



ELEMENTOS PARA INTERVENCIÓN

64º PERIODO DE SESIONES DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL

ELEMENTOS INTERVENCIÓN SR. MINISTRO EN REUNIÓN MINISTERIAL DEL GRUPO DE AMIGOS (Nueva York, 26 Septiembre 2009)

First, I would like to thank the HR for the Alliance of Civilizations, Dr. Jorge Sampaio, for the praiseworthy efforts that he is carrying out in promoting and developing the Alliance, as well as for his work since our last meeting in Istanbul, which has resulted in the presentation of the second Annual Report on the activities of the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC), and the second Action Plan for the next two years.

The growth experienced by the AoC Group of Friends gives us all cause for satisfaction. The same can be said for the clearly growing interest that the initiative has awakened in civil society and the involvement of a variety of actors in AoC-related projects. We shall continue this work, and encourage other countries and actors to join in this effort, and to commit to the goals of advancing dialogue and cooperation.

The growing interest and trust that the Alliance of Civilizations inspires demand of the Group of Friends a joint effort, aimed at counteracting the ideologies of hate leading to division and confrontation, and at working for peace, respect, and tolerance.



This trust and interest in the AoC also calls us to demand coherence between domestic and foreign policy. There are now nearly twenty countries that have committed to incorporating, at the national level, the principles and objectives of the Alliance through national strategies. In January 2008, Spain presented its first National Plan for the Alliance of Civilizations, and it is currently preparing the second. We urge other countries to follow this path.

The Third Alliance of Civilizations Forum will be held in Rio de Janeiro, and I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to thank Minister Amor for his country's generous offer. After the first two Forums, in Madrid and Istanbul, the Alliance is leaving the Mediterranean, where it began, and expanding its horizons. The meeting in Rio will contribute to strengthening its global aspect, while also providing an opportunity to move forward in developing its regional dimension, areas in which the results of our efforts can be notably enhanced by the exchange of experiences and by discussing solutions to our shared problems, optimizing our efforts and increasing their collective impact.

The HR has been doing outstanding work for the development of AoC Regional Strategies, which we firmly support and will promote. We intend to hold a Conference in Sarajevo at the end of this year, with the aim of laying the foundation of the Regional Strategy for Southeastern Europe within the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations, and preliminary work is already underway.

Furthermore, the necessary steps are being taking in order to develop Regional Strategies for the Ibero-American area, and for the Euro-Mediterranean region, and these advances will be presented at the Third Forum. The Brazil Forum will also enable us to debate and explore possible means of cooperation in other regions, especially in Africa and Asia.

These developments do not, however, overextend the Alliance of Civilizations' original objectives. On the contrary, they indicate that we are moving forward, using all of the instruments at hand, in our common aspiration of fostering cooperation and understanding among nations and peoples having different cultures and religions, and counteracting the forces that feed polarization and extremism.

In addition, we are paying particular attention to the relations between Muslim and Western societies. This relationship is also a



priority objective for the EU, and will be a focus of attention during Spain's upcoming Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2010.

The AoC recognizes the essential contribution of religions and of the values and beliefs which are common to the majority of confessions in the defence of a peaceful coexistence and of human rights. Spain follows with great interest the different initiatives in the field of inter-religious dialogue in the interest of mutual understanding and the search of common spaces, where we could build harmonic relations within individuals and within communities. This commitment on dialogue is complementary with our strong defence of the freedom of religion and beliefs, which are inalienable rights that affect the human being in its inner dimension. We should raise our voices against every form of discrimination or intolerance regarding the peaceful exercise of religious freedom and, according to this, we call upon the protection of minorities and their religious traditions, in order to guarantee the real exercise of this freedom and to appreciate their contribution to cultural and to social coexistence.

Within the framework of the United Nations, we should continue working to consolidate the AoC system and its specialized bodies. We welcome the proposal of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Ali Treki, to dedicate the General Debate session to strengthening multilateralism and a dialogue of civilizations for peace, security and international development as effective responses to global crises.

This is, therefore, the right time to present to the General Assembly a Resolution on the Alliance of Civilizations, for the purpose of obtaining the GA's formal and political backing. This is a major step, not only for consolidating this initiative on an international level, but also for highlighting its potential as a tool at the service of the United Nations within the framework of a global partnership for peace, as well as an instrument for preventive diplomacy. Through the Alliance of Civilizations, we are not only heeding the call made by the General Assembly in its Resolution 56/6, of 21 November 2001, which adopted the "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations"; we are also able to advance and strengthen this process with a singular new instrument, whose structure and operational capacity offer major advantages, and we should make the best use of it.



Much progress has been made since the formal launching of the AoC initiative by the UN Secretary-General in July 2005, co-sponsored by Spain and Turkey, but we should not let ourselves fall into complacency. The challenges that the Alliance of Civilizations faces continue to be very great, and they require our firm support, both political and economic. We have in our hands a project that, like no other, can provide positive responses to the challenges stemming from the complexity of the times in which we live, marked by globalization. The Alliance of Civilizations maps out paths for us to follow in tackling an enormous task—a world where tolerance and harmony prevail—which demands that we all participate, and which is the very essence of the UN. I encourage you to do so, here at this annual meeting that aims to strengthen peace and justice in the international community.

EL DIRECTOR GENERAL

Jorge Domecq