

Dialogue among Civilizations

The International Symposium on
Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations

Sana'a, Yemen, 10 to 11 February 2004



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Organised jointly by the Government of the Republic of Yemen and the
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Foreword

At a time when there is renewed focus on the Arab and Islamic civilizations in political and academic circles as well as in civil society at large, the International Symposium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations, held in Sana'a, Yemen, on 10-11 February 2004, was both a timely and significant event.

The starting point of – and, indeed, rationale behind – the Symposium was that the contribution of Arab-Muslim culture to other world civilizations deserves to be carefully and accurately assessed on the basis of scientifically grounded approaches. In contemporary debates about “identity” and “the other”, there are too many superficial conclusions deriving from rigid categories and stereotypes. The effect is to create new divides instead of building new bridges – through dialogue.

Prior to the Sana'a Symposium, the 32nd session of UNESCO's General Conference had invited me to strengthen and intensify the Organization's activities in the area of the dialogue among cultures and civilizations, particularly at the regional and sub-regional levels. The focus of the effort should be upon concrete activities and practical modalities within the Organization's areas of expertise – education, science and technology, cultural diversity, the media, and information and communication technology.

The Sana'a Symposium was the first regional event to take place after the General Conference had reiterated its full support to the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Attended by some fifty personalities from the Arab region and other regions as well as representatives from the United Nations system, the Symposium took place within the newly defined framework. The notion of a dialogue among cultures and civilizations was approached from five different angles: globalization and dialogue; the contribution of education to the dialogue; the contribution of Arab culture to other cultures; the role of dialogue in curbing terrorism; and dialogue between East and West.

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the proceedings of the Sana'a Symposium, the ninth publication in UNESCO's Dialogue Series.

The proceedings convey many of the ideas and proposals discussed during the Symposium. The final declaration, “The Sana’a Call for Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations”, was adopted unanimously by the participants during the closing session and provides us with a number of valuable orientations and recommendations.

The Sana’a Call not only invites other regions to focus their attention on the history and culture of the Islamic and Arab worlds but, following the guidelines of the General Conference, it also calls upon various actors in specific fields to develop practical measures and concrete actions; in other words, it is not enough simply to make general statements and agreements about the positive effects of dialogue in the world. UNESCO, in particular, has been invited to develop an ambitious collaborative programme on dialogue together with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Today, the dialogue among cultures and civilizations is no longer a mere catchword with which everybody agrees and sympathizes. Instead, it is being transformed into a solid tool and working mechanism for setting global agendas and yielding concrete results. The task now is for its instrumentality to be demonstrated through the full commitment of and resolute action by all parties concerned.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "K. Matsuura".

Ko chiro Matsuura

Director-General of the United Nations
Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

Contents

- 5 Foreword
- 11 The Sana'a Call for Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations

PART I

Introductory Addresses

- 19 **Abd Al-Qadir BA JAMAL** Prime Minister of the Republic of Yemen
- 22 **Khalid AL-ROWISHAN** Minister of Culture and Tourism, Yemen
- 23 **Abdul-Aziz AL-MAQALEH** Advisor to the President, Director of the Yemen Center for Studies and Research
- 25 **Ahmed SAYYAD** Assistant Director-General of the Sector for External Relations and Cooperation of UNESCO, Representative of the Director-General
- 29 **Hans d'ORVILLE** Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO
- 34 **Yuichi ISHII** Ambassador of Japan to Yemen
- 37 **Message**
- 37 **Seyyed M. KHATAMI** President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

PART II

Statements made and papers presented

- 41 Abdul-Aziz O. AL-TWAIJRI** Director General, Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (ISESCO), Rabat, Morocco
- 47 Mongi BOUSNINA** Director General, Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, (ALECSO), Tunis, Tunisia
- 62 James W. RAWLEY** UN Resident Co-ordinator in Yemen
- 68 Eric ROULEAU** Journalist and former French Ambassador to Turkey and Tunisia
- 70 Martin WOOLLACOTT** International affairs columnist, The Guardian, London
- 73 Vittorio IANARI** Representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio, Rome
- 78 Michael Abiola OMOLEWA** President, 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO and Permanent Delegate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to UNESCO
- 82 Saleh BA SOWRRA** President, University of Sana'a, Yemen
- 88 Ahmad AL-ASBAHI** Deputy Secretary-General, General Popular Congress, Yemen
- 104 Helmi SHARAWI** Director, Arab and African Research Centre, Cairo, Egypt
- 120 Michel BARBOT** Professor, University of Strasbourg
- 124 Peter CLARK** Chief Executive Officer, The Amar International Charity Foundation, London
- 127 Qaderi Ahmad HAIDAR** Researcher, Yemeni Center for Studies and Research, Sana'a
- 129 Abdul Karim AL-ERIANI** Secretary-General, General Popular Congress, former Prime Minister of Yemen
- 130 Adib F. FARHA** Advisor to the Lebanese Minister of Finance and Member of the National Audio-Visual Media Council of Lebanon

- 135 Wahebah FARIE'** President, Queen Arwa University, Sana'a
- 139 Gunter MULACK** Ambassador and Commissioner for the Dialogue with the Islamic World, German Foreign Office
- 145 Michael HUDSON** Professor, Georgetown University Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Washington, D.C.
- 148 Olaf Gerlach HANSEN** Director General, Danish Center for Culture and Development (DCCD), Copenhagen, Denmark
- 151 Abdul-Salam AL-MAJALI** President, Islamic Academy of Sciences, Amman, and former Prime Minister of Jordan
- 156 Ahmed JALALI** Permanent Delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran to UNESCO former President, 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO
- 157 Albert SASSON** International Consultant, former Assistant Director-General of UNESCO
- 159 Caroline FOUREST** Journalist, Co-founder and Chief Editor of "Pro-Choix"
- 161 Faruk SEN** Director, Stiftung Zentrum für Türkeistudien“, Essen, Germany
- 166 Hans d'ORVILLE** Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO
and **Ann-Belinda PREIS**

PART III

- 177 Annexes**
- Programme of the International Symposium
List of participants



The Sana'a Call for Dialogue among Cultures and Civilisations

The Sana'a Symposium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilisations brought together – under the auspices of H.E. Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen, and at the invitation of the Yemen Center for Studies and Research and UNESCO – some 50 personalities from the Arab world and other regions as well as representatives from the United Nations system. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Yemen, H.E. Abd al-Qadir Ba Jamal delivered the keynote address. All participants expressed their appreciation to the Government and people of Yemen for their hospitality and the excellent arrangements.

Intensifying the dialogue among cultures and civilisations is a joint responsibility of all cultures and must be pursued through joint action and partnership so as to achieve a global human understanding.

The dialogue among cultures and civilisations is a necessity in the contemporary world in order to overcome obstacles, prejudices and re-emerging ignorances and to understand and learn from and about others and their experiences. “Civilisation” is a universal, plural and non-hierarchical phenomenon. A focus on antagonistic relationships between cultures and civilizations ignores that interactions between civilisations

have experienced periods of creative tensions and frequently been a major force of development and progress.

Dialogue is under-utilised in the present globalisation process, though it is instrumental in the construction of a sustainable future everywhere. Multilateral approaches are too often replaced by unilateral solutions. The challenge is to go beyond general statements and to implement concrete action aimed at building a culture of dialogue and countering negative stereotypes. New approaches will be required for education, the sciences, cultural diversity, the media and information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly at regional and sub-regional levels.

