



Statement by H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, The UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations At The Opening Ceremony of The 2nd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue

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Baku, 30 May 2013

Your Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, The President of Azerbaijan,
Your Excellency, Mrs. Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO,
Your Excellency Dr. Abdulaziz Otthman Altwajiri, Director General of ISESCO,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Culture and Tourism,
Dear colleagues and friends,

It is a great honor for me, in my capacity as UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, to address this second Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in this beautiful Baku.

I have also the pleasure to bring you warm greetings from the UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki moon. He attaches great importance to your work, would like to thank you for your partnership, and looks forward to learning about the results of your gathering.



[VIDEO WEB LINK](#)

I want to praise the leadership and the vision of President Ilham Aliyev for having decided to hold this Forum every other year and to focus it on intercultural dialogue and the role of culture in bringing people together. Peace, stability and prosperity around the world require indeed harmony and respect among peoples and cultures.

I would like to congratulate the People and Government of Azerbaijan for hosting this Forum in this spectacular Haydar Aliyev Centre, designed by the world famous architect Zaha Hadid.

I want to seize this opportunity and in the presence of Ministers of Culture and tourism from around the world to stress the role of arts, music, entertainment and sports as well as other forms of collective expressions of human values to foster the culture of peace. I have announced in my inaugural address in Vienna this past February that these would become part of the new pillars of the work of the Alliance of Civilizations. I'm very pleased to say it again here, in this beautiful city of Baku where culture, arts and history constitute the core of the identity of this country.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I trust that we have all been moved last night by the inspiring celebration of Diversity and Inclusion.

As the UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations which has been initiating this world campaign together with UNESCO and the Government of Azerbaijan and more than one hundred partners around the world, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Azerbaijan for

offering us this wonderful ceremony. I take pride that with the campaign “ Do One Thing for Diversity and Inclusion “ we have launched a world movement with millions of supporters and “champions “ for diversity. This movement will keep on growing thanks to the vitality of the civil society, the corporate world, religious organizations, local communities, and the youth.

Last week on May 21st, in celebration of World Day for Diversity and Development, I was myself in the Bronx in New York, to engage with local communities and to learn from them how arts and culture, interfaith dialogue and sports are contributing to Living together Peacefully in a diverse world.

“Divided we fail ; United we stand ; Diversified we grow” : the powerful message of Peter Mousaferiadis from Australia, the winner of the slogan contest jointly organized by the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the Government of Azerbaijan, encapsulates perfectly the terms of the challenge of our modern societies.

It also provides a useful compass to reach the objective of the Baku Forum and its message “ Living Together Peacefully in a Diverse World “.

I was amazed also to hear last night from the representatives of each continent all the creative events and ideas the world campaign “ Do One Thing for Diversity and Inclusion” has generated and its huge popular support.

This shows very clearly that there are many people around the world who stand for diversity and inclusion, and who know that it is indispensable to live in peace and prosperity. As leaders from Governments, corporate sector, civil society, our role and responsibility is to hear their voice and expectations and to empower them to counter the forces of polarization and hatred.

Although the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many other international law instruments clearly prohibit discrimination on grounds of religion, race, gender and many other differences, sadly we live predominantly in a world of intolerance, xenophobia, marginalization, tensions and conflict. In a growing number of countries, culture is perceived as source of division, instead of a path to dialogue and human solidarity. In some regions, minorities are victims of atrocities including mass killings, only because they belong to different cultures. Holy books are burned and religious symbols are defamed.

These are real challenges which threaten our efforts to achieve our shared goals of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

The principles are clear. How to promote and apply the principles is the responsibility of leadership in our societies. That was the clear message of the recent Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum held in Vienna last February.

We owe it to our people, to the peoples of the world to fulfill their expectations.

Without responsible leadership to manage wisely these challenges our ability to coexist in our small planet is at risk.

We see all around the world amazing grassroots initiatives that bring people together beyond cultural divide.

Developed in partnership with the BMW Group and the UN Alliance of Civilizations, the Intercultural Innovation Award is supporting the most innovative projects, helping them to scale up and replicate. We do the same with Youth projects through our Youth Solidarity Fund.

We have indeed the conviction that media, civil society and the corporate sector are essential components, crucial actors if we want to be able to reach this goal of “Living together peacefully in a diverse world”. They do innovate, they are close to the people, they understand the dynamics of the modern and complex world where we live.

The rise of global issues – being climate change, poverty eradication, fight against terrorism, bio diversity ... is also forging a sense of global destiny and global citizenship, and hopefully a global mindset and respect of our difference.

The topics tackled in the program of the Forum are all of key importance to provide the means and the willingness to Live Together Peacefully in a Diverse World.

My hope and my wish is that the discussions and the recommendations that will come out from these two days will reach people way beyond us gathered here in Baku.

Finally I want to emphasize the crucial correlation between cultural understanding and development. My country Qatar has made it a priority at the occasion of the UNAOC Forum held in Doha in December 2010.

Following the successful hosting of the fourth Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations in Doha in December 2011, the Doha Declaration established a strategic approach linking its objectives to these of the Millennium Development Goals, while at the same time, harnessing both tracks so as to serve issues relevant to peace and security as well as justice and development.

I have identified sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as one my six priorities for the Alliance of Civilizations during the next five years of my mandate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is true that the whole world will not automatically change after the conclusion of this forum, but I am convinced that through our joint efforts we can do our part to promote the noble goals of the Baku Forum, foster international peace and security and strengthen relations between nations and cultures.

In concluding, Let me refer to the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi, who said that “No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive”.

I thank you and wish all of us, successful conclusion.