

**OSCE TOLERANCE IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON PROMOTING INTER-CULTURAL, INTER-RELIGIOUS AND INTER-ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING  
(Almaty, 12-13 June 2006)**

**THIRD SESSION**

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR YUSUF BULUÇ  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE OSCE**

Madam Moderator,

I took the floor in my capacity as the representative of a state that is one of the two co-sponsors of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. As such, I align myself with the statement made by the Spanish delegation, Ambassador Lopez Jorin. I also thank Mr. Chafri for his lucid presentation.

Yesterday I shared with this forum our sense of a pressing need to explore a new dialogue with the purpose to address the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and identified the most urgent one being the growing prejudices, misperceptions and polarization between the West and the Islamic world.

Alliance of Civilizations initiative, co-sponsored by Spain and Turkey under the aegis of the Secretary General of the United Nations, has been set up as an international response to the need to forge a collective political will to mobilize concerted action to build a global understanding and hopefully a consensus within the international community that nations, cultures and religions share common values and that societies are interdependent and bound in their development and security. What do the two co-sponsors represent may merit long discussion of our historical experience of transactions with a variety of civilizations which brought about the multicultural societies that we are.

The Alliance initiative also aims to contribute to a global movement which, reflecting the will of vast majority of people, rejects extremism in any society. The novelty with which the Alliance approaches dialogue and partnership is that it aims to launch a set of concrete practical actions in the priority areas of education, media, youth, immigration and integration as well as gender, all of which are relevant not only for the subject of this meeting but also for the priorities of the OSCE.

That is why the participating States have committed themselves to support the Alliance of Civilizations initiative in the Ljubljana Ministerial decision last December. The Secretary General Brichambaut is close to finalizing the OSCE contribution to the Alliance by the end of this month. The OSCE, as a political forum for dialogue among countries with diverse cultural backgrounds and as such already an alliance of civilizations at work, will be instrumental in the implementation phase of the initiative.

Madam Moderator,

Much has been said about the need to establish a balance between the freedom of expression and respect for religious values and sensitivities. The approach that the Alliance has embarked upon partly stems from this need. Alliance of Civilizations, it being rooted in the credible bedrock of

the United Nations, among its many virtuous efforts, should also be seen as an exercise in demonstrating tangibly the compatibility of freedom of expression and respect for diversity and the values it engenders.

In the final analysis, the Alliance of Civilizations initiative will be the ultimate best practice at the global level which strikes the right balance between the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression on the one hand, and the promotion of dialogue, partnership and mutual respect among cultures and civilizations, including the respect for the sacred disposition of human dignity. All religious and humanist traditions rest on the overarching and essential premise that the roots of freedom reside in the singular dignity of human being.

Thank you.