The quest for common values

To be fruitful, dialogue should be rooted in the hearts and minds of people, nurturing a common base for human existence. Any dialogue must focus on the importance of shared values, which give meaning to life and provide form and substance to identities. Tolerance and respect for the Other are core values that transcend civilisational differences.

To promote an awareness and observance of universal values, ethical principles and attitudes lie therefore at the heart of a true dialogue. Moreover, respect for human rights and the search for inclusiveness and unity in diversity become particularly relevant in the context of rapid social and economic transformations.

Free, independent and pluralistic media, both regional and international, can aid understanding and must be cherished. That more voices can be heard thanks to the internet and satellite broadcasting is to be welcomed. These voices influence the perception of increasing numbers of people, especially among the growing – and often unemployed – young generation in the region. The media should be more aware of its influence, for good or ill, in that its performance can enhance or diminish dialogue. More discussion of such issues between representatives of regional and local media should be encouraged.

Education an indispensable element to nurture and sustain dialogue

Education at all levels – through formal, non-formal and informal approaches – has an inherent ability to nurture and sustain dialogue. We need both an education for dialogue and dialogue for education.

Many countries in the Arab world are struggling to provide adequate education for all, at the same time as many educational systems have to cope with insufficient funding.

The global Education for All (EFA) movement is an inseparable part of the agenda of each reforming society. Reforms of the education system in all countries must include revisions of curricula, textbooks, school and learning materials that will foster peace, dialogue and intercultural understanding at all educational levels. The symposium invites other regions to enhance their attention to the history and culture of the Islamic and Arab worlds.

The quest for gender parity in schooling – to be ensured by 2005 in line with the Millennium Development Goals – is a particularly important factor for the social and economic development of the region.

The region should be encouraged to pursue “quality education”. Its quest is to instil universally shared values, promote democratic practices, human rights and pluralism, reorient new generations of teachers, and develop competencies for the emerging knowledge society. Quality education is also a central component in any dissuasion strategy against fanaticism everywhere.

Cooperation among universities from different regions should be encouraged as well as student exchange programmes. In the Arab region, consideration should also be given to establishing centers of studies of America, Europe and other regions – as there are already Centers of Arab Studies in many other regions.

Striving for cultural diversity

Today, each individual must acknowledge and be aware of the plurality of his or her own identity – anchored within societies that are themselves plural.

Beyond the diversity of traditions and cultures, Islam and the Arabic language constitute two predominant features of a common heritage of the region, which comprises culture, religion, science, literature, art, and architecture.

The ability to manage cultural pluralism as a constructive force determines the maturing of society and allows the latter to evolve to a situation where rational choices can be exercised in building a democratic society capable of integrating differences.

The region’s heritage is an important and often overlooked dimension of the notion of modernity for Arab culture and civilisation.

The sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List are receptacles of memory for cultural heritage both in its tangible and intangible forms. They embody the symbolic values of cultural identities and constitute a fundamental reference for structuring societies. Insofar as it enables people to understand themselves, cultural heritage is a source for one's own identity and a key to understanding others based on the acceptance of diversity.

Increasing the translation of seminal works, literature and research into and from Arabic will greatly contribute to learn to live together. This will also be aided by growing mutual receptiveness for films and other valuable cultural materials.

An intensive exchange and close cooperation in the cultural sphere and a partnership of tolerance in culture and education are of central importance. This partnership needs to be based on equality and comprehensive cooperation for a peaceful common future.

The Sana'a Symposium therefore calls for

- the designation of Sana'a as a hub for future activities pertaining to the dialogue among cultures and civilisations in the Arab region;

- a dialogue among cultures and civilisations between the Arab region and other regions that challenges old and new forms of ignorance, prejudice and assumptions about "Otherness";

- a dialogue that promotes mutual understanding and exchange, tolerance and a culture of peace at the level of political decision-makers, intellectuals, actors of civil society, and individuals;

- a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts;

- a dialogue that begins at home, underpinning national unity and the political, economic, social and cultural integration of the region;

- the encouragement of processes of democratisation and non-discrimination, including the upholding of individual rights;

- action by political leaders in fostering dialogue and responding to aspirations of people;

- focus on the importance of leadership and the creation of institutionalised mechanisms for interaction and dialogue, thereby closing the gap between incumbent leaders and civil society, especially the young generation;

- democracy as the choice of the modern age for all peoples of the world, which cannot be imposed from the outside;

justice and accountability as the basis for the rule of law in democratic societies;

the introduction of various measures of quality education by governments in the region and, in particular, a continuation of efforts to reform curricula and textbooks;

women's empowerment, education and knowledge to reinforce the creative pace of societies, social progress and modernisation;

a stronger engagement of young people and women in dialogue activities;

support and subsidy programmes to increase the number of books and publications translated from and into Arabic;

intensified exchanges of films and other valuable cultural materials between the Arab and other regions;

human development which places people at the centre of all development efforts by focusing on an enlargement of people's choices and the fight against poverty;

a collaborative programme by UNESCO, ALECSO and ISESCO promoting dialogue through education, the sciences, culture and communication;

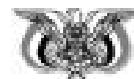
cooperation and contributions by donor governments from outside the region in such a collaborative programme.

A successful dialogue will let peoples and countries from many different cultures and backgrounds come together – and not apart.

Adopted by the International Symposium
on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations
Sana'a, 11 February 2004

PART I

Introductory Addresses



Abd Al-Qadir Ba Jamal

Prime Minister of the Republic of Yemen

I would like to welcome you to Sana'a, city of civilization steeped in the glorious history of mankind. It has stood as a link between the ages of history, a meeting point where the heritage of the nation converged with magnificent human values from the East, from the West, from nearby Africa, and from the Saba, Arab and Islamic culture that make up the authenticity of the Yemeni people.

I welcome you as participants and contributors to the International Symposium on the Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations. It is an important forum in view of the age in which we are living, the venue at which it is being held, the attendance of distinguished friendly brother states, of regional and international organizations, and of personalities who are dynamic both in their countries and the political, social and cultural environment. This gathering embodies the true wish of one and all to establish, for our nations and relations between our peoples, a solid base for the values, concepts and principles implanted in our minds and hearts. We wish to turn this culture of dialogue into a lasting mode of human conduct at the level of governments, peoples, civil society, pioneers of thought and leaders of knowledge and cultural enlightenment.

The world today is passing through rapid change and swift successions of events, the most obvious being those that have resulted from an absence of dialogue and of culture – of that culture which is free from the prejudices which seek to cancel out others, to impose their nihilistic brand of ideas and to prevent human civilizational and cultural values from becoming the building-blocks of internal national unity, of peaceful social coexistence and of a safe and stable future that safeguards common ground and peace for all of mankind.

In the 1980s before the end of the Cold War, Yemen became aware that a tremendous change on our planet was imminent. People were engaged in political, social, economic and cultural movements, the essence of which was a strong desire to do away with totalitarian systems and the bipolar hegemony which forced regimes to side with one of the two great powers waging the Cold War.

The Yemeni political leadership was aware of the burden of its historic responsibility and of the weight on the shoulders of the people of a nation torn by division, whose fate was manipulated by the whims and personal ambitions of totalitarian mentalities. Dialogue, public participation and acceptance of others were the only way to consolidate the

people's course towards national unity – a national unity established on the democratic basis of a multiparty system, public freedoms and human rights. These are the principles on which the unity of Yemen was founded. They constitute a wall of protection and are important factors contributing to Yemen's development and safety.

