



[SAMPAIO CALLS FOR CULTURAL DIPLOMACY FOCUS](#)



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President Jorge Sampaio, High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, has called for a great emphasis on 'cultural diplomacy' in the efforts of the international community to settle conflicts around the world.

Speaking to the annual conference of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in Bern, President Sampaio pointed to the Balkans, East Timor, and South Africa, as examples of societies transformed by soft power tools of diplomacy that can be used to change the perceptions and worldviews of communities and individuals.

"Reconciliation as part of peacebuilding depends highly on cultural and identity issues, narratives and stories built and exchanged about conflicts" he said. "The Alliance of Civilizations makes sense in this framework as a new UN soft power tool."

The Alliance of Civilizations is a special project of the UN Secretary-General which was founded in 2005 as an initiative of the governments of Spain and Turkey. The project is designed to bridge cultural divides in communities around the world, paying particular attention to the so-called 'Muslim-West divide', and helping to counter misconceptions, misperceptions and polarization which can contribute towards extremism.

Noting that the Alliance is based on a recognition that the worldviews of different communities have to be taken into consideration, and integrated into political and diplomatic processes, President Sampaio noted the relevance of the Alliance to many contemporary debates in European society about fundamental issues such as the role of religion in society, the health of modern multiculturalism, and the structuring of immigration policy.

President Sampaio expressed his gratitude to the Swiss Government for its committed membership of the Alliance of Civilizations, and also called for further development of a number of Swiss-branded contributions to the portfolio of Alliance projects.

For text of speech: [[PDF](#)]