



National Plan

State of Kuwait

Alliance of Civilizations Project

2009-2011

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Introduction

Facing the language of conflict and ideological polarization that afflict nations and people, is only achieved through a civilized and cultural dialogue that believes in diversity. Based on efficiency and in accordance with the international frameworks of nations, community leaders are able to have a distinctive roll in mitigation and response.

The challenges of the times and the future resides in the nations' abilities to effectively handle cultural communications, this alone makes the matter of advancing in the forward direction so inevitable.

Communications that bridge between cultures is a subject of strategic planning that requires awareness and an evolved dynamics in order to be effective.

To be productive, we must formulate plans on the national and international scenes that are compatible and harmonious to bear results.

The draft ... Alliance of Civilizations is considered to be a pilot project able to achieve these goals and objectives which will certainly contribute to trap the extremism and violence phenomena and establish a civilization unity through cultural and intellectual bridges that are based on initiatives which are full of variety and creativity.

Since the initiation of the first movement of the Alliance of Civilizations project, the state of Kuwait could not help but be drawn towards it. So quickly that the state of Kuwait joined the group of friends for several considerations; since ancient times the Kuwaiti society has a high regard to communication and openness to other cultures and possessed a high spirit of tolerance, convergence and interaction with other societies regardless of color, race or creed.

Therefore, you can find that freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution and the law in the State of Kuwait and everyone can practice their own religion in safety and freedom. Which is a proof that Kuwait has

taken earlier steps towards the Alliance of Civilizations project that are fully consistent with the goals and aspirations and projects of the Coalition which will be referred to in the course of this national plan.

There are also ideological, intellectual, and cultural well-established perspectives in the Kuwaiti networking affairs that makes communication self-evident and more of a civilized duty that must be executed, implanted, and fully supported.

Also from the Islamic religion which is the guiding light of the state of Kuwait, there are many Qur'anic references that can be highlighted as a guiding beacon in this regard. Some of which are: “O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you...” Al-Imran 3:64 and “O mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another...” Al-Hujurat 49:13.

This holy guidance directs the Muslim masses and encourages them towards cultural communications and humanitarian cooperation which is a starting point for all Muslims. The State of Kuwait pays great attention to this and considers it the foundation in cultural openness and a building block for humanitarian cooperation which is obligatory in the fight against disasters, poverty, ignorance, violence, and extremism.

The national plan for the State of Kuwait constitutes a cultural horizon that branches from the country's belief in the importance of communication and cultural interaction which leads towards peaceful coexistence and human solidarity. As a result, Kuwait is capable of making a world without violence or clashes or wars.

Objectives of the national plan

The objectives of the national plan are based on two major dimensions

1- The first dimension ... Local

It focuses on activating and stimulating the local community including all of its official building blocks in order to reach the entire civil society, and other components of the public from individuals to symbols of societal, intellectual and other opinion leaders.

The public sector is the objective of this draft; this project will target public clubs and social hangouts because that is of paramount importance in promoting a culture of peace, dialogue and cultural interaction.

2- The second dimension ... Regional and global

This dimension is founded upon a partnership to pave the way for paths in order to encourage cultural and civilization interaction through participating with religious, cultural, intellectual institutions and symbols of societies in countries of the region, particularly the European continent and the United States of America. These two regions represent the most prominent challenges in the ideological polarization dialogue with the East and the Islamic culture.

In the light of these dimensions... We can formulate the State of Kuwait's national plans objectives, with respect to Alliance of Civilizations, initiative as follows;

1. Promoting public awareness in the Kuwaiti society of the importance of culture and cultural exchanges.
2. To stimulate the organizations of civil society to participate and cooperate in that direction, and to associate, symbols, and the general public to a culture of peace and cultural exchanges between civilizations.
3. Creating objectives and subjective dialogues on the basis of cultural equivalence.
4. Launching projects and initiatives based on diversity, cooperation, and creativity in order to create opportunities for the convergence of civilizations.

5. Formulating opportunities for cooperation based on social partnership, regional and global cooperation to achieve common understanding that paves the way for work projects which can make a change in the stereotypical attitudes and prejudices.

The main trends of the national plan

Representing the major trends of the basic features of the national plan reflects the manner in which choices and patterns of projects, aims of institutions, the public, and community-based components are made.

The first trend:

Adoption of scientific objectivity and professionalism in the construction of ideas to determine the values, concepts, and target segments to be able to access the details of every project.

The second trend:

Simplifying the considerations in cultural and intellectual awareness that is compatible and takes into account age, intellectual, economic, and social differences as an essential pillar in building a trust-based humanitarian acceptance and respect.

