



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

by

**H.E. Mrs. Elizabeta Kanceska-Milevska
Minister of Culture
of the Republic of Macedonia**

at the

High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on

Agenda item 45

Culture of Peace

New York, 12 November 2008

High-level meeting of the General Assembly

“Culture of Peace”

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Distinguished Mr. President,
Distinguished Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to, begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly. The significant participation of dignitaries demonstrates the constant urge of promoting dialogue and cooperation among religions and cultures. To this end, I would also like to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for initiating this gathering and playing an important role in straightening our joint efforts.

Last September, from this same rostrum, I said that the core of the cultural tradition of the Republic of Macedonia lies in its openness towards other cultures. Its international cooperation is thus oriented towards promoting the values of its heritage. Despite a number of challenges, I trust that the Republic of Macedonia may serve as an excellent example how inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue and understanding can be maintained and promoted on national level. I am deeply convinced that sharing experiences and learning from each other is our obligation, and this multilateral gathering does provide the best frames to spread this message, the message for the culture of peace.

In this regard I would like to inform you that last year in Ohrid, the Republic of Macedonia hosted the World Conference on Dialogue among Religions and Civilizations. The Conference, which gathered hundreds of political and religious leaders and intellectuals worldwide, provided an opportunity to openly discuss

how to generate further political will to eliminate common misconceptions and stereotypes among different religions and cultures. This includes through continuous education on fundamental human values that are common to all religions and cultures, and establishing new channels of communication and dialogue. The Declaration adopted at the Conference was communicated as an official document of the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly under the agenda item "Culture of Peace". The follow-up Conference will be held in 2010 and we expect stronger involvement of all present here.

This significant World Conference in the Republic of Macedonia represents a follow up of several important regional forums and conferences held in our country: the Regional forum of Heads of state "*Dialogue Among Civilizations*" under the auspices of the President Boris Trajkovski and co-presided by the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Koishiro Matsuura in the frames of the ON and UNESCO Decade for dialogue among civilizations, held in August 2003 in Ohrid; the Conference "Balkan Inter- religious Dialogue" held in May 2006 in Ohrid and the Third Regional Conference of Ministers for *Culture Heritage: bridge towards mutual future*, in cooperation with the Regional bureau of UNESCO - BRESCE, November 2006 in Ohrid.

I also wish to stress the importance that the Republic of Macedonia attaches to the Alliance of Civilizations, whose Group of Friends we became a member of in April 2007. All of us present here are aware that we need to strengthen our political action to deal with all divisions, exclusions and deviations from the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other fundamental instruments relating on Human Rights, and to promote our diversity into an effective tool of conflict-prevention and peace-building. I therefore wish to reaffirm our appreciation and support for the objectives of the Alliance – to contribute to bridging the polarization between societies and cultures.

I would like to emphasize that the respect of the cultural diversities lies in the core of the activities of the Ministry of culture, and the Office for protection of the

cultural heritage, along with their cultivation, presentation and development. The Annual Programmes for Culture and the Law of Culture that has civil concept are the ways to put this goal forward.

Only through open and constant dialogue established under entire and mutual respect of the diversities and values of others, the peace can be preserved, the common assignments can be realized and the highest ideals of the modern world can be followed.

The cultural diversity represents treasure and advantage, because the diverse cultural traditions have great creative and artistic potential and at the same time they represent one instrument of peace and mutual understanding and respect. The guarantee and accomplishment of the cultural rights and equality of the national and ethnic groups in each country is a guarantee for stability and sustainable development of the society.

Therefore, the Republic of Macedonia adopted the important UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with several activities.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our primary responsibility, as politicians, to create environments conducive to building tolerance and understanding in our societies to make the process work. In this process, we must engage all stakeholders, including religious communities, local authorities, civil society, private sectors and media. This interdependence is crucial in raising the awareness for the collective wellbeing. But it is also our responsibility to create and maintain strong international and multilateral settings. The Republic of Macedonia perceives the UN in the forefront and we coordinate our national and international engagements accordingly.

In its resolution, the UN defined the Culture of Peace as a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes and solving problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with this in mind that the Republic of Macedonia decided to cosponsor the proposed resolution by the Philippines and Pakistan as it has done previously. Let me conclude by expressing confidence that the deliberations we are holding today will mark a significant step forward in our common endeavor to achieve our objectives, by identifying ways and means forward, by bringing together and building an effective network and partnership of major stakeholders.

Respectful,

Culture is an area on which great attention should be devoted and it can not be neglected under any circumstances. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia follows the culture and the processes connected with it in our country with great attention and puts a great energy and means in its improvement and development. We work on increasing of the concern for the national cultural values and interests through establishment of an efficient financial and valuable system who is based on strong criteria, priorities and principles based on the European standards and criteria.

The cultural policy of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia follows the courses of the political, economical, social, and human development in the country entirely as a part of the global policy.

Thank you.