



ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS (AoC)

AND

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)

Istanbul, April 6, 2009



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Memorandum of Understanding
between the Alliance of Civilizations of the United Nations and the Organization of the
Islamic Conference

PREAMBLE

The Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) hereinafter referred as 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, acts of terrorism, incitement to hatred, negative stereotyping of persons based on religion or belief, and religious intolerance have exacerbated mutual suspicion and fear among societies and that motivated groups and individuals have exploited this context by creating images that reflect the present day globalized world composed of diverse cultures, religions or civilizations as mutually exclusive and confrontational;
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 exchanges, mutual enrichment and peaceful coexistence;



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4. *Reaffirming* the need to build bridges between societies, to promote constructive and result oriented dialogue and understanding to forge collective political will to address the increasing trend of intolerance and divisions among societies by emphasizing a paradigm of mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious traditions and urging concerted action towards the fulfillment of this goal;
5. *Reaffirming* the urgent need to promote inter-cultural dialogue based on the universal principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights – as defined in the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, and other internationally recognized 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. *Determined* to exert more joint efforts to improve relations among peoples belonging to diverse civilizations, religious faiths, and cultural backgrounds 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 relevant provisions of the OIC Ten-Year Program of Action, adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Makkah on December 7-8, 2005 and



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implemented by OIC through its General Secretariat, subsidiary, specialized and affiliated bodies;

10. *Realizing* that combating incitement to religious hatred and intolerance including Islamophobia should be the common objective of the AoC and the OIC;

11. *Taking* into consideration their comparative advantage and their specific characteristics and relying on the good relations that exist between them;

12. Both Parties decided to create a framework for cooperation and dialogue and agreed on the following:

CHAPTER 1: OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

Article 1

The Parties commit hereby to develop their relations in all fields of common interest, in the framework of respecting the cultural and religious distinctions, especially the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding; 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, and advancement of youths and women. By so doing they will follow, inter alia, guidelines and recommendations of the High-level Group Report of 13 November 2006 on the Alliance of Civilizations, and relevant provisions of the OIC Ten-Year Program of Action of 2005;

Article 2

On the basis of strengthened partnership and complementarities, the Parties shall take all necessary measures to promote 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;



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Article 3

The Cooperation between the Parties shall 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 shall take into consideration, in an appropriate manner, their expertise in respective areas of activities;

Article 4

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

Article 5

The Parties shall encourage cooperation with other parties – *inter alia*, international and 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.

CHAPTER 2: COMMON PRIORITIES AND AREAS OF COMMON COOPERATION

Article 6

The Parties commit themselves to maintain close cooperation based on their common priorities and whenever possible strengthen their relations in fields of common interest such as:

- a) Combating incitement to religious hatred, intolerance, and negative stereotyping, including Islamophobia;
- b) Democratic governance of cultural diversity;
- c) Strengthening an inclusive and participatory democratic citizenship;
- d) Intercultural and interfaith dialogue and cultural and religious diversity;
- e) Human rights education, tolerance and intercultural skills;
- f) Intercultural exchange and promotion of human contacts;
- g) Social cohesion.



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Article 7

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

Section 1: Combating incitement to religious hatred, intolerance, and negative stereotyping, including Islamophobia

Article 8

The Parties would use their good offices and capacities to motivate and influence the political leadership to bring the issue of combating incitement to religious hatred, intolerance, and negative stereotyping, including Islamophobia into the forefront of the global political agenda.

Article 9

The Parties shall cooperate to ensure the respect of the right to freedom of expression and that it will be exercised with responsibility, and is not misused to impinge on the right of others and to incite intolerance namely through incendiary and insulting materials.

Section 2: Democratic Governance of Cultural Diversity

Article 10

The Parties shall base their cooperation on the indivisibility and universality of human rights, the respect of relevant norms included in the United Nations, especially the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the OIC Charter, the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, as well as other fundamental instruments on cultural and religious rights.