The third trend:

Finding a variety of forms of cooperation between official institutions and government from one end and civil society institutions and the private sector on the other end.

The fourth trend:

Development of previous projects and care of existing projects with the objectives that are directly related to the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations.

The fifth trend:

Searching for projects based on creativity and diversity that contribute to the participation of a range of different sectors in the local community.

The sixth trend:

Setting the foundations for partnership with regional and international institutions to achieve cultural communication.

The seventh trend:

The targeted institutions will undergo implementation of projects either by care, supervision, technical support, and/or financial cooperation.

These trends will make value of cultural communications. Efforts must provide the support to its frameworks in order to achieve results. From this point, the operational plan will be to galvanize the previous efforts to complement the existing efforts and ongoing research projects with a sustainable and self-expanded dynamics to include broad sectors of the local and regional communities in order to give it the momentum that secures the goals of peace, coexistence and understanding.

Strategic dimensions of the national plan

The culture of peace and coexistence stems out of believing in cultural communication and must be based upon strategic dimensions. These dimensions attain strong and effective forces in order to aid institutions of civil society and individuals, inevitably to move in balance toward realizing the intended aims and objectives. These strategic dimensions:

The first dimension:

- Establishing a culture of peace, tolerance and moderation.

The second dimension

- Trapping extremism, terrorism, and violence.

The third dimension

- Achieving societal consensus and national debate on the concepts and values of cultural communication.

The fourth dimension

- Cooperation with international and regional institutions in laying the foundations for a common understanding on issues of common human interests.

These strategic dimensions have been imbedded in the Kuwaiti system since the first day of independence. Today, it has been deeply entrenched. Therefore, flexibility in the degree of openness to other cultures is one of the features of the Kuwaiti society. It can be given that the objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations initiatives are already in place from an earlier date due to its existing practice. Today, a national plan calls for a global start to formulate an expression of full compatibility between the objectives of the Alliance and directions of the State and the natural features of the cultural composition of local Kuwaiti society.

Previous national efforts

The national efforts prior to the launch of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative are considered to be fully consistent with the same objectives. At the same time it stresses the firm belief that the State of Kuwait shares the identical objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations and is willing to fully cooperate in every way to achieve those goals and plans. We will recall the highlights of the previous efforts at the global and local Frameworks.

First: the global and international frameworks

The State of Kuwait is aware of the importance of peaceful coexistence between different civilizations and its duty to achieve world peace. The Advanced efforts of Kuwait have been represented by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs since 2005, yet it is still conducting a scientific study (Mental image of the West towards Islam and the Islamic and Arabic worlds). The study covered several Western countries which have been selected according to scientific criteria including the United States, Britain, France, Netherlands, and Germany. The study has been updated after the London's incidents of vandalism in July 2005. To activate the results of the study and to lay the scientific and practical approach in the face of terrorism, extremism, and polarization, the findings were printed in both English and Arabic and in accordance to the methodology of report writing of the United Nations so that professionals, academics and interested parties can consult it with ease. In the light of results of the study that emphasized the role of media in establishing stereotypes that caused rooting and increased cultural polarization, to the point where the production of a guide for journalists was necessitated (The Journalist's Guide to Islam and Muslims) about the study of Islamic Culture. That was done In order to allow journalists and media managers in the Western media to come to terms of Islamic culture and some of the terms and implications in a simple and convenient way. For these efforts to continue to serve the scientific and cultural exchanges, the State of Kuwait, represented by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, has participated in the Conference (News Exchange Amsterdam-2005). By sponsoring one of the seminars of the conference whose theme was the media treatment of events in the Middle East and discussing its results. The study was distributed in English, along with a directory of journalists, in addition to the production of a documentary film about the results of the study. Also the launch of a special website titled foresight study of Islam www.islamperceptions.org where the articles have been edited according to the language and minds of the target population in the Western worlds. This participation had a significant role in raising the interests of many of the journalists that were participating in that conference, which ranged at between 500 - 550 participants all from international media.

Efforts did not stop at this point but continued the need to conduct a study on the mental image of the Arab and Islamic world towards the West. Indeed, a study was conducted in this regard, and the findings of this study were remarkable and worthwhile. It helped to shed the light on many of the realities in the relationship between the West and the Muslim world. As well as giving the scientific foundations for the construction of a frank dialogue that eases the cultural polarization between Western and Islamic civilizations.

To complement these efforts and results, Kuwait established the World Center for Moderation. This center cares for imbedding the definition and concept of moderation in thought and behavior and considered as a complement to the framework of (the Alliance of Civilizations). The message of this center is directed to the world and all of its sectarian, intellectual, and ethnic components, and seeks to promote the concept of moderation in the Islamic thought. The center organized two conferences of the leaders and symbols of the Muslim communities in Europe and the United States to stay connected, and to identify a uniformed way of communication between the Muslim communities in European countries and the United States that expresses moderation, tolerance and forgiveness.

