



## ALLIANCE of CIVILIZATIONS

### **UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. Closing Session First Annual Forum**

Madrid, January 16, 2008

Vice- Prime Minister of Spain  
Mister Prime Minister of Turkey  
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Ministers  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is now time to close our Forum after an intensive and fruitful program;

Allow me to seize this opportunity to convey to you all my warmest thanks for your contribution to the success of this First Annual Forum, particularly indeed to our Spanish friends, who hosted this event and offered us their friendly hospitality.

I do hope that, as me, you will keep fond memories of our first gathering and that you go home with fresh ideas and projects, and a glimpse of a renewed hope – that, if we unite our efforts, we will bring some change to the world.

Let me now emphasize that, in my view, we have met our three main objectives:

- Profiling the AoC Forum as a key gathering, providing space for dialogue among a wide range of social and political actors, including political leaders, heads of international and multilateral bodies, religious leaders, as well as corporate sector, media, youth and civil society representatives.
- Branding the Forum as a results-oriented event – I mean, as an international platform for launching innovative projects and building new partnerships as well as for highlighting some of our key initiatives (such as the Clearinghouse and the Rapid Response Media Mechanism).
- Enhancing the profile of the Alliance, by showcasing the strong commitment of its members to turn its political objectives into global deliverables.

In addition to generating new ideas and areas for action, in the 2008 AoC Forum a number of key projects and strategic partnerships have been launched and broadcasted.

Specifically, the outcomes of the 2008 Annual Forum include the following:

1. Announcement of national and regional strategies for cross cultural dialogue by governments and multilateral organizations to advance AoC objectives in their respective countries and regions.

2. Establishment of partnership agreements, with various multilateral agencies and organizations, which contain specific terms that will enable the AoC to leverage networks, contacts, and competitive advantages of partners in the implementation of its programs. We have signed 5 agreements - with UNESCO, ARABIC STATES LEAGUE, ISESCO, ALECSO and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) - and a letter of intent with the Council of Europe.

3. Announcement of a Global Youth Employment Initiative, called Silatech, with an investment of \$100 million from H.H. Sheika Mozah bint Nasser-el-Missned and partnerships with the World Bank and the corporate sector, notably with CISCO, which will begin with 5 pilot country programs in the Middle East.

4. Announcement of a multi-million dollar AoC Media Fund that will be a first-of-its-kind nonprofit large-scale media production company focused on normalizing images of stereotyped communities and minorities in mass media through partnerships with major Hollywood production, distribution, and talent management companies. The Fund was launched with an initial commitment of 10\$ million, and an estimated target of \$100 million.

5. Launch of the AoC Clearinghouse beginning with a theme of Media Literacy Education, which will catalogue media literacy programs and related government policies in different parts of the world; and announcements of partnerships with several universities that will serve as nodes to enliven this clearinghouse by initiating exchanges and posting materials on the latest development in media literacy education.

6. Launch of a Rapid Response Media Mechanism beginning with an online resource that will feature a list of global experts in crosscultural issues, who are available to comment or to talk to journalists, particularly in times of major cross-cultural crises.

7. Establishment of a Youth Solidarity Fund aimed at providing grants to support youth-led programs in the areas of intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Moreover, a decision was made to strengthen the network of youth participants that attended the AoC Forum and broaden the network to include other youth.

8. Creation of a global network of philanthropic foundations and private funders, which will share information; raise awareness of ongoing initiatives, identify mutual needs; and explore ways to leverage existing resources for greatest impact.

9. Discussions at the policymaking level that highlight the importance to move the Alliance forward in 2008 such as: developing joint multistakeholders initiatives at the regional level aimed at promoting a better inter-cultural understanding, and preventing the mounting of tensions and the rise of extremism; contributing to the upgrade of the inter-cultural dialogue among the two banks of the Mediterranean Sea; launching a number of activities within the framework of active and city diplomacy;

10. Establishment of an Alliance network of good will ambassadors made up of prominent, high-profile, internationally recognized figures drawn from the worlds of politics, culture, sport, business and entertainment to help in promoting the work of the Alliance, highlighting priority issues and drawing attention to its activities.

11. Commitment by the United Nations Global Compact to producing a publication aimed at raising the visibility of best practices in the corporate sector toward supporting cross-cultural relations.

12. Signing of an action-oriented statement of solidarity and joint commitment by diverse religious leaders toward the goal of advancing shared security and peace and providing youth with guidance to counter extremist influences.

13. Adoption of an action-oriented statement of solidarity and joint commitment by diverse religious leaders toward providing youth with guidance to counter extremist influence, promoting a sense of shared security in their various constituencies, and elevating the role of women in future religious projects.

Dear Friends

As yesterday, let me repeat again – eppure si muove! – thanks to your commitment, your participation and your contribution.

This first Forum showed the Alliance is a functioning network of different players and stakeholders; it has been an occasion to launching several major initiatives; and it generated new commitments and partnerships among different participants, players and stakeholders.

The Forum also provided a voice for young people involved in creating cross-cultural exchange programs and will link youth leaders to foundations and sources of funding to help them expand their projects.

Let's assume that the Alliance has the power to mobilize high level and high profile commitments in support of innovative crosscultural projects and dialogue that generates greater cultural understanding.

Let's assume that it is in a key position to galvanize support from governments (particularly GoF members) as well as from the corporate sector, international organizations and civil society with a view to developing a number of joint initiatives.

I therefore conclude that the Alliance of Civilizations is a unique example of the way in which the UN can adapt to emerging challenges.

It can be an important element of the UN's preventative diplomacy efforts. It responds to the crucial demand for building bridges of understanding across cultures, promoting practical projects and gathering support from a range of partners, both within and outside the UN system.

Dear Friends

As I told you yesterday, when, nine months ago, I was called upon to skipper this United Nations' initiative, I must confess I was dominated by the uncertainty of the enterprise and the gigantic nature of the mission that lay ahead of me.

Now I can say that for so unpredictable an adventure, I can rely on you and on this road map going from Madrid to Istanbul, our next stop, in one year time.

Until then, so many responsibilities ahead to all of us to show that the Alliance is the right initiative at the right moment!

Urgent action is needed to stop further degradation of human atmosphere. Let's keep united and firm in our certainty that we can change the world.

Let's go back to our work. Emergencies do not wait.

Many thanks