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ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

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TALKING POINTS

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear members of the Group of Friends

- Let me greet you all and thank you for your presence at our meeting.

- Our debates today are to be focused on three main topics:
 - The concept paper for the Doha Forum
 - The 3rd Implementation Plan
 - The Replenishment Mechanism

- The three drafts were circulated in advance in order to give you time to hold internal consultations and come up with additional suggestions or remarks. I apologize for their late distribution but as you know there is an extended deadline - until June 19 – to send your most welcome comments.

- Please note, however, that the purpose of these consultations is not to discuss language but to seek inputs in terms of content, ideas and suggestions for action. Moreover, I am not seeking formal approval from every single delegation on every single proposal of the Action Plan. What I am looking for is for further involvement of the Group of Friends in broad strategic options for the Alliance's activities, be it regarding its next Global Forum or the Implementation Plan for the next two years.

- It is the first time that the Implementation Plan is discussed with the delegations before being submitted to the Secretary General. This is a move that I cherish in order to reinforce the sense of co-ownership of and co-responsibility for the Alliance. But the Alliance is to be kept as a platform for flexible cooperation and engagement. Those who want to move faster and do more should not be prevented by those who want to take their time. My role here is only to keep things balanced and coherent and act as an honest broker.

- I see this 3rd Implementation Plan as focused on delivering. It builds upon the acquis, proposes further development of the main ongoing actions and adds a number of new initiatives.

- Five considerations explain the need of these new initiatives: the new context in the MENA region; the ongoing debates in Europe about how to reconcile diversity and cohesion in European societies; the topical issue of the influence of religion on peace, security and development in our global age; reinforcing the UNAOC as a UN soft power tool for dialogue and peace by working closer with non-state actors; the suggestion made by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah of Qatar to have the 4th Annual Global Forum in Doha focused on the possible connections between the UNAOC's mission and the MDGs agenda.

- Now, regarding the concept paper for the Doha Forum, I do think that it presents a very interesting and promising set of topics to be placed at the core of the Doha debates.

- All Forums have brought new perspectives and fresh thinking to the Alliance. All Forums have been a unique opportunity to engage in a global conversation on topical issues. All Forums have opened up new avenues for intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

- The same will happen with the Doha Forum – Inshallah! – and I am truly convinced that it will be a turning point for the Alliance in terms of raising its visibility, integrating it more into the global agenda and reinforcing commitments for action.

- The world is changing so fast, the need for soft power solutions for an increasing number of problems and the very basic need for dialogue, compromise and bridging divides are so overwhelmingly present that it makes the Alliance an ever more promising initiative.

- My expectations for the Doha Forum are that it will bring to the table a limited number of new flagship global initiatives – but very well targeted projects - which by advancing the UNAOC’s objectives will also contribute to advancing the MDGs.

- I would like to use this opportunity to clarify two misunderstandings that are disturbing some delegations – first, it is not because the Doha Forum will focus on the challenging topic of how to connect MDGs and the Alliance’s goals that suddenly the UNAOC will now shift and become a development focused programme. This is nonsense.

- But on the contrary what makes full sense is to ask how human security and peace impact on development, how cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and cooperation benefit the MDG agenda, how can the Alliance further support the achievement of the MDGs, through its programmes and within its scope and fields of action?

- This is the framework of the Doha Forum and I really think that it can enrich the 3rd Implementation Plan bringing in a number of new commitments that at the end of the day will reinforce the delivering capacity of the Alliance.

- The second misunderstanding regards the connection between the Doha Forum and the 3rd Implementation Plan. As in the past three Forums, the outcomes of Doha will be integrated into and become part of the agenda as commitments to be achieved.

- But let's keep our sense of proportion – the topic of a Forum is one thing which is agreed in close cooperation with the host country and quite another is the broader, long-term agenda of the UNAOC.

- A Forum can give a huge, bold contribution to taking steps forward to achieve the Alliance's goals and therefore have a long-standing impact – and I hope that it will be the case this year. But if it is not integrated in the broader agenda its impact will fade out very soon.

- This is why there is this mechanism of integration of the outcomes of a Forum into the Implementation Plan, through an Addendum that is appended to it. This procedure allows an appropriate follow up and ensures the overall coherence of the UNAOC.

- Let me now go back to the proposed conceptual framework for the Doha Forum. You have noticed that there are four main topics proposed for the debates.
- Now the idea behind that is that the Forum will not only aim to be a global conversation on these four main topics but that it will lead shall we say to global commitments.
- We would like to put these global commitments together and frame them within what we called the “Doha Chart”.
- Don’t be afraid of names – we are not looking to draft useless documents, but to be provided with practical tools for action.
- The Doha Chart will spell out announcements, commitments, actions, decisions that the participants and/or groups of stakeholders will make at the Forum.
- To give you a concrete example: take the topic of “human dignity”. Further to the debates that will be held on this challenging issue, what could be a practical outcome of this debate to be included in the Doha Chart?

- For instance, a good proposal would be the announcement of a global multi-stakeholders project around the topic of “teaching history to bridge divides”.
- But this is just an example to make the idea of a Doha Chart more concrete as some of you have been asking me about it.
- Anyway, what we are planning to do before the GoF meeting in September is to circulate the various drafts announced in the concept paper in order to hold a good discussion on them in September and avoid any fears or misunderstandings.
- My last point regards the draft note on the Replenishment Mechanism. The date of the 1st replenishment session in October will be communicated to you in the coming weeks.
- For me, the future of the Alliance depends on the success of the replenishment session. As a pledging conference, it has to achieve its goals otherwise even the success of the Doha Forum will be at risk.
- More than that – let me be very clear: if I put on the table a rather ambitious Implementation Plan it is because I have great expectations for the Replenishment Session in October.

- The 3rd Implementation Plan needs appropriate resources and if we don't manage to secure them I will indeed have to revise it drastically. But I am not ready to give up before trying, this is my way!

Dear friends

- I would like to call upon your assistance to help us identify potential donors, mainly from civil society and the private sector.
- I would be most grateful to the delegations if you could provide one, two, five, or even ten suggestions for potential supporters from your countries, from your regions. We are used to speaking about the economic crisis but there are many parts of the world that – fortunately - are doing well and thriving. We need to reach out to this huge emerging community of new potential donors and this why I call upon you to help in this task.
- Now my last point in this regard concerns the need to provide the community of donors with a loose mechanism of consultation and exchange of ideas through which they can be informed about the funds and have a say in their management.

- As you know this is always part of the deal. In the draft paper I put forward some ideas but they are purely indicative and I am very much looking forward to receiving your inputs on how to best organize it. But for me it is crystal clear that some further thinking about what might be the most likely scenarios for its future development is required.

Excellencies,

- I don't want to take up more of your time. So I will not, as I usually do, recap the more recent initiatives that have taken place since our last meeting or those that are planned for the next months.
- A new issue of the newsletter will be prepared soon.
- Let me just finish by recalling the Pre-Forum with civil society organizations that took place in Doha, at the beginning of May. I want to thank Qatar for the opportunity to hold these consultations because this was a good step forward to reinforce the local footing of the Alliance and its action-oriented perspective.

- I hope that this track will be further reinforced in the 4th Global Forum and that in December we will manage to bring together a wide range of stakeholders around concrete commitments to action.

- I thank you