



ESPAÑA

ASAMBLEA GENERAL 63º PERÍODO DE SESIONES

Tema 45: “Cultura de paz”.

Intervención del Presidente del Senado, D. Francisco Javier Rojo.

Nueva York, 13 de noviembre de 2008
(Cotejar con intervención definitiva)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 63 SESSION

Item 45: “Culture of Peace”

Statement by the President of the Senate, Mr. Francisco Javier Rojo

New York, 13 November 2008
(Unofficial translation. Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

It is for me a great honour to accept your invitation to participate in this debate of the General Assembly on Agenda item "Culture of Peace", which provides an excellent occasion to exchange views regarding the fundamental issues for coexistence and understanding amongst our societies.

I would like to express our profound gratitude to King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, whose impetus given to this plenary meeting has brought together numerous Heads of States and Government as well as other relevant authorities.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by France on behalf of the European Union. I would like to take this opportunity to share some of the recent experiences and views of Spain in relation with this debate.

The Spanish Government attaches great importance to all the initiatives that lead to the promotion of dialogue and understanding amongst peoples, cultures and religions of the world. We share the concern about the growth of intolerance in all of its aspects, and in that regard, we support Saudi Arabia's endeavour for progress to be made, through dialogue, in mutual understanding amongst all peoples, so that extremism and radical attitudes that may rise at the heart of any community can be addressed.

The initiative of Philippines and Pakistan for the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace are also included within this framework.

Spain was pleased to welcome the request by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia for Madrid to host the World Conference on Dialogue last July. We were honoured by this choice because, as His Majesty King Juan Carlos stated, "Spain constructed its democracy based on tolerance, mutual respect and coexistence." At the Madrid Conference, a great number of representatives belonging to different religions met and recalled the objectives of the United Nations, and praised dialogue as a means to both a mutual understanding in human relationships and in the peaceful coexistence amongst nations.

We strongly hope that this noble effort in interfaith dialogue will be fruitful and have the desired continuity.

Spain is a non-confessional State in which, together with freedom of all religions and beliefs, separation of Churches and State prevails, which does not prevent the development of dialogue and cooperation between the Government and the different creeds, based on mutual respect.

Furthermore, to a great extent, due to the immigration, Spanish society is undergoing a growing diversification, which is reflected in a renewed interest by my country in all those initiatives aimed at resolving the challenges raised by diversity, both inside and outside our borders.

Mr. President,

The Alliance of Civilizations, created in 2005 within the United Nations, following the initiative of the Heads of Governments of Spain and Turkey, has been a clear reflection of this concern. Its main objective is to promote in a practical manner understanding and cooperation among States and peoples of all cultures and religions, within the framework of the principles and values of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Alliance of Civilizations is a political initiative of preventive diplomacy that, as expressed yesterday by the Secretary General in his statement before this Assembly, aspires to overcome conflicts stemming from misperceptions of the different cultures and religions, with no interference in interreligious dialogue as such, that belongs to the representatives of confessions themselves.

In a first phase, the Alliance focused its efforts in exploring the root cause behind the polarization of cultures and societies throughout the world and in proposing practical recommendations to counteract forces that, unfortunately, cause an increase in radicalism and extremism, which can lead to violence.

With the appointment of Mr. Jorge Sampaio as High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations by the Secretary General of the United Nations a second stage begins, whose cornerstone is the development of an action plan for 2007-2009, that includes a group of specific measures in projects relating to four fundamental areas: youth, media, education and migrations.

The first forum of the Alliance of Civilizations held in Madrid on 15 and 16 January 2008, brought together more than 500 participants, including political leaders, representatives of governments and international organizations, as well as members of civil society, together with religious communities and leaders of the media and businesses.

The report presented by the High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Sampaio, to the Secretary General, distributed as a General Assembly document (A/63/336) contains the results of the first forum of Madrid as well as the main activities of the Alliance during its first year of work.

Mr. President,

The Alliance of Civilizations is achieving significant progress, and I am convinced that the second forum that will be held in Istanbul in April 2009 will constitute a fundamental milestone in the important road ahead. Furthermore, the great number of countries and organizations that participate actively highlights that States and civil society wish to promote all those initiatives for dialogue that foster understanding and tolerance amongst peoples.

Consequently, I am confident that, in the near future, the General Assembly will renew its support and impetus to the Alliance of Civilizations and to its important activities. I am sure that it will strengthen the values of dialogue, cooperation and understanding necessary for the progressive building of a real culture of peace in the world.

Thank you, Mr. President.