



***Memorandum of Understanding between the League of Arab States  
and the Alliance of Civilizations of the United Nations***

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**PREAMBLE**

*The League of Arab States and the Alliance of Civilizations of the United Nations,  
hereinafter referred as the Parties;*

1. **Recognizing** that the process of cultural diversity in our societies has gained momentum during the past few years and that globalization, revolution in digital and telecommunications, means of communication and transport have rendered the national cultural systems all the more porous;
2. **Bearing in mind** that wars, occupation and acts of terrorism, during the past few years, have exacerbated mutual suspicion and fear within and among societies and that radical groups have exploited this context by creating images that reflect a world composed of cultures, religions or civilizations that are mutually exclusive, historically different and heading towards confrontation;
3. **Recalling** that the diversity of civilizations and cultures is an essential characteristic of human societies and a driving force for economic and social development of peoples and that the history of relations between cultures includes centuries of fruitful exchange, cross-fertilization and peaceful co-existence;
4. **Reaffirming** the need to build bridges between societies, to promote dialogue and understanding, to forge collective political will to address the increasing divisions among societies by emphasizing a paradigm of mutual respect

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- among peoples of different cultural and religious traditions and urging concerted action towards the fulfillment of this goal;
5. **Keen** to establish inter-cultural dialogue based on the universal principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights –as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, the Arab Charter for Human Rights and other fundamental instruments;
  6. **Bearing in mind** that encouraging inter-cultural dialogue and developing conditions to stimulate it constitutes one of the main responsibilities of public authorities at all levels, civil society, non-governmental actors, private sector and every citizen;
  7. **Desiring** to strengthen cooperation and ensure the coordination of action taken on issues of common interest;
  8. **Particularly determined** to exert more joint efforts to improve relations among peoples on both shores of the Mediterranean with the aim of realizing better mutual understanding, enhancing mutual trust and respect, in general, and resolving problems that divide them;
  9. **Bearing in mind** the report of the High-level Group of 13 November 2006 on Alliance of Civilizations and particularly the recommendations therein, as well as the provisions related to the issues already adopted within the framework of the League of Arab States and implemented by its specialized organs, especially the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).
  10. **Taking into consideration** their comparative advantage and their specific characteristics and relying on the good relations that exist between them;
  11. **Decided** to create a framework for cooperation and dialogue;

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*Both parties agreed on the following:*

**I. OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION**

12. The Parties will develop their relations in all fields of common interest, in the framework of respecting the cultural and religious distinctions, especially the promotion and protection of pluralistic democracy; democratic governance of cultural diversity; strengthening of democratic and participatory citizenship; human rights education; tolerance and inter-cultural skills; inter-cultural dialogue and exchange; social cohesion. By so doing, they will follow, inter alia, guidelines and recommendations of the said High-level Group Report of 13 November 2006 on the Alliance of civilizations, the recommendations of the Arab League's two conferences on Dialogue of Civilizations held in Cairo in November 2001 and October 2002, as well as all other relevant provisions;
13. On the basis of strengthened partnership and complementarities, the Parties will take all necessary measures to promote their cooperation by means of exchanging views on their respective activities and by developing and implementing their joint strategies and progress in areas of priority and common interest mentioned below;
14. The Cooperation between the Parties will duly take into consideration the comparative advantages, respective competences and expertise of both Parties and will— by avoiding double standards— search for added value and seek to utilize existing resources in a better way. The Parties will take into consideration, in an appropriate manner, their expertise in respective areas of activities.

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15. The Parties will broaden the scope of their cooperation in all domains likely to bring added value to their action;

16. The Parties will encourage cooperation with other parties, inter alia, international or regional organizations, public authorities, active civil society organizations to maintain coordination or implementation of joint programs, projects or initiatives in inter-cultural domains that are likely to bring added value to their actions and to create new synergies.

## **II. COMMON PRIORITIES AND AREAS OF COMMON COOPERATION**

17. The Parties reaffirm their commitment to maintain close cooperation based on their common priorities and whenever possible strengthen their relations in fields of common interest such as:

- Democratic governance and cultural diversity;
- Inclusive and participatory democratic citizenship;
- Intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity;
- Human rights education, tolerance and intercultural skills;
- Intercultural exchange and promotion of human contacts;
- Social cohesion;

18. Other fields of priority and common interest could be identified upon mutual consultations.

### **• Democratic Governance and Cultural Diversity**

19. The Parties will base their cooperation on the indivisibility and universality of human rights, the respect of relevant norms included in the United Nations and the League of Arab States basic texts, especially the United Nations Charter,

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the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Arab Charter for Human Rights, as well as other fundamental instruments on cultural and religious rights.

20. Cooperation between the Parties will include the protection of individuals belonging to national minorities, combating discrimination, racism, xenophobia and intolerance, as well as torture and ill-treatment, promotion of human rights education and freedom of expression and information.
  21. The Parties will explore possibilities to work more closely together to develop a political culture that encourages cultural diversity, based on the conciliation between the rule of the majority and the rights of minorities as well as the media.
  22. The Parties will work to promote local democracy taking into consideration the contribution it could have on the realization of their shared objectives. In such a case, they should make good use of all the other well-known organs or institutions that have access to local and regional authorities likely to be associated with the implementation of projects of common cooperation.
  23. Bearing in mind their common objectives to promote democratic governance and cultural diversity, the Parties will intensify their joint efforts particularly to enrich relations between countries on both shores of the Mediterranean.
- **Democratic, Inclusive and Participatory Citizenship**
24. The Parties will benefit from their mutual experience and activities in order to promote and strengthen democracy and good governance, encourage equality among all citizens –on the level of equal opportunities as well as equality between men and women within the religions and traditions pertaining to

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different civilizations- including increased participation of women in decision-making in public life.

