

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS  
HIGH-LEVEL GROUP****Palma de Mallorca, 27 November 2005**

*Delivered by S. Iqbal Riza  
Special Adviser of the Secretary-General  
on the Alliance of Civilizations*

I am delighted to send my warmest wishes to this launch of this first meeting of the High-level Group on the Alliance of Civilizations.

I am grateful to each of you for offering your time and knowledge to this essential and timely initiative. Allow me also to express special thanks the Governments of Spain and Turkey for launching this initiative and for their continued support.

It is appropriate that you meet in Spain, a land rich in both Islamic and Western traditions. A millennium ago, the Iberian peninsula proved the proverbial melting pot of East and West. It gave rise to hostilities and conflict. Yet it was learning and the exchange of ideas that bequeathed the more lasting legacy, benefiting all humanity in the process.

Regrettably, so many centuries later, we are experiencing a period of sharply increasing intolerance, extremism and violence. Trends of recent years have strained relations between East and West. They have notably strained perceptions between Islamic and Western peoples. If unaddressed, these may even threaten stability in our world.

Your High-level Group must assess these alarming developments. And it must propose a collective response to defuse these tensions. Your diverse backgrounds and experiences epitomise what we all must strive towards: an alliance of social, political and civil forces to counter policies and actions which isolate cultures and societies from one another. Only by such concerted efforts to come together can we deprive the extremist, and the terrorist, of the discontent and mistrust that serves as his oxygen.

This is a challenging task. It would be easy to descend into generalities, or adopt inflexible and unbridgeable positions. I trust you will avoid those pitfalls.

Your overriding goal is manifest: our common humanity must triumph over perceived differences. We live in one world. We have no choice but to understand and respect each other, live peacefully together and search for commonality in the best of our respective traditions.

For in the end, your work is not only for an Alliance for Civilizations. It is equally for a global civilization for all members of all societies.

Much is expected of you. I thank each one of you for your commitment, and wish you every success in this essential endeavour.

Kofi A. Annan