

Tunis Declaration for the Alliance of Civilizations

Tunis, Tunisian Republic: 1 February 2006

The participants in the International Symposium on "**Human Civilizations and Cultures: from Dialogue to Alliance**", held by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - ISESCO- in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Heritage Preservation of the Tunisian Government, under the high patronage of His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Tunisian Republic, from 30 January to 1 February 2006 in Tunis, the seat of dialogue and interculturality, the crossroad of cultures and civilizations, a main affluent to Islamic civilization and a partner architect of the human civilization at large, in which was issued the "**Carthage Charter on Tolerance**" in 1995 and "**Tunis Appeal on Dialogue among Civilizations**" in 2001,

- Referring to the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (November 1998) on designating the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, as well as to the resolution of the 10th Islamic Summit Conference (Malaysia, October 2003) regarding "the Universal Declaration on Dialogue among Civilizations" and the contribution of the Islamic world to the international action relative to inter-civilizational dialogue;
- Inspired by the spirit of the Islamic civilization grounded on the principles of dialogue, tolerance and human fraternity, and confirming the true Islamic perception of the objectives of interaction, coexistence, dialogue and alliance between religions and civilizations;
- Responding to the kind invitation that His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Tunisian Republic, extended to ISESCO Director General to convene this international symposium in the Tunisian Republic;
- Recalling the support of the Islamic world for the initiative launched by Mr. José Luis Zapatero, President of the Spanish Government, towards the promotion of the alliance of civilizations;
- Being conscious of their responsibility towards all humanity, both in present and future, which is jeopardized by serious hazards as a result of turning away from the

human and civilizational values that contribute to consolidating mutual understanding and coexistence between peoples and nations;

- Stressing the need to carry on action towards reaching the end results of the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and step up the efforts of the international community for the dissemination of the values of dialogue, peace and mutual understanding, avoiding all aspects of bigotry, extremism and terrorism that have spared no civilization or religion throughout history and constitute abnormal situations;
- Noting with appreciation and pride the noble values, enlightened ideas and judicious directives contained in the opening speech of His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali as well as the in-depth analysis given by His Excellency Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri, Director General of ISESCO, in his address;

Agree to issue the present Declaration wherein they stress the following:

- Dialogue among civilizations is expressive of the most outstanding values of the Islamic civilization and indicative of the traits of the balanced Islamic identity. It is, indeed, an unavoidable necessity as well as a moral, human obligation for building up constructive, fruitful cooperation leading to peaceful coexistence. In addition, belief in the constant values shared by all human beings requires not only equal wills and good intentions, but also mutual respect and commitment to the objectives aimed at consolidating human values and principles common to all cultures and civilizations.
- The message of Islam is universal and addressed to the entire peoples. It recognizes and respects all revealed religions and all prophets and messengers. Based on moderation, peaceful coexistence, the constant common values, joint cooperation and mutual understanding between civilizations as well as on constructive dialogue among religions and cultures, the Islamic civilization is part and parcel of the human civilization.
- Respecting each of the world's civilizations, recognizing their richness and expressing concern about the ongoing hostile smear campaigns against Islam, its people, civilization and culture. This slanderous attack has been on the rise since the events of 11 September, and sometimes took the form of a biased, insolent affront against Islamic sanctities, the Holy Quran and the person of the Messenger of Allah, Mohammed, peace and blessing be upon him.
- Clashes and conflicts cause tragedies for both individuals and peoples, and sow the

seeds of hatred and discord among human beings. To prevent such a situation, the optimum alternative lies in dialogue, mutual understanding, peaceful coexistence and the respect for the rights and specificities of the others. In addition, benefit should be derived from religious, cultural and civilizational diversity to build an interactive, integrated human society.

- Recognizing the universal right to a decent free life and to progress, and that the combat against poverty, exclusion, injustice, violence, extremism, terrorism, double-standard treatment and patronizing theories is a moral responsibility incumbent on the entire humanity. It is a duty that requires the adoption of just measures and the elaboration of appropriate strategies with a view to creating an environment that favours the edification of balanced human relations. In this respect, the Tunisian initiative to create a world solidarity fund to eradicate poverty and promote human development provides an excellent model for the fostering of dialogue and alliance among civilizations within the framework of solidarity, away from all forms of violence, extremism and exclusion.
- The alliance of civilizations is a principle of international law and a chief foundation of international relations. It greatly contributes to bringing peoples and nations closer together as well as to removing the accumulated barriers of mutual misunderstanding. This alliance represents an ideal approach to address the adverse effects of the phenomenon of globalization, invigorate cooperation and solidarity between peoples and eliminate all forms of double standard and preference leading to the clash of civilizations. The alliance of civilizations is the path taken by the wise and constitutes a common human responsibility incumbent particularly on decision makers, regardless of their rank of responsibility, as well as on the elite group of intellectuals and media figures the world over, the aim being to work together for building peace in the present and the future.
- The sought alliance of civilizations builds on the values shared by all human beings and the principles of right, justice and mutual respect, abides by the rules of international law and champions human rights, tolerance, citizenship and democracy. It opens up wide horizons for mutual understanding between peoples and communities, and favours rapprochement and cross-fertilization between civilizations, resting on the points of convergence, not divergence, within the framework of objectivity and impartiality when dealing with the other at all levels, and excluding the distortion of truths that damages the image of the other.
- Terrorism is an aggressive global phenomenon that belongs to no religion and no nation. Throughout history, it has spared no region of the world, no culture and no

religion. Efforts should be combined to root out terrorism in all its forms and means, dry its sources of finance and pursue its perpetrators, plotters and advocates. Equally, clear distinction should be made between terrorism and the right to self-defence and resistance against foreign aggression and occupation.

- Adhering to just, comprehensive and lasting peace in all strife-stricken areas, especially in the Middle East, reiterating support for the Palestinian cause and the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for establishing, on its soil, the independent state of Palestine with Al-Quds Al Sharif as its capital, and calling for the application of the United Nations decisions aimed at the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories.
- Combining the efforts of governments as well as of international, regional and non-governmental organizations, particularly of ISESCO and UNESCO, in order to consolidate the mechanisms of communication, interaction and alliance of civilizations and disseminate the culture of fraternity, peace, dialogue and tolerance, as dialogue is the sole alternative to counter the culture of confrontation and clash, through concrete partnerships, initiatives and projects. The said efforts should also aim at extending the scope of dialogue so that it transgresses official channels, and at involving civil society and the large public in these efforts.
- Benefiting, in an appropriate way, from bilateral and multilateral agreements, as well as from educational networks and initiatives, and university chairs; encouraging the enactment of national legislations and the elaboration of international standards and mechanisms to put an end to the misrepresentation of the image of the other in the mass media and notably in educational programmes; and establishing observatories to monitor stereotypical images and misconceptions about the world's religions, civilizations and cultures, and take the necessary measures to redress them.

The participants commend the designation of Tunisia to play host to the present symposium; a choice that is commensurate with the civilizational richness of this Arab African country and the constant efforts it deploys to promote the values of dialogue and alliance of civilizations and foster international peace and security. They reiterate their appreciation and gratitude to the President, government and people of the Republic of Tunisia for hosting the symposium. They express also their pride to see President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali receive ISESCO Gold Shield in the Field of Dialogue among Civilizations, in recognition by the Islamic world of his efforts in promoting this vital area. Likewise, the participants laud the remarkable conjoined efforts that the Islamic Organization -ISESCO- and the Tunisian government, particularly the Ministry of Culture and Heritage Preservation, have devoted to hold the symposium in the best conditions.

