

АЛИАНС НА ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИИТЕ



ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

FOR THE PARTICIPATION

OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

IN THE UN INITIATIVE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

PART ONE: CONCEPT PAPER

PART TWO: PLAN OF ACTION (May 2007 – 2009)

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CONCEPT PAPER
FOR THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS
(STRATEGIC AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK)

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INTRODUCTION

Back in July 2005, the Secretary-General of the United Nations launched the beginning of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, acting on a proposal by the President of the Government of Spain Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, sponsored by the Prime-Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Since then the Alliance of Civilizations has fast become **an undertaking of global dimensions** dealing, first and foremost, with the need to devote **special priority to relations between the West and Muslim countries and communities**. By reaffirming the understanding that no religion is to be regarded as basically compelled to preaching violence, the primary goal of the AoC initiative is to reduce the risk of expanding the deficit of mutual awareness and comprehension, for such a negative trend is likely to lead to the realization of predictions announcing an inevitable “Clash of Civilizations”. Thus, the AoC strives to bring about a change in the thinking and actions of UN Member States and the international community at large.

An important role for the inception of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative was played by the recommendations of the High-Level Group, consisting of twenty eminent representatives of the world political and academic community, the civil society and the media. The Group’s Report, presented in Istanbul on 13 November, 2006, emphasized the conclusion that tensions between the West and the Muslim societies are underlined by political, rather than religious differences. The Report further outlined the potential danger in the use of provocative language by religious and political leaders and by the media, cautioning them to demonstrate a sense of responsibility, respect and mutual esteem. Last but not least, it was stated in the Report that the solution of regional conflicts would certainly exert a beneficial effect on the implementation of the Alliance’s objectives, and recommended establishing **partnerships and international cooperative projects in four basic areas: youth, education, migration, and media**.

Finally, the report paid due attention to the potential, contained in the collective efforts of the international community to deal with the challenges linked to the place and role of **Muslim communities in non-Muslim environment**, first of all in the EC Member States. With regard to crisis-management, the AoC initiative aims at studying the opportunities for a constructive input by civil society organizations, mostly faith-based ones.

In this sense, the Alliance of Civilizations is an initiative designed to counter the factors pushing towards radicalism within Muslim communities. Therefore, the encouragement of dialogue between cultures and religions, protection of human rights, assistance to democracy and for economic prosperity is to be perceived as contribution by the initiative proper in opposing terrorism. The Alliance should be construed also as an **effective means for preventive action** against recruitment of volunteers for terrorist purposes. The Alliance of Civilizations is consonant with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted by the General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/288 on 8 September 2006, in which the United Nations proclaims its active support for this lofty initiative.

On 14 June 2007, in New York, the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Jorge Sampaio unveiled **the Implementation Plan 2007-2009** of the Report of The High Level Group. The Plan envisages the AoC to build its own structural framework, a Voluntary Trust Fund, and a network of leading public figures called ‘Ambassadors of the

Alliance of Civilizations' entrusted to assist the activities of the High Representative, and to contribute the spread of the initiative's principles and goals. In January 2008, at the First Annual Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations the High Representative made additional proposals to strengthen the sharing of experiences and best practices among participating states, namely implementing of national strategies, boosting AoC regional activities and expanding city diplomacy initiatives.

The Implementation Plan and the High Representative's consequent acts have been instrumental in outlining the main directions of work and functions to be assumed by the Alliance. It became clear that on the political level the Alliance will endeavour for the establishment of contacts and dialogue between eminent political figures, religious personalities, media executives, and civil society leaders, but without necessarily creating alternative paths or duplicating mechanisms for ongoing negotiating processes in many places of the world. The Alliance will strive to create **favourable conditions for a fruitful outcome of political talks** by mobilizing support at other levels.

The Alliance intends primarily **to develop partnerships with States, international and regional organizations, civil society groups and private sector** bodies, which share its vision for the future. Nevertheless, the Alliance does not seek to take on the full development of projects on the ground, nor does it intend to run its own set of programmes. Rather, the Alliance will seek to assist in the adaptation, updating and expansion of ongoing activities.

The Alliance will support and **boost interaction, cooperation and exchange of information with similar initiatives** within the United Nations system, i.e. the Dialogue among Civilizations, and the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace.

Bulgaria expressed its support from the very inception of the Alliance. Consequently, in March 2007, the country joined the Group of Friends of the Alliance. On 25 September 2007, in New York, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ivaïlo Kalfin met with Jorge Sampaio, the High Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations, thereby setting the beginning of a high level dialogue between Bulgaria and AoC. The Bulgarian Foreign Minister took part in the first Ministerial meeting of States-Members of the Alliance's Group of Friends.

