

JOINT STATEMENT BY SPAIN AND TURKEY IN RESPONSE TO THE
SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE HELSINKI
MINISTERIAL DECISION Nº 8/08 ON "OSCE CONTRIBUTION TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS
INITIATIVE".

(Permanent Council 4 June, 2009)

Madam Chairperson,

On behalf of the Delegations of Turkey and Spain I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary General and express our sincere appreciation for the presentation of his excellent report on the Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, held in Istanbul two months ago. We fully endorse the report, that has been received with great interest, to judge from the numerous statements in response to it.

As the co-sponsors of this initiative under the auspices of the United Nations, we fully agree with the Secretary General that the Alliance of Civilizations is consolidating its role as an important global reference for debate on good governance of intercultural and inter-religious diversity.

Let me recall some facts that attest to this role of the Alliance of Civilizations:

- The Istanbul Forum was attended by well over a thousand prominent participants.
- More than forty Participating States and nine Partners for Cooperation were represented.
- The Forum served as the platform for the meetings of six Heads of State and/or Government of the OSCE area (Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey), more than fifty Ministers, the Secretary Generals of twelve international organizations and hundreds of representatives of civil society groups and the private sector.
- The Forum also served as an opportunity to take stock of the initiatives developed by the Alliance of Civilizations and to launch practical projects in collaboration with civil society and corporate partners.

Testimony to the increasing interest in the Alliance of Civilizations within the OSCE is the fact that there are now ten Participating States and one Partner for Co-operation that have their own National Plans to advance the objectives of the Alliance, namely Albania, Algeria, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Portugal,

Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

As to the relations between the OSCE and the Alliance of Civilizations, we agree with the Secretary General that there is a great degree of correspondence between the objectives of the Alliance and the OSCE values and commitments, and that the OSCE is already an alliance of civilizations in action.

We also agree with the Secretary General that the Alliance could be a useful tool for potentially enhancing the cost –efficiency of OSCE activities, and that the OSCE could bring in the work of the Alliance issues of relevance for the OSCE approach, such as respect for human rights, democratization, gender equality, media freedom, a comprehensive approach to all forms of religious discrimination and countering radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism.

We therefore agree with the Secretary General that, within existing mandates and resources, the OSCE can:

- Continue to interact with the Alliance by maintaining institutional contacts through the Secretariat, including attending meetings of the Group of Friends of the Alliance.
- Exchange experiences through mutual invitations to respective relevant events.
- Use the framework provided by the Alliance to disseminate information on relevant OSCE values, commitments and activities, and to publicize its calls for contributions, like ODIHR did at the Istanbul Forum. That would benefit both the OSCE and the Alliance of Civilizations.
- Explore the possibilities for increasing co-operation in the fields of youth and education to promote mutual respect and understanding.

Two regional strategies were also announced at the Istanbul Forum, one for the East-European countries and the other for the Euro-Mediterranean region. Taking into account that the Alliance of Civilizations does not aim at duplicating the work of existing organizations or initiatives, much less at substituting them, but at complementing their work providing a global platform for building partnerships and dialogue, these regional strategies of the Alliance could provide further opportunities for co-operation between the OSCE and the Alliance of Civilizations.

Finally, we encourage all Participating States and Partners for Cooperation and, in particular, the forty one Participating States and nine Partners for Cooperation that belong to the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations to work with us and the OSCE executive structures and to provide the political impulse to promote the co-operation between the OSCE and the Alliance in areas of common interest and mutual benefit.