

Ban hails ‘invaluable’ work of Alliance of Civilizations in fostering understanding



ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

28 September 2012 – [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today lauded the United Nations-backed initiative that seeks to promote better cross-cultural relations worldwide, noting in particular its recent efforts in the wake of the release of an anti-Islam video that led to protests in several countries.

“The Alliance of Civilizations both grounds us in everyday realities and lifts our sights to our shared responsibility to each other,” Mr. Ban said in [remarks](#) to the ministerial meeting of the Alliance’s Group of Friends, held on the margins of the high-level debate of the General Assembly.

“This is not mere sentiment,” he added. “It has deep and practical consequences in how we carry and conduct ourselves in the world.”

Mr. Ban noted that the world faces multiple challenges, from climate change to growing unemployment to terrible bloodshed and conflict in Syria, the Sahel region of Africa and beyond.

“To tackle these and other challenges, we must work together. Yet, in many parts of the world, the politics of division rule the day. The global economic crisis has only made matters worse. Too often, political and community leaders exploit unease to polarize communities and drive wedges.

“The deplorable video that has caused such anguish is but the latest example,” he added.

“In our inter-connected information age, we may not be able to prevent every merchant of hate in every corner of the world. But we can build bridges that are strong enough to withstand those forces. In the process, we can deny those who seek to sow division what they want most – more hatred, more upheaval, more publicity.”

Shortly after the release of the video, the Alliance launched an initiative to ensure that the voices of moderation were not drowned out by the vocal and violent minorities on any side. Called “Represent Yourself,” the Twitter campaign engaged more than 3 million people in just a few days.

“This is one small example,” said Mr. Ban. “Time and time again, the Alliance has shown how it can help open minds and seek change on the ground. It does so by empowering youth around the world ... inviting tomorrow’s leaders to take part in cross-cultural exchanges ... training journalists to keep the public better informed ... and much more.”

Mr. Ban also announced that he has designated Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the President of the Assembly’s 66th session, as High Representative for the Alliance. Mr. Al-Nasser replaces Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, who led the initiative for five years.

Mr. Sampaio will step down following the next Alliance forum, which is scheduled for February 2013 and will focus on the issue of responsible leadership.

As the Alliance renews its leadership, the Secretary-General urged participants to renew their commitment, engagement and support.

“The challenges we face are clear and connected. It is our duty to build the alliances of understanding that can help secure progress on the many critical issues we face. Let us make the most of this invaluable platform.”

The Alliance was launched in 2005 through the initiative of Spain and Turkey, under UN auspices.

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