

## Statement From The High Representative on the Current Crisis

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The recent deadly tragic events in Benghazi, but also incidents in Cairo, Sanna'a, Tunis – and they are spreading – are of deep relevance to the Alliance's core mission of addressing persistent cross-cultural tensions and divides.

Although the killings in Benghazi are likely to constitute a vicious terrorist attack that is a matter for criminal investigation and prosecution as the Libyan authorities promptly pointed out, the protests around the world were triggered by a provocative video that denigrates Islam and insults the Prophet Muhammad, thus offending the religious feelings of believers.

As the same old inflammatory scene played out again and again, these events remind us of the political challenges ahead that all countries are faced with in order to oppose extremism, intolerance and advocacy of religious hatred, and tolerate political and ideological diversity in a world increasingly interdependent. But in countries whose peoples have fought for freedom and democracy and that are now undergoing profound political and social transformations these challenges are even more acute. To confront them with success international dialogue and cooperation play an important role.

The UN Alliance of Civilizations is an appropriate platform for this kind of co-partnership and enhanced dialogue. A partnership developed in close connection with other UN agencies which would pave the way for working further with new ruling governments, new parliaments and public administration, with emerging civil society, youth, media and religious leaders on National Plans and Regional Strategies for intercultural dialogue, human rights, democracy, pluralism, tolerance and peace.

But there is more than that. New tools and mechanisms are needed to prevent tensions and conflicts, and foster a domestic environment of religious tolerance, peace and respect. We need to increase international efforts to enhance a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of respect for others, with tolerance and peace at all levels. As we are living in globalizing times, we are all citizens of the world. A higher sense of responsible citizenship and responsible leadership has to be promoted because a conflict anywhere is a conflict everywhere, as these events clearly show.

At the coming ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of the Alliance, to be held on 28 September, I will be proposing a set of concrete proposals to Ministers, and a special working meeting is convened on 18 October to discuss additional action in the euro-Mediterranean region. Furthermore, I will be consulting our civil society networks and youth in order to agree on how to enhance dialogue and cooperation on the ground.

In spite of the challenging and complex times we are going through, grass-roots, bottom-up initiatives, focused on reinforcing the sense of our common humanity make me think that there is definitely hope for a better common future. But as the wake-up call resonating from Benghazi to Cairo, Tunis, Sana'a and elsewhere clearly shows to transform hope into achievements, bold action is urgently needed.

[Dr Sampaio – A Wake-Up Call For Bold Action \(full statement\) \[pdf\]](#)