First International Conference for Moderation – (London, May 2006), the ministry participated in the Arab Media Forum – (Abu Dhabi, 2006), to present the results of a study (the mental image of the Islamic and Arab worlds towards the West). Then followed by the Second International Conference for Moderation – (Washington, October 2006).

To expand the circle of the media to play a positive role and to confront the misleading media, polarization, irresponsible, and the type of media that provoke a conflict, three short films and documentaries highlighting the realities of the lives of Muslims in the West and the attitude of the West towards Islam, Muslims, and Arabs were produced in hopes to achieve integration of Muslims and Arabs.

In addition, the State of Kuwait will participate as a key member in the strategic vision of Russia and the Islamic world (Vision Russia-Islamic World). The conference will focus on the geostrategic relations and the common history between Russia and Islam. It will discuss regions such as Caucasus, Chechnya, and the Tatars.

The ongoing relations represented by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, which continues to have a large and firm symbols with opinion leaders in Muslim communities in all five continents, this communication is built on the foundations of intellectual and cultural civilization that believes in dialogue as an essential foundation for world peace. Many educational and developmental projects have been launched that was targeting the Muslim communities in the West especially the youth. The aim of the developmental projects, which specializes in education and mentoring, a major role in securing a decent spiritual atmosphere for the Arab and Muslim immigrants in Western countries. Thereafter, to promote the concept of good citizenship that is safe and compatible with itself and its surroundings, and able to keep their identity yet be part of their environment.

This program is connected with the symbols and leaders of Muslim communities around the world; it has a prominent role in spreading the culture of moderation and tolerance in the Muslim communities that migrated to the West. Still the mechanisms and channels of communication are investing to promote a culture of tolerance and moderation and protecting the cultural identity of Arab and Muslim communities, with regard to the need to represent good citizenship in their home countries to Western immigrant.

Previous efforts can be summarized as follows:

- Establishment of the International Center for Moderation in March 2006.
- Study the mental image of the West towards the Islamic world and Muslims (January-March 2005).
- Contributing to the launch of the website www.islamperceptions.org
- Participation in the News Exchange conference Amsterdam (News Exchange in November 2005).
- Launching (the First International Conference for Moderation London May 2006).

- A study of the mental image of Arab and Islamic world towards the West (May-June 2006).
- Participation in the Conference on Arab Media Forum 2006 Abu Dhabi.

What has already been mentioned was on the international and external scenes, parallel efforts have been made on at the national level and local levels.

Second: the local context and national levels

In addition to the efforts and activities outside the country that were undertaken by the International Center for Moderation, the center has local efforts that are unique. These local efforts are connected and concentrated on guiding the public. In this regard, it has prepared and presented systematic training programs to the religious guidance and social slices of the community (Imams and preachers). The center presented an integrated training program that aims to raise awareness of the medium term and is considered a holistic approach for culture that welcomes dialogue, communication, and to renounces violence and extremism. In order to ensure a better understanding of moderation and related meanings of tolerance and humanitarian partnership, the International Center for Moderation has prepared and presented intensive training courses that parallel the imams and preachers program and directed to another portion of the community. This part of the community is very important and influential in the formation of conscience and incomprehensible towards the key issues in cultural communication. Teachers and motivators of Islamic education in various stages of the Ministry of Education. The training program have been presented by scientists, social thinkers, and mentors and lasted for one full year.

Among the efforts made by the International Center for Moderation are printing books and publications that are aimed at the same end goal. In addition to launching commercial campaigns in regards to the same subject

and service the same approach with a view of reaching concrete results that achieved awareness of the importance of cultural interaction. There is also an interest in the definition of a culture of tolerance and communication through the ongoing activities which contribute to the awareness of communities in the State of Kuwait's Islamic culture. Part of the training program is organizing scientific conferences such as (we and the other) 2005, and the seminar (Dialogue of civilizations between Japan and the Islamic world) 2009. And many other lectures and seminars with government and private sector that constitutes the civil society which is interested in the intellectual and cultural communication.

As well as the Grand Mosque...the most prominent house of worship in Kuwait but not limited to its worship role. Also went further to the cultural role in connecting with one another, especially Westerners. The grand mosque also played an important role in communicating with embassies and foreign consulates, especially Westerners, through programs and joint activities that took place there. Most of these activities were held in the corridors of the mosque which is considered as a cultural center and the accompanying program that provides for official visitors and tourists to the definition of Islamic culture. It can do that through one of two, "Care Center for the Muslim's cultural and intellectual communities" and "the center of correcting the Western's understanding of Islam. Indeed, the results are encouraging and remarkable that prompted Western embassies to communicate seriously and support the programs of these centers.

