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**The Alliance of Civilizations' Regional Strategy**

**on Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation for the Mediterranean**

*Adopted at the First Alliance of Civilizations' Regional Meeting for the  
Mediterranean, on 9 November 2010 in La Valetta*

**PREAMBLE**

1. The Alliance of Civilizations was launched in 2005 by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, with the co-sponsorship of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and M. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, with the aim of improving understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions and, in the process, to help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism.
2. Backed by a Group of Friends made up of a growing number of over 120 states, international and regional organizations, this United Nations' initiative is based on the recommendations of the Report of the High-Level Group of November 2006 on the Alliance of Civilizations.
3. As an action driven initiative, it aims at implementing and/or supporting innovative projects in its four main fields of action. Through its multiple network of partners, the Alliance acts as a driving force, a global matchmaker and a platform that achieves results in partnerships mainly with governments, international and regional organizations, cities and local governments and authorities, civil society, religious institutions, foundations, corporations, and the media.

4. Building further upon the achievements of pre-existing work, the Alliance has been calling for additional initiatives at national and regional levels, namely by promoting National Plans and Regional Strategies for intercultural dialogue and cooperation, involving a wide range of stakeholders.

5. National Plans and Regional Strategies should be based on the common framework expressed in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and in international law and other instruments related to human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as on the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

6. Regional Strategies are intended to generate a process of joint ownership among members, partners and stakeholders of the Alliance regarding its goals and to create a culture of peace, by shaping an enhanced framework for policy development, providing new opportunities for and a new impetus to projects on the ground, linking innovative initiatives within and across regions, promoting people-to-people contacts and intercultural dialogue among countries and peoples.

7. Underpinned by a three-fold approach, namely: “breaking down walls”, “building bridges” and “sharing spaces”, Regional Strategies for intercultural dialogue and cooperation also seek to contribute to ongoing efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including discrimination against persons based on their religion or belief.

***SCOPE, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES OF THE REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN***

8. The Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean brings together members of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations as well as other Mediterranean partners.
9. This Regional Strategy is a framework strategy. Its purpose is to adapt the Alliance's global mission, aims and commitments as expressed in the High Level Group Report on the Alliance of Civilizations and its Implementation Plans to national and regional conditions, challenges and needs. Furthermore, it also aims at reinforcing a dynamic partnership among all relevant international and regional organizations and stakeholders, particularly the Union for the Mediterranean in cooperation and coordination with the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, in accordance with the Final Statement approved by the 10<sup>th</sup> Barcelona Process/Union for the Mediterranean Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Marseille in November 2008.
10. The Mediterranean region is facing a complex number of demographic, economic, political, social and cultural challenges, often marked by stark contrasts and negative trends inciting extremism and polarization throughout the world and creating tension among societies which require extensive regional cooperation among concerned parties.
11. This Regional Strategy aims at contributing to the general ongoing efforts to bring closer all relevant cultural, economic, social and political stakeholders, promote mutual understanding and improved perceptions of each other, defuse tensions and bridge divides, enhance security, human development and intercultural dialogue among societies, institutions and individuals in the Mediterranean region.

12. By helping achieve these goals, this Regional Strategy can also favour progress in the Middle East peace process, particularly the negotiations that will lead to a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.
  
13. This Strategy focuses specifically on intercultural dialogue and cooperation by taking into account the various relevant ongoing initiatives, in particular those carried out in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership such as the Barcelona process, launched in 1995 on the basis of the Barcelona Declaration, and the Union for the Mediterranean, launched in 2008, as well as their various initiatives, namely the activities and programmes of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures, of the Euro-Mediterranean University in Slovenia and the Euro-Mediterranean programmes and projects in the field of dialogue and culture. Furthermore this Regional Strategy will also take into consideration the relevant activities carried out by the Alliance of Civilizations' members, in particular by UNESCO and other UN agencies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States, the Council of Europe and its North-South Centre, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), ISESCO, ALECSO and IRCICA. When appropriate, this Regional Strategy will also seek to engender bridging exercises with other potential partners, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) or the European Commission-League of Arab States (EC-LAS) Liaison office in Malta. A list of relevant ongoing initiatives carried out by partners will be included in an Annex to the Action Plan.
  
