



Ban stresses cultural tolerance at meeting with representatives of Islamic countries



Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (second right) meeting with some Ambassadors of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)

5 April 2011 – The recent burning of a copy of the Koran in the United States and similar actions anywhere else contradict the efforts of the United Nations to promote tolerance, intercultural understanding and mutual respect between cultures and religions, **Secretary-General** Ban Ki-moon said today.

In a meeting with a group of ambassadors representing Member States of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to the UN, Mr. Ban **condemned** the incident in the state of Florida and said such actions cannot be condoned by any religion.

The Secretary-General said he supported the UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, Jorge Sampaio, who noted in a statement on Sunday that the desecration of the Koran – as of any holy text – should be vehemently repudiated.

The burning of the Koran sparked widespread protests in Afghanistan in recent days, and resulted in the killing of three UN staff members and four Nepalese guards at the UN compound in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif on Friday.

Mr. Ban and the OIC diplomats also discussed issues related to the work of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (**UNRWA**) and the Middle East peace process, as well as the evolving situation in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Secretary-General thanked the ambassadors for their condemnation of and condolences for the attack on UN staff in Afghanistan. He said such an attack cannot be justified under any circumstances.

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