It is our duty, one and all, at this international forum to pursue our dialogue without any intellectual or ideological prejudice or misinterpretation of reality and history. For that would not help in creating a climate that is conducive to objective dialogue or effecting reforms. We reaffirm, in this context, that Arab civilization and Islamic teachings and values do not contradict the principles of dialogue. Neither do they oppose civilizational and cultural interaction with all nations, their beliefs and ideas. On the contrary, our culture promotes mutual respect for the specificities and diversity of ideologies as shaped by the movement of mankind's history worldwide throughout time.

The Yemeni experience, in its political transformation, has, through mature intellectual dialogue, revealed the importance of the economic and social dimension in changing people's thoughts on democracy and cultural coexistence.

This is because people who suffer under the yoke of poverty find that they are more drawn, in their subconscious minds, towards issues of life and day-to-day existence. They, particularly the poor, view public action and social movement through the prism of their hopes and ambitions as bringing a tangible improvement in their standards of living. Basic cultural and educational reforms in poor countries require the support of the rich, advanced nations and their governments. For efforts towards democratic reform and developmental programmes are needed to revive national economies in order to help poor societies overcome their difficult living conditions.

In this way, cultural dialogue and intellectual interaction will have social, public dimensions and will stir a deep awakening in the minds and hearts of all peoples. Dialogue should not be confined to elites or considered a privilege reserved for a certain segment of society. For it would, in that way, lose its radical effect on social and public consciousness.

The question of dialogue between cultures and the interaction and merging of civilizations is a major issue for intellectuals and advocates of a harmonious human approach. The purpose should be to serve the goals of the inhabitants of this earth, to bring about the coexistence and peace that emanate from a spirit of tolerance, from human accord, from ties of love

and conciliation, from the exchange of material and moral benefits, and from the enhancement of knowledge and economic integration among peoples.

The European, American, Arab and Islamic presence at this international forum reflects a desire to show that we are united in one destiny, to bond our multiple human experiences, and to manifest our keenness for fruitful cooperation among our peoples and national institutions in all fields.

Sana'a is truly the place to assert common principles, aspirations and goals as well as our hope for a bright future in which democratic dialogue, development, peace and close human cooperation prevail.

On this splendid occasion, at a gathering of such distinction at both Arab and international levels, I declare today the launch of cultural, literary, artistic and architectural activities to crown Sana'a the Capital of Arab Culture for 2004, just as it always has been.

To conclude, I would like to thank UNESCO and its Arab partner, the Yemeni Preparatory Committee, for their excellent organizational work to ensure the success of this symposium. There are many individuals working behind the scenes, and as we cannot mention all of their names, we would like to say that they deserve our every praise and deep gratitude.



Abd Al-Qadir Ba Jamal
Prime Minister of the Republic of Yemen

Khalid Al-Rowishan

Yemeni Minister of Culture and Tourism

It is no coincidence that the International Symposium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations should be held here in Sana'a, in Yemen. For this is a country of historical and geographical diversity, plurality, differences and change. It is a country of harmony, too. More than 100,000 villages have existed for thousands of years in an area that is relatively small, but conspicuously diverse in architecture, nature, culture and life itself.

Naturally, there can be no dialogue without plurality, and no variety without diversity. Here on this land the right to be different and unlike others is part of its history and geography. Such a right is entrenched so deep in the land that it flows just as blood runs in a man's veins.

Here, harmony in difference and variety and diversity in harmony are everywhere to be experienced – one yearns for the soft, refreshing scents of Tihama and the cloud that caresses the peak of Mount Sabr in Ta'az, the burning desert breezes of Shabwa and the cold wind blowing on the sands of Al-Mahweet.

The harmonious change that has taken place here in Yemen in the fourteen years since unification in the sheer diversity and plurality of opinions and counter-opinions and in political pluralism cannot be understood without understanding the geographical and historical essence of this country and how it is reflected in its civilization and cultural character.

At times, dialogue here is so boisterous and soaring that it reaches the sky. In fact, the bursting, overflowing vitality of this country, which lies across a large corner of the Arabic peninsula, is like a burning coal that continuously flames. It resembles the mountains of Yemen which have always been volcanic. The great desert in the north is like the glow of this tremendous burning log in the south. In one place the burning log, in the other, the trunk of the tree and its veins. Light flows from here through history, people, water and life.

These brief words can in no way summarize a country. But I claim that any part of the world, any tear, laugh, sigh or moan, is the essence of man, the essence of a huge, overpowering world.

Sana'a celebrates this year its selection as Culture Capital of the Arab World for 2004. But even before it celebrates this occasion, it celebrates having you as dear guests on its land, the elite of excellence from all over the world, reverent sons sympathizing with man's sufferings and hope, man's plights and yearning for freedom, justice, righteousness, and beauty.

Abdul-Aziz Al-Maqaleh

Advisor to the President and Director, Yemen Centre for Studies and Research

Allow me at the outset to welcome the participants of this Symposium – brothers and sisters, friends and guests – to this ancient city, which is being crowned this year the Culture Capital of the Arab World. This is not the first meeting held within the framework of dialogue among cultures. Several have previously been organized in capital cities of the East and West. Sana'a, and particularly this place in which we are gathered, has had its fair share of meetings. They were ideal forums for exchanges of opinions, for lively, honest dialogue and constructive, intellectual debate with a view to acquainting cultures with one another and enabling them to gain mutual benefit. They constituted a truly creative, human expression of civilizational activity and of the perpetual quest for a better life in which the values of justice, freedom and beauty prevail.

I do not believe that anyone is better suited than intellectuals for performing these tasks which require striking the right balance between heritage and the culture of the present in all their diversity and plurality, in order to enrich intellectual and cultural activities and implant the values of tolerance, dialogue and respect for different views. As you all know, a society cannot live in isolation. Therefore openness to all cultures of different outlooks, from different places and speaking different languages is necessary.

You may agree with me that it is difficult to imagine the existence of a culture or cultures that are complete in terms of advancement, maturity and self-sufficiency. We believe, however, that there are cultures that have roots, practices and characteristics through which we may observe the advancement of mankind and its values, rather than through abstract civil aspects that are devoid of emotions, ideas, feelings and creativity. Perhaps it is the duty of cultures and intellectuals to engage in developing cultures and bringing them closer together, so as to understand the dangers that backwardness poses. They should, at the same time, beware of cultures that seek to dominate and wipe out specificities and of the threat they pose to diversity and plurality. They should defend the integrity of man, his right to a free and honourable life and his aspiration to a happy, secure future.

Our presence here is a rare opportunity to exchange expertise and ideas and choose feasible means to realize what we, as people of culture, dream of – that is, to make our life more beautiful and stable, rejecting inflexibility, arrogance, violence, haughtiness, and usurpation of the right to expression. It is one of the most noble tasks that mankind can fulfil.

Being in this place for this moment of free dialogue, you will undoubtedly accomplish most astutely a large part of that task, particularly as this venue – for us who come from diverse cultures and areas that are geographically far apart – is an ideal place to review what mankind has achieved in the past. This country represents that great heritage.

