



ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

Address by H.E. Ali Babacan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, at the closing session of the first Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, Madrid, January 16, 2008

President Sampaio, Minister Moratinos, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that we have had a vibrant and successful Forum. Our deliberations were rich and lively; we have had both conceptual discussions of a very high standard, and many useful contributions on concrete projects and specific issues of implementation. As such, I am greatly heartened by our deliberations and even more confident than ever that our Alliance will strengthen and prosper. Turkey will continue to strongly contribute to the Alliance of Civilizations. We will be hosting the Second Forum in Turkey in 2009. I am of the opinion that our National Strategy will serve as an important instrument to advance the objectives of the Alliance. The key concepts of our Strategy are pluralism and diversity, networking and cooperation, dialogue and understanding, and respect for human dignity and gender equality. Our Strategy will initiate new projects such as organizing meetings, publishing articles and books, establishing centres for cultural dialogue at the universities and providing support for the ongoing projects regarding regional meetings, conferences and education and youth.

The Alliance has launched an impressive number of new projects and mechanisms and adopted the Madrid Charter on the main outcome of deliberations. Partnership agreements concluded in Madrid with various multilateral agencies and international organizations will enable our Alliance to reach out to new networks and contacts.

During the Madrid Forum, the Alliance has launched an impressive number of new projects and mechanisms, and concluded partnership agreements with various multilateral agencies and international organisations. This will enable our Alliance to reach out to new networks and contacts.

The Madrid Forum has brought together leading statesmen, diplomats, academicians, businessmen and journalists and made it possible to hold a useful exchange of views on the implementation of the Alliance's objectives. The interventions made in the plenaries and working sessions and proposals put forward suggest that the international community wishes to see friendship and cooperation rather than new areas of conflict and that the common denominators bringing us together are much stronger than the elements leading to division. It would be appropriate to regard the Alliance of Civilizations initiative as one of the most important peace initiatives of the 21st century, seeking to stem the spread of rage and hatred, through the spirit of solidarity. In our age of growing mutual interdependence, global security is indivisible.

It will of course take time to reflect upon and digest many of the important messages and arguments conveyed in those discussions. For my part, I shall leave Madrid with the strong impression that we were able to agree on some fundamental issues. I can name some of these:

Firstly, the international community is united on the need to stem the tide of extremism and polarization of perceptions. National leaders and statesmen of international prominence can perhaps do more to promote cohesion and constructive engagement.

Secondly, there was a high degree of convergence that respect for diversity is essential and that this is perhaps best achieved through universal observance of fundamental values such as human rights, individual liberties and rule of law. Cultural and religious diversity is a source of enrichment, rather than a threat.

Thirdly, I believe that there was a growing appreciation of the need to emphasize the implementation of commitments as the best way forward for our Alliance. My country will faithfully play its part in this crucial stage.

There were also a very high number of ideas, suggestions and proposals for action. We should all reflect on those that seem to offer the greatest potential for realization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have full confidence in the High Representative, President Sampaio, in leading and steering the future work of the Alliance. Participating countries and international organisations also have high expectations of the Alliance Secretariat, especially in the realization of many of the initiatives and projects launched or identified during the deliberations.

Finally, I sincerely believe that the First Forum held in Madrid yesterday and today has proved to be a very timely initiative to begin the practical implementation phase of the Alliance and the Forum has reached its objectives.

I wish to conclude my remarks by thanking our Spanish hosts again for organizing this Forum. I look forward to seeing you all in Turkey in 2009 for our Second Forum.

Thank you for your kind attention.