

Secretary-General Announces Composition of High-Level Group for Alliance of Civilizations

NEW YORK, 2 September (UN Headquarters) -- The following statement was issued today by the Spokesman for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

The Secretary-General is pleased to announce the composition of the High-Level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations. The members have been identified through extensive consultations with specialists in the field of inter-civilizational and intercultural relations. A few more members may be included later.

The Group is expected to hold its first meeting in late November 2005. It will be serviced by the Alliance secretariat, which is currently in the process of being established.

The terms of reference and the list of 18 members of the Group are as follows:

Alliance of Civilizations -- Members of High-level Group

CO-SPONSORS

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| 1. Mr. Federico Mayor (Spain; co-chair) | President of the "Culture of Peace" Foundation and former Director-General of UNESCO |
| 2. Prof. Mehmet Aydin (Turkey; co-chair) | Minister of State of Turkey and Professor of Theology |

MIDDLE EAST

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| 3. Seyed Mohamed Khatami (Iran) | Former President of Iran |
| 4. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah (Qatar) | Consort of the Emir of the State of Qatar and Chairperson of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development |

NORTH AFRICA

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| 5. Dr. Mohamed Charfi (Tunisia) | Former Education Minister of Tunisia |
| 6. Dr. Ismail Serageldin (Egypt) | President, Bibliotheca Alexandria |
| 7. Mr. Andre Azoulay (Morocco) | Adviser to His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco |

WEST AFRICA

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| 8. Mr. Moustapha Niasse (Senegal) | Former Prime Minister of Senegal |
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SOUTHERN AFRICA

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| 9. Archbishop Desmond Tutu (South Africa) | The Rt. Hon. Archbishop of Cape Town |
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WEST EUROPE

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| 10. Mr. Hubert Vedrine (France) | Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of France |
| 11. Ms. Karen Armstrong (UK) | Historian of Religion |

EAST EUROPE

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| 12. Prof. Vitaly Naumkin (Russian Federation) | President of the International Center for Strategic and Political Studies and Chair, Moscow State University |
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NORTH AMERICA

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| 13. Prof. John Esposito (United States) | Founding Director-Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding-Georgetown University and Editor-in-Chief of the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World |
| 14. Rabbi Arthur Schneier (United States) | President, Appeal of Conscience Foundation & |

Senior Rabbi, Park East Synagogue

LATIN AMERICA

15. Mr. Enrique Iglesias (Uruguay)

Ibero-American Secretary-General and former President of Inter American Development Bank

SOUTH ASIA

16. Dr. Nafis Sadik (Pakistan)

Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General
Managing Director of the Hindustan Times, New Delhi

17. Ms. Shobana Bhartia (India)

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

18. Mr. Ali Alatas (Indonesia)

Former Foreign Minister of Indonesia

EAST ASIA

19. To be nominated

Terms of Reference for High-level Group

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has launched an initiative, co-sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, for an Alliance of Civilizations.

Context

The initiative responds to a broad consensus across nations, cultures and religions that all societies are interdependent, bound together in their development and security, and in their environmental, economic and financial well-being. The Alliance seeks to forge collective political will and to mobilize concerted action at the institutional and civil society levels to overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that militate against such a consensus. And it hopes to contribute to a coalescing global movement which, reflecting the will of the vast majority of people, rejects extremism in any society.

Events of recent years have exacerbated mutual suspicion, fear and misunderstanding between Islamic and Western societies. This environment has been exploited by extremists throughout the world. Only a comprehensive coalition will be able to avert any further deterioration of relations between societies and nations, which could threaten international stability. The Alliance seeks to counter this trend by establishing a paradigm of mutual respect between civilizations and cultures.

High-level Group

To guide this initiative, the Secretary-General, in consultation with the co-sponsors, has established a High-level Group of eminent persons with the following objectives:

-- To provide an assessment of new and emerging threats to international peace and security, in particular the political, social and religious forces that foment extremism;

-- To identify collective actions, at both the institutional and civil society levels, to address these trends;

-- To recommend a practicable programme of action for States, international organizations and civil society aimed at promoting harmony among societies.

Toward this end, the High-level Group will consider practical strategies:

-- To strengthen mutual understanding, respect and shared values among different peoples, cultures and civilizations;

-- To counter the influence of groups fomenting extremism and the exclusion of others who do not share their worldviews;

-- To counter the threat to world peace and stability posed by extremism;

-- To foster awareness in all societies that security is indivisible and is a vital need for all, and that global cooperation is an indispensable prerequisite for security, stability and development.

The High-level Group will present a report containing analysis and a programme of action for States, international organizations and civil society with practicable measures designed, inter alia:

-- To emphasize the importance of mutual understanding, and to propose specific mechanisms by which it can be advanced, including but not limited to developing better international cooperation frameworks and using mass media (including the Internet) to foster and frame public debates in constructive ways;

-- To cultivate cooperation among current initiatives aimed at enabling those in the mainstream majority -- who are overwhelmingly moderate and reject the views of extremists -- to set the agenda;

-- To establish partnerships that will help diverse societies to better understand their differences while emphasizing and acting on their commonalities;

-- To propose measures through which education systems can foster knowledge and understanding of other cultures and religions;

-- To reach out to the youth of the world, in order to instil the values of moderation and cooperation, and to promote appreciation of diversity;

-- To promote awareness that security, stability and development are vital needs for all, and that global cooperation is necessary to achieve them, and to present practical proposals for advancing mutual security.

The High-level Group will present its report in the second half of 2006 to the Secretary-General, who will determine, in consultation with the co-sponsors, the appropriate way to present the programme of action to the international community. Implementation of the programme could then be overseen by a smaller group of similar stature.

Support Structure

A secretariat headed by an experienced director will prepare studies, analyses and proposals for the consideration of the High-level Group. It will also cooperate with similar initiatives and draw on work accomplished or under way in other forums.