

*Check against delivery*



**ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**

**UN HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**

**CLOSING SESSION**

**SECOND FORUM**

*Istanbul,  
April 7, 2009*

Minister Babacan

Minister Moratinos

Minister Aydin

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

My dear Friends of the Alliance

- It is now time to close our Forum after a very intensive and fruitful program.
  
- Allow me to seize this opportunity to convey to you all my warmest thanks for your contribution to the success of this Second Annual Forum, particularly indeed to our Turkish friends, who hosted this event and offered us their friendly and exquisite hospitality.
  
- I do hope that, as me, you will keep fond memories of our second gathering and that you go home with fresh ideas and projects, and a glimpse of a renewed hope – that, if we unite our efforts and go ahead, we will bring some change to the world.

- Let me now emphasize that, in my view, we have met our four main objectives:
  - Profiling the AoC Forum as a key gathering, providing room for an **open, inclusive and global dialogue** among a wide range of players who are involved in promoting good governance of cultural diversity and intercultural cooperation, including political leaders, heads of international and multilateral bodies, religious leaders, as well as corporate sector, media, youth and civil society representatives.
  - Branding the Forum as a platform for **dialogue that delivers**. It is about concrete, practical projects that make a real difference to the lives of people on the ground
  - Enhancing the profile of the Alliance as a **global matchmaker**. It connects innovative, groundbreaking grassroots initiatives with policy makers and potential funders who can help scale up these projects and give them global prominence.
  - Highlighting the political leverage of the Alliance, by showcasing the strong commitment of its members to **turn its political objectives into *glocal* deliverables**.

- In addition to generating new ideas and areas for action, in the 2009 AoC Forum a number of key projects and strategic partnerships have been launched and broadcasted.
  
- Specifically, the outcomes of the 2009 Annual Forum include the following:
  1. **Announcement of new National Plans and regional strategies for intercultural dialogue by governments and multilateral organizations to advance AoC objectives** in their respective countries and region – this is the case of several countries such as Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Montenegro, Portugal, Russian Federation, Qatar and Slovenia as well as two regional Strategies, one for the East-European countries and the other for the Euro-Mediterranean region. With regards to the East-European Strategy, an International Conference in Sarajevo to take place in the second half of this year has been announced. Concerning the Euro-Mediterranean Regional Strategy, a set of initiatives will be carried out in order to prepare its adoption in a meeting to be hosted by Egypt. Moreover, a forthcoming Regional Strategy for the Ibero-American countries has also been announced.

2. **Establishment of a new set of partnership agreements** which will enable the AoC to leverage networks, contacts, and competitive advantages of partners in the implementation of its programs. We have signed 7 agreements - with the International Organization of Migration, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Ibero-American General Secretariat, the Anna Lindh Foundation, l'Organisation de la Francophonie, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries and the Union Latine.
  
3. The launch of a **Global Youth Movement for the Alliance of Civilizations** composed of youth organizations and individuals who make the objectives of the Alliance a central part of their daily lives through concrete projects and personal commitments.
  
4. Launching of a **number of new initiatives** such as:
  - a. **“Restore Trust, Rebuild Bridges”**, a cluster of Euro-Mediterranean projects, led by the Alliance and the Anna Lindh Foundation, to be developed by a number of partners, aimed at restoring trust and rebuilding bridges in that region in the wake of the Gaza crisis.

