



**Second Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations
Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April, 2009
Working Session 7
'Doing Business in a Multicultural World'
Tuesday, 7 April, 9:00-10:30**

Organized by the Alliance of Civilizations and the UN Global Compact Office

Background information

In the 1st AoC Forum, held in Madrid, in January 2008, the United Nations Global Compact committed to producing a publication aimed at raising the visibility of best practices in the corporate sector toward supporting cross-cultural relations.

Now the Istanbul Forum will serve as a platform to launch *"Doing Business in a Multicultural World"* which presents the challenges companies are facing as a result of growing cross-cultural tensions and showcases a number of 'good practice' examples of innovative corporate actions to address these challenges by encouraging tolerance and cooperative intercultural relations – in the workplace, the marketplace and in communities.

Organization of this Working Session

This working session will bring together business, civil society and government representatives to examine the role of the private sector in promoting cross-cultural understanding and explore how all actors in society can more effectively collaborate in this area.

The session will also provide the private sector with an opportunity to explore opportunities for collaboration with the UN Alliance of Civilizations with a view to establishing a network of private sector representatives interested in the area of cross-cultural dialogue.

This 1.5 hour interactive session will be led by representatives of the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the UN Global Compact. To kick-off the discussion, the session will begin with brief remarks by 2-3 prominent speakers (CEOs and a representative of the ILO-*tbc*). Approximately 40-50 participants are expected to attend this session.

Objectives

This session will provide the private sector with an opportunity to explore opportunities for collaboration with the UN Alliance of Civilizations with a view to establishing a network of private sector representatives interested in the area of cross-cultural dialogue.

Some of the questions to be raised are:

- How does cross-cultural understanding matter to the private sector? How are companies overcoming the key challenges they are confronting in this area? Are there lessons learned that could be useful to others, especially in the context of the current global financial crisis?
- How do Government decisions and political considerations affect businesses and their reputations overseas? What are the kinds of approaches companies can use to combat foreign communities' stereotypes and biases against their countries of origin?
- What are the specific activities the private sector can take (both individually and/or in collaboration with other stakeholders) to make a contribution to fostering cross-cultural understanding, tolerance and cooperative relations? Can the examples profiled in "*Doing Business in a Multicultural World*" be replicated in other regions of the world?
- What more can be done by business associations, NGOs, Governments and the United Nations in encouraging business initiatives in this area and to help enhance collaboration towards more significant impact?