

**The Third Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

**May 28, 2010**

**Address by H.E. Mr Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of Turkey**

Dear and esteemed presidents and prime ministers,

Esteemed ministers,

Distinguished participants,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

With the deepest regards, I'd like to say welcome to the beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and welcome to the Third Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Yes... Today, Rio de Janeiro is witnessing history.

Today, here we are having what is a historic summit for our countries, our people and above all for our whole world and the future of humanity.

Everyone here knows well the current problems of the world.

We are going through a global financial crisis...

There are global problems like poverty and the unfair distribution of income. Nuclear arms, weapons of mass destruction and a lack of organized disarmament threaten our future.

Terrorism at an international level, human trafficking, drug trafficking, global warming, environmental pollution, aridity and other threats...

My dear friends, we have known all threats...We have seen all these threats and their consequences.

However, there is another threat which has gone unseen, and is growing imperceptibly while threatening our future at least as much other threats are.

Prejudices, presumptions, intolerance, impatience and discrimination... In short, we have been witness to a wave of thinking setting off and forming a basis for polarization and even a clash of civilizations.

Yes...We are here to bring attention to such a threat growing while the world is becoming smaller.

Today, we are here, in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, to stand up to this danger and to show to the world that to eliminate this danger is possible.

My dear friends, we have never been pessimistic...

We are never without hope...

We believe that all problems arising from the past and here now are solvable.

We believe that hostilities of the past and in our age, prejudices, intolerance are not the unchangeable destiny of humanity.

We believe that we will dignify love and respect and have tolerance prevail.

Believing that to change the path of history is certainly possible and what is real is love and peace not negative winds, we are here having these summits.

As a co-president of the Alliance of Civilizations, I'd like to express my gratitude to you, all participants and countries, for setting their hearts and contributing to such an important target.

My wish is that this historic summit will play an important role in the meeting and merging of civilizations and today historic results will arise.

The Alliance of Civilizations attempt which as Turkish and Spanish Prime Ministers we started in 2005 under the United Nations is based on a belief that different cultures and civilizations can live together.

I'd like to express my gratitude to Mr. Kofi Annan for his great contributions and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for his support since taking up his position.

Also, I'd like to thank to Brazilian President Mr. Lula da Silva and the Brazilian people for hosting the meeting this year.

Esteemed participants,

Dear and esteemed friends...

The effort to portray people, societies, cultures and religions as if they were hostile towards each other because of their differences is a major blow to world peace.

Those who present differences as a cause for conflict and enmity devalue the common history of humanity and universal values.

People having different languages, religions, races, cultures and civilizations is a requirement and natural result of being human. Trying to file down, to suppress or to eliminate these differences, or making them a pretext for segregation, is the equivalent of trying to destroy humanity.

Keeping the differences introduced by different religions, civilizations and cultures alive is a common call again by these religions and civilizations.

In the Holy Koran, the creator almighty God says, "O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other."

Islam's holy prophet Muhammad says, "An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also red has no superiority over black nor black has any superiority over red. No nation has superiority over another."

The Bible says, "If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others?"

Just as having differences is a necessary part of being human, living together is a requirement for human beings as social creatures.

The ethics of living together is one of the fundamental elements of our being human.

Major religious traditions and ethics have the necessary principles to make the ethics of living together real.

I want to underline the following matters:

A human being should treat others the same way that they want to be treated by them.

One who wants to be loved should love others. One who wants to get respect from others should show respect to them. One who wants to hear the truth should speak the truth.

One who wants justice should treat people with justice, and one who advocates equality should treat people equally.

I want to draw your attention to the great scholar and man of heart Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi's following words which shed light on today from the 13th century. Mevlana says:

“Be like a river in generosity and help  
Be like the sun in tenderness and mercy  
Be like the night in covering the faults of others  
Be like the dead in anger and nervousness  
Be like the earth in modesty and humility  
Be like the sea in tolerance

Either seem as you are, or become as you seem.”

Another Turkish poet, Yunus Emre conveys the common meaning of the four holy books, namely Psalms, the Old Testament, the Bible and the Koran to today from centuries ago:

“Regard the other, as you regard yourself, this is the meaning of the four holy books, if there is any.”

My dear esteemed friends

Throughout history, it has been argued that the crusades were the biggest conflicts that separated the East from the West, and Muslims from Christians.

The crusades, of course, were the battles during which Muslims and Christians, or the crusaders and Turks confronted each other.

But I want to draw your attention to especially that point: The crusades were also a time period during which all parties knew and contacted each other, forged alliances with each other, and most importantly, they intensively exchanged their assets in the areas of science and art.

What has remained from these confrontations is the traces of cultural exchange, rather than the traces of conflicts.

Common words in our languages, common works of science and culture, common elements in various areas from music to cuisine, all of these are the results of such confrontations.

We cannot serve a prosperous future on earth by reading history differently, that is, seeing history as a string of wars and enmities, and relaying this view to new generations.

The world doesn't consist of only the West, the East, the South or the North.

The history of mankind is not only the story of one segment of people or any single community.

The history of civilizations is not the history of wars, conflicts or assimilations, but the history of differences, richness and interaction.

Those who suppose that the world is made for their own benefit cannot truly read the soul of our age. Some still look at history, policy and world issues from an egocentric angle, exclude diversities, and claim that the truth is only in their own monopoly.

Therefore they underestimate societies and cultures other than themselves, they define them with adjectives such as "undeveloped," "unimproved" or "developing."

