

**JOINT STATEMENT BY SPAIN AND TURKEY IN RESPONSE TO THE
SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT ON THE ALLIANCE OF
CIVILIZATIONS FORUM**

(Permanent Council, 10 April 2008)

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegations of Turkey and Spain, I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary General and express our sincere appreciation for his comprehensive report presented today on the First Alliance of Civilizations Forum held in Madrid on the 15th and 16th of January. We also thank the Secretary General for sharing his views on an appropriate OSCE contribution to the implementation phase of the Alliance of Civilizations.

We, as the co-sponsors of this initiative under the UN auspices, are pleased to agree with the Secretary General that the Madrid's Forum, as an action-oriented event resulting in significant joint initiatives and partnerships, testified an increasing support and interest towards the Alliance of Civilizations by a growing number of States, international organizations, NGOs, media, cultural and religious figures.

As a matter of fact, it is in this action-driven spirit and fully in line with the Madrid Ministerial Decision 10/07 that we would like to encourage the Chairmanship and the participating States to seize the momentum generated by the beginning of the implementation phase of the Alliance to initiate a thorough debate on the identification of the areas on which the OSCE may concentrate its contribution.

In this process, we should all bear in mind that the Alliance of Civilizations is first and foremost a peace and conflict prevention initiative which is based on the will of the vast majority of peoples around the world to reject violent extremism and prevent radicalization that leads to terrorism. It offers an innovative framework with a global scope for action and looks forward to becoming a helpful tool in reducing cultural and religious tensions and hostility within and among societies.

High Representative Jorge Sampaio, in his recent address to the UN Human Rights Council, stressed that respect for human rights is both the precondition and the framework of the Alliance, and its ultimate goal.

Like the OSCE, the Alliance of Civilizations operates at different levels of participation. It encourages National Strategies for cross-cultural dialogue at State level, Partnership Agreements with international organizations and bodies, and networks to engage with civil society. Its approach to address complex challenges is multi-disciplinary.

The OSCE, in all these areas of common concern, is regarded by the Alliance an indispensable partner. Secretary General, in his report, has credibly argued that the OSCE would benefit from this partnership. We endorse his views. Being an active partner in the Alliance will be a win-win situation.

Mr. Chairman,

Secretary General's report provides us with a substantive input regarding the areas where the OSCE work coincides with the priority objectives of Alliance. In order to complement those ideas, we would like to offer the following areas of activity which, we believe, the OSCE's contribution to the implementation phase of the Alliance could focus on:

- Prevention of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism
- Inter-cultural dialogue, early warning and conflict prevention
- Human rights education
- Fight against discrimination and intolerance
- Media freedom
- Gender issues
- Migration and integration policies

In all these areas which are related to the key priorities identified by the Alliance, the OSCE has become a repository of commitments, recommendations, best practices, materials, resources and projects. The OSCE and the Alliance would mutually benefit from promoting these instruments at a global level.

Finally, we would like to share our thoughts on how to proceed. We do believe that the report presented today by the Secretary General does serve as a good starting point for a renewed engagement of the Organization in the work of the Alliance. In this regard, we do believe that the Alliance and the OSCE should regularly consult each other at both political and working levels and exchange relevant information on topical issues of shared interest. Organization of joint activities, projects and events should also be envisaged. Naturally, the feasibility of such initiatives and activities will be subject to respective decision-making rules of both parties and availability of their resources. "Focal points" within respective secretariats should be responsible for ensuring permanent contacts between both organizations.

We believe that there is merit in establishing these modalities of cooperation in the framework of a formal arrangement, thus attaining certain order and structure to the incipient relationship. However, we should detach discussions on the substance of our cooperation from that of procedural aspects. We should proceed with determining the substance of the OSCE contribution without making it contingent on the state of discussion on the institutional form and structure our cooperation with the Alliance will take. We hope that not only the participating States but also the representatives of our Institutions and structures will be further engaged in the discussions on an OSCE contribution to the implementation phase of the Alliance of Civilizations.

We also would like to encourage the Chairmanship to invite the High Representative Sampaio to the Permanent Council at an appropriate time.

I would like to conclude by announcing that Spain and Turkey, as a testimony to their commitment to the Alliance and in response to a call by the High Representative, have developed their National Strategies to advance its objectives at the national and regional levels. The texts of these Strategies have been made available through the OSCE and

Alliance websites. We encourage those participating States who support the Alliance to prepare their own National Strategies.

We thank once again the Secretary General for his report and look forward to the discussions at the Committee.

Thank you.