



**MESSAGE OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE ALLIANCE OF
CIVILIZATIONS HIGH-LEVEL GROUP, PALMA DE MALLORCA, 27
NOVEMBER 2005**

*Delivered by S. Iqbal Riza
Special Adviser of the Secretary-General
on the Alliance of Civilizations*

I am delighted to send my warmest wishes to this launch of this first meeting of the High-level Group on the Alliance of Civilizations.

I am grateful to each of you for offering your time and knowledge to this essential and timely initiative. Allow me also to express special thanks the Governments of Spain and Turkey for launching this initiative and for their continued support.

It is appropriate that you meet in Spain, a land rich in both Islamic and Western traditions. A millennium ago, the Iberian peninsula proved the proverbial melting pot of East and West. It gave rise to hostilities and conflict. Yet it was learning and the exchange of ideas that bequeathed the more lasting legacy, benefiting all humanity in the process.

Regrettably, so many centuries later, we are experiencing a period of sharply increasing intolerance, extremism and violence. Trends of recent years have strained relations between East and West. They have notably strained perceptions between Islamic and Western peoples. If unaddressed, these may even threaten stability in our world.

Your High-level Group must assess these alarming developments. And it must propose a collective response to defuse these tensions. Your diverse backgrounds and experiences epitomise what we all must strive towards: an alliance of social, political and civil forces to counter policies and actions which isolate cultures and societies from one another. Only by such concerted efforts to come together can we deprive the extremist, and the terrorist, of the discontent and mistrust that serves as his oxygen.

This is a challenging task. It would be easy to descend into generalities, or adopt inflexible and unbridgeable positions. I trust you will avoid those pitfalls.

Your overriding goal is manifest: our common humanity must triumph over perceived differences. We live in one world. We have no choice but to understand and respect each other, live peacefully together and search for commonality in the best of our respective traditions.

For in the end, your work is not only for an Alliance for Civilizations. It is equally for a global civilization for all members of all societies.



Much is expected of you. I thank each one of you for your commitment, and wish you every success in this essential endeavour.

Kofi A. Annan

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**Opening Address of His Excellency Professor Federico Mayor Zaragoza,
Co-Chair of the High Level Group
Palma de Mallorca, November 27, 2005**

Mr. President of the Spanish Government,
Mr. Prime Minister of Turkey,
Distinguished Members of the High Level Group and
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is time for action. It is time for encounters, for dialogue and for mutual recognition. It is time to forge attitudes of solidarity. It is time to mobilize all peoples on the side of concord and conciliation. It is time to abandon forever the perverse proverb, “if you want peace, prepare for war,” replacing it with “if you want peace, work for it through your actions each day ...”

The Alliance is founded on the equal dignity of all human beings. In their diversity — because each individual is unique— capable of creating, with that power that distinguishes us, our hope. All of us are different, but all are united in universal principles and values. An Alliance that has respect for all, that includes rather than excluding, that maintains self-esteem, that does not homogenize nor weaken diversity in a melting pot that does not rank its citizens nor permit dominance of any kind.

Mr. President, the very composition of this group is a symbol of the Alliance that we seek and are striving to achieve: people from different ethnic groups, with different ideologies, beliefs, traditions, projects... all seated around a table to calmly present their points of view and to listen to those of others, being aware that we all share a common destiny, that all of us have the duty to remember and, above all, the duty to forge daily with our actions a brighter and clearer future for our children.

We cannot wait for “others”, those in higher positions, to clean house and to put things in order. Each one of us, each citizen who yearns to live in peace must do his part so that his children and grandchildren cannot look back and ask, “Why did they remain silent?” “Why did they let fear overcome them when their future, our future, was at stake?”

All representatives of society—NGO’s, and student, artistic, academic, scientific and sports associations and institutes, all must collaborate in this mobilization, because it is their security, peace, happiness and sharing that must be sown and built each day... Those which most easily attract our youth have special responsibilities in that regard...



From Palma de Mallorca by the sea: by a sea that tells us at each moment, with each wave that there may be many seas, but that there is really just one...

I want to express to all of the inhabitants of the Balearic Islands our pleasure at being able to hold this first Group meeting in Palma de Mallorca, a place of exceptional beauty, which is so renowned for its hospitality.

