

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's opening speech at the 3rd Alliance of Civilizations Forum.

Mr. General Secretary of the United Nations,

Presidents, Chiefs of State, invited to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Alliance of Civilizations Forum.

Firstly, the Brazilian government and its people, especially this wonderful city, as is known Rio de Janeiro, welcome all who have honored us with their presence in this Forum.

This alliance was formed by an expressive group of nations, as the answer to the obscurantist offensive of those who intend to divide humanity through a supposed shock of civilizations.

Our adherence to this project is in sync with the universal principles that rule the Brazilian State and its external politics, but also reflects the construction of our national identity. We are multiethnic; we embrace distinct religions and cultures. The Brazilian nation is formed by the land natives and also by millions of Africans who came here, forcefully, due to slave labor. We shelter successive generations of European and Asian immigrants. Here, millions of Arab descendants cohabit peacefully with hundreds of thousands of Jews and Jew descendants.

Brazil has an enormous debt to the nations of practically the whole world, who helped us build our material richness, and are also responsible for the construction of our cultural patrimony. All of them, with no exception, are part of what we call the Brazilian civilization.

We learn from our own history that tolerance and equality of opportunities are essential to an environment of agreement and peace. It has taught us that exclusion, prejudice, and poverty feed scenarios of tension and conflict, and provide for situations of dominance and injustice, that do not allow people and nations to build a dignified and peaceful future.

There will be no brotherly meetings between civilizations while the deepest roots of conflicts are not confronted, while there is hunger and unemployment, as well as while ethnic, religious, cultural and ideological intolerance persists.

The promotion of a culture of peace must be one of the central pillars of this Forum. For this, we must renew mentalities. In order to do so, it is necessary to offer opportunity of economic growth with social justice to the millions of men and women who live in the brink of Humanity; humiliated and offended, with no hope.

The theses about a supposed fracture of civilizations in the world that would, inexorably, lead to conflicts are absurd. These theories are criminal when used as pretext for military action, said to be preventive.

Brazil bets in understandings that silence weapons, invests in hope that overwhelms fear, uses political, economic and social democracy as its only and best weapon. My experience as syndication leader taught me that inflexible positions only make for confrontation and drive out the possibility of a peaceful solution that most aspire to.

With these principles in mind, I travelled to Tel Aviv and Ramalá, trying to find peace. For this, Prime Minister Erdogan and I went to Teerã to find, with president Ahmadinejad, a negotiated solution to a conflict that threatens a lot more than the stability of an important region in the planet. The world needs the Middle East in peace and Brazil is not oblivious to this necessity.

We defend a planet free of nuclear weapons and in full compliance, by all countries, of the determinations set by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation. We believe that nuclear weapons should be an instrument for the promotion of development, not a threat. We have solid credentials to demand disarmament. Brazil is one of the few countries to prohibit constitutionally the production and use of nuclear weapons. Latin America and the Caribbean form the first denuclearized zone on the planet. The existence of weapons of mass destruction makes the world more insecure. Nuclear weapons are outdated and obsolete pieces, remnants of a past (incomprehensible) of terror.

Dear friends,

Promoting the Alliance of Civilizations requires creativity to forge new bonds between regions and continents. We reduce physical distances, approximating visions of the world, integrating people and cultures. In Latin America and the Caribbean, we are consolidating a project of regional integration that goes beyond the creation of a continental economic state. We want our diversities to be a multiplying factor of our strength, not a pretext to dissolve our common objectives.

The idea of magnifying a dialogue of civilizations inspired us to run two summit meetings between the countries of South America and the Arab countries, and another two with the African countries. We are deepening our mutual knowledge, with the certainty that our shared heritage and values will make us stronger to face challenges such as global warming, energetic insecurity, international terrorism, and, overall, the hunger and misery in the world.

Friends,

The financial crisis that affected us all showed how necessary it is to count on vigorous multilateral organizations, consistent with a world each time more and more diverse and multipolar. But we have noticed a great resistance to change. Incapable of assuming their own mistakes, some leaders try to transfer the burden of the crisis to those who are weaker. They adopt protectionist measures that make export goods and services from underdeveloped countries more expensive. While being lenient with fiscal paradises, they blame immigrants for the social crisis.

The international community needs to react. The fight against xenophobic and racist manifestations is a task that cannot be put off. Brazil is still an open and welcoming country for those

who come looking for a dignified job and better life. While the recession cut thousands of jobs in our economy, we did not hesitate in regularizing the situation of tens of thousands of immigrants.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Young people constitute one of the groups most vulnerable to fanaticism and intolerance, in addition to being the main victims of violence. But, they are also our best bet for the future, as long as they are well oriented towards the knowledge of others and respecting differences. Youth participation in the promotion of dialogue and intercultural cooperation has to be the central objective of our Alliance.

A strong investment in education is indispensable. Knowledge and historical and cultural information about different civilizations are essential to promoting a naturally tolerant environment. For this reason, we are implementing the teaching of Afro-Brazilian culture in our schools. People without knowledge of their history and culture have no means to evaluate the present and will be incapable in making the best choices to construct their own future.

The means of communication also have a decisive role in the formation of values in any society. Its constructive role is indispensable to promoting the principles of our Alliance.

My dear friends,

This 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum confirms that we did not let ourselves be defeated by distance or by the skepticism of those who doubted our capacity to work together. Here prevails the determination to break paradigms and perfect a pioneering dialogue between States and societies who wish to build a world pertaining to the image of its best traditions of understanding and solidarity. This is the message that our Summit launches.

Brazil will help solidify this bridge of friendship and cooperation being built between our nations.

Thank you very much.