Bulgaria's active participation in the initiative rests on fundamental causes and arguments. Their subsequent development, in conjunction with defined strategic aims, methods and resources, applicable for their achievement, are the subject of the present Concept Paper.

I. STRATEGIC OUTLOOK AND DIRECTIONS OF WORK

1. Overall Goals

Bulgarian participation in the Alliance of Civilizations represents a tangible contribution to the overall international efforts to promote **understanding and cooperation among diverse cultures and religions**, first of all **between the West and the Muslim world**. This includes efforts **to overcome polarization and extremism**, to bring about **an international environment** propitious for reinforcing **international peace and security, development cooperation**, and enjoyment of **human rights**.

Bulgaria is a country with long-established traditions of tolerance in relations among representatives of various ethnicities and religious backgrounds within Bulgarian society at large. Among the finest examples of Bulgarian historic legacy are the sheltering of Armenian refugees in the wake of World War I, and the saving of Bulgarian Jews during World War II. Bulgaria's new status as geographic boundary of **the European Union** and the incumbent responsibilities illustrate the need for Bulgaria to prove its additional new role as a bridge, not as a barring wall between Europe and its adjacent regions. As we see it, one of the ways to do so is through our participation in the Alliance of Civilizations.

Bulgaria has realized its **transition to modern development in a peaceful way** and without violence. The active Bulgarian commitment to the AoC initiative is also a most appreciated means to make known the Bulgarian experience in the preservation of ethnic peace - an experience that could certainly serve as a useful example for other States as well. Also, the Bulgarian input in **international efforts to regulate regional crises**, the Kosovo problem in particular, is focused, among others, on the preservation of the cultural and religious inheritance and the cultural monuments.

With its participation in the initiative Bulgaria seeks to enlarge the circle of countries within the Group of Friends, in which the Eastern Orthodoxy is the predominant faith.

Likewise, we consider the Bulgarian participation in the initiative to have a special importance of its own nation-wide, in the sense of preserving and **strengthening the best traditions of the Bulgarian people** and its cultural and historic heritage, as well as for avoiding external negative influences and populist xenophobic appeals.

2. MAIN DIRECTIONS OF WORK

2.1 Youth

The call of the Alliance of Civilizations is to expand the opportunities for communication among young people of diverse ethnicities and faiths. This will certainly increase their cultural views by making available to them the achievements of world civilizations. But, also, it will be conducive to making young people receptive to internationally approved **standards in the field of human rights**, and to adopting them as their own basic system of values. Larger youth exchanges through educational, scientific and sports programmes will be a valuable contribution for more intensive communication among young people of diverse background, reinforcing also their **sense of civil responsibility**.

2.2 Education and Research

The Bulgarian participation in the Alliance of Civilizations aims at further improving the opportunities for **educating young people in a spirit of tolerance** and respect for cultural and religious traditions. The introduction of the theme of tolerance in the curriculum at various stages of the school system deserves to be appreciated as an essential part of the educational reform in the country. A basic leading principle in the drafting of school programmes is the treatment of diverse cultures and civilizations on an equal footing. For that purpose close relations with academic organizations will be established and information about the Alliance of Civilizations will be disseminated among school communities and school teachers.

At the same time the Alliance of Civilizations initiative will favour a more active Bulgarian **participation in international research networks** bringing together universities and centers in European and Mediterranean countries. Bulgaria has at its disposal a significant scientific potential in the field of cultural interaction, more precisely in research of the East. A telling case in this respect is the fact that the Bulgarian group ranks the fifth among the scientists-members of the European Union of Arabists and Islamists. Consequently, the Institute on Balkan Studies to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences occupies a central place in the research projects in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. Traditional contacts and accumulated experience, coupled with new possibilities for scientific work, are a good prerequisite for a successful integration of researchers from the Bulgarian academic community in projects of the Alliance of Civilizations.

2.3 Migrant communities, Ethnic and Religious Groups

An important present-day task is to build the necessary **capacity in local administrations** to address the issues of co-existence among diverse ethnic and religious communities in cities, and in mixed population areas.

And again, Bulgaria is convinced that its participation in the AoC initiative will be greatly conducive to neutralizing eventual negative societal views towards migrant communities, and within such communities themselves, most of all with respect to immigrants from Muslim countries.

