



**RELIGIONS AND THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS:  
ADVANCING SHARED SECURITY**

**MADRID, SPAIN | 15 JANUARY 2008**

We, *Religions for Peace* religious leaders participating in the Alliance of Civilizations forum, hosted by the Government of Spain on 15-16 January 2008, are convinced that dialogue and cooperation among religious communities must be an essential dimension of a genuine alliance among civilizations.

An alliance of civilizations is needed to serve the well being of all people. It can provide a foundation for the concrete collaboration needed to address the common threats that confront the human race. It can help nurture the collective will necessary to guaranteeing the fundamental dignity and rights of persons and communities.

Multi-religious dialogue and cooperation can serve a unique and irreplaceable role in an alliance of civilizations. Each religion raises questions of what is valuable. Through multi-religious dialogue, deeply held and widely shared values can be discerned and these can provide platforms for multi-religious action in service of the common good.

We acknowledge that our religious traditions, which offer a living sense of moral order, have at times also been sources of misunderstanding and conflict. This has led some to the mistaken perception that religious belief itself is the root cause of intercultural conflict. We know, instead, that our religious communities have profound spiritualities, moral heritages, and large social networks that are unique assets for working toward the common good.

Respectful of our religious differences, we commit ourselves to opening new avenues for guiding our communities and the world's diverse peoples into a partnership to help build the common good. In particular, we commit ourselves to providing our youth with genuine opportunities for religiously based service to the common good, as an alternative to what is offered them by religious extremists who often advance violence.

Women have exercised essential roles within our various religious traditions. They have also all too often been held back by various forms of gender bias. Welcome opportunities for new forms of their leadership are present today. We urge that religious women be fully mainstreamed into the leadership of our common efforts to advance multi-religious cooperation for the common good.

We recognize that there are urgent practical imperatives for cooperation for the common good. Today, no one can build walls high enough to insulate themselves from the insecurity of others. This practical imperative is matched by a moral one well known to all of our religions—the obligation to care for others.

The call to care for others needs—today—to be expressed as a commitment to a concrete state of “shared security.” This understanding of security respects the value of national sovereignty and builds upon an expanded notion of human security that includes concern for basic human rights and needs. Importantly, shared security highlights the reciprocal dimensions of security and the collective responsibility to achieve it.

We acknowledge the vulnerability of all human beings. We are convinced that no nation can truly be secure until all nations are secure. All peoples and nations are interrelated, as is their search for security and peace. Security is therefore interdependent and linked to the ability to advance cooperation for the flourishing of life, including the well being of those most marginalized. Shared security also recognizes the need for multi-stakeholder approaches to prevent and transform conflicts, build peace, and promote human development.

We commit ourselves to the common responsibility of promoting shared security and peace. We will work to engage our religious communities in the promotion of shared security from the grassroots to global levels.

We also welcome other initiatives that promote genuine dialogue and cooperation among all religions and cultures, and note as a helpful example the “A Common Word” letter to Christian leaders from 138 Muslim scholars in 2007 that called for a joint examination of the principles of love of God and love of neighbor.

Confident that multi-religious and intercultural cooperation can play an irreplaceable role in a genuine alliance of civilizations for the common good, we call upon religious leaders around the world to join us in:

- Resisting the misuse of religion by extremists;
- Sharing with your communities—particularly the grassroots—successful examples of multi-religious dialogue and cooperation for the common good, and encouraging them to participate in similar activities;
- Engaging the media to help communicate the positive role of multi-religious dialogue and cooperation in building peace and promoting the common good;
- Supporting mechanisms that advance multi-religious dialogue and cooperation;
- Supporting youth by strengthening multi-religious youth networks that engage in peace education and other outreach to vulnerable peer groups;
- Working to advance shared security and peace through principled multi-stakeholder partnerships with governments and other sectors of society.

**Religions for Peace** *is the world’s largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action for peace since 1970. Headquartered in New York and accredited to the United Nations, Religions for Peace works through affiliated inter-religious councils in 70 countries on six continents.*