Article 11

Cooperation between the Parties shall include the protection of individuals belonging to national minorities, combating discrimination, racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and



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intolerance, as well as torture and ill-treatment, promotion of human rights education and freedom of expression and information.

Article 12

The Parties shall 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.

Article 13

The Parties shall work to promote local democracy towards raising awareness of cultural diversity at the grass roots, 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.

Article 14

Bearing in mind their common objectives to promote democratic governance of cultural diversity, the Parties shall intensify their common joint efforts particularly to enrich relations between countries and people of different culture, religions and traditions.

Section 3: Strengthening an Inclusive and Participatory Democratic Citizenship

Article 15

The Parties shall 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 with due respect to the cultures and traditions pertaining to different civilizations – including increased participation of women in decision-making and in public life.



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Article 16

The Parties shall also endeavor to promote greater participation of foreign residents in life of the local communities, which favors the social integration and cohesion of social ties.

Section 4: Dialogue on Intercultural and Inter-civilizational Diversity

Article 17

The Parties shall 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.

Article 18

The Parties shall promote ideas and values that encourage cultural and religious diversity in concerned countries as well as within relevant international forums. With this in mind, the OIC will promote the ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression.

Section 5: Human Rights Education, Tolerance and Intercultural Competences

Article 19

The Parties shall 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.



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Article 20

The Parties shall work to develop more inclusive educational programs – formal as well as informal – of the world and its peoples, especially in the field of history of the world from an inter-disciplinary perspective regarding cultures, religious creeds and practices.

Article 21

The Parties shall 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.

Article 22

The Parties shall support a network of education and students exchange at all levels, including those that exist with European and Western countries.

Section 6: Intercultural Exchange and Promotion of Human Contacts Including Youth

Article 23

The Parties shall 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.

Article 24

The Parties shall encourage exchange of good practices concerning the movement of individuals to improve contact between people whether in the framework of migration or tourism.



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Article 25

The Parties shall endeavor 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, and religious and community leaders, at the national and transnational levels is indispensable.

Article 26

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

Section 7: Social Cohesion

Article 27

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

Article 28

Using their respective cadres, the Parties shall 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 far developing more efficient policies in this domain.

CHAPTER 3: MECHANISMS OF COOPERATION AND FOLLOW UP

Article 29

The Parties shall regularly and closely consult each other both politically and technically on relevant questions of common priority domains above described.



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Article 30

The Parties shall develop and agree on biannual plans of action including joint activities and cooperation in areas of common interest to be implemented.

Section 1: Meetings and mechanisms to strengthen the cooperation

Article 31

The Parties shall hold their regular meetings dedicated to the most important aspects of cooperation and strategic issues. In addition, high-level ad hoc political consultations could be organized on current issues of common interest.

Article 32

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 OIC and his Secretariat, on the other hand, could be organized at the request of either Party.

Section 2: Institutional Presence

Article 33

The Parties shall indicate a focal point to ensure permanent liaison between the two institutions. When appropriate, they should consider how to enhance and strengthen their better collaboration respectively in New York and/or Jeddah.

Section 3: Joint Programs

Article 34

Cooperation realized within the framework of joint programs-which could include regional



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thematic programs-should be the objective of a two-year partnership, which should be agreed upon by both Parties.

Article 35

The following are the proposed areas of cooperation:

I. General Areas of Cooperation:

- (a) The Parties shall continue and expand their exchange of information and expertise in the areas of education, culture, cultural and natural heritage, youth, sport and media, both bilaterally and in the framework of multilateral structures of cooperation and coordination.
- (b) The Parties shall seek to promote cross-fertilization and synergy between their respective programs of activities.
- (c) The Parties shall seek to develop close cooperation aimed at promoting the elaboration of National Plans for Intercultural dialogue as well as regional strategies for dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Furthermore, the Parties shall support and assist the Focal Points to achieve these tasks.
- (d) The Parties shall develop close working relationships between themselves aimed at collaborating together with other partners, in the development of the two main projects for the next two years.
 - i The AoC Clearinghouse, which aims to provide a detailed and comprehensive online database of organizations, projects, practitioners and resources in these areas in order to foster the development of partnership and the exchange of best practice. The clearinghouse will be divided into seven themes;



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- ii The Rapid Responses Media Mechanism, to be mobilized during times of global tensions around cross-cultural issues that threaten to degenerate into violence.

