



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

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Remarks at the opening of the Fourth Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations

I would like to first of all thank His Highness Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and Her Highness Sheikha Mozah, for organizing this very important meeting at this time.

Shukran jazeeelan.

Speaking out against extremism. Advancing tolerance. Standing for justice, dignity and mutual understanding.

These values are at the core of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Everywhere, these values are being tested.

We see in the daily news headlines: in Syria, North Africa, across the Middle East, and beyond.

Not long ago, I travelled to Oslo to pay my respects at the site of the July 22nd bomb attack.

Beneath a tree, in the heart of the city, people had left flowers and photographs of the victims. I laid my own wreath and said a prayer.

At the Oslo Cathedral, the Archbishop told me about the young people he counselled after the attacks. Many had lost dear friends. All experienced pain and deep sorrow.

Yet they did not permit this act of terror to shake their faith in our common ideals of civilization.

"Norway was shattered," the Archbishop said. "But our young people showed us a new future."

I see this everywhere I go as United Nations Secretary-General. Again and again, we are reminded that our differences are nothing compared to our shared humanity.

As I see it, we are living at an inflection point in history. As I begin my second term as UN Secretary-General, I have identified five generational opportunities to decisively shape our future for decades to come.

The Alliance is an integral part of this agenda. Today, I would like to discuss how it can do even more.

The first imperative: empowering women and youth.

Youth have always been a focus of the Alliance.

Now is the time to expand that work.

I want the coming years to see an emphasis on the problems of women and children, in particular in health, in education, in creating jobs and new opportunities on a scale never seen before.

A second imperative: preventing conflict and violence.

By promoting dialogue, the Alliance can defuse tensions before they boil over into fighting.

The Alliance has a special role in speaking out:

When terrorists attack and kill innocent people.

When politicians stir hatred and exploit stereotypes to win votes.

When moderate voices struggle to be heard amid the politics of polarization.

That is why the Alliance's Global Expert Resource is so important.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A third imperative is building a safer and more secure world.

Conflicts will not be solved by negotiation alone. Mutual understanding is also required.

The Alliance is working to lay this groundwork.

We must keep building peace and tolerance in places that knew only division and discord.

A fourth priority: helping nations in transition – particularly countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

In some countries these transitions have been peaceful. Others have seen bloody crackdowns.

But in all, reconciliation is essential for transformations to succeed.

There is considerable scope for the Alliance to help these nations to shape their future.

The fifth and final imperative is sustainable development our overarching priority for the coming years ahead.

There can be no sustainable development without human rights and strong bonds among all people.

Globalization is exposing new fault lines – between urban and rural communities, for example.

The Alliance must address potential new divides that impact development.

In this room, we can feel the power of the Alliance a wide range of partners coming together to break down walls.

But there is another wall I would urge you to demolish.

The wall between this small but dedicated group and our wider world.

When you leave Doha, please do your utmost to involve people in your churches, mosques and synagogues. Engage students, families and activists.

Have a dialogue – far and wide. But also ensure that it leads to action – real and concrete to make this world better for all people.

Thank you very much.