

International Symposium on “Civilizations and Cultures: From Dialogue to Alliance”

Tunis, January 30-February 1, 2006

All of our different cultures, beliefs and identities are our wealth. Uniting in universal values is our strength. Only through dispassionate dialogue, interaction, and reciprocal knowledge will we be able to live harmoniously in peace. We must promote a great mobilization in civil society to achieve the eradication of the causes of extremism and violence, to enable us to make the transition from a culture of imposition to a culture of dialogue and conciliation. Building peace each day and establishing alliances by means of the word is our immense and urgent mission.

An alliance within the framework of the United Nations, to be able to dissuade and, if warranted, respond rapidly and efficiently to any attack or provocation.

An alliance to enable us to confront natural catastrophes, reducing their impact through rapid cooperation, providing the adequate human and technical resources.

An alliance to collaborate in the prevention and treatment of illness and pandemics.

A world alliance against poverty.

An alliance, above all, to prepare together adequate strategies with respect to the great global challenges, which can no longer continue to be decided by a minority: energy, nutrition, water... . Foresight is of the utmost importance to avoid “surprises,” which always affect the weakest.

An alliance to protect our common heritage, our cultural identity, our diversity and uniqueness, which are our greatest wealth. And shared values that strengthen our unity.

An alliance to enable us to know and respect each other, for peaceful dialogue, for the transition from a culture of violence and imposition to a culture of dialogue and conciliation.

An alliance to provide access to life-long education for all, which promotes the distinctive creative powers of the human species and enables us to find our own answers, the result of reflection and the exercise of our freedoms, so that we do not respond to the dictates of others. Education that avoids propagating stereotypes, disarms history and emphasizes the many facets that comprise the mystery of each human life.

An alliance for active participation and the consolidation of democratic contexts in which human rights may be freely exercised and responsibilities assumed.

Alliances in favor of the most vulnerable, children, youth, the elderly and disabled... with a permanent attitude of solidarity on the part of society.

Alliances that foresee and, when warranted, identify and isolate extremist, fanatic, dogmatic and intolerant attitudes so that it is possible to

progressively persuade their proponents of the advantage of abandoning positions of force and, if the need arises, to efficiently combat violence and terrorism.

Alliances to combat “fear and misery,” in the words of the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, through access to reliable information and freedom of expression, sharing material wealth and knowledge, so that they may promote stability and security through justice and the respect for human dignity, preventing the formation of breeding grounds for frustration, radicalization and aggression.

An alliance to form an immense human outcry, capable of peacefully changing present trends that are guided by the short-term interests of a minority. In this mobilization, made possible today by technological advances in communications (particularly, the mobile phone), it is imperative to achieve the cooperation of the press, radio and television on a local, regional and worldwide scale.

An alliance, through interaction and exchange, among universities and scientific institutions, among entities involved in the arts and sports, among townships... among all countries of the world and, particularly, among those which are most distant and share fewer relationships.

In short, an alliance that is the result of peaceful dialogue instead of imposition and force.

All of these alliances are possible if civil society ceases to be a passive spectator and chooses to become the author of its own destiny.

The time has come for society and the organizations that represent it to build, through its daily conduct, this peaceful and unified future that is characteristic of free peoples, unburdened by addictions, fear and prejudice.

Only then will we have exchanged conflict for alliance.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza

January 27, 2006