2.4 Media

By increasing the awareness of the public-at-large of problems in the dialogue among cultures and ethnicities, the media will make their own contribution to addressing negative societal views, stereotypes, prejudices, and bias. We believe that in this context the Bulgarian participation in the initiative may provide a strong impetus for a debate within the societies-at-large on the problems and challenges facing interethnic and intercultural co-existence.

Involving Bulgarian media experts in the initiative will surely enrich the **informed coverage of the themes of interethnic and intercultural dialogues**. It will be of valuable assistance in raising the level of media literacy and encouraging a more responsible journalism.

2.5 Local Authorities

Involvement of the **local authorities** is of paramount importance for the achievement of Alliance of Civilizations' goals. In view of Bulgaria's positive experience in developing good governance initiatives throughout its municipalities and regions, AoC might help further expand that lore in specific areas, namely the management of physical and societal co-existence of various religious and ethnic communities living side by side in Bulgarian cities, towns and villages.

2.6 Private Sector

The involvement of the private sector in Bulgaria as partner to the initiative is an important objective, the realization of which is expected to improve to a large extent the job opportunities for diverse ethnic and religious groups.

3. FUNCTIONS

The Alliance of Civilizations is expected to fully rise to the level of its intended role both globally and within the United Nations system by building bridges and serving as a **convener** establishing contacts among public figures and organizations desirous to commit themselves to the promotion of confidence and understanding among diverse communities. Thus, acting on shared aspirations and mutually beneficial partnerships, the Alliance of Civilizations can be the **catalyst** and **facilitator** for innovative projects aimed at reducing polarization between nations and cultures. In this sense the Alliance of Civilizations will be able to serve also as **a platform for access to collected information and good practices**, to be used by States, institutions and organizations willing to engage in such undertakings.

Functions of the MFA-based Coordination Unit set up to monitor Bulgaria's participation in AoC-related projects:

3.1. Arranging for **partnerships and/or auspices**: The MFA-based Coordination Unit is entitled to advocate the usefulness of Bulgarian projects before the AoC Secretariat. It can also take steps to have a specific project recognized as belonging to the Alliance and to have its symbols used for identification purposes of the project itself. Under certain conditions the project could be placed under the auspices of the High Representative of the UN Secretary-General, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and/or other State and government leaders of the Republic of Bulgaria, provided that the objectives of the project in question are fully consonant with the principles of the Alliance of Civilizations.

3.2. **Serving as catalyst**: The Alliance of Civilizations is expected to be of valuable assistance in developing project ideas and motivating reliable partners to participate in them. This assistance may also take the form of initial investment of human and financial resources by the AoC to help develop an idea to a stage from where interested implementing partners would take it forward. In keeping in line with these functions the MFA-based Coordination Unit is entitled to stimulate outside assistance (from the AoC Secretariat, for instance), as well as to facilitate the convening of groups of interest or disseminating information on the ways and means to take part in AoC-related activities.

3.3. **Facilitating implementation of projects**: The Secretariat of the Alliance of Civilizations may help guide a project throughout part or all of the implementation process, serving as intermediary, mediator or facilitator for partner organizations in charge of implementing the project. Similarly, the MFA-based Coordination Unit may remain involved in a given national project through sponsorship beyond the initial conception stage, up to a determined stage or even up to its final implementation.

3.4 **Managing project implementation**: The MFA-based Coordination Unit will concentrate its efforts to implement national projects of key importance. In such cases the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will seek to identify credible implementation partners willing to assume some of the responsibilities inherent to the project.

4. PARALLEL INITIATIVES AND PROCESSES RELEVANT TO BULGARIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

- 4.1 Programme of Activities to be carried by the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues to the Council of Ministers;
- 4.2 Programmes for the Decade of Roma Inclusion;
- 4.3 Activities stemming from the Statutes of the Directorate for Religious Beliefs to the Council of Ministers;
- 4.4 National Reports of the Republic of Bulgaria on the Implementation of the Millennium Goals for Development;
- 4.5 Activities of the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria;
- 4.6 Activities of the National Commission for Protection from Discrimination.
- 4.7 Activities of the National Committee for UNESCO.
- 4.8 Strategy for the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue;
- 4.9 Campaign to mark the Sixty-fifth Anniversary of the Salvation of Bulgarian Jews during World War II.
- 4.10 Celebrating the 130th Anniversary of Bulgaria's Liberation.
- 4.11. Working programmes of the Diplomatic Institute to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the State Cultural Institute, the office of the Foreign Ministry Spokesman, the Information and Public Relations Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

II. PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

1. Participation in Fora and Meetings of the AoC initiative

1.1 Annual Forums

Bulgaria will take part in the Annual Forums, convened by the High Representative for the United Nations and the host country. Consequently, Bulgaria intends to be represented in the Annual Forums at a high political level and to participate in all working sessions.