It's tremendously wrong and dangerous to judge and to mark a whole mass of belief group or all members of a religion and civilization by starting out with historical prejudices or some present bad example.

However wrong is to impose one's own value judgment, one's way of life on others, it's also equally wrong to ignore another's sensitivities.

I always say, "There's no Islamic terrorism." Islam and terrorism are two contrary, opposite words to each other that cannot come together.

I say very clearly that the inhuman attacks aimed at cities such as New York, Madrid, London and Istanbul are also as much attacks on Islam and Muslims, on the essence of this religion and against the members of this religion, as against these cities.

How wrong a blind enmity towards the West is, and how wrong anti-Semitism is, it's as much as wrong to connect Islam with terrorism....Islamophobia is also that wrong.

Dear esteemed friends...

Those who leave the feeling of justice, the feeling of equality, or the feeling of freedom and conscience out of international relations, lay the foundations of a fatal destruction.

That some are in welfare and in safety, doesn't remove the fact that others live in poverty, famine and shortage.

Justice is a universal principle and it conveys a meaning provided that it is implemented globally and coherently.

Thus for us the safety, serenity and welfare of Istanbul cannot be considered separately from the security, serenity and welfare of New York, Baghdad, London, Mumbai, or Rio.

The attitude that we displayed for Gaza, for Jerusalem, which is the holy city of three religions, is an attitude that put forward justice, equity, and conscience before anything else.

As we shed tears for the children who die in conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, likewise we shed tears for the children who lost their lives in earthquakes in Chile and in Haiti.

Just as the beliefs, languages, colors and ethnic roots of innocent civilians who died in Georgia is out of our subject of interest, we do not regard the beliefs, the color of the skins of civilians who died in Somalia.

Just as those who lost their lives in the twin towers, in the subways of London and Madrid, and in Istanbul made our conscience bleed in the same way those who lost their lives in Gaza cause our conscience to ache.

Therefore we lend an ear to the voice of the children in Gaza. We say that global peace and justice cannot be constructed in a world where nobody lends an ear to that voice.

Dear esteemed participants;

From this day forth, we have to translate the pluralistic structure of history of humanity into a global political language without further delay.

We have to establish a political order where everyone is represented fairly, where nobody is despised, excluded, humiliated.

We believe that with black and white, rich and poor, Muslim and Christian, Easterner and Westerner, everyone should have a place at the table.

Therefore we object to injustices and double standards, in the policies that we pursue. We are doing this not only for our own national benefits, but as a necessity of universal principles that we believe.

We want justice for everyone, freedom for everyone, welfare for everyone, security for everyone.

We know that nobody is safe in a world where some aren't in safety. If tranquility and welfare cannot be provided for everyone, they are not sustainable.

There are many dimensions to global peace. Many components should be brought together in a patient, determined and consistent manner.

We have to establish a fair and egalitarian global order on a political level.

On an economic level, we must establish a just and sharing global economic order.

We must establish a sociocultural order that doesn't turn cultural differences into points of conflict.

We must take determined steps with regard to basic human rights and freedoms.

Here in this sense, the Alliance of Civilizations is a global peace call.

The Alliance of Civilizations, which set out to reach these goals, has today become a global peace movement.

Supported by more than one hundred countries and institutions, the Alliance of Civilizations has been contributing to the building of a common good by carrying out concrete projects.

Projects developed in such areas as youth, entrepreneurship, science, art, climate change, migration, media responsibility, minority rights, pluralism, the role of non-governmental organizations and conflict resolution aims to find permanent solutions to the pressing issues of our world.

My dear and esteemed friends...

Here today in full unity, we call on the whole world and say:

Come! Let's protect this world all together. We're proceeding on this ship of the Earth towards a common destiny and future. Let's find solutions to the pressing issues of our world together. Let's fight poverty together. Let's cooperate against all kinds of terrorism. Let's purify our world from nuclear weapons. Let's join our forces against communicable disease, and put an end to human and drug trafficking.

Come! Let's lend an ear to the voice of Gaza, and achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East together. Let's make Iraq's political and economic future safe and bright, and extend a helping hand to hundreds of thousands of Iraqi widows and orphans. Let's work together to ensure safety, peace and prosperity for the Afghan people.

Come! Let's save the Balkans from being a region of tension and conflicts. Let's exert efforts together for a permanent regional peace in the Caucasus.

Come! Let's respect freedom of religion and conscience, and take a stand against sacred values being insulted in the name of freedom of the press. Let's together oppose all kinds of broadcasts or publications, practices and policies that disregard human dignity.

Let's show the same respect to the people of Rio, Tokyo, Baghdad, New York, Tehran, London and Cairo. Let's embrace all of them without discriminating among them in terms of their religions, language, color and level of welfare.

Come! Let's come together in common good. Come! Let's establish a brighter, fairer, free and prosperous world. Now, we know very well that nobody is safe, free and in peace in a world where people are not safe, free and prosperous.

Justice, rights, prosperity and freedom should be for everyone. Then, and only then, can we make our way through to a bright future. Ending my speech with these feelings, it is my wish that The Third Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations will provide new opportunities for cooperation.

I 'd like to thank again my friend Mr. Zapatero, as well as Mr. Ban Ki-Moon for his full support for our efforts and the Alliance of Civilizations Secretary General Mr. Sampaio.

I'd like to express my gratitude to Brazil, the host of the third summit, and Brazilian President Mr. da Silva and to First Lady of Qatar Sheikha Mozah who is going to host the fourth forum of the Alliance. I salute all of you. Thank you.