



AN ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL GROUP

25 August 2005

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has launched an initiative, co-sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, for an Alliance of Civilizations.

Context

The initiative responds to a broad consensus across nations, cultures and religions that all societies are interdependent, bound together in their development and security, and in their environmental, economic and financial well-being. The Alliance seeks to forge collective political will and to mobilize concerted action at the institutional and civil society levels to overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that militate against such a consensus. And it hopes to contribute to a coalescing global movement which, reflecting the will of the vast majority of people, rejects extremism in any society.

Events of recent years have exacerbated mutual suspicion, fear and misunderstanding between Islamic and Western societies. This environment has been exploited by extremists throughout the world. Only a comprehensive coalition will be able to avert any further deterioration of relations between societies and nations, which could threaten international stability. The Alliance seeks to counter this trend by establishing a paradigm of mutual respect between civilizations and cultures.

High-level Group

- To guide this initiative, the Secretary-General, in consultation with the co-sponsors, has established a High-level Group of eminent persons with the following objectives:
 - To provide an assessment of new and emerging threats to international peace and security, in particular the political, social and religious forces that foment extremism;
 - To identify collective actions, at both the institutional and civil society levels, to address these trends;
 - To recommend a practicable programme of action for States, international organizations and civil society aimed at promoting harmony among societies.

- Toward this end, the High-level Group will consider practical strategies:
 - To strengthen mutual understanding, respect and shared values among different peoples, cultures and civilizations;
 - To counter the influence of groups fomenting extremism and the exclusion of others who do not share their worldviews;
 - To counter the threat to world peace and stability posed by extremism;
 - To foster awareness in all societies that security is indivisible and is a vital need for all, and that global cooperation is an indispensable prerequisite for security, stability and development.

- The High-level Group will present a report containing analysis and a programme of action for States, international organizations and civil society with practicable measures designed, *inter alia*:
 - To emphasize the importance of mutual understanding, and to propose specific mechanisms by which it can be advanced, including but not limited to developing better international cooperation frameworks and using mass media (including the Internet) to foster and frame public debates in constructive ways;
 - To cultivate cooperation among current initiatives aimed at enabling those in the mainstream majority – who are overwhelmingly moderate and reject the views of extremists – to set the agenda;
 - To establish partnerships that will help diverse societies to better understand their differences while emphasizing and acting on their commonalities;
 - To propose measures through which education systems can foster knowledge and understanding of other cultures and religions;
 - To reach out to the youth of the world, in order to instil the values of moderation and cooperation, and to promote appreciation of diversity;
 - To promote awareness that security, stability and development are vital needs for all, and that global cooperation is necessary to achieve them, and to present practical proposals for advancing mutual security.

- The High-level Group will present its report in the second half of 2006 to the Secretary-General, who will determine, in consultation with the co-sponsors, the appropriate way to present the programme of action to the international community. Implementation of the programme could then be overseen by a smaller group of similar stature.

Support structure

- A secretariat headed by an experienced director will prepare studies, analyses and proposals for the consideration of the High-level Group. It will also cooperate with similar initiatives and draw on work accomplished or under way in other fora.