1.2 Participation in the meetings of the Group of Friends

Bulgaria will seek to actively participate in the overall work of the Group of Friends of the Alliance, providing input on the Agenda items of the working sessions.

1.3 Interaction with members of the High Level Group and Goodwill Ambassadors of the Alliance of Civilizations

The political supervision of Bulgaria's participation in the initiative maintains contacts and extends invitations to distinguished public figures involved with the Alliance of Civilizations for working visits to Bulgaria, so as to personally promote the initiative within the Bulgarian public-at-large.

2. PARTICIPATION IN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS

2.1 Projects of the Alliance of Civilizations and common pilot projects

Bulgarian participation in the initiative will include optimal forms of involvement with projects, managed or implemented with the decisive assistance of the AoC Secretariat.

2.2 International projects

The **MFA-based Coordination Unit** will endeavour to disseminate information on proposals for partnership projects with foreign participation, and to encourage interested Bulgarian partners to start joint initiatives with colleagues from European, Muslim and other countries.

2.3 National Projects

The underlying goal of the Bulgarian participation in the Alliance of Civilizations is to assist in the development and implementation of projects, consonant with Alliance objectives, at all levels of governance. On **the national level**, due attention will be focused on the institutionalization of cooperation of valid importance to the entire Bulgarian society.

Central to the initiative's attention will be projects capable of enhancing the capacity of **local authority** bodies, such as **regional governor offices, municipal councils and Mayors** of settlements, for the purpose of securing optimal conditions for co-existence among nationals of diverse ethnic and religious background. Of particular importance will be the dissemination of information on best practices of co-existence in larger towns and cities with territorially delineated concentration of ethnic communities, as well as in smaller settlements with mixed population. This is precisely the level at which the MFA-based Coordination Unit should be able to develop highly pertinent projects and to implement them in partnership with local authority bodies, by taking part, within the limits of the possible, in their funding.

3. Communications strategy

The Communications strategy within the Alliance of Civilizations framework is threefold:

- (1) **Making the initiative largely known** and raising the level of public support for its objectives.
- (2) Highlighting AoC programmes and projects and **attracting the attention of interested circles.**
- (3) Managing **media coverage of AoC activities.**

The Communications strategy of the Alliance will seek to provide platforms for **voicing messages and vocabularies** for public use on themes relating to religious movements.

We regard as duly important to start a project to build and maintain a national **website on Bulgaria's participation in the initiative** (initially, as online newsletter in the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). A national website is ultimately the most important mechanism for exchange of best practices and rapid media response.

III. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Supervision and monitoring of Bulgarian participation in the initiative is achieved in the following ways:

1. Political supervision

The Bulgarian participation in the Alliance of Civilizations is put into practice under the supervision of **the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs**.

The Minister and a designated **Deputy Foreign Minister** maintain a political dialogue with the High Representative and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on subject-matters pertaining to the Alliance of Civilizations. Also, they assess Bulgaria's input in implementing the initiative and shaping its evolution in the future.

2.MFA-based Coordination Unit and a National Coordinator

An MFA-based Coordination Unit is functioning under the supervision of a designated Deputy Foreign Minister, while his functioning is organized by a National Coordinator. The work with respect to the initiative is part of the official duties and working plans of the MFA diplomatic and technical staff involved in rendering assistance to the Coordination Unit. Additional help is readily obtainable through the use of trainees, performing on a voluntary basis.

3. AoC Groups of Friends working on specific tasks

3.1 The discussion of projects is carried out at meetings at the Deputy Foreign Minister level with **thematic working groups**, follows: (1) State and Governmental institutions; (2) Universities and Research institutes; (3) Media and other bodies, specialized along the thematic groups of the initiative;

3.2 **The Implementation Plans** are approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs after a preliminary harmonization with concerned Directorates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the MFA Spokesman, the Diplomatic Institute and the State Cultural Institute. During the actual elaboration of the projects due attention is paid to comments and proposals by Bulgarian Embassies in countries actively involved in the initiative;

4. Partnerships

4.1 The activities in the Implementation Plan are subject to coordination with interested State and Governmental institutions following the existing administrative procedure;

4.2 The Coordination Unit is responsible for carrying out the exchange of information with the Secretariat of the Alliance and with partners from academic circles and the non-governmental sector. One of its tasks is to maintain an online webpage about the Alliance of Civilizations in the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (jointly with the MFA's Information and Public Relations Directorate);

5. Mechanism to Assess Achieved Results

Assessing the effectiveness of the various projects is carried out on a periodic basis by the supervising Deputy Foreign Minister;

The financial control of MFA-led projects is entrusted to the Ministry's financial auditor;

IV. FUNDING

1. Voluntary Trust Fund of the Alliance of Civilizations

The Voluntary Trust Fund of the United Nations is the chief mechanism to finance the activities of the Alliance of Civilizations. The Republic of Bulgaria provides annually a contribution to the fund.

