

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

**THE ARAB LEAGUE EDUCATIONAL
CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATION (ALECSO)**



AND



**United Nations
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**



Madrid, 15 January, 2008

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**Memorandum of Understanding
between the Arab League Educational
Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)
and the Alliance of Civilizations**

PREAMBLE

ALECSO and the Alliance of Civilizations

- 1) Recognizing that for some years our societies' diversification process has accelerated considerably and that globalization, revolutionized telecommunications, media and transportation have made national cultural systems increasingly permeable;
- 2) Having in mind that for some years, wars, occupation and acts of terrorism have exacerbated suspicion and mutual fear within and between societies and that radical groups have exploited this context by raising mirror-images reflecting a world formed of cultures, religions and civilizations that are mutually exclusive, historically different and destined for confrontation;
- 3) Recalling that the diversity of civilizations and cultures is a fundamental characteristic of human societies and drives peoples' economic and social development, and that the history of relations between cultures includes centuries of constructive exchange, reciprocal contributions and peaceful coexistence;
- 4) Reaffirming the need to build bridges between societies, to promote dialogue and understanding and to forge the collective political will to deal with the growing divisions between societies by reiterating a paradigm of mutual respect between peoples of different cultural and religious traditions and by encouraging the mobilization of concerted action towards this goal;
- 5) Desiring to establish intercultural dialogue on the universal principles of democracy, the State of Law and human rights, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions and other fundamental documents;
- 6) Having in mind that encouraging intercultural dialogue and creating the conditions for dialogue is a basic responsibility of public authorities at all levels, civil society, non-government stakeholders, the private sector and every citizen;
- 7) Desiring to intensify cooperation and provide coordination for actions on matters of mutual interest;



- 8) Being determined more specifically to use additional joint effort with a view to improving relations between peoples in order to arrive at a better mutual understanding, to increase mutual trust and respect and, in general, to resolve the problems that separate them;
- 9) Having in mind the November 13, 2006 Report of the High Level Group on the Alliance of Civilizations, especially its recommendations, as well as all the relevant provisions in this regard previously adopted in the context of the League of Arab States and implemented by its special bodies, particularly ALECSO;
- 10) Considering their mutual contributions and specific characteristics and relying on the good relations existing between the two parties;
- 11) Determined to create a framework for cooperation and intensified dialogue, they have agreed as follows:

Cooperation objectives and principles

- 12) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO are developing their relations in all areas of mutual interest, specifically the promotion of cultural diversity, strengthening of democratic and participatory citizenship, human rights education, tolerance and intercultural skills, intercultural dialogue and exchange. In so doing, they will be following *inter alia* the guidelines and recommendations contained in the November 13, 2006 Report of the High Level Group on the Alliance of Civilizations as well as all other relevant provisions;
- 13) On the basis of a partnership and strengthened complementarity, the Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will take all necessary measures to promote their cooperation through exchanges of opinion on their respective activities and by developing and implementing joint strategies and programs in the above-mentioned priorities and areas of mutual interest.
- 14) Cooperation will duly take into account the Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO's mutual contributions, and respective skills and expertise, and by avoiding duplication and promoting synergy, will seek added value and proceed to a better use of the existing resources. The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will appropriately take into account their experience in their respective activities.
- 15) They will expand their cooperation to all areas where it is likely to contribute added value to their action.
- 16) They will foster cooperation with other partners - including international and regional organizations, public authorities and civil society organizations - with a view to coordination and/or implementation of joint programs, projects and initiatives in the intercultural domain that are likely to bring added value to their action and create new synergies.

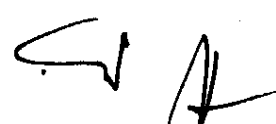


Mutual priorities and areas of interest for cooperation

- 17) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO reaffirm their commitment to establishing a close cooperation founded on their mutual priorities and wherever possible, to strengthen their relations in the areas of mutual interest, such as:
- Promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue,
 - Education in democratic citizenship, tolerance and intercultural skills,
 - Intercultural exchanges, particularly among youth.
- 18) Other priority areas and areas of mutual interest may be determined on the basis of mutual consultation.

Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue

- 19) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will cooperate to develop intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity with a view to promoting the respect of human rights and mutual understanding among cultures. This dialogue is an important component in the fight against all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia.
- 20) The Alliance of Civilizations will examine its participation in the open platform inter-institutional cooperation for intercultural dialogue initiated by the Council of Europe and UNESCO during the Ministers' Conference in Faro – and to which ALECSO also belongs – in order to assess the opportunities for joint actions.
- 21) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will promote ideas and values fostering cultural diversity both in the countries involved and the relevant international forums. In this spirit, ALECSO will promote ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Moreover, the Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will promote its ratification and implementation by their international partners.
- 22) In keeping with the spirit of their mutual objective, which is to promote cultural diversity, the Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will intensify their joint efforts with a particular view to enriching relations among countries on both shores of the Mediterranean.




