

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Mr. President of the General Assembly,  
Dr. Sampaio, High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentleman:

The management of peaceful coexistence between cultures, both inside and outside of our borders, is going to constitute one of the major challenges that the international community will have to face in the coming years, if we are to avert a serious threat to international security.

For the Alliance of Civilizations to be an innovative instrument to face these 21<sup>st</sup> century threats, we should try to transform it into a political concept that we can all share. Just as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, or the Barcelona Process, have been able to make the Mediterranean a space for cooperation between EU countries and those on its southern shore, the Alliance of Civilizations aims to create a global political space for combating lack of mutual understanding and communication.

I believe that the appointment of the High Representative is a turning point in this initiative's development. The Alliance has gained a "face", a high-profile political figure who is working to articulate and disseminate this new political concept on a worldwide scale.

After consulting with the Secretary-General and the High Representative, Spain has offered to host the first Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations in Madrid on 15 and 16 January 2008. A concept paper has been distributed here.

Our intention is for the Forum to become the initiative's major annual event, serving to:

- Promote our capacity for political mobilization through the Alliance, at different levels:
  - States and international organizations;
  - Young people, media personalities, and opinion-makers;
  - The corporate sector and civil society;
  - Academia and religious leaders.
- Strengthen the Alliance's role as a clearing house, thus helping to give greater impetus and focus to the many projects that international and regional organizations are already carrying out in this area.

The Alliance is action-oriented, and therefore we want the Forum to produce concrete results. I can mention, inter alia, the following:

- Strengthening the role of the Alliance as a mechanism for prevention and crisis management, including through the appointment of Alliance Ambassadors and the establishment of a media rapid response mechanism.
- Putting into action specific projects regarding youth employment and educational exchange.

- Creating a Youth Fund to provide small-scale financing for projects promoting the Alliance's principles.

To achieve all this, the Group of Friends constitutes the nucleus of political support for the Alliance. It has been steadily gaining influence, and currently comprises more than 70 states and international organizations. It is meant to play a key role in forging this new political concept that the Alliance aims to represent.

It is my view that the Alliance will become consolidated to the extent that we manage to integrate it into our own national policies and that we make it a true state policy:

- Integrating it into the guiding principles of our respective foreign policies.
- Incorporating it, moreover, as a source of our own domestic policies in such areas as education, youth, migration or the mass media.

Therefore, I welcome his suggestions regarding the possible drafting, in the future, of "Partnership Charts with the Alliance", as well as "National Strategies." These ideas deserve further consideration.

For my part, I would like to announce that Spain has the intention of drafting a National Plan for the Alliance, addressing both its foreign and domestic aspects. More coherence and visibility should be given to the various things that we are already doing nationally and through our international cooperation policies in these areas. I would like to remind you here of the recent establishment in my country of Casa Árabe, or "Arab House", Casa Sefarad-Israel, Casa África and Casa Asia, which have joined the well-established Casa América, and whose goal is none other than to be tools for promoting intercultural dialogue.

Our intention is to be able to present the main lines of this Spanish National Plan during the first Forum of the Alliance in January.

I would like to end my remarks here by reiterating to the High Representative my unconditional commitment to cooperate with him, and to take advantage of this opportunity to invite all of the Foreign Ministers of the Alliance of Civilizations' Group of Friends to come to Madrid on 15 and 16 January 2008, to participate in the first Forum of the Alliance.

Thank you.