2. AoC Media Fund

The Alliance provides for setting up a special media fund to assist productions dealing with cultural, religious and/or national issues in ways suitable for mass audiences. The MFA-based Coordination Unit provides support for Bulgarian applicants.

3. Exchange of Information on Sources of Financing

The Alliance will facilitate communication and the sharing of information and strategies among leading **international donor agencies, foundations, corporations and philanthropists** who are exerting their efforts to build understanding among diverse cultures, placing special emphasis on relations between Western and Muslim societies. The MFA-based Coordination Unit seeks to facilitate the participation of both Bulgarian donors and beneficiaries in the international network.

4. National financing of participation

Within the MFA's budget (Programmes I and III) will be elaborated a special project on Bulgaria's participation in the Alliance of Civilizations, complete with a corresponding substantiated financial analysis.

PART TWO:

PLAN OF ACTION

CONCERNING: PROMOTING AND IMPLEMENTATING THE UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS May 2007 - 2008

I. NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Assisting the activities at the national scale of governmental bodies with competences in fields corresponding to the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations.

1.1. Rendering assistance to the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues to the Council of Ministers in the implementation of the **Framework Programme on Romas equal rights integration** and the **National Strategy for demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria** (e.g. in activities concerning Moslem communities and mixed population areas);

1.2. With a view to improving Roma quality of life, enhancing the lead role of Bulgaria in the initiative **Decade of Roma inclusion**, approved by nine States of Central and Southeastern Europe, as well as by several international organizations and institutions, like for instance the World bank, UNDP, OSCE, The Open Society Fund, and others;

1.3. Rendering assistance to the Working Group for **New Policy towards Expatriate Bulgarians** for the purpose of elaborating a strategy document to deal with Bulgarian communities abroad (on the basis of consultations with partners from the Working group on Migrant communities for 2008);

1.4. Rendering assistance to the elaboration of the **National Strategy for Migration and Integration (2008 – 2015)**, drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

1.5. Rendering assistance for activities consonant with the Alliance objectives within the National Strategy for Bulgaria's participation in the **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)**, developed by the **Ministry of Culture** (through consultations with partners in the initiative of the Working groups in 2008);

The input of Bulgarian partners in the Alliance will be centered on the following (and similar) projects : (1) activities within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, including meeting of Ministers of Culture; (2) ensuring participation in the film festival of the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation; (3) updating museum collections devoted to the salvation of Bulgarian Jews during World War II; (4) organizing relevant manifestations within the framework of "*European Cultural Seasons*", to be held in France during the French presidency of EU; (5) rendering assistance to promote the Bulgarian National project *Our House - Home of our unity in sincere embracement*.

1.6 Rendering assistance for the success of the *Campaign “All Different, All Equal”* launched by **the State Agency for Youth and Sports**, aimed at stimulating cooperation among youth from various ethnicities. Disseminating useful information and knowledge on the Alliance of Civilizations initiative through Youth Information and Consultation Centers to the State Agency for Youth and Sports, located in larger cities and towns across the country;

1.7 Providing cooperation for the realization of activities by **the UNESCO National Committee**, in particular during the Second Extraordinary Session of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Preservation of UNESCO Nonmaterial Cultural Heritage (Sofia, 19-22 February 2008);

1.8 Cooperating with **the State Tourism Agency** in the implementation of projects aimed at the development of cultural tourism in Bulgaria, more specifically through the inclusion of cultural and religious sites in the itineraries for individual and collective visits;

1.9 Providing assistance to **the Ministry of Education** to elaborate suitable curriculum in a spirit of tolerance, as well as programmes for the needs of spiritual educational establishments; Assisting the Europartners 2007 foundation and **the National Pedagogical Center** to disseminate information among school communities and school teacher about the Alliance of Civilizations;

1.10 Providing assistance in the presentation in 2008 and its subsequent implementation of the recommendations of the **Second National Report on the Millennium Goals**, through which will be reformulated some of the adapted back in 2002-2003 Bulgarian national goals, as well as their specific dimensions and indicators.

