



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Secretary General on the Alliance of Civilizations

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Hugh Neighbour
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 10, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States read with interest the report of the Secretary General following his observation of the First Annual Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations which took place in Madrid on January 15th and 16th.

The United States appreciates the efforts of the Alliance of Civilizations to consider ways to improve understanding and respect among various religious communities. The United States believes that there is value in dialogue among cultures and religions, encouraging mutual understanding and tolerance, and we believe that the OSCE has played a positive role in this regard in the past, and should continue to do so in the future.

As the Secretary General noted in his report, the OSCE has developed a broad range of principles, structures, mechanisms, and activities that substantially go in the same direction as the Alliance's goals and activities. We believe there is merit in inviting the Alliance of Civilizations to participate in and observe OSCE events on tolerance and non-discrimination, freedom of religion and media freedom.

We do not believe, however, that there is any need to create an institutional structure or formal partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Alliance of Civilizations. As we have seen in the past, such institutional structures have a tendency to take on a life of their own, going well beyond the intended scope and level of activity envisioned by the participating States, and coming back to bite us all in our pocketbooks.

We encourage a broad and extensive discussion of this report in the Human Dimension Committee, to prepare for any further discussion in the Permanent Council of possible future OSCE activities to implement the goals and principles that underlie both the Alliance of Civilizations initiative and the OSCE itself.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.