14. This Regional Strategy takes full advantage of the proclamation of 2010 both as the "International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures", led by UNESCO, and the United Nations' "International Year of Youth: Dialogue and

Mutual Understanding" and will build on the synergies among the activities to be carried out at national, regional and international levels during the year and promote actions at all levels aimed in particular at disseminating among young people the ideals of peace, freedom, progress, solidarity and dedication to the objectives and goals of progress and development, including the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

15. The following five objectives are established for this Regional Strategy:

- a. To build bridges in order to promote dialogue and understanding among peoples, cultures, religions and beliefs, and foster a culture of peace in the Mediterranean region.
- b. To reinforce trust, tolerance and respect for diversity through cooperation, partnership and inclusion.
- c. To contribute to good governance and the rule of law with a view to protecting and respecting cultural diversity, religious freedom and pluralism;
- d. To combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance including discrimination against persons based on their religion or belief and incitement to hate;
- e. To promote integration of legal migrants to further social cohesion and participatory societies and avert marginalization and exclusion of vulnerable migrant groups.

16. These objectives are to be met through action-oriented initiatives involving various partners, mainly focused on the four fields of the Alliance – education, youth, media and migration – to be identified in an Action Plan.

17. The Plan of Action implementing this Strategy is underpinned by the three following guiding principles: to open up new avenues for cooperation based

on synergies, complementarities and the creation of added-value; to promote the development and the involvement of civil society organizations as well as the exchanges between them; to engage a wide array of global and local partners, such as cities and local governments, corporations, philanthropic foundations, universities, think tanks and opinion-makers.

18. The first Action Plan for a period of four years (2011 – 2015) will aim at making progress in the ten interdependent priority domains of action and synergies identified below:

- a. Respect for and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, social cohesion, citizenship and participation;
- b. Promotion of gender equality, equal enjoyment of human rights and equal opportunities for women and men;
- c. Promotion of partnerships with governments, multilateral institutions, philanthropic and other foundations and the private sector in the four fields of action of the Alliance, particularly regarding education and culture;
- d. Developing cross-cultural education as well as learning and teaching intercultural skills and competences;
- e. Expansion of international exchanges mainly among youth to deepen knowledge, understanding and tolerance among peoples and societies;
- f. Encourage efforts made by non State actors in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a tool to promote tolerance, pluralism and respect for diversity and fight against extremism and radicalization;
- g. Promotion of independence of the press, media literacy and respect for plurality of views and fundamental rights;

- h. Investing in cultural diplomacy through translations, arts and entertainment programs to deepen mutual understanding and challenge stereotypes;
- i. Promotion of city-to-city cooperation or city diplomacy in the Mediterranean region;
- j. Promotion of sports diplomacy;

19. When identifying the concrete projects to be implemented in the priority domains of action and synergies listed above, the Secretariat of the Alliance should, through appropriate consultations and partnerships, take into account as much as possible the relevant activities carried out by its partners and existing initiatives promoted by its members that can be expanded to further cooperation.

#### ***MECHANISMS OF COOPERATION AND FOLLOW-UP***

20. The 1<sup>st</sup> Action Plan (2011-2015) implementing this Strategy has been prepared by the Alliance of Civilizations Secretariat in close cooperation with all relevant members, partners and stakeholders engaged in improving intercultural dialogue and cooperation in the region, in accordance with the relevant paragraphs above, and agreed upon by the relevant Focal Points of the members of the Group of Friends of the Alliance mentioned in paragraph 8.

21. This Regional Strategy, launched and finalized in Alexandria, as well its 1<sup>st</sup> Action Plan (2011-2015) will be submitted for adoption at the First Alliance of Civilizations' Regional Conference, to be hosted by Malta on 8-9 November 2010.

22. This Conference will provide an opportunity to express political commitment to and support for the objectives underpinning this Regional Strategy and to the implementation of its Action Plan. It will also provide an opportunity to create a platform for engaging civil society, the private sector, foundations, etc., in concrete commitments to participate and support financially the various actions that will be included in the Compendium referred to in paragraph 6 of the Action Plan.
  
23. A follow up and monitoring mechanism of the implementation of the Action Plan, its composition and mandate will be specified in the Action Plan.
  
24. The annual Forums of the Alliance (namely Qatar in 2011 and Vienna in 2012) will be used to share with other partners success stories, lessons learned and to report on progress made in the implementation of this Regional Strategy. A marketplace of commitments to this Regional Strategy should take place annually at the occasion of the Alliance of Civilizations Forums.
  
25. In 2015 the outcomes of this First Action Plan will be presented in order to allow a decision on the possible revision of this Regional Strategy and adoption of a Second Action Plan.