2. Assisting at the national level the activities of State bodies with competences in fields corresponding to the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations:

2.1 **Ensuring the necessary interaction with the Office of the President of the Republic** for the purpose of the patronage by the Head of State for suitable manifestations within the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations, and the achievement of the following concrete goals : (1) Proposal to set up a *UNESCO regional centre on Nonmaterial Cultural Heritage*, introduced by Georgi Parvanov, President of the Republic of Bulgaria at UNESCO’s General Assembly in October 2007; (2) Elaboration by the Ministry of Culture of an overall concept for the Thrace Cultural Corridor, as part of President Parvanov’s initiative “*Cultural Corridors in Southeastern Europe*”;

2.2 Providing assistance to **the Commission for the Protection from Discrimination** in its activities to promote and reinforce the norms of anti-discriminatory legislation and change of outdated views and behaviour stereotypes;

2.3 Assisting in making known to the public-at-large the results of activities carried out within the framework of the initiative **European Year of Equal Opportunities for All – 2007** (educational seminar on the subject „*Implementation of anti-discriminatory legislation by Bulgarian specialized organs*”, a representative study on the subject of „*Multiplied Discrimination and Discrimination under the Six Symptoms of EYEO-2007*” etc.);

2.4 Introducing the initiative Alliance of Civilizations to **the Office of the Ombudsman** and exploring the opportunities for interacting with it;

3. Providing assistance to local authority organs with competences in fields corresponding to the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations:

3.1 Presentation of the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations at the session of the Working Group of the **National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria**. Presentation of good practices, such as:

(1) *Employment of Romas*, (as a component of Project JOBS) on the creation of job opportunities for employment in vulnerable communities.

(2) *Project “I want to be...”* of the State Agency for Youth and Sports and the United Nations Development Programme as part of their joint efforts to facilitate tolerant attitude towards minority groups within the society, among friends, fans, families of training players, and all sports fans, by organizing soccer tournaments among teams of junior players aged 14 - 15 coming from diverse ethnic background;

3.2 Rendering assistance to Bulgarian towns to actively participate in activities carried out by **the United Cities and Local Governments**. Making widely popular the principles of the UCLG Declaration, adopted in Jeju in 2007, particularly in the part dealing with the Alliance of Civilizations and the “city diplomacy”;

3.3 Rendering assistance to Bulgarian mayors to participate in **First World Conference on City Diplomacy** (11-13 June 2008, Peace palace, Hague).

3.4 Assisting the participation of Bulgarian representatives in the **European and Arab City Meetings** (Doha, 11 February 2008);

4. Collaborating with universities and civil society organizations with fundamental activities in fields corresponding to the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations:

Media

4.1 Providing assistance in the implementation of the project *Two Cultures, one Orpheus* developed by the **Union of Bulgarian Journalists**;

4.2 Development of the project (as best practices example) **Dimitar Peshev Annual Award for Journalistic Excellence in Ethnic Tolerance** on the initiative of Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme, the Bulgarian News Agency, the Faculty for Journalism and Mass Communications of the Sofia University;

4.3 Organizing, together with the Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation and UNDP-Office Bulgaria, of an international conference: *The Alliance of Civilizations and the Media Responsibility in Multicultural Societies* (Sofia, 18th April, 2008). Presentation of the **AoC Rapid Response Media Mechanism**.

4.4 Collaboration by **Bulgarian movie producers and journalists** to candidate for financing from the independent AoC Media Fund for assisting film and productions on often stereotyped communities, so as to present them from a more neutral and/or positive perspective.

(Successful examples are the award winning films of movie directors Andrey Slabakov (*Djasta-Prasta (Knock-you-down)*), Malina Petrova (*This is the Balkans, man!*), Adela Peeva (*Whose song is now being played? Divorce Albanian style !*), Venelin Petkov (*Afganistan – opium and roses*), Boris Despotov (*Corridor 8*) etc.)

Migrant communities

4.5 Organizing a discussion in the **Hall of Debates “Red House”**, jointly with Migrant communities in Bulgaria, devoted to contemporary Muslim and Arab culture;

4.6 Presentation in Sofia of the joint project of Norway and Indonesia on the Media in **Interfaith Dialogue**.

4.7 Rendering assistance to Sofia-based **Center for Near East Analysis** to organize an international conference “*Dialogue among Religions at present and in the future*” (Sofia, 15 November 2008)

4.8 Providing expert assistance to mark nation-wide March 10th as **Holocaust Day and Day of Victims of Crimes against Mankind** (*in accordance with the respective decision of the Council of Ministers of 13 February 2003*), and the presentation of two new publications on the Salvation of Bulgarian Jews and the Jewish migration;

