



MISIONI I PËRHERSHËM  
I REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË  
PRANË OKB-SË  
NJU JORK

PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK

- check against delivery -

STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

MR. ADRIAN NERITANI

AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

AT THE HIGH LEVEL PLENARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY ON AGENDA ITEM 45

“CULTURE OF PEACE”

NEW YORK

13 NOVEMBER 2008

Mr. President

Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses

Distinguished Delegates

It is my honor and privilege to address this High-Level meeting at this very august international body of dialogue and negotiation. One of the places where everyday world affairs are taken in consideration with the aim of making it a better place for all the human kind. It is a particular privilege to represent my country and join other distinguished speakers in addressing this very sensitive and highly important matter that directly affects the chances for a world peace.

We share with other previous speakers in expressing our deep appreciation to His Majesty, Custodian of two Holy Mosques, King Adallah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia for his initiative to hold this high-level meeting, to you Mr. President and to the Secretary General of United Nations as well as to all distinguished dignitaries who have given their support for a successful accomplishment of this meeting.

Albania is a small country, but has something great to offer to the world, its own example on the pivotal role that the culture tolerance and understanding has on societies. Throughout its difficult and troubled history, Albanians have always proudly demonstrated acceptance and respect to the other for his/her beliefs building thus a sanctuary of harmonious coexistence between faiths. This remarkable attitude of my people has been visible not only toward each other but also toward those who in difficult times of persecution have found shelter in this traditional Albanian home of acceptance and understanding. I am referring here to the unprecedented example of those Albanian families, both Muslims and Christians, who risked their own lives during the Second World War to shelter and protect hundred of Jewish families from the horrors of Holocaust. During the 1999 Kosovo War, Albania opened its doors and hearts to over half a million Kosovar refugees who were deported by Milosevic's military and paramilitary.

Religion rests in the core of every civilization and as such affects the lives, attitudes, traditions and behaviors of millions in the world. Therefore respect for the religion and for the beliefs of the other becomes a quintessential element in building new perspectives of peace. Unfortunately, the contrary is also true. Religion is very often misused by extremists to fuel dangerous fanatic ideologies, or even nationalistic agendas, which brings confrontation and war. The recent history of our Balkan peninsula demonstrates this too well.

For this reason, building upon our own history, social texture and geography as a country in the crossroads between East and West, Albania has turned the inter-faith dialogue and understanding in a priority for development and regional stability. Albania is in the forefront of supporting every initiative in the regional and international level, which aims to build understanding and trust among peoples, different faiths and cultures.

Albania currently is an active member of the Alliance of Civilizations, determined in fostering communication and interaction amidst the Group of Friends and also strengthening the confidence on this initiative.

Albania shares the approach of the partner countries of the Group of Friends that the activity of the Alliance should serve as a Roadmap, which would fill with its relevant approaches and concrete projects the gap of artificially created divisions between West and East, among different cultures and religions in our contemporary society.

Our national strategy on Inter-Cultural Dialogue reflects the centuries - old tradition of complete harmony and understanding among the country's three major confessions. It fully complies with the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the documents of the Alliance of Civilizations and UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Cultural Expressions.

Your Majesties, Your Excellencies,

I have the privilege to communicate to this highly esteemed Assembly, our initiative to convene the Forum of Inter-Confessional Dialogue in South East Europe in January 2009 under the direct patronage of our Prime Minister Sali Berisha, as a follow-up of the Regional Conference held in Tirana in 2004, in cooperation with UNESCO.

We have high expectations from this Forum, since in view of the new threats and challenges stemming from conflicts, stereotypes and inter-confessional prejudices and by sharing the successful model of the Albanian society, we could also render our modest contribution in conflict resolution.

As this High Level meeting has demonstrated during these two days, it is possible to strengthen our inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue in a global level. We hope that we would be able to keep this momentum and Albania pledges to give its full contribution in this direction.

Thank you.