- b. **Dialogue Café**, a highly innovative technological project aimed at creating a global collective of ordinary citizens, who will explore common interests across divides, and will be encouraged to collaborate on common projects. This project by CISCO will be the first example of a true Private-Public global Partnership, involving the business sector, foundations, universities and, we hope, local public authorities as well.
- c. An initial showcasing of the **Alliance Fellowship Program** to facilitate meaningful exchanges of young leaders from a number of countries and establish working relationships between them.
- d. **Plural +**, a youth film festival focused on migration themes to be launched in partnership with the International Organization for Migration.
- e. *Doing Business in a Multi-cultural World – Challenges and Opportunities*, a joint report of the **Alliance of Civilizations** and the **UN Global Compact** showcasing a range of best practices and case studies for companies to use in responding to the diversity of today's business environments
- f. The launch of *Mapping Media Education Policies Around the World*, a joint publication by the Alliance and UNESCO on media education policies
- g. A **joint rapid response media framework** developed with the Anna Lindh Foundation and the European Commission to serve the needs of journalists working across the Mediterranean region. This initiative will provide user-friendly access to information and expertise in the context of crises with cultural dimensions as well as a support mechanism to bring together international journalists, editors and relevant experts for media dialogue.
- h. **The Alliance Research Network** was launched with 12 universities from across the world.

i. **The launch of the Education About Religions and Beliefs Clearinghouse** with 12 partners from around the world.

Dear Friends

- This is only an overview of the more tangible outcomes. But for me, the debates held in the working sessions, the exchange of views and information were also of the utmost importance and they will play a key role in our future endeavors.
- I am particularly grateful to the honorable members of the Group of Friends who accepted for the first time to have an interactive working session on some topical issues, such as *Politics and religion; Fostering civil society role in building inclusive societies; Rethinking of Education as a critical key for fostering respect and understanding; Extremism and radicalization; Public diplomacy.*
- Be assured that I will take your suggestions and remarks into consideration, and let me express my heartfelt thanks for your invaluable input and for your political support.
- Now, you may ask, and what about the way forward?
- There are already a number of clear indications for our upcoming journey to Brazil.

➤ Let me highlight five of them:

- enlarge the global scope of the Alliance, streamline and consolidate National Plans and Regional Strategies for intercultural dialogue;
- place education and youth as top priority areas of action for the Alliance;
- strengthening the role played by civil society and the private sector in addressing cultural diversity issues and develop a closer cooperation at all levels;
- developing joint multi-stakeholders initiatives at the local, regional and international level, namely through city diplomacy initiatives aimed at promoting a better inter-cultural understanding, and preventing the mounting of tensions and the rise of extremism;
- reinforce the voice of the Alliance within the international community, and making it a reliable, fully operational tool for soft and smart diplomacy for a global partnership for peace.

Dear Friends

- Many of us expressed concerns that the severe economic and financial crisis that hits the world may carry with it the risks of a rise in hostility towards the “other”, seen as the cause of all evils or at least as an obstacle to solutions.

- Moreover others insist that the persistence of conflicts of a political nature introduces strong limitations to the Alliance 's outreach.
- Let's have realistic expectations about the Alliance and work to turn its goals into achievements.
- The Alliance is there to help - to prevent divides, to promote good governance of cultural diversity, and to build more inclusive and participative societies. Societies of equality, dignity and respect for human rights, within a less dramatically imbalanced world.
- There are in the air, indications that the necessary dialogue, the required multilateral and multi-stakeholder approach may get some welcome boost.
- I have been impressed by the intensity of the many action-oriented discussions, which developed during these two days in different formats and from different perspectives.
- Let's assume that the Alliance has the power to mobilize high level and high profile commitments in support of innovative cross-cultural projects and dialogue that generates greater cultural understanding.
- Let's assume that it is in a key position to galvanize support from governments (particularly GoF members) as well as from the corporate sector, international organizations and civil society with a view to developing a number of joint initiatives.

- Let's assume that the Alliance of Civilizations is a unique example of the way in which the UN can adapt to emerging challenges.

Dear Friends

- Now I can say that we are prepared for our next journey to Brazil. I also have the pleasure to announce that after Brazil we will continue, most probably with Qatar and Austria in our road-map as next stops.
- Until then, so many responsibilities ahead for all of us to show that the Alliance is the right initiative at the right moment!
- Urgent action is needed to stop further degradation of human atmosphere. Let's keep united and firm in our conviction that we can change the world.
- Let's go back to our work. Lets' move forward because emergencies do not wait.

Many thanks