Here we find historic achievements and evidence of the accomplishments of man through patience and determination, enlightened by a culture that is open and meant to serve all mankind. Other human achievements to be found in this country are the monuments of Maareb and other regions of Yemen, embodied in dams, steps, irrigation canals and roads. They are full expressions of the dreams of mankind, who seeks to build and create harmony, not to expand and wage war. These are facets of true civilization, which are in total opposition to the civilization of nuclear weapons, inter-continental missiles, and other methods of destroying human beings and Earth.

Lastly, allow me to commemorate with you a dear departed friend who paved the way for this meeting and who passed away before he was able to take part. I am speaking of our friend, Dr. Amin Asber, former UNESCO Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to UNESCO. I also convey my deep gratitude and appreciation to our friends from UNESCO who have taken part in the preparations and organization of this Symposium.

Ahmed Sayyad

Assistant Director-General of UNESCO,
Sector for External Relations and International Cooperation
Representative of the Director-General of UNESCO

Allow me to begin by welcoming you and conveying the greetings of Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO. It is his wish that this Symposium be crowned with success and that dialogue and the constructive exchange of views will promote understanding between civilizations both within this region and between it and other parts of the world.

The United Nations, and UNESCO in particular, did not wait for the events of September 11, 2001, to call for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. The UN itself was founded in the hope that dialogue would triumph, diversity be accepted, and international solidarity be established. Its purpose was to eliminate conflict and war, foster tolerance and understanding among nations and peoples of different languages, cultures and creeds. For one fate unites the peoples of the world. Different identities should not divide them and the United Nations supplies a framework for civilizations to engage in dialogue and a forum for international cooperation to prosper.

As UNESCO's founding message was the promotion of intellectual cooperation among various cultures, it has always flown the flag of tolerance, dialogue and the protection of material and non-material cultural heritages. It was behind the decision of the UN General Assembly in November 1998 to declare 2001 the "Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations". The UNESCO General Conference, at its thirtieth session in 1999, asked member states to give 2001 its due importance and truly consider it the year of dialogue between civilizations. The conference included dialogue between civilizations in the medium-term strategy adopted by member states. During the Millennium Summit at UN headquarters in New York, in November 2000, UNESCO organized a round table that brought together several heads of state to discuss dialogue between civilizations. It was followed by a second meeting attended by intellectuals from various parts of the world, which addressed intellectual and practical questions.

All these efforts undeniably emphasize that UNESCO's interest in fostering understanding between cultures was not due to pressures resulting from the attacks of September 11, 2001. Rather, it is an essential part of its activities and a response to the urgent needs of humanity in this day and age.

At the thirty-first session of its General Conference in 2001, UNESCO expressed its determination to switch the focus of its call for dialogue between civilizations from the global to the practical, regional level. In so doing, it hoped to bring dialogue closer to citizens, intellectuals and political institutions in all regions in order to help them respond to related issues and concerns and enlist their forces in giving substance to the call for dialogue and finding realistic new methods for achieving effective, concrete results. To this end UNESCO sponsored three conferences on dialogue among civilizations in 2003. The first was in New Delhi, India, in July, the second in Ohrid, Macedonia, in August, and the third in Abuja, Nigeria, in December. Today in Sana'a we are pursuing the those endeavours to bring dialogue between civilizations, cultures and religions closer to people everywhere in order to help them overcome the difficulties they face in their countries and regions.

Despite all the external pressures for change in the Arabic world, we should recognize that change must, first and foremost, be a response to the urgent needs of its inhabitants. If we perceived change only as a response to outside pressure, we would undermine the capacity to effect change in accordance with known public sentiment and weaken the ability of democrats to arouse people's sympathy and willingness to act.

What is required is dialogue within and between each society across the Arabic world on issues of public participation, development, education and the relationship of those societies with the rest of the world. Dialogue should begin at home rather than abroad. No nation can expect the respect of others if it fails to respect its own men, women, young people and children. How can any nation call for equality with other nations when it does not apply that principle to its citizens, ignores the young and marginalizes its women? Dialogue at home is the first step towards dialogue with others.

True dialogue between civilizations begins with treating the ordinary citizens of each country like human beings who have rights precisely because they are human beings and citizens. They are entitled to lead free, honourable lives, express their opinions, take part in formulating political and economic agendas, and share in the task and fruits of development. The mere fact of being alive bestows on them rights as citizens on which no-one may encroach.

Dialogue between civilizations in the Arabic world should deal with real and current issues, particularly those which tend to be postponed until, one day, they erupt. I am referring to issues of human rights, like the rights of women and religious and national minorities, cultural and

political freedoms, democracy, educational reform, modernization and emancipation from backwardness.

The Arabic region began to address these issues at the beginning of the nineteenth century and engaged in dialogue during the first half of the twentieth century. At the time, some believed that East was East and West was West and never the twain [should] meet, while others saw that modern civilization consisted of links in a chain of world cultures to which each nation contributed its share and the fruits of which were the property of all. However, this dialogue was disrupted due to the great difficulties it encountered and, as a result, decisions concerning urgent questions were deferred and issues remained unresolved. In fact the Arabic world in many cases lagged behind – oppression increased, public participation receded and despotism prevailed – and it is now among the furthest removed from engagement in the democratic changes that stormed the world at the end of the twentieth century.

Before the Arabic region embarks on overtures to other civilizations, cultures and religions, we must first show our determination and will to attempt real dialogue with each other, our citizens, and with political, cultural, religious and ethnic minorities, women, young people, marginalized groups, immigrants and refugees. We must test our capacity to fight discrimination based on race, gender, creeds and political opinion, to recognize minority rights, to eliminate violence and hatred, to support dialogue and tolerance amongst ourselves, and to prove truly that we are prepared to enter into dialogue between civilizations on a global scale. We must always remember that democracy is not in essence the law of the majority, but first and foremost the defence of minorities' rights to stand up and be respected.

He who cannot hold a dialogue with his neighbour and is not prepared to recognize the human rights of all citizens cannot conduct a dialogue with civilizations, cultures, religions and nationalities in the other parts of the world. Only with this understanding may dialogue between civilizations take on a creative global meaning, and develop the human values which protect the humanity of man. World civilization in this way will take on a noble, humanitarian aspect. Globalization will move from the predominance of idle talk, presumptuousness, and narrow-minded egotism at world level, to a deepening of the values of tolerance and the acceptance of one civilization by another. This, in turn, will lead to the supremacy of the highest values of equality, freedom, democracy and respect of human rights and a denial of racism, fanaticism and barbarism.

Dialogue should not focus on history and the past. Instead it should pay attention to the development of man's present and future, avoid the intolerance that is, sadly, increasing in various walks of life, and denounce wars, oppression and despotism. We should hold dialogue amongst ourselves first, criticize ourselves before criticizing others, and ask ourselves what have we done to ourselves and to others to make them doubt or misunderstand us. Wondering why others show ignorance towards us and why they treat us badly cannot initiate a dialogue. We should question the truth of our reality and the truth of the world with which we interact. We should accept diversity and criticism. We should understand that civilization – any civilization – contains within it various cultures, opinions, ideas and creeds. With this understanding, and bearing in mind the importance of dialogue in the life of individuals and groups, the meaning of a statement in the introduction to the UNESCO Constitution becomes clear. That statement: "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."



