



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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Statement by His Excellency
Ing. Carlos Morales Troncoso
Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Culture of peace:
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First of all, I would like to congratulate those who have promoted that in this forum, where all conflicts between belligerent national groups or between nations come to be discussed, we are meeting today on the subjects of dialogue and a culture of peace.

We would especially congratulate the Head of the Spanish Government, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, for his idea of the Alliance of Civilizations and for having the initiative of the celebration of the first forum on the subject. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the person of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, for his proposal on interreligious dialogue, and this Organization for holding this event and for giving the highest attention to the subject of the dialogue among civilizations since it was put forth 10 years ago.

In the same vein, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, to designate a High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.

Distinguished participants:

In our mind there is no doubt that the peaceful world we aspire to will only be an achievable goal when those subjects dominate the debate agendas among neighbors, among countries, among governments and the governed, among leaders and the followers of all religions, and among the representatives of all cultures.

If we live in a world of conflicts, we must find the cause in the abandonment of a culture of dialogue or in an erroneous conceptualization of its use or objectives.

With regularity we see that groups take on dialogue as something it is not: a strategy for domination, as a means of imposition on their interlocutors.

Dialogue is not the imposition of our beliefs, points of view, or culture on others.

Dialogue is the most effective of the efforts of understanding, for the establishment and strengthening of a relationship of cooperation, tolerance, and mutual respect.

Dialogue provides a means of examining our differences, sharing ideas, breaking down mistrust, and promoting the togetherness emanating from the acceptance of the diversity characteristic of human beings.

This is why we should not only engage in dialogue, but also promote it as a means to the solution of the problems we face as individuals or nations, in a world so interconnected that the most geographically distant conflicts resonate on a global scale.

Promoting dialogue implies rejecting the theories that encourage the clash of civilizations, cultures, and religions.

Promoting dialogue implies rejecting international terrorism, in today's modern world a formidable obstacle for cooperation, mutual understanding, and peaceful co-existence.

Promoting dialogue implies fighting for the respect of human dignity and human rights, since the state of peace- which we all desire- is one in which human beings live in conditions of justice and respect for fundamental rights.

If we promote dialogue, if we work toward the prevalence of a culture of peace, our nations will fulfill one of the greatest responsibilities they undertook when becoming members of this Organization: the commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Here we recognize the calamity that conflicts, as is the case with fire, tend to spread.

Here we recognize the calamity that conflicts, as is the case with natural disasters, tend to lead to death, the destruction of nations' productive resources, the paralysis of economies, and the immersion of nations in insecurity and despair.

This is a reality that we are witness to everyday, and which we see repeated almost out of habit, aggravating in this or that country political, economic, social or environmental situations that already impose suffering or unimaginable hardship.

How appropriate that the promotion of dialogue is one of the central points of our agenda!

Our conviction is that only through dialogue can we think of the ideal of living in a world of peace.

Why?

Because dialogue will bring us closer. Because dialogue will allow us to listen to what others have to say. Because dialogue will help us understand others' arguments, to comprehend them and accept them as they are.

Understanding and acceptance will give life to co-existence. And co-existence will allow us to live in peace.

It does not matter if the religions through which we get close to God practice their faith in a different way or use different holy books. In the end, we are all members of one family, the human race, and God, the Creator, is only one.

We know that religious fundamentalism, exclusive in nature, exists, and that its proponents act under the notion that only they possess a monopoly on the transcendent truths of the spirit.

But religion, which is the means of communication of every human being with God, is intrinsically against discrimination, violence, hate, hostility, and conflict.

Who can say that they speak truthfully if they say they love God and hate their brother?

My country trusts that this World Conference on Dialogue will be as fruitful as the expectations of its promoters, and turns into the herald of the era of understanding, cooperation, compassion, and peace, which leads us to a world where liberty and justice reign.

That, for being a world without violence, without discrimination, and without conflict, it won't be a world of stillness or in which we will all find ourselves in a permanent state of contemplation.

Human beings- as history has shown- are always fighting.

This is why we would like to conclude by repeating the words of the illustrious Latin American intellectual Germán Arciniegas, who claimed that if there is to be peace, the peace must be an active one.

I thank you.