

## **ROMANIA**

### **THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE "ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS"**

#### **Background information**

The UN initiative "Alliance of Civilizations" (AC) was formally launched on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2005, as a joint proposal of the governments of Spain and Turkey with the objective of advancing understanding and cooperative relations among cultures and religions, as well as countering those forces that fuel polarization and extremism.

In 2005, the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, set-up a High-Level Group with the mandate of analyzing the causes of the current polarization between societies and cultures and to recommend a program with concrete actions. Based on the recommendations of the High-level Group Report, presented on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007, the work of the AC is structured around the following three objectives:

- Develop a network of partnerships with states, international organizations, civil society groups and private sector entities;
- Develop, support and highlight projects that promote understanding and reconciliation among cultures, globally and, in particular between Muslim and Western societies; these projects should be related to the four main fields of action of the AC: youth, education, media and migration. At the beginning, the main projects will be: 1) Online Clearinghouse of best practices and information on cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation projects and 2) Rapid Response Media Mechanism to cross-cultural tensions.
- Establish relations and facilitate dialogue among groups that can act as a force of moderation and understanding during times of heightened cross-cultural tensions.

In April 2007, the UN Secretary-General appointed Jorge Sampaio, the former President of Portugal, as High Representative for the AC.

The initiative AC is supported by a Group of Friends – a community of over eighty countries and international and regional organizations. The members of the Group of Friends are the main partners for the AC activities, being in a key position for identifying potential partners and projects, granting assistance for the implementation of projects and policies meant to improve cross-cultural understanding, mobilizing resources, hosting regional events, disseminating information, etc.

In this regard, the High Representative for the AC recommended to the members of the Group of Friends the following:

- Develop their own national strategies for cross-cultural dialogue in the field of media, youth, education and migration;
- Cooperation with the AC mainly for the implementation of the two main projects (Online Clearinghouse of best practices and information on cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation projects; Rapid Response Media Mechanism to cross-cultural tensions);
- Appointment of a Focal Point for the AC.

Further information is available at [www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org)

## **National Framework**

Situated on a geographical position of confluence, Romania became a crossroad for many cultural and religious traditions. Favored by the tolerant, peaceful and open nature of Romanians, people of Latin descent and orthodox in his greater majority, the representatives of different cultures, ethnicities and religions could freely express here, contributing to the opening of the Romanian culture to universal values and to the shaping of its European nature. That is why the Romanian culture offers a concrete example of "unity in diversity", by knowing how to assimilate the European and non-European cultural values, keeping at the same time its own values and specific identity. Today, the cultural diversity is acquiring new dimensions through the integration of our country in the European Union and under the effects of globalization.

These aspects highlight Romania as a place of cross-cultural and religious dialogue, a privileged framework of actions and debates meant to cultivate the reconciliation among cultures and religions. Furthermore, after the democratic evolutions that took place in the last two decades, one can state that Romania is a space where all communities collaborate among them, creating new values and contributing to the progress of the Romanian society. Even if Muslims represent a small percentage of the country's total population, in regard of the relationship between them and the other ethnicities, including the majority of the population, Romania can be an example of good practice at regional, European, and global level.

## **Objectives**

Romania understands the importance of cross-cultural and religious dialogue, especially within the present international circumstances, and would like to put forward its experience on democratic management of cultural diversity contributing to find solutions on this matter at global level. Romania is interested at the same time to learn from the experiences of others and is open to all partnerships developed by AC

Romania considers that the AC can contribute to the improvement of the relations among cultures and religions. Therefore, Romania became a member of the Group of Friends at the beginning of 2007 and responded to the invitation of the High Representative, by elaborating the present national plan for the AC.

The National Plan intends to continue and rely on the already developed activities in the field of cross-cultural and religious dialogue, seeking at the same time to emphasize the main messages and actions formulated by the AC. The National Plan intends to be a complementary contribution to Romania's participation at the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)", as well as to other initiatives in the area.

The National Plan is oriented towards concrete projects and actions endorsing the promotion of cross-cultural and religious dialogue within the Romanian society, as well as at regional and international level. Among the key principles that will guide the activities are: promoting a culture of dialogue based on respect for human rights and mutual understanding, freedom of speech and free access to information, gender equality, pluralism and non-discrimination, democratic citizenship etc.

