

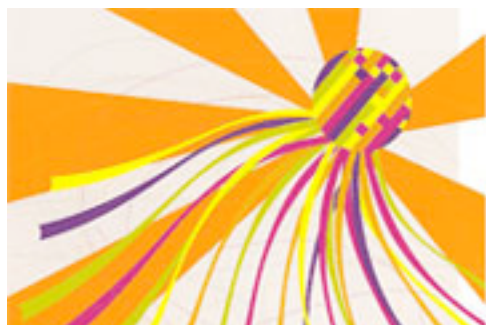


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## UN Year of global cultural rapprochement closes with warning of challenges ahead



2010, International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures

11 March 2011 – The United Nations today formally closed the year it had dedicated to bridging the gulf between the world’s various cultures, with [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon warning that bigotry and intolerance still cast a long, dark shadow over planet Earth.

The General Assembly proclaimed 2010 the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, with a slew of events to promote inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and understanding, as the crowning moment of the first decade of the new millennium which it had already declared the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.

“Bridges were built that I hope will be reinforced in the years ahead,” Mr. Ban [said](#) at the closing ceremony at UN Headquarters in New York, hosted by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), which the Assembly designated the lead UN body for the event.

“But the human family continues to face serious challenges and obstacles – conflicts, violence, bigotry, intolerance and exclusion, in old forms and new. This dark reality compels us to continue the efforts that animated the Decade and Year. While those observances are over, the

imperative remains: building a sustainable future underpinned by human solidarity and universal values.”

The closing ceremonies coincided with a meeting of the High Panel on Peace and Dialogue among Cultures, set up last year by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova to chart new avenues for peace and promote cultural diversity in a globalized world.

Its members include former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio, Mr. Ban’s High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, an initiative launched in 2005 by Spain and Turkey under UN auspices to promote better cross-cultural relations worldwide.

“Reconciliation is one of the great challenges of this early century,” Ms. Bokova told the closing ceremony. “We must work against forces that fragment human society and strengthen values and aspirations that are common to all. No State and no people can afford to retreat into fear. A culture of exclusion cannot be allowed.”

Mr. Sampaio highlighted cooperation, partnership and coordination as key to progress on rapprochement. “The Alliance is a global matchmaker, bringing together multiple sectors to bridge divides,” he said. “We should consolidate and work together to reconcile cultural diversity and social cohesion.

“Cultural diversity should be seen as a resource for sustainable development,” he added, stressing the role youth has to play on the issue.

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[Ban stresses tolerance among communities for global peace and harmony](#)