Ahmed Sayyad
Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, Sector for External Relations and International Cooperation

Hans d'Orville

Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO

Coordinator of UNESCO Activities pertaining to the Dialogue among Civilisations

I wish to express my whole-hearted and profound gratitude to the Government of Yemen for its generosity and willingness to host and co-organize with UNESCO this most timely Symposium on the Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations in the historic city of Sana'a. The designation of Sana'a as cultural capital of the Arab world for 2004, which will be conferred upon it today is, from UNESCO's point of view, a resounding confirmation of the longstanding honour bestowed on Sana'a through its inscription in UNESCO's World Heritage List. We are therefore rejoicing with you and extend to the Government and the people of Yemen our most sincere congratulations.

After several months of constructive preparations in Paris with the Permanent Delegate of Yemen to UNESCO, Ambassador Hamid Alawadhi - and over the past weeks also directly with our counterparts in Yemen - we are delighted to welcome you all in this historic and vibrant city which has so much to offer as a backdrop to our discussions. The excellent arrangements made by our hosts augur well for our deliberations.

The Sana'a Symposium with its particular regional focus is the first of its kind which UNESCO is organizing with a Member State from the Arab region. This is a source of satisfaction in itself. But beyond that, I am convinced that everybody present is mindful of the significance of Yemen's readiness to engage in the staging of such an event, which has as its explicit purpose the identification of constructive and concrete avenues and approaches to the dialogue, and the elimination of current trends of stereotyping "otherness" through various inappropriate forms of discrimination and exclusion, accompanied by the emergence of new ignorances.

This, I submit, is the overarching and intellectual underpinning of the Sana'a Symposium - and our common point of departure. At the outset of this symposium, let me briefly share with you some contextual issues.

Immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 2001, UNESCO's General Conference - under the Presidency of Ambassador Jalali who is present with us here - unanimously adopted a resolution (31 C/39) entitled "Call for international cooperation to prevent and eradicate acts of terrorism". The resolution stated that "all acts of terrorism are a denial of the principles and values of the United Nations Charter, the UNESCO

Constitution and the UNESCO Declaration on the Principles of Tolerance (1995) and represent an attack against humanity as a whole”.

This resolution further affirmed that the dialogue among civilisations “constitutes a fundamental challenge based on the unity of mankind and commonly shared values, the recognition of its cultural diversity and the equal dignity of each civilization and each culture”.

UNESCO thereafter intensified its action in this regard through the organisation of various conferences in different parts of the world to examine specific issues. In 2003, Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura – who unfortunately cannot be with you here today – proceeded to organise two major events, one to focus on the formulation of an international framework and the other to translate the principles underlying the dialogue in concrete terms at the regional level. An “International Ministerial Conference on Dialogue among Civilizations – Quest for New Perspectives” was held in New Delhi on 9 and 10 July 2003, with the participation of some 50 Ministers from all regions. It resulted in a forward-looking policy statement called the “New Delhi Declaration”, which is being distributed at this symposium. The second event was the “Regional Forum on the Dialogue among Civilizations” held in Ohrid, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 29 and 30 August 2003. It was attended by the eight Heads of States of South-East Europe, among others all the Presidents of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia - who had never met and engaged in formal dialogue since the break-up of Yugoslavia 10 years before. The Forum adopted the “Message from Ohrid”, also available to you, which sets out concrete undertakings for action in the areas of education, cultural heritage and scientific cooperation and networking for the region.

Parallel to these formal encounters, my office set up a worldwide electronic network of eminent intellectuals, scholars and experts with a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, who will be called to assist UNESCO in identifying new and practical approaches to the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. The network presently counts some 200 contributors, with whom we are dialoguing – as it were – on a regular basis – and you all are invited to become part of this expanding digital dialogue network.

Three months ago, the momentum from Ohrid and New Delhi was carried straight into the 32nd session of the General Conference – under the Presidency of Ambassador Michael Omolewa whom I also welcome here -, during which UNESCO’s Member States adopted a landmark resolution on the future approaches to the dialogue among civilizations.

The resolution endorsed the “New Delhi Declaration” and the “Message from Ohrid”, and assigned to UNESCO an international lead role in promoting dialogue in a concrete and tangible manner. It called on UNESCO to intensify dialogue and action in and through all its domains – education, the sciences, culture and communication. Many such initiatives have already been launched. Today and tomorrow, we are challenged in Sana’a to discuss the various dimensions of relevance for the Arab region and to chart new approaches.

An important intergovernmental Regional Conference took place a month ago in Sana’a dealing with Democracy, Human Rights and the Role of the International Criminal Court. This paved the way to our Symposium.

Thus, the Sana’a Symposium springs directly from a series of other international agreements and events. To be relevant for today’s challenges, the Sana’a Dialogue must address a complex range of socio-political issues and parameters, which are themselves constantly undergoing change and transformation. In such circumstances, we must be in a position to swiftly chart and adapt novel approaches to dialogue beyond established frameworks, and hence to move beyond the stage of general agreement and statements of “good intent”.

Most importantly, if we wish to succeed in enjoying the tangible fruits of dialogue - a more secure and a more sustainable world - its values must be imparted in different ways from an early age. This is why UNESCO has recently launched a novel private-public partnership with DaimlerChrysler called “Mondialogo”. Through two types of contests – one being a school contest to share and exchange knowledge about the cultures and civilisations of partnering schools in other countries and continents, the other being an engineering contest bringing together multi-cultural teams of engineering students in a quest to design practical solutions to the exigencies of sustainable development – students are encouraged to dialogue across continents and cultural barriers. I am pleased to note that also 8 secondary schools from Yemen have subscribed to the School Contest and will be dialoguing actively with schools from other continents and cultural background in the coming months.

We need many more such initiatives to demonstrate and show the true and practical value of dialogue: an ability to build new bridges between cultures and civilizations, to promote tolerance, mutual understanding, human rights, democratic principles and diversity - and to acquire knowledge about other cultures and civilisations.

We must identify a series of concrete paths, which will take the Arab region forward together with other regions. The people of the region can and must build on its own vast accomplishments in the sciences, philosophy, the arts and architecture – to name but a few areas which influenced and drove modernity in times past. The countries and people of the region must capitalise on a self-esteem that is rooted in past exploits and innovations while striving to become an actor in the emerging global knowledge society. The challenge is to pair and reconcile tradition and local knowledge with technological and other innovations and advances introduced from other regions. I have no doubt that a true and open dialogue has the potential of mobilising the region, overcoming moments of discouragement and hesitation and leaving behind present obstacles.

We will not and cannot succumb to Huntington's fallacious thesis that posits the existence of a finite number of civilizational and cultural heritages in the world, each tied to a specific place of origin. Since these heritages were assumed by him to be ultimately antagonistic and incompatible, they and the individuals associated with them were considered best to be kept separate – so as to avoid their inevitable clash.

If one looks at current range of conflicts in the world, these are certainly not occurring between civilizations as the Huntington thesis would suggest. Rather, divisions – and conflicts – arise within civilizations, cultures and communities. Hence, it is entirely inappropriate to equate certain regions or religions with violent or terrorist acts.

Each civilization contains a wealth of cultural diversity. Global and instantaneous communications, migration induced not least by poverty in many regions and countries, and cultural diffusion in the process of globalisation will certainly add to the diversity of the future. Today, each individual must acknowledge not only "Otherness" as such, but also the plurality of his or her own identity - and this within societies that are themselves plural.

