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Global forum of UN Alliance of Civilizations opening in Azerbaijan

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Baku, Azerbaijan

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BAKU, April 26. /TASS/. Elaboration of mutual understanding and the bridging of estrangement between people in the conditions of a polarizing world are the main topics on the agenda of the 7th Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) that opens here on Tuesday.

The motto of the two-day forum is 'Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and a Goal'. More than 1,500 delegates from over a hundred countries including the active-duty and former heads of state, leaders of international organizations, famous politicians, political scientists and experts, civic society activists, religious leaders, and business executives will attend discussions of the "importance of diverse communities living together in harmony."

The official opening ceremony is to take place in the Baku Congress Center in the presence of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. A video address of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon will be played at the ceremony.

Secretary General Ban planned visiting Baku as part of a tour of South Caucasus countries and taking part in the conference. He put off his visit at the very last moment, however, saying he had to stay in New York in the period of global crises.

The itinerary of the forum included discussions in sixteen sections and two plenary sessions where the debates will concentrate on the problems the UN finds to be particularly pressing.

"These are the problems of peace and security, human rights, supremacy of law, and development," organizers of the conference said. "Especial spotlight will be given to the role played by religious leaders, women, young people, as well as sports and education in building modern society."

Discussions will also embrace the struggle with extremism and terrorism, the rebuffing of the rhetoric of hatred, extremism, terrorism, and xenophobia.

The conference will be crowned with the signing of a Baku declaration.

The idea to set up the Alliance of Civilizations was voiced in 2004 by the then Prime Minister of Spain, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. The UN Secretary General endorsed it on July 14, 2005, and these forums have been gathering under his auspices since then.

The main objective of the alliance is to step up international actions against extremism through inter-ethnic, inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue and collaboration.

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