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## ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

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**VIDEO – ADDRESS TO THE OIC FOCAL POINTS MEETING**

Rabat,

*17-18 November 2011*

Dear Focal Points of the Alliance

- It gives me great pleasure to greet you all and I would like to hail the very timely initiative, led by the OIC, to convene this meeting.
- As you know I attach great importance to the unique role that the Focal Points can play in rooting the Alliance's goals at national level and in promoting action at grass-roots level.
- From your draft Agenda I understand the three main points at stake are: the adoption of an OIC Action Plan for the Alliance for 2012-2014; national plans; the Doha Forum.
- Let me use this opportunity to say a few words on these three topics.
- Regarding what the agenda calls "the OIC Plan of Action for the AOC (2012-2014)", although I don't know the details, I understand that you will be revisiting the 2006 High Level Report in order to identify which actions or recommendations need to be pushed further.
- I must say that when I prepared the 3<sup>rd</sup> Implementation Plan (2011-2013) I took the same approach and would be happy indeed to learn more about the outcomes of your discussions.

- Ten years after nine eleven, the High Level Report has to be put into perspective. In my view, three points have to be highlighted:
- First, ten years after nine eleven, all reports show that tensions persist and that Muslim and Western publics continue to see relations between them as generally bad with both sides holding negative stereotypes of the other – these are, for instance, the main findings of the latest Pew Global Attitudes Survey.
- According to this survey, many in the West see Muslims as fanatical and violent, while few say Muslims are tolerant or respectful of women. Meanwhile, Muslims in the Middle East and Asia generally see Westerns as selfish, immoral and greedy – as well as violent and fanatical.
- However, the latest survey also finds something of a thaw in the US and Europe compared with five years ago. A greater percentage of Western publics now see relations between themselves and Muslims as generally good compared with 2006. In contrast, Muslims in predominantly Muslim nations are inclined to say relations are generally as bad as they were five years ago. And, as in the past, Muslims express more unfavourable opinions about Christians than Americans or Europeans express about Muslims.

- Because of these findings – which are corroborated by other reports and surveys – I decided to include in the Doha Forum a session on this topical issue. It is essential to raise a number of key questions, namely: what are the causes of these bad relations? About which side holds the high ground on key issues? Further to disagreement, what are the points of agreement? What are the shared concerns?
- Indeed, recognizing the problems is essential but not enough. Further to a good diagnosis, we need a good therapy.
- As you know, for me this means: policy action, in other terms: Nationals Plans and Regional Strategies.
- Without a national vision and strategy it is not possible to bring about sustainable change on the ground. To be successful and reach grass-roots this strategy has indeed to combine a top-down and a bottom-up approach. It has to rely on communities, on civil society involvement. But it has to be supported by strong policies towards building inclusive, pluralist societies at all levels and in all fields. In this regard education, as well as youth and media, are key issues. The migration/minorities field is of course also of great importance.

- So regarding the second point - on National Plans -, I only want to make three comments: to urge you to develop strong, holistic National Plans; and to offer you the UNAOC's willingness to organise a whole session on National Plans on the occasion of your next meeting. Furthermore, I would like to suggest organising country missions in 2012 to work with each of you on your National Plans in order to make the most of the (limited) UNAOC resources and tools and try to expand them at national level (for instance, organising media trainings for journalists; developing a dialogue café and using it for intercultural programming and exchanges, etc.).
  
- My last point concerns the Doha Forum. I am pleased to say that the programme strikes a happy balance between the ongoing UNAOC agenda and the specific new topic that the Doha Forum brings to our reflection and hopefully for new common actions.
  
- The assumption that underpins the Doha Forum is twofold: the Millennium Declaration creates a link between the Alliance's mission and goals and the agenda of the MDGs that can and should be further developed; cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue can boost development and indeed peace.

- At the general meeting of Focal Points in Lisbon, in early November, which I hope all of you will attend, we will discuss further the expected outcomes of the Doha Forum. A document is being prepared for discussion with the proposals of commitments that I hope will be made in Doha.
  
- For this Forum to be a real turning point it has to bring commitments to action. Commitments here stand for a plan to address a significant challenge that will have a positive impact on lives around the world.
  
- I really count on you.
  
- Many thanks. Good work