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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 June 2010

**In response to the address by the United Nations High Representative for
the Alliance of Civilizations**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Jorge Sampaio, the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. We listened with interest to his detailed comments, notably on the results of the Alliance's third forum held from 27 to 29 May in Rio de Janeiro.

This initiative sponsored by Spain and Turkey enjoys ever greater support among the United Nations Member States, and the constant expansion of the "Group of Friends" of the Alliance is testimony to that fact.

According to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, three quarters of modern-day conflicts have a culture-related component. The development of the international situation, the modern-day risks and challenges facing humanity, and the threat posed by terrorism and conflicts on ethnic and religious grounds – all of these factors make it necessary for the world community to begin practical efforts to form a partnership between civilizations based on the values that are common to all peoples and religions.

We cannot allow ethnic, religious or cultural conflicts to replace the ideological contradictions of the Cold War era. Those who promote hatred, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance must not be allowed to win. It would seem that the Alliance of Civilizations is able to offer a new set of tools for developing mutual understanding and co-operation among the representatives of different cultures and religions and countering such worrying phenomena as the "caricature scandal" that occurred a few years ago. We believe there are also grounds for considering the expansion of the Alliance's "sphere of competence" beyond relations between the West and Islam.

A year ago, Russia presented a national plan for the development of relations with the Alliance of Civilizations, in the implementation of which non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and other segments of civil society would play a broad role. Various federal departments are also involved in its implementation: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy, the Ministry of Culture, the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications of Russia and the Federal Migration Service.

As regards the part of the plan concerned with education, the annual intake of foreign citizens and compatriots living abroad at Russian institutions of higher education is expanding with the aid of the federal budget. A trial course on the “Foundations of religious culture and secular ethics” is being organized in schools.

The section of the plan dealing with young people covers many different aspects, and priorities include promoting the mobility of young people and contacts between youth NGOs within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Another aspect concerns the development of contacts between young people at the European level, notably with the Council of Europe, with whom a programme on co-operation in the area of youth policy has been signed for the period 2009 to 2012.

The Russian media are paying particular attention to the Alliance. Positive examples include information-related support for the summit of CIS Muslim leaders held in Moscow in June 2009, the round table entitled “The problems of Islamic religious education in Russia and abroad” held in September 2009, a press conference on “Educational and political figures against extremism” held in March 2010 and many other events. Questions of intercultural and interreligious communication are taken up in programmes on both State and private radio. Participants in these discussions include representatives of the Orthodox and Muslim clergy and other Russian and world religious confessions.

In 2006, the Moscow Government launched a targeted programme for the integration of migrants, both adults and children, through education. The positive experience of the Russian capital, where the main routes of transit migration intersect, has been developed in other regions of the country – Saratov, Udmurtia, St. Petersburg, Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai.

An important aspect of this work is expanded co-operation with the Muslim world, which has reached a new level since Russia was granted observer status with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in 2005. Dialogue between civilizations lies at the heart of the strategic vision group “Russia-Islamic World”, which was established in 2006 and brings together many Islamic countries.

Lastly, I should like to mention that we are taking measures to ensure that the Alliance of Civilizations website is translated into Russian.

In conclusion I should like to sincerely wish Mr. Sampaio continued success in his work.

Thank you for your attention.