I would like to express my appreciation to President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero for this initiative, to which today –since the recent United Nations summit– all Heads of State and Government are now committed... and to Prime Minister Erdogan, co-sponsor of what is now a worldwide initiative:

We reaffirm the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action adopted by the General Assembly and the value of different initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including the dialogue on interfaith cooperation. We commit ourselves to taking action to promote a culture of peace and dialogue at the local, national, regional and international levels and request the Secretary-General to explore enhancing implementation mechanisms and to follow up on those initiatives. In this regard, we also welcome the Alliance of Civilizations initiative announced by the Secretary-General on 14 July 2005. (Paragraph 144 of the Final Declaration of the Millennium Summit +5. A/RES/60/1)

In the name of the entire Group we wish to thank the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Secretariat for their special support. My dear and distinguished Group members: there is still time to mobilize the people in support of dialogue, of the alliance, of conciliation and of peace. At crosscurrents, against those who refuse to accept that the time for knowledge and the word has arrived, forever replacing force, imposition and violence. We cannot change the past, but we can change the future and it is our responsibility to do so. We must commit ourselves to this task, because we cannot leave our descendants, the future generations, a house full of hostility, dilapidated and cold.

This is the time for action. Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary General: please rest assured that this Group's firm intention is to help you to make your dream a reality, your dream of weaving, with all of our hands together in a tapestry of multicolored filaments, an alliance among all cultures, customs and civilizations in which only one attitude is unacceptable: the attitude of extremism, violence and imposition. We need only to erase one word from our minds and our dictionaries: "indisputable."

Let's put this into practice. The time for action has come!
Thank you very much.

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**Opening Address of His Excellency Prof. Dr. Mehmet Aydin, Minister of State of
the Turkish Republic, Co-Chair of the High Level Group
Palma de Mallorca, November 27, 2005**

“The Alliance of Civilization” initiative, launched by the Turkish and Spanish Prime Ministers and fully supported by the Secretary General of the UN, is a timely project from many points of view. The vision and the mission of the Initiative is very clear: “To address emerging threats emanating from hostile perceptions that ferment violence, and to bring about cooperation among various efforts to heal the wounds opened by misunderstandings, misrepresentations, unfounded prejudices, irrational reactions, extremism of all sorts and the unrestrained use of power which has not only physically destroying consequences but culturally confusing, humiliating and alienating effects at a very large scale.”

The Initiative aims to create an enabling atmosphere to contribute to the joint efforts which want to pass from a climate of “clash” through which we are going now, to a climate of alliance. which is indispensable if we are in search of a peaceful co-existence. We all know that many people, many competent analysts, many world leaders and administrations rejected the idea of a “clash of civilizations.” But this did not prevent some of them from introducing different versions of the “clash argument” into their discourse. Many powerful world leaders did not hesitate, for instance, to explain certain tragic events in terms of civilization-related arguments that run more or less like this: “They are against our values, democracy and human rights regime.” Some well-known scholars were more than ready and happy to give this discourse an academic gloss. Let us remember once more what a Western author stated more than a decade ago: They are against our secular vision, our Judeo-Christian heritage. and worldwide expansion of both. This is not less than a clash of civilization.¹

This argument and its more detailed versions put forward by other authors did not fail to create or strengthen its counter-part: “They are against our religion, our cultural values. They want to destroy us so as to make it easier for them to have a free hand on our natural and human resources by dominating us militarily, materially and even, culturally.” It seems to me fairly clear that to a certain extent, the clash discourse translates the political into the language of civilization, and its counter-part translates the political into the language of religion; thus, both feeding each other.

As the initiators of the Alliance Project state, this new approach is going to be open, comprehensive, dialogical and action-oriented. It is not in search of a scapegoat to lay the blame on. There are extremism, integrism, moral decadence, political opportunism, ruthless and politically corrupt leaders in all cultures and civilizations. They have created a pessimistic environment practically everywhere. That is the reason why most of us began to worry, to be concerned about the future of reasonable pluralism, the politics of

¹ See Bernard Lewis “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990.



multiculturalism, democratic governance, the world security and peace without which we cannot even imagine a human and humane form of co-existence.

The Alliance of Civilizations initiative, like all the previous initiatives launched by the UN such as the Promotion of Culture and Peace, and Dialogue Among Civilizations, is of the opinion that a civilizational understanding is not only a possibility but a necessity.

The Alliance of Civilizations initiative has to spare some time and energy in order to produce and gather more reliable knowledge on civilizational commonality and diversity, and a framework that would create a reasonable environment for their management. Here we need more international discussions and debates on this historically, culturally and politically sensitive issue.

However something more than the exchange of knowledge, intellectual, moral and material achievements has to be done in order to translate ideas, knowledge and resolutions into practice. The Alliance Project must be, as I have just said, an action-oriented project at all levels, from education to politics.

