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Al-Nasser urges strengthening Alliance of Civilizations as a global mediation tool



General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser (right) chairs debate on cross-cultural understanding. UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras

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The President of the General Assembly, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, today called for the strengthening of the role of the Alliance of Civilizations as a global tool to mediate international disputes and promote cultural understanding and tolerance.

“The international community, the Member States, should strengthen the capacity of the Alliance through adequate resources, and give the organization the means equal to its objectives,” said Mr.

Al-Nasser in an opening [speech](#) at the General Assembly's Interactive Debate on Fostering Cross-Cultural Understanding for Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies.

Launched in 2005 through the initiative of Spain and Turkey, under the auspices of the United Nations, the Alliance of Civilizations seeks to promote better cross-cultural relations worldwide.

“I can see a role for the Alliance and for the Office of the High Representative [of the Secretary-General] in appeasing tensions, preventing misunderstandings, and mediating disputes, particularly when they arise from cultural grievances,” Mr. Al-Nasser said. “I appeal to Member States to strengthen this role.”

The Alliance would then become an additional instrument in the “toolbox of conflict prevention and resolution, at a very little cost to the international community,” he noted, adding that it provided the world a chance to elevate the consideration of issues related to peace and security to a higher level of universality and effectiveness.

The Alliance has also become a source of fresh hope for the international community to stem the tide of intolerance, according to the General Assembly President. He said he was encouraged by the fact that the number of members of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations has risen to 107 countries.

Referring to the reasoning behind the holding of Thursday's debate, Mr. Al-Nasser said that the world was again facing heightened challenges stemming from cultural diversity.

“Why is culture perceived – and sometimes deeply felt – as a source of division, instead of a path to dialogue and human solidarity?” he asked. “Why is the fear of the ‘other’ an easy platform for those whose simplistic philosophy implies a world of mutually exclusive identities? Why has multiculturalism failed and xenophobia risen in some societies? Why are anti-immigration policies receiving, here and there, increased political support?”

“We have entered a world in which these issues will continue to unsettle us, unless we make sure that the benefits are shared in a just and harmonious way between all members of the human family,” Mr. Al-Nasser added. “If not – and I stress, if not – culture and identity will become the refuge of all those excluded and left behind.”

The President plans to convene an informal high-level meeting on mediation in the General Assembly on 23 May.

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