Education

4.9 Rendering assistance for the realization of the first joint European Master’s Programme “**Matilda**” on **gender history, elaborated by St. Kliment Ohridsky**” Sofia University, in partnership with universities of Austria, France, Great Britain and the Central-European University;

4.10 Assistance in the dissemination of the publication entitled “**Cultural Awareness**”, the **New Security Environment and Consequences for Education – Civilian and Military**, by the Sofia University St Kliment Ohridsky, relating to the project to strengthen the effectiveness of Bulgarian participation in peace-keeping operations;

4.11 Exploring the possibility for **involving New Bulgarian University** (currently engaged in a special project for the purpose of producing a special geographic map with tourist itineraries in the Balkans, with emphasis on sites of prime interest relating to various religions) and/or other **Bulgarian universities in the Harvard University project** on tourism and pilgrimage along the *path of the Prophet Abraham*.;

4.12 Rendering assistance for the organization of the International Conference “Fighting Radicalization of Islam: What Schools can do?” (Sofia, 17 – 18 September 2008), which is a part of the international project “**Studying and preventing the radicalization of Islam: What school communities can do? Comparative analysis of cases of Spain, Morocco, Romania and Bulgaria**”, funded by the European Commission and organized by the universities from Spain, Morocco, Romania and Bulgaria

4.13 Assistance in the dissemination of the *publication entitled “Civilizations: clash or cooperation”* whose initiators are the **Europartners 2007 foundation and the Institute of peace and conflicts, University of Grenada**;

4.14 Rendering assistance to **Sofia University and New Bulgarian University** initiative for settlement of *interdisciplinary academic group* of students and researchers from Bulgarian universities.

4.15 Rendering assistance to **Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University** project for settlement of research group and organization of an *open seminar on the initiative Alliance of Civilizations*

4.16 Assisting the **National Association for International Relations** to organize a workshop dealing with the possible approaches to settle *international conflicts in the Western Balkans and in the Caucasus*;

4.17 Exploring the possibility to realize the idea developed by the **Balkan Studies Institute to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences** for research on the subject of tolerance within the Bulgarian educational system in the period following Bulgaria’s Liberation.;

4.18 Providing assistance to the **Bulgarian Association for the Study of the European Communities (BECSA)** to join the international network of academic organizations (EUROMESCO), which includes research centers from EU and the Mediterranean, for the purpose of research on *European Neighborhood Policy with emphasis on its southern dimension, particularly with respect to problemacy within the scope of the Alliance of Civilizations*.

Youth

4.19 Cooperating with **youth organizations** (e.g. the Youth Section of the Bulgarian United Nations Association, and others) for the purpose of organizing a model United Nations forum dealing with *“Whether the Alliance of Civilizations is possible”*.

4.20 Providing assistance to **the Bulgarian United Nations Association and Youth Internet Media** to organize *Sofia International Model United Nations “Search of Future Ideas, Models Us Now”* (20 – 27 July 2008).

4.21 Sharing the Bulgarian experience in the *JOBS PROGRAMME* launched specifically to assist youth employment and private entrepreneurship and on that way rendering support for the setting up of a **Regional Youth Employment Centre**.

4.22 Providing assistance to **the Diplomatic Institute and the State Institute of Culture** to organize, in partnership with the **Geneva-based European Cultural Centre**, a *national student contest for a written essay devoted to cultural diversity*, in connection with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and to the United Nations initiative Alliance of Civilizations;

Private Sector

4.23 Working with **Rotary International – District 2482**, for the project on peace, understanding and conflict solution “*Equal opportunities for children in a situation of inequality on Balkans*”. This project is a result of the joint efforts of three Rotary Clubs from Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey.

IV. FOREIGN POLICY DIMENSIONS OF THE ACTIVITIES

1. Support rendered by Bulgaria to the Alliance of Civilizations initiative within the framework of *international organizations*:

1.1 Imparting the due importance of the Alliance of Civilizations in the work of Bulgarian Missions to **the United Nations**, including in their work on issues dealing with:

(1) Dialogue among Civilizations; (2) Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace; (3) relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council; (4) relevant ECOSOC resolutions; (5) relevant resolutions of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly.

