



ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

Group of Friends Ministerial Meeting

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 26 Sep. 2007

Meeting report

Remarks by the High Representative

“How can we live together in a globalizing world, where clashes taking part in any corner of the world could have an impact anywhere on the planet and where cultural and religious fault lines divide our societies?” This is the global challenge that the AoC has to address in concrete terms, using a results-oriented approach with a focus on deliverables.

As the Group of Friends members are the leading and primary partners of the AoC in the implementation process, they are in a key position to identify projects that reflect good practice in building cross-cultural understanding and to implement policies aimed at improving intercultural relations among communities in the four main fields covered by the AoC – education, youth, migration and media.

To this end, the High Representative proposed that the following practical measures be pursued by GoF members and he also urged them to announce commitments during the first annual Forum in Madrid, in January, 15-16, 2007:

- That Member States create or strengthen “National strategies for cross-cultural dialogue” in the areas of media, youth, education and migration. Close collaboration to achieve the AoC Implementation Plan, particularly the two main projects – the online Clearinghouse and the Rapid Response Media Mechanism (RRMM) – would demonstrate the leadership of Member States in implementing the recommendations put forward in the HLG report at national, regional and local level.
- That international organizations create a “Chart for partnering with the Alliance” and outline expected results with an aim to mobilizing international and regional organizations around the world that could play an important role in bridging divides and promoting cross-cultural dialogue among partners and within Member States.

- That countries and international organizations and bodies appoint a Coordinator or a Focal Point for internal coordination and implementation of the Chart as well as for liaison purposes with the AoC Secretariat.

The High Representative further stressed that the Alliance should serve as a catalyst for pilot initiatives that would be conducted in partnership across nations and/or regions as well as between different international or regional organizations and bodies. He also stated that a Consultative Board would be created to provide advice to him on the Alliance of Civilizations' strategic direction.

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Introduction

The High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) presided over an informal and open dialogue with Foreign Ministers of the Group of Friends (GoF). The meeting explored ways of strengthening the role of the GoF, shaping the course of action of the Alliance and building momentum around common objectives.

The meeting was opened by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon who welcomed the group and expressed his appreciation for the commitment shown by the Group of Friends and for the rise in numbers of participants. He also stated that he would be promoting the work of the Alliance during the 62nd session of the General Assembly.

Further statements were made by the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, followed by an outline of the priorities and challenges ahead by the High Representative Pres. Jorge Sampaio. During the open dialogue that followed, statements were made by the representatives of the AoC co-sponsors Spain and Turkey, as well as by Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, El Salvador, France, Iran, Italy, Luxemburg, Malaysia, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Russia, Slovenia, Switzerland and United Kingdom. The following multilateral agencies and international organizations also made statements: European Commission (EC), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Council of Europe (COE), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), UNESCO and ISESCO.

Suggestions and observations

The participants in their statements expressed support for the AoC, acknowledged the appointment of Pres. Sampaio as High Representative and stated their appreciation for the work done by Spain and Turkey in support of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. Several suggestions were also made for taking the work of the Alliance forward in accordance with the HLG report and the four action areas – media, youth, education and migration. Some of the key points raised were:

- The importance of building on existing initiatives both within and outside the UN system and to bring them together and identify the important links when they are missing.
- The need to include religious leaders and women among the key actors to engage in the four action areas of the AoC.
- The importance of using the media as a tool to counteract negative and dividing images and promote an alternative narrative, and the need to acknowledge that the media often focuses on negative views and representations and that not enough space is allocated for people to talk about respect, goodwill and harmony. The RRMM could fill a crucial gap in this regard.
- The importance of working within countries and societies
- Working with grassroots is key. How do we move beyond a discussion that takes place on the elite level?
- Need to also look at root causes – lack of development, education, structural inequities – not just symptoms.
- Need for dialogue is relevant not only for relations between Islam and the West, but in relations among all civilizations.

Support and commitments

Member states and attending multilateral agencies and international organizations acknowledged the work done to date by the AoC. There was widespread support for the points suggested by the HR regarding the establishment of a rapid-response media network, clearinghouse, national action plans and appointment of focal points for liaison with the AoC. Some countries also pledged support for specific initiatives.

Several other representatives stated that they would be taking action in their respective capacities to organize meetings, create national action plans and promoting the work and profile of the AoC:

- The Vice Minister Astor Escalante of El Salvador's Ministry for Security and Public Safety stated that the AoC would be promoted in El Salvador and that a plan of action for the country would be presented.

- Qatar, the Netherlands and Argentina stated that they would create opportunities and meetings in their countries to promote dialogue between religions and cultures.

- The European Commission, France and Slovenia highlighted the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. Slovenia and France will be holding the chairmanship of the European Union during 2008 and both countries pledged to highlight the AoC initiative and enhance the European dimension of the plan of action.

- The Director General for Education, Culture and Youth of the Council of Europe has been appointed to draft a policy paper that will be presented to the 47 member countries regarding the AoC initiative.

- The AoC HLG report has been submitted to all national parliaments by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Parliaments have been encouraged to distribute the report within their organizations and put it on the agenda for discussion.