If we succeed in doing this, the perceived threat of a clash will be demystified and lose its grip on our perceptions and preoccupations, if not our fears. Instead, it will be replaced by a notion of genuine human relationships rooted in diverse cultural backgrounds, faiths and dispositions. Our common and most noble goal must be to create a sustainable and peaceful future for people everywhere. We must be able to demonstrate to each other that we are capable of living together and not to drift apart. The background paper which UNESCO's Bureau of Strategic Planning has prepared for this symposium addresses various avenues for concrete action in the areas of quality education, scientific cooperation and

initiatives around cultural heritage. An Arab renaissance may provide a framework for ushering in a renewed era of dialogue drawing its lessons and inspiration from such action.

I look forward to our deliberations, which I hope will result in a forward-looking final document that might be given a title reflecting the ambition of this Symposium such as “The Sana’a Call for Intensified Dialogue among Cultures and Civilisations”. For UNESCO, I can assure you that the results and all your contributions during this event will inform and be integrated into UNESCO’s future action in support of a true and constructive dialogue among civilisations.



Hans d'Orville

Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO Coordinator of UNESCO Activities pertaining to the Dialogue among Civilisations

Yuichi Ishii

Japanese Ambassador to Yemen

It is a great honour for me to have this opportunity to address you at the International Symposium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations organized by UNESCO, in cooperation with the Yemeni Centre for Studies and Research, and with financial support from the Japanese Government. It is also my pleasure to be present at a meeting organized by UNESCO, since I used to attend many gatherings at its Headquarters in Paris, when I was director of the Multilateral Cultural Cooperation Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Support for Dialogue among Civilizations

In a situation of proliferating conflicts caused by ethnic and religious antagonisms in the world in the post-Cold War era, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in 1998, proclaiming 2001 the “United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations”. Since then, UNESCO, as the UN agency promoting and executing the resolution, has been vigorously addressing, under the strong leadership of Director-General Matsuura, dialogue among civilizations and cultures as one of its major projects. UN member countries also have been making efforts to encourage dialogue at different levels.

By a cruel irony, the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations was the year of the “9/11” simultaneous terrorist attacks in the United States. War on terror has now become one of the major global issues for the international community. Against this background, it is urgent to secure peace and stability in the world by overcoming differences among nations, religions, and cultures. Many people share the perception that dialogue among civilizations and cultures is essential to world peace.

In order to absorb knowledge of different civilizations and deepen mutual understanding among peoples, it is important to dialogue and associate with people of different cultures in a spirit of tolerance and respect for others. It is admirable that meetings promoting dialogue among civilizations have been convened throughout the world by entities such as governments, international and regional grouping, and non-profit organizations.

Dialogue among Civilizations in Japan

In response to the UN resolution, the International Conference on Dialogue among Civilizations was held under the auspices of the UNESCO and the United Nations University in Tokyo in July 2001. Participants from around the world exchanged views on the prerequisites for conducting meaningful and constructive dialogue among researchers and thinkers from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. They made gratifying progress in drawing up guidelines for future dialogue among civilizations.

Another initiative is the annual seminar organized by the governments of Japan and Bahrain since 2002. It is devoted to dialogue between Japan and the Islamic World, including Yemen, with the view of further deepening mutual understanding. We are also planning to hold a conference on theme of “Trans-Regional Dialogue between Japan and the Arab World on Cultural Diversity and Modernization”, in collaboration with UNESCO and Arab countries, including Yemen, in Paris in May of this year. Proceedings will focus on review of the process of modernization in Japan and the Arab World as well as cultural diversity. The conference expects many prominent researchers and thinkers, not only from Japan and the Arab World, but also from Europe, to attend. We hope the conference will be another opportunity to demonstrate the significance to the international community of dialogue among different civilizations.

Dialogue among Civilizations in Yemen

This symposium is part of a series of projects conducted by UNESCO to promote dialogue among civilizations and cultures, following the resolution adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference last October on the role of UNESCO in further promoting dialogue. Japan appreciates the initiative taken jointly by Yemen and UNESCO in organizing this meeting as an event marking “Sana’a, the 2004 Arab capital of culture”.

It is no exaggeration to say that Yemen, where enriching encounters between civilizations have taken place since the earliest stages of history, is one of the most suitable and best qualified venues for convening a gathering on the theme of dialogue and exchange among civilizations. Many important issues, such as globalization, education, democratization, terrorism, tolerance and cultural diversity, will be discussed by eminent participants from different parts of the world in recognition that facilitating democratization based on universal values, ensuring freedom of expression, advancing women’s empowerment and improving the quality of education are all vital to bringing about a world of peace, stability, and

prosperity in the twenty-first century. I hope that you will have a rich, animated discussion on those issues and will attain the objective of strengthening dialogue in the Arab region. Although no Japanese speakers could join you, I should like to extend my heartiest wishes for the great success of this symposium over the coming two days.

Before concluding, I wish to say that Japan is committed to continuous efforts to foster dialogue among civilizations, aiming at ensuring peace and stability in the international community and achieving peaceful coexistence of humankind.

Message

Seyyed Mohammad Khatami

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Message delivered by Ahmed Jalali, Permanent Delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran to UNESCO, former President of the General Conference of UNESCO

I am honoured to convey to you a message from President Mohammad Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran. When he was informed both of this prestigious gathering and of the very successful local conference on our arrival in Sana'a, the cultural capital of the region, he asked me to convey his best wishes and to share with you, in my words, his thoughts.

It is, as you know, President Khatami's belief that dialogue today is not some superfluous intellectual pastime. It is a necessity. We cannot escape from that.

The first point he would like to make is that there is great underuse of capacity within our cultures and civilizations. To exploit the potential of different cultures for solving the problems currently afflicting humanity – terrorism, inhuman globalization, exclusion – we need dialogue: dialogue to help us draw on the hidden capacities of different cultures and civilizations.

Secondly, while we know that the core of our commitment to dialogue between civilizations and cultures is intellectual and cultural, it is also political. By "political" we mean that we should turn the words of our

discussions into the deeds of decision- and policy-making, particularly in the field of education. We should not only educate our peoples to utilize their cultures and share it with others, we should educate them to dialogue – education for dialogue and dialogue for education.

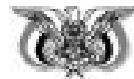
And finally President Khatami would like to stress the need to learn and exercise the art of listening.



**Ahmed Jalali, Permanent Delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran to UNESCO,
former President of the General Conference of UNESCO**

Part II

Statements made and papers presented



Abdul-Aziz Othman Al-Twajri

Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)

Introduction

Cultural diversity has become another well-acknowledged international term. From the Islamic point of view cultural diversity is an extremely clear concept. For the Holy Koran states: "Mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes, that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct."

God has created nations and peoples of different ethnic origins, races and languages. God has also created a diversity in tastes, inclinations and levels of understanding, a matter which leads to a diversity in ideas and lifestyles. The result has been what we now call "cultural diversity", which is a human right as acknowledged by international covenants, declarations and agreements.

It is worthy of mention here that Islamic civilization, which flourished during the Middle Ages, once known as the "Dark Ages" outside the Islamic world, has continued to preserve cultural diversity as one of its salient features.

Never, throughout the history of mankind, was there a civilization that maintained the right of cultural diversity and ensured freedom of worship as Islamic civilization did. It could, therefore, rightly be said that respect for diversity is a specific characteristic of Islamic civilization. However, this characteristic and its principal manifestations have fallen away and their influence abated over the past six centuries, which have seen cultural decline of the Islamic civilization.