- **Intercultural Dialogue and Cultural Diversity**

25. The Parties will cooperate to develop intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity in order to promote the respect of human rights and mutual understanding between cultures. This dialogue is an important element in the combat against all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

26. The Parties will promote ideas and values that encourage cultural diversity in concerned countries as well as within relevant international fora. With this in mind, the League of Arab States, through ALECSO, will promote the ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression. Furthermore, the Parties, especially through ALECSO, will promote the ratification and implementation by their international partners of the said convention.

- **Human Rights Education, Tolerance and Intercultural Competences**

27. The Parties will cooperate to contribute to building societies based on knowledge and to encourage a democratic culture especially by developing human rights education, tolerance and inter-cultural skills. They will support all initiatives aiming at developing skills required for launching inter-cultural dialogue: skills of citizenship and multilingual skills, social commitment, a vision based on respect for the other, solidarity and pluralistic outlook.

28. The Parties will work to develop more inclusive educational programs – formal as well as informal- of the world and its peoples, especially in the field

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of history of the world from an inter-disciplinary perspective regarding cultures, religious creeds and practices.

29. The Parties will explore the possibilities of promoting programs and activities for education in schools, especially at the secondary level, to contribute to the development of the critical sense and approach in order to fight erroneous concepts and prejudices.

30. They will support a network of education and students exchange at all levels.

• **Intercultural Exchange and Promotion of Human Contacts including Youth**

31. The Parties will intensify their cooperation in the Youth sector by developing and participating in programs and campaigns that aim at offering youth the means for actively contributing in the democratic process and facilitating exchange.

32. They will encourage exchange of good practices concerning the movement of individuals to improve contact between people whether in the framework of migration or tourism.

33. They will endeavour to create opportunities for intercultural dialogue in urban areas as well as for activities that encourage diversity of cultural expression, mutual understanding and tolerance. To achieve this end, the participation of public authorities, non-governmental organizations, unbanned religious communities, trade unions, at the national and transnational levels is indispensable.

34. They will encourage civil society organizations to participate in such initiatives. Moreover, they will stress the value of partnerships existing at the international level.

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- **Social Cohesion**

35. The Parties will cooperate in the domain of social cohesion by relying on relevant United Nations documents.

36. Using their respective cadres, they will support the efforts exerted by states to exchange good practices on the issue of social cohesion and solidarity, especially with regard to combating violence, poverty and exclusion, the protection of vulnerable groups, as well as for developing more efficient policies in this domain.

### **III. JOINT PROGRAMMES**

37. Cooperation realized within the framework of joint programs –which could include regional thematic programs– should be the objective of a two-year Partnership which should be agreed upon by both parties.

38. The contribution of the civil society and private sector institutions to the realization of common objectives of the Parties and the participation of these institutions in the Parties joint programmes, will be strongly encouraged by both parties.

### **IV. MECHANISMS OF COOPERATION AND FOLLOW UP**

39. The Parties should develop and agree on a plan of action (partnership) during the next two years including joint activities and cooperation to be implemented.

40. This cooperation should include the following:

- A strengthened dialogue on the main political orientations with the aim of identifying common priorities and developing concerted strategies in the medium- or long-term.

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- A regular exchange of information and defining common stances and initiatives;
- Coordinating operational activities in areas of priorities;
- Consultation among network/authorities having activities in the same areas of priority or interest;
- Organization of joint activities and events.

41. The Parties will carry out regular and close consultations at the political as well as technical levels on issues related to their common priorities described above. In addition, high-level ad hoc political consultations could be organized on current issues of common interest.

42. Regular consultations aiming at strengthening political dialogue between the High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations and his Secretariat, on the one hand, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and his Secretariat on the other, could be organized at the request of one of the Parties.

43. The Parties will adopt all necessary measures to diffuse their common activities –especially those dealing with joint programs. They will consult with each other on the agenda of their respective awareness campaigns and will examine the possibilities of organizing joint events.

44. In order to ensure effective implementation of the cooperation programmes agreed upon by the Parties, they will indicate a focal point to ensure permanent liaison between the two institutions in New York and/or Cairo.

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## V. FINAL PROVISIONS

45. The Parties will carry out a regular evaluation of the implementation of the present Memorandum of Understanding.
46. In light of this evaluation, the Parties will agree, not later than 2012, to amend, if necessary, this Memorandum with the aim of including new priorities for their cooperation.
47. This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force on the date of signature by the authorized representatives of both parties.

*This Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Madrid on 15/1/2008 in two originals, each one in Arabic and English languages, and both originals being equally authentic.*

**For the League of Arab States**

**Ahmed Benhelli**

**Assistant Secretary-General**

**for Political Affairs**

**For the Alliance of Civilizations**

**Jorge Sampaio**

**UN High Representative**