1.2 Rendering **assistance for the institutionalization of the relations between AoC and the European Union** through participation in the High Representative’s Meetings with the EU Political and Security Committee and Working Parties of the Council CONUN, COTER, EUROMED, etc. Participation in the implementation of joint **EU-AoC projects**;

1.3 Providing assistance for active Bulgarian presence in **OSCE activities** consonant with the Alliance of Civilizations, including at seminars dealing with incitement of hatred on the internet, annual workshops of partners from the Mediterranean, and others ;

1.4 Exerting efforts for harmonizing, as possible, the Bulgarian participation in the **Council of Europe with Alliance objectives** in the field of issues such as protection of minorities, cultural diversity, and others;

2. Support by Bulgaria to the Alliance of Civilizations initiative within the framework of *regional organizations*, and to the *dialogue among regional organizations themselves*;

2.1 Initiating the elaboration of a common position in support of the Alliance of Civilizations by **States-members of the Process of Cooperation in Southeastern Europe** during the Bulgarian chairmanship;

2.2 Rendering assistance for a better comprehension and adoption of the Alliance of Civilizations values by youth leaders of States-Members of the **Central European Initiative** during their Seventh Annual Meeting, (Sofia, 24 November 2007);

2.3 Enlisting AoC themes on the agenda of cultural interaction in the **EU Black Sea Synergy**;

2.4 Actively promoting Bulgaria's participation in forums of ASEM, devoted to cooperation among religious faiths; In relation to that rendering assistance to Bulgarian participants in **4th ASEM Interfaith dialogue, to be held 3-5 June 2008, Amsterdam.**

2.5 Exploring the possibilities to reinforce the components in the field of education in the implementation of the **EU Strategy for Central Asia**, and coming up with suitable Bulgarian initiatives in the field of educational exchange;

2.6 Participation in the preparation of the international conference "**Our Common World – Progress through Diversity**" (Astana, Kazakhstan, October 2008) and advocating close links of the initiative to the Alliance of Civilizations;

2.7 Exploring the possibilities to reinforce the components concerning migration and development in the implementation of the **Joint EU-Africa Strategy.**

2.8 Participation in the segment for interreligious and intercultural dialogue at the margins of **the EU – League of Arab States meeting** (Malta, February 2008);

2.9 Organizing meetings, on an annual basis, of the Minister for Foreign Affairs with Mr. Amr Moussa, **Secretary-General of the League of Arab States**, at sessions of the United Nations General Assembly;

2.10 Participation in the **EU – Latin America Meeting** including in the segment for intercultural dialogue (Lima, 16 May 2008);

2.11 Participation of Bulgarian representatives in the **Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Crans-Montana Forum** (26-29 June 2008), and the **Third Annual Forum of the Dialogue among Civilizations.**

3. Taking due steps for having the Alliance objectives reflected in Bulgaria's bilateral ties (e.g. in the cultural field) with States participating actively in the Alliance of Civilizations:

V. MEASURES TO BUILD AN ADEQUATE NATIONAL CAPACITY FOR TAKING PART IN THE INITIATIVE

1. Top contribution by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs;

2. Meetings at a deputy minister for foreign affairs with target-oriented working groups:

- 2.1 State agencies and line ministries;
- 2.2. Universities and research institutes;
- 2.3. Media
- 2.4 Migrant communities;
- 2.5 Private sector;
- 2.6 Local authorities.

3. Setting up and subsequent activities of a Coordination Unit based at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to be headed by a National Coordinator;

4. Launch of the Bulgarian participation in the UN initiative Alliance of civilizations on May 21, World day of Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, (including validation of a commemorative post card.)

5. Setting up and maintaining a Newsletter on the Alliance of Civilizations within the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

VI. PROSPECTS

The ideas, activities and objectives as proposed in the form of a Framework Document and a Concept paper and Plan of Action to be set in motion by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are aimed at ensuring a successful start to Bulgaria's participation in the UN Alliance of Civilizations initiative. Bulgaria regards the AoC initiative as an important vehicle in international efforts to lower intercultural polarization and foster a wider respect of, and understanding among, diverse communities. The Bulgarian participation in the Alliance is expected to have a positive impact on the thinking and actions of Bulgarian organizations and institutions, having the capacity and being able to elaborate programmes and conduct policies on this particularly topical problemacy.

In the initial phase of implementation, the main goal will be to widen intercultural dialogue and cooperation at the grass-root level and in mixed population areas, by involving, if need be, additional resources and organizations to exert efforts in that direction.

Following up on the initial phase, a new bi-annual plan will be drafted, taking duly into account the achievements of the Alliance of Civilizations, and also in the light of newly appearing opportunities and evolving global issues having the potential to influence intercultural relations. The new bi-annual plan will draw its sources from accumulated best experience and accomplished results, so as to achieve an increasingly optimal participation by Bulgaria in the AoC initiative, in keeping with its own evolution.