We admit this fact as an act of self-criticism at the general Arab and Islamic levels and acknowledge that practice at times deviated from the true path of Islamic culture for reasons we cannot consider in detail now. Nevertheless the belief in cultural diversity and the conviction that it must be safeguarded have remained a principle of Islam to which all Moslems should adhere.

The international concept of cultural diversity

The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states that culture takes diverse forms across time and place, and that such

diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the communities and societies that make up humankind. The declaration goes on to assert that, as a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary to mankind as biological diversity is to nature. In this sense, cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity and must be recognized and asserted for the benefit of present and future generations.

In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life.

Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone. It is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve amore satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.

The UNESCO Declaration likewise affirms that cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, universal, indivisible and interdependent. The flourishing of creative diversity requires the full implementation of cultural rights as defined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Articles 13 and 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

All persons have, therefore, the right to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue. All are entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity, and all persons have the right to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

While ensuring the free flow of ideas by word and image, care should be exercised that all cultures may express themselves and make themselves known. Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge – which includes in digital form – and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity.

From this perspective and in accordance with this understanding every creative work draws on the roots of cultural tradition, but flourishes in contact with other cultures. For this reason, heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations, so as to foster creativity in all its diversity, inspire genuine dialogue among cultures, serve the highest human objectives and contributes to maintaining international peace, security and stability.

As present-day economic and technological change opens up vast prospects for creation and innovation, the international community must pay particular attention to the diversity of the supply of creative work, to due recognition of the rights of authors and artists and to the specificity of cultural goods and services which, as vectors of identity, values and meaning, must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods. Safeguarding cultural diversity in all its manifestations ensures that there continues to be a basis for cultural initiatives of all forms.

The UNESCO Declaration concludes that while ensuring the free circulation of ideas and works, cultural policies must create conditions conducive to the production and dissemination of diversified cultural goods through cultural industries that have the means to assert themselves at the local and global level. It is for each state, with due regard to its international obligations, to define its cultural policy and to implement it through the means it considers fit, whether by operational support or appropriate regulations.

The status of cultural diversity

Since the advent of modern means of communication – from steam engines to space travel as means of transportation to constantly evolving information technologies and the Internet – the world has become a family in what may be termed a world of “one home”, rather than the “Global Village” (which was the slogan with the widest currency in the last third of the twentieth century). For any major event is transmitted by the mass media as soon as, and wherever, it occurs to audiovisual devices in most homes and, sometimes, in every room of a home.

It is now possible to see and hear in a single programme, or on the same channel opposing points of view from people in remote countries and of different cultures. Such confrontations at a single sitting and before the whole world were infeasible in the last century. But these are the facts and realities of the new age of communication. They encourage all to venture

into the arena of transparency and clarity and to renounce the monopoly of truth and contempt for others.

This dense, immediate flow of communication daily brings ideas and cultures from all over the world before humanity at large. For opinions and counter-opinions are no longer broadcast from remote radio or television stations that use distance to distort people's ideas of each others or to underpin mutual stereotypes. Nor can such means of mass media be used to express the opinions of their owners even if this is at the expense of truth and justice. Denial of others' ideas is no longer acceptable in today's world of global communication, although some remnants of such backward ideas and systems still resist the great leap in the field of universal communication. They use all available economic, propaganda and political means to condemn and twist the ideas of others so as to attain their objectives.

This new era requires more advanced means of dialogue, communication, and exchange of ideas. For you do not negate the other person when you talk to him in the language of arrogance. Nor do you deprive him of existence when you speak to him in a loud voice. For your behaviour only reflects your narrow-mindedness in thinking that your ideas alone that should prevail all over the world and that others should heed them.

In this modern world of ours it has been proven that an idea can only be defeated by one that is stronger. Victory in dialogues of the future will depend on the power of logic, clarity of argument and soundness of ideas, and not on loudness of voice, personal smears or the language of the stick and the carrot. Unfortunately, cheap methods of dialogue will continue to exist, no matter how many means of communication there are, so long as the world fails to abide by religion, morality and logic, or to believe in the values of fair, civilized, cultural dialogue. That is a fact of life.

If we wish to address that fact, we have to secure wider recognition for cultural diversity and promote it on the grounds that it is part of human nature and a rule of God. We must also propagate and support dialogue among civilizations and cultures that is based on a set of values that rise above generalization, the belittling of others, preconceived ideas, misleading comparisons, wrong evidence or reasons, faulty reasoning, distortion, fallacies and deceit. These and other ways of flawed thinking we now see being used to defend the political ideas of eminent figures, who belong to the civilized world that teaches sublime ideas and branches of knowledge in its universities, yet fail to apply them in real life.

Consequently, on the basis of our analysis of the phenomenon of cultural dialogue in the contemporary world, it is now evident that – no matter how violent the attempts to suppress man’s will to express his cultural identity and civilizational specificity, and no matter how illogical the practices aimed at subjugating human communities and imposing upon them the culture of power – we will all ultimately have to accept that cultural diversity exists as a fact of life and a reality than can neither be overlooked, trespassed upon or denied.

Islamic perception of cultural diversity

In Islamic civilization there is a rule of conduct known as “the courteousness of accepting the differences of others”. This is a rule that spells out true Islamic conduct and is positive, refined feature of Islamic civilization. But our nation has turned away from its true roots and neglected this rule of conduct at a time when it most needs to apply it. We should revive the values of dialogue and of respect for differences of opinion, as Islam ordains us to do. For, in so doing, we can be fair to our opponents and respect their opinions. In fact, differences of opinion are a source of Islamic law and an element that enriches thought, knowledge and culture.

The Islamic Education, Science and Culture Organization (ISESCO) is guided in its activities by the Holy Koran, which says: “And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the difference of your languages and colours. Lo! herein indeed are portents for men of knowledge.” ISESCO also complies with the tradition of the Prophet and international covenants and is well aware of the need for just dialogue between cultures and civilization in respect of cultural diversity. Such dialogue should, however, be based on high values, the highest of which are:

- Mutual respect,
- Equity and justice, and
- Rejection of fanaticism and hatred.

Reaffirmation of these values and the call to abide by them are the subject of several verses in the Holy Koran, which is the essential source of ISESCO’s mandate. The verses enjoin believers to deal wisely and kindly with others and to call them “unto the way of the Lord with wisdom and exhortation and reason with them in the better way”. How can justice and equity be maintained if one is not just towards others, if one fails to deal with them in all decency and respect for their opinions?

This concept is also reflected in another ordinance of God in the Holy Koran: “And speak kindly to mankind.” Note that God here addresses all mankind, all people, whether they be Moslems, non-Moslems or followers of other faiths. It is God’s message to Moslems to be kind in their dealings and gentle in their dialogue. The Holy Koran also states in this respect: “And speak unto him a gentle word, that peradventure he may heed or fear”; and again: “Allah loveth not the utterance of harsh speech save by one who hath been wronged. Allah is ever hearer, knower.”

These same principles are often repeated in the sayings and tradition of the Prophet. For he says: “God is gentle and likes gentleness and grants for a gentle deed the blessings which he would not grant for any other.” The prophet is known to have told his wife Aisha: “Be kind and gentle. For kindness and gentleness in any deed is an adornment to it and any act void of kindness and gentleness is contemptible.”

Such instructions and guidelines demonstrate that Islam approves and accepts cultural diversity and calls for dialogue between people and coexistence among nations. For dialogue can only be conducted between parties that have different opinions, stands and cultural backgrounds.

