

ENGLISH only

Providing dialogue of cultures and intercultural thought.

The speech, given at the 'Conference about Intolerance and Discrimination towards the Muslim Community',
Cordova, 9-10th October, 2007
Fourth Plenary Session

Dear Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I have heard of the Ziyodullo Shahidi Cultural Foundation (NPO) and a member of Public Council of Tajikistan, I am deeply thankful for giving me opportunity to talk on that important issue: how to arrest Intolerance and Discrimination towards the Muslim community. I am especially thankful for Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, who visited Tajikistan in April this year and met with the members of PC in Dushanbe. As a researcher, who studies Islamic culture in its fundamental, generating values, I would like to talk about implementation of these values in their global significance of modern times.

Historically Central Asian contribution to Islamic thought and modern civilization is known by the names of Farabi, Ibn Sina/Avicenna, al-Biruni, Khorazmi and, of course, Jalalud-din Rumi, whose 800-anniversary is widely celebrated this year due to the special UNESCO decree. But how their significant contribution to the modern civilization, which has been formed on the cross-roads of Arab, Persian, Turkish cultures, were rethinking and re-evaluating due to the close cooperation with Russian and European academic thoughts during the last, XXth century? Unfortunately, the last century is known by local, regional and the First and Second World War more, then by its inner national/regional/world dynamic of intercultural relations.

Implementation of the thoughts of our classical ancestors in modern literature, music, theatre and cinema made an internal cultural infrastructure of all diversity of national cultures of Central Asia of the last century. Paradoxically, these achievements of the soviet period are not met by international society in its global significance. As a result, the inner national/regional dynamic of the cultural exchange, established at the soviet period with all its advantages and disadvantages, has been totally marginalized from the building of the new intercultural, international building of our own days. Ignoring of historically formed intercultural potential of the region created anti-cultural phenomenon, consisted from two extremes, such as marginalization of Islamic values, from one hand and islamophobia, in its westernized form, from the other. Although dialogue of religious and secular identities is a core of the Peace Agreement in Tajikistan, which ended the 5-years war of 1992-1997, ignoring of that important experience of the country, which has the longest border with Afghanistan and mutual cultural background with Iran, Turkey and part of India and China, from the world peace-building movement, delays intercultural development of Central Asia and the modern world. To improve the situation, creating conditions for dialogue of cultures inwardly and outwardly, is the aim of our Foundation.

Thus, in 2002 we initiated conference entitled 'The Rights for Culture and Interculturality', inviting our colleagues and partners from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, as well as from Austria, Sweden and France. We provided the First International Festival of modern music in 2004. We constantly organize seminars and conferences, providing the idea of interculturality as a core of our national/regional identity. Unfortunately, these types of event are not so much supported by international organizations, including OSCE.

Dear chairman, I hope, that the current conference attracts the world community's attention for the great potential of Tajikistan and, Central Asia, as a whole, for providing dialogue of cultures as a really functional instrument to arrest all types of discrimination. It will be a turning point for OSCE and all international organization, functioning in the region, in promoting dialogue of cultures in Central Asia and Europe and in the globalizing world.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Munira Shahidi,
Chairman of the Z.Shahidi International Foundation (NGO), Chief Editor of the journal 'FONUS'