Appendix

Alliance of Civilizations Ministerial Meeting, 26 September 2007, ECOSOC Chamber List of Participants

- 1) **H.E. Mr. Lulzim Basha**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Albania**
- 2) **H.E. Mr. Larbi Katti**
Minister Plenipotentiary of the Mission of **Algeria** to the United Nations
- 3) **H.E. Mr. Jorge Taiana**
Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Republic of **Argentina**
- 4) **H.E. Ms. Ursula Plassnik**
Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of **Austria**
- 5) **H.E. Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev**
Permanent Representative of **Azerbaijan** to the United Nations
- 6) **H.E. Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury**
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of **Bangladesh**
- 7) **Mr. Jan Grauls**
President of the Directing Committee for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Belgium**
- 8) **H.E. Ambassador. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti**
Permanent Representative of **Brazil** to the United Nations
- 9) **H.E. Mr. Ivailo Kalfin**
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Bulgaria**
- 10) **Mr. Eduardo Galvez**
Director of Multilateral Politics of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Chile**
- 11) **Mr. Saul Weisleder**
Deputy Permanent Representative of **Costa Rica** to the United Nations

- 12) **H.E. Mr. Per Stig Moeller**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of **Denmark**
- 13) **H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of **Egypt**
- 14) **H.E. Mr. Astor Escalante**
Vice Minister for Security and Public Safety of the Republic of **El Salvador**
- 15) **H.E. Ms. Ilkka Kanerva**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Finland**
- 16) **Mr. Martin Hirsch**
High Commissioner for Active Solidarity against Poverty, **France**
- 17) **H.E. Ambassador Martin Ney**
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission of **Germany** to the United Nations
- 18) **H.E. Ms. Kinga Göncz**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Hungary**
- 19) **Mr. Rezlan Rishar Jenia**
Director General Multilateral Affairs of **Indonesia**
- 20) **Ms. Ruchi Ghanashyam**
Minister, Disarmament and International Security, Permanent Mission of the Republic of **India** to the United Nations
- 21) **H.E. Mr. Abbas Araghchi**
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of **Iran**
- 22) **H.E. Mr. Gianni Verneti**
Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of **Italy**
- 23) **Mr. Takashi Ashiki**
Director of Human Rights and Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Japan**
- 24) **Mr. Samar Al-Zibdeh**
Secretary to the Permanent Mission of **Jordan** to the United Nations
- 25) **H.E. Mr. Marat Tazhin**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Kazakhstan**
- 26) **H.E. Ambassador Hyun-chong Kim**
Permanent Representative of the **Republic of Korea** to the United Nations

- 27) **H.E. Mr. Oskaras Jusys**
Deputy Foreign Minister of **Lithuania**
- 28) **H.E. Mr. Jean Asselborn**
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of
Grand-Duché de **Luxembourg**
- 29) **H.E. Mr. Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of **Malaysia**
- 30) **Mr. Juan Manuel Gomez Robledo**
Under Secretary of Multilateral Affairs of **Mexico**
- 31) **H.E. Mr. Mohamed Benaissa**
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of **Morocco**
- 32) **H.E. Mr. Milorad Scepovic**
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of **Montenegro**
- 33) **H.E. Mr. Maxime Jacques Marcel Verhagen**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the **Netherlands**
- 34) **H.E. Ambassador Rosemary Banks**
Permanent Representative of **New Zealand** to the United Nations
- 35) **H.E. Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of **Norway**
- 36) **H.E. Ambassador Munir Akram**
Permanent Representative of **Pakistan** to the United Nations
- 37) **Mr. Luis Enrique Chavez**
Deputy Permanent Representative of **Peru** to the United Nations
- 38) **H.E. Mr. Rafael Seguis**
Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the **Philippines**
- 39) **H.E. Ambassador Andrzej Towpik**
Permanent Representative of **Poland** to the United Nations
- 40) **H.E. Mr. Luis Felipe Marques Amado**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Portugal**
- 41) **Mr. Mohamed Abdullah Al-Rumaihi**
Assistant Foreign Minister of the State of **Qatar**

- 42) **H.E. Mr. Adrian Mihai Cioroianu**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of **Romania**
- 43) **H.E. Mr. Alexander Saltanov**
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the **Russian** Federation
- 44) **H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Serbia**
- 45) **H.E. Mr. Dimitrij Rupel**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Slovenia**
- 46) **H.E. Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos Cuyaubé**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of **Spain**
- 47) **H.E. Mr. Carl Bildt**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of **Sweden**
- 48) **H.E. Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey**
President of the **Swiss** Confederation, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
- 49) **H.E. Mr. Walid Al-Moualem**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the **Syrian** Arab Republic
- 50) **H. E. Mr. Nitya Pibulsonggram**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of **Thailand**
- 51) **Ms. Svetlana Geleza**
State Consul for Multilateral Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of **Macedonia**
- 52) **H.E. Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah**
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Tunisia**
- 53) **H.E. Mr. Ali Babacan**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Turkey**
- 54) **H.E. Dr. Kim Howells**
MP Minister of State of the **United Kingdom**
- 55) **H.E. Mr. Abubakr A. Al-Qirbi**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of **Yemen**
- 56) **Ms. Helene Marie Gosselin**
Director, Representative to the United Nations, UNESCO

- 57) **Mr. Amr Moussa**
Secretary General , League of Arab States
- 58) **Mr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu**
Secretary General, Organization of the Islamic Conference.
- 59) **Mr. Anders Johnsson**
Secretary, Inter-Parliamentary Union
- 60) **Mr. Ahmed Said Ould Bah**
Head of the Cabinet of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- 61) **Mr. Terry Davis**
Secretary General, Council of Europe
- 62) **Mr. Juan DeLuis**
Senior External Cooperation Officer, OSCE
- 63) **Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner**
Commissioner, European Commission