II. The Clearinghouse

- (a) The OIC will ensure that all the appropriate information on its activities will be included in the AoC Clearinghouse of best practices, materials and resources on cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation projects.
- (b) The Parties shall collaborate in developing the existing Clearinghouse on media literacy as well as on other themes to be included in other Clearinghouses and they shall work together to identify potential think-tanks, universities, and research institutions that could serve as partners in the Muslim World.
- (c) The OIC shall promote the AoC Clearinghouse as a practical tool for governments, organizations and institutions interested in launching projects in these areas in their respective communities, countries and regions.

III. Rapid response media-based mechanism

- (a) The Parties shall seek to develop a network of high profile personalities who are strongly committed to its objectives and principles
- (b) The Parties shall build a network of editors and media decision-makers to sensitize them to Alliance related issues.



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Article 36

The Parties shall develop and agree on joint program activities and cooperation in areas of common interest to be implemented, particularly regarding main ongoing projects or new projects to be launched at the Istanbul Forum.

This cooperation should include inter alia the following:

- (a) Holding of conferences, seminars, and workshops aimed fostering mutual understanding and tolerance among cultures in a way to decrease misperceptions. Holding of sideline events, particularly during the AoC Annual Forums, will be given special attention.
- (b) To create awareness campaign through ads in the most important news network, such as *euronews*, *cnn*, *bbc*, etc, to inform citizens about the OIC and AoC ideal on the quest for dialogue, including dissemination of available resources and international legal mechanisms to redress incitement to religious hatred and human rights abuse.
- (c) Social cohesion – to organize workshops for local communities in which community leaders could express their views, and develop dialogue projects for better understanding and interaction with the “other”.
- (d) To create a network of community and religious leaders who are keen to develop projects for better integration of their communities into mainstream society.
- (e) Education – to develop a joint project that evaluates educational facilities with the view of encouraging them to disseminate the ideal of cultural diversity and understanding among different civilizations with special focus on highlighting the contribution of Islam and Muslims in the evolution of cultural heritage and civilizational values of Europe.



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- (f) To develop projects in different schools in which students are encouraged to present/discuss thesis on a faith/religion that is alien to him/her.

Article 37

The Parties shall regularly closely consult each other both politically and technically on relevant questions of common priority domains above described.

CHAPTER 4: VISIBILITY OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Article 38

The Parties shall engage to improve cooperation in communication towards creating greater awareness and understanding of their shared values and their partnership to the general population as well as specific groups. They will consult with each other on the agenda of their respective awareness campaigns and will examine the possibilities of organizing joint events.

Article 39

The Parties shall adopt all necessary measures to diffuse their common activities – especially those dealing with joint programs – for the citizens of the States concerned, giving particular importance to States that benefit from this cooperation.

CHAPTER 5: MONITORING

Article 40

The Parties shall carry out a regular evaluation of the implementation of the present Memorandum of Understanding. 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.



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CHAPTER 6: SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES, ENTRY INTO FORCE AND AMENDMENTS

Article 41

Any dispute arising from the MoU will be settled through consultation between the Parties, in accordance with their respective obligations under this MoU and in keeping with relevant resolutions and decisions of their respective governing bodies, as well as the relevant rules and regulations of their respective organizations.

Article 42

This MoU will enter into force upon the signature of the two Parties.

Article 43

The Parties may amend this MoU by mutual consent in writing.

Signed in two copies in three languages English, Arabic and French, all being equally authentic. In case of disagreement on the interpretation of the text, the English version shall prevail.

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Secretary General of the Organization
of the Islamic Conference

Jorge Sampaio
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Civilizations

Istanbul, April 6, 2009