Previous efforts can be summarized as follows:

- A conference (we and the other in Kuwait in March 2006).
- Conduct an ongoing training program on the concepts of moderation and is directed to imams and preachers segment - 2007 (enrollment 735 imam and preacher).
- Conduct an ongoing training program on the concepts of moderation and tolerance which was directed to teachers of Islamic Education in the Ministry of Education 2007 - 2008 (number of enrolled 447 teachers).

- Printing 25 different publications on mainstreaming the concept of moderation and tolerance.
- A seminar (dialogue of civilizations between Japan and the Islamic world) in May 2009.

Existing national efforts

The current existing national efforts in addition to the previous national efforts are compatible to a large extent to match the goals of the Alliance of Civilizations ... some of them are:

There are vigorous efforts which the State of Kuwait seeks through them to take care of the Islamic groupings in Western countries. Especially in Europe and the United States to achieve important strategic dimension, and help these communities to integrate the practice of good citizenship and to contribute to the reduction of the extremism and polarization. Also, positive promotion of cultural cooperation frameworks which is aimed at achieving understanding and cultural convergence.

- Held three training courses in cooperation with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) to train imams and Muslim clerics about the values of dialogue and moderation in European countries (Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany).
- Health care center in the city of Leicester, United Kingdom.
- Establishment of nurseries and kindergartens in the city of Graz, Austria.
- Management and development of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies in collaboration with the Institute of Culture in Moscow.
- A training course on the values of dialogue and moderation in Albania.

- The first conference was held to promote the teaching of Arabic in Paris in cooperation with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).
- An international symposium in cooperation by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) on the activation of international conventions, the harbor of the limits between freedom of expression and profanity against other religions.
- Support for the Museum of civilizations of Islam in Switzerland in cooperation with the Cultural Association of Muslim Women in Switzerland.
- Complete support of People's Friendship University students in Kyrgyzstan.

There is also a greater effort on the level of cultural interaction; the cultural exchange by sending the carefully selected advocates for religious guidance among the Muslim communities in European countries, already has approval from several European countries (Germany).

Participation in the network of partners of earth and in the preservation of the environment and its impact on the standardization of concepts and cultural values towards greater good.

There are more efforts and ongoing projects but we only have referred to specific few due to their great significance.

Future national efforts (2009-2011)

National efforts will continue at the local and global levels, more frequently because of the growing relationships, partnerships, and increase awareness of local, regional and global importance of partnership in supporting the values of communication and peaceful coexistence among peoples and nations.

Some of these future efforts are:

- Conference (highlight the true image of Islam, leaders of the police and security in the United States and Europe)
- The Seventh Plan to address climate change (2010-2017)
- Re-launch research, scientific studies of common understanding
- Development of the website (www.islamperceptions.org)
- Development of the website (<http://wasatiaonline.net>)
- Cultural exchange at the seasonal advocate level
- Participation in the support forums and intellectual and cultural conferences in Europe and the United States

Challenges

Those efforts must be continued despite all the previous difficulties and natural challenges. Though we can point out some of those challenges facing the national plan and that can limit the results to achieve goals at the level of cultural interaction and objectives of the Alliance of Civilizations. These challenges are based on two levels, Local/National and Regional/global levels.

First – Challenges at the local and national levels:

- Political, ideological, and outstanding issues represents a real challenge whenever an accident or an attack on human populations, as what happened in (Gaza January 2009).
- Unilateral approach in the media and its effects in the formation of strong positions in segments of the community towards the issues of

cultural polarization and thereby weakening the projects of cultural communication.

- Lack of outreach for the Alliance of Civilizations.
- The weakness of the intellectual and cultural product with respect to cultural communication.

Second - Challenges at the regional and global levels:

- Alliance of Civilizations initiative is a new project that will require time to advertise and promote.
- The Middle East - and the State of Kuwait are considered to be in an area of Ideological polarization, and this in itself is a major challenge.
- Setbacks caused by developments in political and security events.
- Lack of quality projects of value and sustainability.
- The agenda of the media.

Conclusion

The State of Kuwait has a lot of faith in the message, vision and direction of the Alliance of Civilizations AOC project. Hence, efforts will continue at the local and national level. To emphasize the partnership key in supporting the values of communication, co-existence, and peace for the desired global target. The State of Kuwait has put its capabilities in bringing civilization to confront and combat all aspects of extremism, violence, terrorism and cultural polarization. Kuwait has taken the initial step in order to achieve global security of human civilizations and peaceful existence.