



**PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**STATEMENT BY**

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**MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS  
OF THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**

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Mr. President of the General Assembly,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to thank the President of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Kerim, the Secretary-General of the UN, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for their participation in support of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, as well as for their encouraging words.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the High Representative Mr. Sampaio for his dedicated and able leadership. We are confident that with you, Mr. High Representative, our targets will be met.

When we are asked why we place such great importance on this process and why we have invested so heavily in getting the Alliance of Civilizations initiative operational, our answer is simple. We are faced with a serious undercurrent – with clear manifestations - that many choose to ignore and we need to address this problem now.

Troubling events of recent years have highlighted the need to engage in a meaningful and operational dialogue among different cultures and belief systems. I will not dwell on each of these cases as we are all familiar with them, and they are part of the reason why we are in this room today. The mini crises we have all had to confront are not isolated by nature. They are, on the contrary, linked and symptomatic of a larger problem that has been confronting us all.

Indeed, as a result of many decades of negative interaction and disconnect, tremors are being felt along the major cultural and religious fault lines. Decades old injustices and inequalities on the one hand and entrenched fears and suspicions on the other are unfortunately all combining to foment prejudice, animosity, intolerance, anger and the like. This cause and effect relationship, coupled with abject ignorance on a global scale, is a potent mix that breeds extremism.

The fact is that instead of attracting each other to create synergy, the dominant cultures and belief systems of our day are repelling one another. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the complicated relationship between the West and the Islamic World. No doubt, this phenomenon is not new. But the urgency with which it needs to be dealt with is all too clear. The regression towards a confrontational relationship among the reigning belief systems of our time is a major risk and a long term challenge which commands our immediate attention.

It is in this light that we have co-sponsored the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) initiative together with the Government of Spain. The report of the High Level Group that was presented to the UN Secretary General almost one year ago in Istanbul contains critical insights and crucial recommendations.

Success in the implementation phase which has already begun is imperative if lasting solutions are to be found to the problems we are faced with. Following up on the recommendations contained in the High Level Group's Report will be crucial.

The Group of Friends formed within the UN will be the bedrock of our support. We are pleased to see that this is, indeed, a very strong group. But declarations of national support alone will not be enough. We need all relevant actors in this field, from the media to the academia, from civil society to government agencies to actively work

together to develop and implement projects geared at realizing the goals of the AoC. And for this, we will need committed leadership at the political level and that is where everyone in this room comes in.

In this connection, we fully support the proposals of the High Representative, particularly to develop national strategies for cross-cultural dialogue in the areas identified in the report of the High-Level Group. For its part, Turkey will consolidate its efforts in crafting a comprehensive National Plan in line with the philosophy of AoC.

We have an opportunity to tackle a very serious issue before it gets worse and evolves into a major threat whose repercussions will be felt on a day to day basis. It is my sincere hope that we can rise to the occasion and meet the challenge before it is too late. After all, success can only be attained if we can harness our comparative advantages to our mutual benefit and achieve a sustained level of cooperation through genuine solidarity.

Let me in conclusion thank, once again, all the esteemed participants. I would be remiss if I do not extend Turkey's particular thanks to the High Representative and his able staff for all the work that they have been doing to commence the implementation phase of the initiative.

It has been, indeed, a great pleasure for me to be together with the members of the Group of Friends of the Alliance. I would like thank each and every member of the Group for their continued support and participation in this critical endeavor.