

Press Release

For the first time, a Pre-Forum of Civil Society will take place in Doha, Qatar, May 3-4, 2011; as a mile stone for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

The Pre Forum will put into a new light the convergence of intercultural, governance and development issues, with a special focus on the Arab World.

Doha and New York, April 28, 2011

Qatar will host on May 3-4 the first Pre Forum of Civil Society of the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

New York, Doha, May 2, 2011 - It will be **the first major event in the run-up to the December, 2011 Fourth Annual Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations**, a major initiative affiliated with the United Nations. The Alliance of Civilizations seeks to address misunderstanding and fear from the Other and build trust and confidence that stems from mutual knowledge and understanding. The Alliance is backed by a growing group of more than 100 countries and 20 international and regional organizations.

The Doha Pre Forum will bring together more than 170 civil society leaders, representing regional and national networks from Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, Europe, North America, Asia and the MENA region.

This ambition of mutual understanding and cooperative action is essential to reduce tensions, to foster peace and to contribute to economic and social development.

"How can we live together in a spirit of respect and cooperation while the increasing diversity of our societies can generate anxiety, divisions and pressure on fragile democracies? That is the question we must deal with at the Alliance of Civilizations and to which we must continue to respond", said HE Dr Jorge Sampaio, United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.

The 4th global Forum of the UNAOC Doha Forum aims to be a turning point embodied by Qatar's capital city of Doha, under the impulsion of HH Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser.

Among the priorities of the Pre-Forum, consolidation of education, youth, media and migration programs will rank high, as well as encouraging more substantive commitments from all stakeholders – public and private.

Building on the Millennium Declaration statement that “*differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity*”, HH Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser **proposed for the Doha Forum a focused linkage between the program of the Alliance of Civilizations and the scope of the Millennium Development Goals**. This spirit is illustrated by her strong words : *We must live our belief that the values of justice and equality still rule.*”

The Doha Pre-Forum of Civil Society will address **cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and human rights as fundamental conditions to promote sustainable development strategies**.

Back to back with the first ever organized consultations session with civil society organizations, the AoC is also convening the Sixth Focal Points meeting on 2 May, 2011. The Focal Points meeting will focus on the UNAOC National Plans – the importance of strengthening the national ownership of the UNAOC’s objectives and engagement, ongoing projects and regional initiatives – update and discussion and the preparation of the Doha Forum and will give an opportunity for Focal Points to interact with Civil Society organizations.

The Qatar Committee for the Alliance of Civilizations is developing a **wide and unprecedented consultation of actors of the Civil Society and Group of Friends countries** to set concrete targets for intercultural dialogue and understanding which will bring fresh ideas and initiatives

The current events in the Arab World are a powerful remainder of the aspiration of peoples to justice, freedom, shared prosperity and motivating personal perspectives, as well as the growing power of the Civil Society in the era of new media, direct democracy and global citizenship.

By putting Civil Society at the center stage, the Doha Pre-Forum aims at helping people, especially the youth, to change their assets and aspirations into skills and achievement, in a world of deep transformations.

The Pre-Forum will focus on a number of new directions to embody this “*turning point*”, not only in the Alliance’s role to build dialogue and peace among people and nations but also to contribute to foster sustainable development

Background for media:

Qatar Committee for Alliance of Civilizations was established by the decision No. (8) of the Council of Ministers. The decision was approved by H.H Sheikh Tameem Bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir's Deputy, on 29 March 2010.

The committee works to consolidate the role of the State of Qatar in highlighting the contribution of the Arab and Islamic civilization alongside with other civilizations to enhance human development and the dialogue role, solving conflicts, confirming values of tolerance, solidarity and peace between the people of the world, and combating extremism and fanaticism.

The committee seeks to achieve closer cooperation between races, religions and cultures, establish the foundation of solidarity exchange of expertise and benefits between the peoples, based on the principles of truth, justice and equality to further realize humanitarian objectives as a whole.

About the UNAOC:

The UN Alliance of Civilizations was established in 2005 as an initiative of the UN Secretary General, under the cosponsorship of the President of the Government of Spain and the Prime Minister of Turkey. It emerged out of a conviction that, in order to achieve sustainable peace, long-standing divisions and misperceptions between cultures need to be addressed. In April 2007, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, as High Representative for the Alliance. Under his leadership, the Alliance promotes dialogue that delivers change on the ground. It is supported by a growing Group of Friends of 128 governments and international organizations. The UNAOC is also involving many other partners.

Attachment: Pre-forum meeting Agenda.

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