, ISYP and the local organizers will provide an invitation letter for your visa application if necessary.

Please direct all additional information & general inquiries to the following email:

menaconference2016@gmail.com