

## **EU Presidency Statement**

**on**

### **Item 43**

### **Culture of Peace**

**by**

**H.E. Mr. Adam Thomson, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations**

**on behalf of the European Union**

**Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations**

**New York**

**20 October 2005**

Mr President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the opportunity provided at the mid-point of this International Decade to reaffirm the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and non-violence for the Children of the World.

The European Union also expresses its full support for the other ongoing related activities on interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue in this area, such as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action. Further, the European Union also welcomes the recent initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations, announced by the Secretary-General in July this year. Each of these initiatives can contribute to the common platform of unity which the international community must build to challenge the growing forces of extremism and sectarianism which threaten all our daily lives.

Mr President,

Who could have imagined at the start of this international decade the challenges to a culture of peace that the world is facing today? As a counter to extremism and terrorism, we must choose to celebrate the values that unite us. In order to undermine those who seek to sow division and chaos we must strive to develop tolerant and inclusive societies. We must

celebrate how diversity enriches our societies, improve understanding amongst faiths and cultures, and foster stronger respect between communities.

Mr President,

Respect, tolerance and dignity are cornerstones in creating the conditions for a safe, secure and peaceful world in which all can realise their full potential as human beings, and are intrinsic to developing a culture of peace, as outlined in Article 3 of the Declaration. Full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, for democracy and the rule of law, as set out in the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is essential if we are to promote and protect those values common to humanity. And whilst working to promote these aims, we must also defend against those who seek to undermine these values. We must act against those that incite and promote extremism. It is our duty to do so.

Governments need to work with and through their home communities. We must encourage and empower mainstream voices to challenge the extremists with a more powerful message that reaffirms our values of tolerance and respect. This effort must go hand in hand with work to tackle inequality, poverty and injustice. We must do more to improve opportunity, pursue good governance and entrench universal human rights. Making a practical difference to people's lives by promoting rights and ensuring their implementation will only support our pursuit of tolerance and peace.

Mr President,

Education has a critical role to play in this regard. Good quality education provides a foundation for genuine dialogue among peoples. As the outcome document of the twenty-seventh Special Session of the General Assembly entitled, A World Fit for Children, reminds us, children are "resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all". The European Union is committed to empowering children and young people to express themselves.

In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth and its five new priority areas. Across the European Union, there are an increasing number of youth programmes aimed at developing cooperation on a wide range of activities between young people in different Member States and beyond. Bringing together young people from different backgrounds and from different countries helps combat negative prejudices and stereotypes. Young people are key to creating the tolerant society in which we all want to live. Young people must be considered part of the solution.

**The European Union pays particular tribute to "The United Network of Young Peacebuilders", a global network of young people and youth organisations active in the field of peacebuilding. Their work is an example to us all, and evidence of the significant role that civil society can play in advancing a culture of peace. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the World Report on the Culture of Peace prepared by over 700 civil society organisations as an important contribution to assessing the review of progress made in the last five years.**

Mr President,

The European Union pays tribute to the work of UNESCO as lead agency for the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. UNESCO's commitment to fostering a culture of peace in its fields of competence is as relevant now as ever, and we urge UNESCO to pursue greater synergy across the UN system, for visible results. The European Union also pays particular tribute to UNESCO's work in elaborating the draft Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions. We welcome the adoption of this international convention at the 33rd session of the UNESCO general conference and urge member States to ratify it as early as possible.

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\* Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.