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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to UN Alliance of Civilizations High Representative Jorge Sampaio

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 17, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We join others in welcoming High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, President Jorge Sampaio, to the Permanent Council.

The United States recognizes the value of the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) as an important initiative to improve understanding among cultures and peoples. President Obama, in his Cairo address a year ago, and Secretary Clinton at the Roosevelt Institution last September noted our appreciation for the leadership Turkey and Spain have provided in developing the AoC. We participated as an observer at AoC and AoC-related events for the past several years, including in major conferences in Madrid, New York, and Astana. We were among the first to fund an AoC project in 2007, a successful Citizen Dialogue program in Spain "in the spirit" of AoC in 2008.

The AoC has evolved in a positive direction over the past several years, emphasizing above all the connections and commonalities among cultures. We are pleased to associate ourselves with such an approach. As announced to the Permanent Council on May 20, the United States joined the 119 member countries and international organizations in the Alliance's Group of Friends this year.

In joining the Group of Friends we expect to further the innovative, inclusive approach of this promising cultural initiative. We particularly applaud efforts to defuse tensions between the Western and the Islamic worlds.

High Representative Sampaio, we appreciate the role you have played in setting sound precedents for the AoC to operate flexibly and apolitically. We support the AoC's approach that invites member states to outline innovative ideas and share successful initiatives on their own, or in conjunction with other like-minded states, NGOs, international organizations or corporations. The United States looks forward to working with the Alliance to further strengthen the innovative, inclusive and apolitical approach it has come to represent.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.