

**Alliance of Civilizations
Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends
Statement by Mr Vladimir Pavlovich,**

**Head of the International Organizations Department
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus**

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It is a privilege to me to extend on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Belarus the deep appreciation and heartfelt thanks to His Excellency Jorge Sampaio, the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilization, the Governments of Spain and Turkey and all the participants of this forum for their commitment to keeping the Alliance of Civilization alive during the whole period of its existence.

I am pleased to inform that this year Belarus joined the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations. Belarus actively seeks the worldwide proliferation of the atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding between peoples of different faiths and cultures and will do its utmost in the implementation of the Alliance's agenda.

As a historically multinational and multiconfessional state, Belarus is a staunch supporter of cultural and religious pluralism. Despite the diversity of religious confessions present in my country, over her history Belarus has never experienced religious or ethnic conflicts. On the contrary, on the basis of this diversity the people of Belarus have nurtured centuries-long traditions of tolerance, openness and peace.

We welcome the outcomes of the second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, convened in Turkey in April 2009, and consider that the Second Implementation Plan of the Alliance for 2009-2011 will serve as a road map in streamlining and maximizing our efforts.

Mindful of the main priorities of the Alliance my country undertakes its practical steps in promoting the atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding at the national level. Belarus has a specific State Programme for 2006-2010 to reinforce cultural pluralism and tolerance in Belarus. The Advisory Inter-ethnic Council under the Representative on issues of religions and nationalities offers a good example of constructive interaction and collaboration between national associations and State authorities. The Council is composed of the representatives of more than 20 nationalities, representing the interests of national and cultural associations active in Belarus.

We also keep up with the idea of the Alliance to promote Regional Strategies.

Belarus highly commends the initiative of Spain and Turkey to submit for consideration of the 64th session of the General Assembly a draft resolution devoted to the Alliance of Civilizations. We reiterate our readiness to take an active part in this process and cosponsor the resolution. The adoption of such resolution will be a timely reminder that the cause of mutual understanding must be also at the centre of the agenda of the United Nations.

We are confident that the Alliance of Civilizations will succeed in making meaningful contribution to a stronger role of the mutual understanding and cooperation in the promotion of peace and security.