## **Carrying into effect**

The National Plan is conceived on medium and long term and will be periodically updated and reviewed in order to ensure sustainability and convergence with the developments at global level under the auspices of AC.

The National Plan was detailed in consultation with the institutions that are in charge with the promotion of diversity and cross-cultural dialogue, as well as with representatives from the academic and non-governmental circles. The National Plan draft was posted for ninety days on the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Department for Interethnic Relations (DIR) for further comments, proposals or suggestions that have been subsequently included in the final version.

The carrying into effect of the National Plan will be done in a range of ways as follows: launching of new projects like setting-up meetings, publishing articles, creating specific links on the websites of interested institutions; supporting the ongoing projects that sustain the objectives of the AC; adjusting the existing projects with a perspective of the AC; taking part in projects advanced by members of the Group of Friends that would assist dissemination at international level of the Romania's experience and good practices regarding dialogue and cooperation among ethnic and religious communities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will follow the carrying into effect of the National Plan in cooperation with other governmental institutions and with the participation of civil society, cultural personalities, media and academic representatives. A National Coordinator will ensure the coherence of actions at national level and relation with the AC Secretariat, as well as with counterparts from other member countries of the Group of Friends.

## **Agenda of activities**

### **A. Enhancing the visibility of the "Alliance of Civilizations" at national level**

- 1. Introducing the AC and the Romanian contribution to this international initiative on occasions of different activities organized in the field of cross-cultural and religious dialogue in our country. This kind of activities will contribute to raising the awareness of Romanian society with regard to the problems and debates at global level on this issue and encourage projects in the main areas of the AC.*
- 2. Press releases for permanent information of the public opinion on the developments related to the AC; setting-up specific headings on the MFA and DIR websites.*
- 3. Raising the awareness of the journalists regarding the AC' objectives and facilitating the publication of articles on this issue in the media and radio and TV broadcasting.*
- 4. High-level Romanian participation at the international meetings of the AC.*

### **B. National initiatives for the "Alliance of Civilizations"**

- 5. Setting-up a Working Group under MFA coordination with the participation of all stakeholders from governmental and civil society frameworks that will cooperate*

- with the National Coordinator, for the planning of activities that will be carried out under the auspices of the AC.*
- 6. Organizing or supporting activities at national and international level that promote the AC objectives.*
  - 7. Designing a website dedicated to the AC.*
  - 8. Nominating National Ambassadors for the AC.*
  - 9. Enhancing the dialogue initiated by the MFA with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), as well as with The League of Arab States for developing cooperation in the field of cross-cultural and religious dialogue.*
  - 10. Encouraging the development of civil society projects in the field of cross-cultural and religious dialogue.*
  - 11. Promoting the AC objectives among youth, including the support of the Romanian youth delegates at the United Nations.*
  - 12. Appointment of a focal point for the AC.*
  - 13. Financing the activities under the agenda of the AC from the annual budgets of the participating institutions, based on a Memorandum with the Government approval.*

**C. Integration of the “Alliance of Civilizations” objectives within the policies and activities promoting cross-cultural dialogue**

- 14. Continuation of the dialogue with the Romanian institutions for a periodical update on the developments within the AC and with Romania’s contribution, including the carrying into effect of the present strategy.*
- 15. Carrying into effect of the 2008-2009 National Strategy on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, its activities being concurrent with the AC objectives.*
- 16. Turning into good account the positive experiences of the participation to the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)”.*
- 17. Continuation and development of the youth and student exchange programs, especially with representatives from Arab states.*
- 18. Development of media representatives exchange programs (press, radio, TV) with the purpose of emphasizing good practices from the Group of Friends member states, including Romania.*
- 19. Promoting the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.*

*20. Cooperation with the UNESCO Department for cross-cultural and religious exchange from the University of Bucharest education in order to reflect the AC's objectives within its educational and research programs.*

*21. Launching Romania's National Plan for the AC in an international conference organized by MFA and DIR.*