Education in democratic citizenship, human rights, tolerance and intercultural skills

- 23) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will cooperate to help build societies based on understanding and to promote a democratic culture, by specifically developing education in democratic citizenship, human rights, tolerance and intercultural skills. They will support all initiatives aiming to develop the necessary skills for intercultural dialogue: citizenship skills, knowledge of other languages, social engagement, a vision based on respect for the other, solidarity and respect for diversity.
- 24) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will work on developing education programs – formal and informal – that are more inclusive of the world and its peoples, particularly in the area of history from a perspective that is interdisciplinary with regard to cultures, beliefs and religious practices.
- 25) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will explore the opportunities to promote programs and education measures to the media, and in schools - especially at the secondary education level - to help develop judgement and a critical approach for fighting against erroneous perceptions and prejudices about the Other.
- 26) They will support education networks and student exchanges at all levels.

Intercultural exchanges, particularly among youth

- 27) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will intensify their cooperation regarding youth by conducting and taking part in programs and campaigns for giving youth the means to actively participate in the democratic process and by facilitating exchanges.
- 28) They will attend to the creation of spaces for intercultural dialogue as well as activities fostering the knowledge of diverse cultural expressions, mutual understanding and tolerance. The active participation of government authorities, non-government organizations, religious communities, unions, both nationally and transnationally, is essential in order to do this.
- 29) They will encourage civil society organizations to participate in this type of initiative and emphasize the value of international partnerships



Cooperation methods

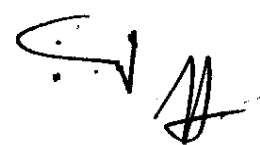
- 30) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will consult with one another regularly and closely both politically and technically on issues pertaining to the areas of mutual priorities described above.
- 31) They shall establish and agree upon an Action Plan (Partnership) for the next three years dealing with joint activities and cooperation to be implemented (see annex).
- 32) This cooperation should include:
 - Dialogue on the major policy guidelines for determining mutual priorities and developing joint medium- and long-term strategies;
 - A regular exchange of information;
 - Coordination of operating activities and joint initiative and events in the priority areas;
 - Consultations between networks/bodies having activities in the same area of priority or interest..

Meetings and mechanisms for strengthening cooperation

- 33) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will periodically hold meetings dedicated to the most important aspects of cooperation and strategic issues. In addition, *ad hoc* consultations at a high political level could be organized on current issues of common interest.
- 34) Regular consultations intended to strengthen political dialogue between the High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations and its Secretariat on the one hand, and the Director General of ALECSO on the other, could be organized at the request of one of the parties.
- 35) Civil society's contribution to achieving the Alliance of Civilizations' and ALECSO's mutual objectives will be greatly encouraged.

Institutional presence

- 36) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO shall appoint a "focal point" responsible for providing permanent liaison between the two institutions. Where appropriate, the institutions shall study ways to best enhance and strengthen their respective collaboration in New York and/or Tunis.



Joint programs

- 37) A three-year partnership shall be established and agreed to by both parties for the cooperation carried out as part of the joint programs, which could include regional thematic programs.

Partnership visibility

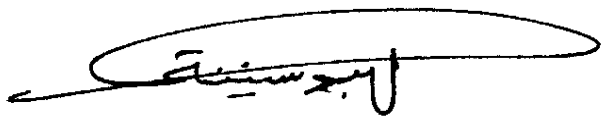
- 38) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO undertake to improve their cooperation regarding communication with a view to making their shared values and their partnership better known and understood by the general public and niche audiences alike. They will consult one another on the timetables for their respective awareness campaigns and study the opportunities to organize joint events.
- 39) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will adopt all the necessary measures for developing the visibility of their joint activity to the maximum, particularly regarding joint programs, for the citizens of the countries involved, with special emphasis on the countries benefiting from this cooperation.

Follow-up

- 40) The Alliance of Civilizations and ALECSO will regularly assess the implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding. On the basis of this evaluation and by mutual agreement, a decision will be made no later than 2012 to revise the Memorandum of Understanding with a view to including new cooperation priorities.

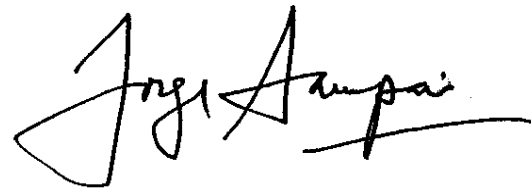
Done in Madrid on 15 January 2008, in two original copies in Arabic and English

For ALECSO



Mongi Bousnina
Director General

For the Alliance of Civilizations



Jorge Sampaio
High Representative of the Alliance of
Civilizations

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Annex A

ALECSO and the Alliance of Civilizations' Secretariat agree to explore the possibility of working collaboratively on one or more of the following projects in 2008:

1. Expansion of intercultural dialogues between the Arab States and other regions
2. Expert meetings on curricula and teacher training on intercultural dialogues, diversity, and democratic citizenship
3. Expert meetings on the analysis of history schoolbooks and teaching curricula on history, including the programme entitled, "The Image of the Other in History Teaching". Dissemination of UNESCO's *History of Humanity* series
4. Expert meetings on foreign language teaching and learning, including the annual meetings on the "European Language Portfolio" to improve dialogue
5. Expert meeting on the interpretation of cultural heritage and the transmission of common cultural values

In order to determine next steps, Alecso will begin by sending the AoC Secretariat a more detailed explanation of their programs for 2008 related to the above issue areas. Based on the scheduled programs, the secretariats of Alecso and the AoC will discuss next steps.

