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ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

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**Parliamentary Conference: the role of legislators in promoting
intercultural dialogue and cooperation**

Third Forum of the Alliance

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Mr Vice President of the IPU

Members of Parliament

Ladies and Gentlemen

- It is a great pleasure for me to be invited address this audience in the framework of the 3rd Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations

- Let me just say how glad I am to see members of Parliament meeting for the very first time here and now within the Alliance of Civilizations. Let me welcome you and greet you all very warmly and thanks the IPU for this initiative.

Members of Parliament

- As a former member of parliament myself, I know pretty well that Parliaments play a decisive role in building democracy and pursuing the goals and fundamental political options that determine the course of a nation and ensure citizens' cohesion and unity around a joint plan for society.

- We are privileged to be living in one of those times in which events begin to move faster and we are asked to give the right responses to the challenges that the present lays before us.

- You know that all societies around the world are facing huge challenges to cope with globalization in which States and their populations suffer from new vulnerabilities and the whole international order is in a state of flux.

- As in all times of change, the current situation inspires conflicting feelings: on one hand, concern, misgivings and a degree of anxiety, on the other hand, confidence and renewed hope.

- For my part, I still believe that a better world is possible and that by reinforcing cooperation at all levels of leadership and between the various constituencies we will be able to be up to the huge challenges placed before us.

Members of Parliament

- As I like to say, the Alliance of Civilizations is about democratic of cultural diversity. So this matters to you because parliaments are the House of democracy and you are its voice.
- I like to stress that the Alliance of Civilizations is about promoting “good governance of cultural diversity”.
- And I always stress that “cultural diversity” is the fourth pillar of sustainable development, complementing its economic, social and environmental three other pillars.
- So this matters to you. This is an issue in your domestic agenda as it is becoming a main issue in the global agenda.
- This new trend is linked to globalisation and increased mobility, but also to the ever increasing urbanization of the world population.
- A government relatively unable to manage cultural diversity will make its country, its cities potential breeding grounds for unrest, conflicts and violence, with the risk of spreading regionally, nationally, and internationally.

- Cultural diversity can spark innovation, stimulate creativity and boost the economy. But this bright side of cultural diversity cannot be taken for granted.
- Good governance of cultural diversity is central not only to achieving social cohesion within societies but also in terms of conflict prevention and to ensure security and sustainable peace among communities and peoples at the grass- root level.
- To avert diversity to become a source of polarization and conflict and make it an advantage, we need appropriate policies and common action aimed at creating true intercultural societies.
- Now as a new concept or even perhaps a new paradigm of thinking about government of modern societies and nations, “good governance of cultural diversity” has to be developed, deepen and implemented – this is a task for you!
- To you give you an example of what I am thinking about, let’s take the issue of the link between human rights and good governance of cultural diversity.

- In my view this is a key point because good governance of cultural diversity can only “take place in an environment where a person is guaranteed safety and dignity, equal opportunities and participation, where different views can be voiced openly without fear, where there are shared spaces allowing for exchanges between cultures”

- So we need to recognize that good governance depends upon the full implementation of human, civic, economic, social and cultural rights, as outlined in international legal instruments, such as the Charter of the United Nations, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as in other documents on cultural and religious rights.

- This is why good governance of cultural diversity is all about democracy.

- Now there are a few questions here to be raised such as:

- How can we best support democratisation processes through the promotion of mechanisms and policies aimed at developing good governance of cultural diversity at national level?

- How can we best use National Plans and Regional Strategies that the Alliance asks its member countries to develop as opportunities to realize rights and promote equality and freedom, I mean after all democracy, meaning by that equality of citizens before the law, equal access to power and protection of freedom of citizens by legitimized rights and liberties?

Members of Parliament

- We are living in a time of change marked by uncertainties, in which each and all of our democracies are faced with huge challenges. To prevent the reappearance of antidemocratic trends and the violence that they always bring, we must always value the role of Parliament as the unfailing centre of democratic legitimacy and as the ideal forum for debating the ideas and plans that will mould the future of all.
- I call upon you to include in your parliamentary agenda, cultural diversity issues and to promote, in your capacity as representatives of People' interests, democratic governance of cultural diversity as an essential question of our of sustainable development and peace.

- This means engage in a new and innovative agenda aimed at developing public policies as they relate to cultural diversity and to intercultural dialogue.
- At the heart of these policies we should place education for cultural diversity, intercultural competencies and skills and integrate their development as part of an overall political vision or national strategy on life-long learning how to live together.
- This is also a new field opening up for parliamentary cooperation and I am sure that it will enliven the fruitful contacts that I hope will be established between the parliamentarians represented here today.
- I wish you all good work
- Many thanks