

Check against delivery



ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

UN HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR
THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS WITH
Mrs IRINA BOKOVA
UNESCO DG

Paris,
UNESCO HEADQUARTERS

February 1st, 2010

- Many thanks for this very much expected meeting which comes at a turning point:
 - on the one hand, it marks the beginning of our working relations with UNESCO under your leadership;
 - on the other hand, it coincides with a new cycle of the relationships between UNESCO and the AoC at a time when we are about to renew our initial MoU.

- I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr Matssura, with whom I always had extremely good working relations.

- Now I am thrilled to develop a stronger and closer cooperation with UNESCO in the years to come.

- Prospects are quite good:
 - You placed at the centre of your priorities the issue of cultural diversity – it was clear from your inauguration speech and I have noticed that you are always mentioning it with great emphasis;
 - 2010 is dedicated to the celebration of “the International year of the rapprochement of cultures”
 - From a longer term perspective, we have a kind of road map outlined in the UNESCO World Report on cultural diversity, released in 2009, aimed at implementing the recommendations put forward...

- On the AoC side, as you know, we have made a lot of progress and I am very happy to say that at least we have already met one of our main targets, i.e. to place in the global political agenda cultural diversity as an issue that needs to be addressed!

- This is the reason why the AoC is in the agenda of almost all international and regional organizations. But, as I have repeated several times, the AoC is only a broker, a convener and a catalyst – we have the capacity of generating political support and synergies.

- Our aim is not to replace the expertise and the longstanding experience of international agencies and organizations.

- We are not an organization, but a “political initiative” and this is the real added value of the AoC!

- Regarding cultural diversity issues, UNESCO has a unique role to play as the UN specialized agency dealing with education, culture, communication and information etc.

- By the way, I imagine the huge challenge you have to face to meet MDG 2 on time (ie achieve universal primary education by 2015)

- I say so because, as you may know, I also deal with MDG 6 on Tuberculosis , as a UN Special Envoy to Stop TB, and I am perfectly aware of the dimension of the problems to be overcome to stick to commitments made in 2010...

- Anyway, the dimension and the number of challenges ahead is so big that I really don't think that we can afford to lose time, waste resources, miss opportunities, let alone to allow our people to compete instead of creating synergies, exploring common interest and move forward to deliver.

- So for me it is crucial that you and me, we make it clear to all that:
 - UNESCO and the AoC are determined to cooperate within the specific mission of each one, mutually respecting their autonomy, mission and mechanisms;

 - UNESCO and the AoC are committed to work together in order to deliver;

 - UNESCO and the AoC are determined to coordinate their action in the fields where identified complementarities bring added value and where common initiatives can bring change on the ground

- Because after all, we are all working to improve people's life, life of those in greatest need – peaceful life between communities and societies.

- Now concerning our **MoU and the neew to renew it**, my proposal is that your collaborators and my secretariat in New York prepare a new draft to be signed at the Rio Forum in May.

- In this regard, I would only like to make three points:
 - the MoU signed in 2008 represents, let's say, "an acquis" – I think that its first 3 parts remain valid (mutatis mutandis) and should continue to frame our cooperation;

 - Its fourth part (Areas of joint action) needs to be updated. I would suggest that it be more focused, more concrete, drafted in a suggestive and a more binding way – I am thinking of a limited number of common actions/projects/initiatives to be implemented in the next two year that has to be clearly identified as well as deadlines and implementing partners.

 - Regarding actions to be included, let me just remind you that:
 - The AoC has presented to UNESCO a number of suggestions (namely in the context of the IYRCultures);
 - there are still some ongoing projects going that have to be pushed to the next MoU (namely: the Intercultural VadeMecum included in Restore Trust, Rebuild Bridges;

UNESCO Unitwin AoC Chair on Media and Information
Literacy for Intercultural Dialogue)

- In times of crisis I think that it is crucial to **cooperate** and to **coordinate**

- As a final general remark, let me just remind you that, as you may know, the AoC is pushing forward **National Strategies for Intercultural Dialogue and Regional Strategies – these are two unique opportunities of collaboration between your organization and the Alliance.**

- **National Plans for Intercultural Dialogue** – this is a field where I think UNESCO may give an outstanding contribution.

- **What are National Plans for Intercultural Dialogue ?** These are a powerful political tool to devise new policies and strategies aimed at developing good governance of intercultural dialogue at the national level in a comprehensive and coherent way within a long term perspective covering the 4 fields of action of the AoC : education, youth, media and migration.

- However, as an emerging issue on political and policy agendas, a comprehensive and accurate approach is needed with a view to working out possible common standards, to develop tentative criteria to inform decisions on what makes a project “good or best practice”, and to implement appropriate policies for intercultural dialogue and cultural rights covering the four main fields of action of the Alliance.

- I have suggested in this regard that a Conference with Focal Points of the Alliance of Civilizations, national agencies and coordinators dealing with cultural diversity issues and experts worldwide is organized by the end of 2010 under the auspices of the UNESCO to help generating sources of good practice projects, inspire initiatives, develop standard indicators for evaluation and monitoring programmes and open the way towards a common paradigm or strategy for intercultural dialogue.

- This common paradigm could be underpinned by a four-step approach – mapping roads; breaking down walls; building bridges; and sharing spaces - which will also serve as the structure of the programme of the above mentioned Conference and hopefully will lead to a common charter with recommendations for good governance of cultural diversity.

- Regarding now Regional Strategies

- Our first **Regional Strategy was presented in Sarajevo on 14th December** – now we will start the discussion of the Action Plan to be presented in Rio – I hope I can count on your active participation – In Sarajevo we had very good working sessions – there was already a number of interesting projects presented – so I hope you will be among our strong leading partners because the role of the Alliance is only one of a broker, a convener and a catalysts – you have the expertise and you are on the ground; so with other partners (such as for instance the Council of Europe) I hope that we can help to deliver more and more because the need are unfortunately big enough to have room for everybody!

- I dare to say the same thing for the **Mediterranean Strategy** – I want to see you represented at the 2nd preparatory meeting because we did not attend the 1st one in Alexandria!

- And I hope that you, yourself, you will attend the Alexandria meeting on 8-9 March.

- Moreover, we are preparing our 3rd Forum in Rio (please save the date 28-29 May 2010) – we would like the UNESCO to prepare a working session as it is suggested in a proposal sent to your predecessor (on 2010 international year of rapprochement of cultures)

- We have framed it as a Plenary Session – initially it was a working session, but in consultation with the host country in order to accommodate your expectations we turn it into a Plenary because of the 2010 International Year for the rapprochement of cultures that UNESCO leads. But also to pay tribute to the priority that you give to cultural diversity issues.

- So in Rio Forum we could have a strong presence of UNESCO + celebration of 2010 year of Rapprochement of Cultures

- Ie
 - Signature of new MoU UNESCO+AoC

 - Plenary session organized by UNESCO

 - There is a side event a musical performance) to be organized – this is why that we also suggested that in the Pre-Forum session you could organize an encounter with participants in musical groups/experiences/orchestras based on mixing diversity to reflect on the power of music to bridge divides + musical performance.

 - To announce a “rapprochement of cultures special award” for civil society projects aiming to promote this aim that could be included in the Marketplace of Ideas.

