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ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

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THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

OPENING SESSION

Third Forum of the Alliance

Rio de Janeiro,

28 May 2010

Mr. President Lula da Silva, our host at this forum

Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations

Mr. President of the Government of Spain

Mr. Prime Minister of Turkey

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations

- At this great meeting where we celebrate cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity I could do not less than address this initial greeting in Portuguese as a gesture not only of merited tribute but also of positive friendship to our hosts.

- Thank you dear President Lula, Chancellor Celso Amorim and all the team headed by Ambassador José Lindgren Alves, for your generous hospitality and unceasing availability. Thank you, above all, for having proposed Brazil as the host of the III Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations.

- I would also like to extend my thanks to all those in the four corners of the world who spared no effort to attend this meeting.

- Without wishing to leave anyone out, I cannot fail to highlight the presence of the United Nations Secretary General, whom I thank for his unfailing support; the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, the sponsors of the Alliance; the many Heads of State and of Government who have honoured us with their presence; the Foreign Ministers and other representatives of the States and international and regional organisations, members of the Group of Friends; the extended community of Focal Points of the Alliance, all other partners and friends of the Alliance. I thank you all for your commitment, determination and enthusiasm.

- The Alliance is all of you, the Alliance relies on your strength, the Alliance is at your service. In fact, that is exactly what I replied one particular day when a well-known strategist mockingly asked me, as Stalin is said to have asked about the Pope: "How many divisions does he have?" The Alliance has no divisions simply because you are the people of the Alliance, you are the Alliance.

Excellencies

- In almost all cultures, the number 3 has a very special symbolism, as it does in science, music, philosophy, mythology, literature, and of course religion.

- By bringing our third Forum to Brazil, we were precisely looking forward to consolidating the “third dimension of the Alliance”, by which we mean:
 - its global scope;
 - its universal outreach;
 - its three-way creative dynamics;

- So far, we must acknowledge: we’ve done it! To give you three examples:
 - Since the Forum was announced, membership of Latin American and African countries has been strongly reinforced, not to mention the fact that the United States joined us a couple of days ago.

- For the first time, here in Brazil, all AoC partners have had the opportunity to propose and organize activities during a whole working day, called the Pre-Day Forum. In this regard, let me highlight a novelty in the AoC and a first in our Forums: a parliamentary session organised by the International Parliamentary Union was held yesterday.

- Here in Rio, for the first time, we will open this Forum to a global conversation, clearly recognizing that we live in one world so that we have to understand and respect each other, live together and live up to the best of our cultures, civilizations and religions.

Excellencies,

- Further to the political, economic and strategic stakes, most of the current international conflicts and a good number of domestic tensions within societies around the world are at the intersection of cultural and religious divides.

- The Alliance of Civilizations is precisely meant to stand at that crossroads and act as a platform for dialogue that delivers.

- Achieving this goal is not as easy as we might like it to be because there are prerequisites for such a dialogue. But that is all the more reason to try harder with all our will, moved by a sense of urgency and using all tools available.

- So, creativity and innovative thought and action are needed to generate the right environment. Stronger cooperation for intercultural dialogue, a wide engagement at grass roots-level, but also leadership at all levels, are all indispensable driving forces for change.

- As Albert Einstein once remarked “You cannot solve a problem from the same consciousness that created it”, meaning by that we cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking and approach we used when we created them

Excellencies, Dear Friends, if I may,

- Going back to the symbolism of numbers, let me remind you that in Chinese culture, the number three is considered a good number, bringing good luck.

- So, I would like to say to this distinguished audience: in our one world, let's share one dream made up of three wishes – achieve better rights for all, give peace a chance and build a common hope for future generations.

- So, we must take it as a good sign for our third forum and as in a race count: “one, two ...three: our Forum is open!

- I wish you good and inspiring work!

- Thank you very much