

Statement by

**H. E. AMBASSADOR JOÃO SALGUEIRO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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under agenda item 45: "Culture of peace"**

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(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Portugal aligns itself with the statement made yesterday by Mr. Alain Juppé on behalf of the European Union. I would like to start my statement by thanking the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia for his noble efforts to promote dialogue among religions and cultures.

Much has already been said about inter-religious and intercultural dialogue but Portugal would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue as crucial dimensions of the dialogue among civilizations and of the culture of peace.

Let me underline that we value this occasion to learn more about regional or national initiatives or best practices to encourage dialogue and mutual understanding. These initiatives are mutually reinforcing and interrelated and Portugal values all efforts to foster a better understanding among peoples. It is indeed the absence of understanding that promotes intolerance, bigotry and extremism. At a national level, we should not undervalue the role of education. Indeed, Portugal is fully convinced of the primary importance of education in promoting a culture of peace. It is by investing our efforts in the youngest members of our society, and also in education through life, that we can best mainstream the values of peace, tolerance and protection and promotion of human rights for the future generations.

Mr. President,

Portugal is in full agreement that the promotion of dialogue and understanding among cultures is essential to building a more peaceful world. But this goal can only be achieved if human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully protected and promoted. And all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated as stated in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. [And I quote par. 5 of the VDPA "While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and

cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”]

Mr. President,

→ ~~Portugal is part of the group of friends of the Alliance of Civilizations initiated by the Governments of Spain and Turkey and now under the auspices of the United Nations, as mentioned yesterday, here, by Mr Ban Ki-moon.~~ We firmly believe that the Alliance of Civilizations can play a central role in reinforcing dialogue at a global level. Indeed, more than ever before, intercultural understanding is ^a complex task but an essential element of both domestic and international harmony. ~~This~~ ^{The} Alliance, with its universal membership, both in terms of regional, cultural, linguistic and religious, is a valuable tool that we must fully explore *as well*.

By embracing diversity as a means of progress and building upon universal human rights, we can work towards an effective culture of peace and provide a better world for the next generations.

I thank you.

~~Portugal is part of the group of friends of the Alliance of Civilizations. This initiative, as it was mentioned yesterday, here, by Mr. Ban Ki-moon, was launched by the Governments of Spain and Turkey and is now under the auspices of the United Nations.~~