

**JOINT DECLARATION
REGARDING THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

**H.E. MR. JOSE LUIS RODRIGUEZ ZAPATERO
PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN
AND
H.E. MR. RECEP TAYYİP ERDOGAN
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**

**CO-SPONSORS OF
THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS INITIATIVE
22 JULY 2006**

The current dramatic escalation of violence in the Middle East has already left hundreds of innocent civilians dead and many more wounded. We condemn all forms of terrorism . We can neither accept bombs or missiles landing on civilians. We firmly reject any disproportionate use of force. We demand the release of the soldiers kidnapped and of those detained in the course of events including ministers and deputies.

Denial of the most fundamental and inalienable rights to life, security and freedom threatens to widen even further the gap that we, the Co-Sponsors of the Alliance of Civilizations, strive to narrow. The grave repercussions of this confrontation will be felt well beyond the Middle East.

It is not only innocent children, women and the elderly but all the fundamental values upheld by humanity that are struggling for survival under the debris of the homes, bridges, schools, hospitals, power stations, infrastructure and civilian settlement areas being punished by bombing.

We believe that confrontation in the Middle East is not inevitable; on the contrary, peace is possible in the region. Moreover, the solutions have already been identified. We may need to review the approach to peace followed so far but it is imperative that we manage to put the peace process back on track as a matter of urgency. What is required is enough political courage to deliver the difficult concessions that all concerned parties must make for the sake of peace and security for all in the region.

We are certain that in a not too distant future, the citizens of all the countries in the region will look back and not understand why today their leaders were unable to solve their differences through dialogue and negotiations.

We call upon the United Nations, the EU and other relevant all international organizations, nations and international leaders and political decision makers, to intensify ongoing efforts to bring an end to this spiral of violence and hostility that runs the risk of dragging the entire region into a chaotic deadlock with global repercussions.

We as co-sponsors of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative stand ready to contribute in whichever way may be appropriate. Weapons must give way to dialogue and negotiations. There is no time to lose; the time for joint action to achieve a ceasefire and peace is now. Our future is at stake. We cannot allow ourselves to simply watch the tragedy continue to unfold.

* * *