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## ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

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**ADDRESS TO THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE  
OSCE**

*Vienna  
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Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

- Let me start by thanking the OSCE Chairperson-in-office, Kazakhstan's Secretary of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kanat Saudabayev and his representative, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, for the most kind and timely invitation to address this session of the Permanent Council.
  
- Let me also express my gratitude to your Secretary General, Ambassador Marc de Brichambaut, for his active and very valuable participation in the Alliance's 3<sup>rd</sup> Global Forum, held last month in Rio de Janeiro.

Excellencies

- I was very much looking forward to having the opportunity to share with you several thoughts on a new beginning for the relations between the OSCE and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.
  
- In a period of global financial, economic and sometimes social crisis, and of mounting ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among and between communities, it is high time for us to join efforts and develop a common partnership for enhancing human security and peace in the OSCE area.
  
- The United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations and the OSCE share the same values, have some common goals and even use a number of similar means.
  
- We are both committed to human rights, security and peace in a broad sense. As I see it, the OSCE's "human dimension" coincides in various ways with the Alliance's agenda and interests.
  
- Furthermore, we are both engaged in making full use of soft power tools on the basis of a mainly preventive diplomacy approach. We are also both flexible and results-oriented.
  
- But at the same time, we differ in scope, in action, in thematic priorities and in strengths. So there is enough room to build our cooperation on our comparative advantages.

- Enhancing international mechanisms for cooperation by strengthening our mutual coordination is not an option, but the only way out if we want to confront challenges and act effectively against common threats.
- This gives us a steady sense of responsibility for greater concerted efforts to pursue an ambitious agenda on human rights, security, peace and sustainable development. For, in my view, these are the four cardinal points of the 21<sup>st</sup> century compass for human dignity that the international community is fully engaged to promote.
- To enhance our cooperation in order to perform effectively it is not as easy as one might like it to be. But this is all the more reason to try harder, with all our will and our complementary tools.

#### Excellencies

- In April last, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to test some ideas for our future cooperation in an informal exchange of views kindly organized by the current Chairmanship.
- Here today, I would like to formally submit to your consideration a number of suggestions for our cooperation for the coming times.
- But, first of all, I would like to use this opportunity to call upon you to work together to bring on board all OSCE members because there are still some of you who haven't joined the Alliance.
- You can, of course, choose to wait and see, or to test the Alliance as observers before committing to membership, or even to engage in some concrete actions instead of becoming full members.
- But I really think that in our world lack of collective action in confronting common challenges is hardly likely to be effective.
- In my view, this is crystal clear with regard to the challenges posed by globalization, increasingly interdependent societies, fast economic and social changes, and continuous migration flows that, all together, generate feelings of greater uncertainty and instability among people.
- So almost all societies are confronted with growing diversity, be it ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious, and are shaken by new controversies and dilemmas that challenge pluralism and democratic governance.

## Your Excellencies

- The Alliance of Civilizations aims to improve 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.
- To cut a long story short, one can think of the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations as a new tool of soft power aimed at addressing "democratic or good governance of cultural diversity".
- Let me now be more specific and illustrate with two practical examples how we operate – I mean through AoC National Plans and Regional Strategies
- As you may know, the Alliance has been calling upon its members to develop National Plans and Regional Strategies for Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation covering the four main fields of action of the Alliance – education, media, youth and migration.
- Through National Plans and Regional Strategies, countries are asked to put forward their own solutions to the challenge of promoting good or democratic governance of cultural diversity, improving relations between diverse cultural groups and promoting innovative projects. But this is also an opportunity to generate sources of good practice, inspire new initiatives and open up the way towards a shared paradigm or strategy for intercultural dialogue
- Concerning the Alliance's regional strategies, so far we have adopted, in December last year, the Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe. It involves 14 countries and several international and regional organizations as well as a number of civil society organizations. It builds on the pre-existing work and is intended to further improve neighbourly relations and to ensure better understanding between peoples and reconciliation.
- An Action Plan was presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum of the Alliance and is now being finalized.
- Preparatory works on the AoC Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean have already started, against a backdrop of strong support from some partners and great caution from others.
- Let's hope that we can move forward smoothly. For us, the Mediterranean is a critical area – not only because it is the epicentre of cultural and religious fault-

lines in our societies, but also because it is in this region that opportunities for reconciliation and cooperation are sometimes most fertile, where constructive exchanges have allowed humanity to take great leaps forward.

- Let me be very clear on one point: as a UN results-oriented initiative of global scope, the Alliance cannot deliver if it doesn't develop at the local level as a platform for cooperation. Here, by local level, I both national and regional levels.
- This is why I commonly say that National Plans and Regional Strategies are the Alliance's main building blocks. I could have called these plans and strategies something else, such as, for instance, "approaches", "actions", "platforms", "roads maps", "charters" or whatever. It so happens that, for the sake of a certain consistency and coherence, I called them Plans and Strategies.
- The only important point here is: to achieve its mission, the Alliance has to turn its global scope and aims into local goals. To achieve its goals locally, the Alliance relies upon its members to come up with actions – actions to be implemented at national level, hopefully in close cooperation with civil society; and common actions to be implemented by a group of countries facing common challenges and willing to address them together.
- This is my vision of AoC Regional Strategies. Regional Strategies are not an imposition, but an open platform for cooperation. They are a framework for cooperation. But indeed this framework needs a quantum minimum of structure, of identified objectives and priorities. That's all!
- Now why am I insisting on these two tools?
- Because, in my view, it is within this framework that the OSCE and the Alliance can develop a most fruitful cooperation.
- To give you some ideas: look at Central Asia.
- In my view, a Regional Strategy for Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation covering education, youth, media and migration/minorities issues for this area is most timely and needed.
- Moreover, I think that if the countries of the region were encouraged to develop their own National Plans for Intercultural Dialogue, it would help to prevent social unrest and to build regional security.

- Still on Central Asia - don't you think that producing a joint report on intercultural trends in Central Asia could lead us to develop an appropriate strategy for this crucial area?
- Take other OSCE regions- the Caucasus for instance – and the very suggestions that I have just mentioned are, in my view, meaningful and most needed to prevent future conflicts and help to build sustainable peace in this critical area.
- Last but not least, let me give you a final suggestion of possible future collaboration in the fields of media and minorities.
- Couldn't we combine our efforts and use our mutual synergies to help the OSCE region to advance in the fields of tolerance and non- discrimination as well as freedom of the media as priority topics of the AoC National Plans and Regional Strategies?

#### Excellencies

- I have brought you some suggestions to strengthening our partnership and focus it on concrete goals. You may have other ideas based on your rich regional experience, knowledge and capabilities. I am totally open to take them into consideration. Because after all, what I would like to see in a near future is more common projects on the ground, more joint efforts, more cooperative action.
- Please, note that in putting forward all these proposals, I am not trying to push the Alliance to compete with the OSCE let alone to replace it.
- The Alliance is not at all a new, hidden, would-be international agency.
- On the contrary, the Alliance is aimed at creating an inclusive platform for partnerships, global conversations, action and innovation, bringing together the knowledge, experience and energy of a wide range of partners, all committed to rethinking the way in which we deal with tensions across cultures and to agree on concrete, practical initiatives to promote trust and understanding.
- So the foregoing proposals are intended to strengthen our cooperation by building on the very significant regional capabilities of the OSCE and on the global scope of the AoC and seeking to leverage our relative capabilities and comparative advantages.
- I trust that you will reflect on all these possibilities for a future partnership. I hope that I have been convincing enough to persuade you that moving together to explore untapped resources is not a luxury, but an emergency exit for securing peace in the world.
- Many thanks