Cultural diversity in ISESCO

ISESCO has endeavoured to promote the concept of establishing the values of fair and just dialogue through its numerous conferences, seminars, publications and declarations. Its White Paper includes documents related to dialogue between cultures and civilizations. They cover decisions, recommendations, declarations and executive programs designed to promote dialogue, as well as the draft Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference’s draft project on dialogue, and ISESCO’s statement on dialogue between civilizations, its implications, scope and humanitarian objectives.

The current symposium, which calls for dialogue among cultures and civilizations to be given serious consideration and seeks to promote cultural diversity as an enriching value, is an integral part of the activities of ISESCO. It is our hope that the results of this Symposium will resonate all over the world. Accordingly, ISESCO’s 2004- 2006 triennial plan includes programs that seek to enhance cultural diversity within the framework of dialogue between cultures, civilizations and religions.

Mongi Bousnina

Director-General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today in the lofty city of Sana'a, capital of prosperity and blessings, the capital of the culture of Arab Al Areba since the dawn of history and humanity.

I would like to take the opportunity to express our gratitude to His Excellency President Ali Abdullah Ben Saleh for the warm hospitality extended to us by our kin. It is hospitality and generosity that could only be extended by the Yemeni people.

I would also like to congratulate President Saleh for the distinguished performance of the government, people and intellectuals of Yemen who have fully shouldered the momentous responsibility that ensued from the choice of Sana'a as 2004 Culture Capital of the Arab World. Yemen, the land of the Areba Arab civilization, is a worthy Arab beacon beaming its light to the whole world.

I likewise wish to convey to President Saleh the determination of the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization, (ALECSO), to perform its duties in full, so as to ensure the success of this important event.

I also wish to express sincere gratitude to Dr. Abdul-Aziz Al-Maqaleh, Chairman of the Yemeni Centre for Studies and Research. I wish him, and all those working with him, all success in their work, particularly at these critical times in Arab history, when the Arab nation seeks both to make its voice heard all over the world and to listen to what the world has to say, so that the Arabs may be truly a part of the contemporary age and subscribe to the values and principles of today.

The choice of the subject of this Symposium, "Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations", its aim, its ideas and its mechanisms are most appropriate, timely and far-sighted.

Its goal is to intensify dialogue in order to underpin and strengthen common human values. This dialogue shall reflect an appreciation of cultural, linguistic, ideological, and religious diversity so as to enrich human experience, as Arab Islamic culture has done in the past and continues to do in the present.

The mechanisms for conducting dialogue between nations on the issue of cultures and civilizations. They are: to bring geopolitical change into the framework of dialogue and to underline the importance of education as a means of sustaining the values of exchange, tolerance and peace.

In appreciation of this enterprise I feel it is appropriate to deal with the same values and concepts in my contribution. I focus in particular on the meaning of and conditions for dialogue, on the need to sustain cultural diversity, and on the important role that should be played by schools in propagating the values of human brotherhood and the merits of tolerance among all peoples.

I do not in any way claim novelty when I say that the first prerequisite for any dialogue between two parties is that such a dialogue should not serve the ends of vainglory or domination. However, the sons of the Arab Islamic culture have excelled more in taking pride in their merits than in listening to others, so much so that they have lost the wisdom of reason. For example, common sense dictates that no-one should be so arrogant in his dealings as to lay exclusive claim to a merit and assert that no-one else may possibly possess it and that he is, therefore, better by nature or by endowment.

I believe that the very universality of Islam exposes the falseness of such thinking. For any value that claims to be universal bears within it the recognition that it is achievable by any man. Consequently, all human beings are, in principle, equally capable of acquiring all values, virtues, ideas and visions. If there are any differences between peoples or countries, these are but differences in means, empowerment, patterns of growth and impediments to development.

The most dangerous of such claims, and one to which many theoreticians have fallen victim, is to make what is acquired into what is natural and to consider contingent historical obstacles as inherent natural defects. There is no nation or people who cannot, or will not, do something because it is "not in their nature". There is no natural defect that exclusively afflicts one nation, nor is there any natural capacity that is exclusively enjoyed by one nation. All such claims are but groundless, ignorant presumptions that feed on selfishness, fanaticism and sectarianism and are, in general, the results of failure to succeed by employing reason in its universality and comprehensiveness.

I would like, at this point, to remind those who take pains to classify and rank nations, those who provoke disunity and clashes of civilizations inside or outside the Arab world, and those who are talented in the art of arrogance and disdain of others, be they part of the Arab world or not – I would like to remind them of the words of Ibn Khaldun, the great Arab sociologist. In book one, chapter two of his work, *Al Mokademah* (The Introduction) he asserts that "the Arabs are of the same nature as all the nations of the world".

All the above references and provisos are designed to argue that the first pre-requisite for conducting dialogue, whether between people or countries, is the acknowledgment that all are equal – equal in dignity and in all the basic rights provided for by divine religions and earthly laws.

Accepting that principle logically leads to accepting the principle that people are different from each other. There can be no single, absolute identity implicit in the saying “man is man everywhere”. There are different identities, each one of which is productive and fertile in its own right. Each has several facets and manifestations, and each has its own achievements and different forms of expression, which create diverse cultures and civilizations, each of which is proof of the existence of man throughout history. For civilization is nothing if not the evidence of human life.

Different schools of anthropological thought use different terms to define culture and how it differs from civilization. But they are in near-unanimity when it comes to the notion that “the cultural” is what is added to “the natural”, regardless of the nature of this addition, whether it is mere modification or harnessing and taming nature to cultivate and fertilize the land.

The essence of the dialogue between anthropologists is that “culture” is whatever man adds to “nature”, “nature” being the domain in which he lives. It is a concept that is reflected in the writings of Herkovits.

In accordance with this concept, any change in natural input consequently reflects human existence, and even the lowest level of culture, adjustment or modification undoubtedly reflects the existence of man.

If we acknowledge that any change effected on nature is an act in which man employs his intelligence, imagination, feelings, emotions and values, then we should recognize that any cultural product, whether material or not, is the reflection of a human existence which fulfils itself by mastering a natural element. Consequently, any cultural expression is worthy of respect, if not for its value per se, then for its human source and because it signifies human existence. For culture is man himself, so any cultural product is a reflection of man himself and proof of his existence in history. Therefore, there could be no man without culture and no culture unless created by man.

This concept led to anthropology gradually ridding itself of subjective judgments and ideas that had become so narrow and immature that they created a relationship of opposites between “the civilized” and “the savage”, “the cultured and “the barbarian”, “the primitive” and “the advanced”, and many other unfounded dualities, which anthologists have

now discarded. They appear only in backward writings full of unscientific, unjust and insolent statements that seek to sew the seeds of dissension.

Evidence that the concept of dualism is false is found in the writings of Claude Lévi-Strauss. He identified aspects of error and deception in those studies of the phenomenon of culture where there was excessive evaluation of the “ego” and excessive devaluation of “the other”, described as “barbarian”, “savage” or “uncivilized”. Lévi-Strauss concluded his study by stating that the barbarian is he who believes in barbarism, for the concept of classifying cultures and civilizations as “advanced” and “backward”, “savage” and “civilized”, argued Lévi-Strauss, is illogical and groundless. It contradicts, on the one hand, scientific objectivity and, on the other, the requirements of respect for human identity per se. Dialogue between cultures means people meeting on the path of mutual recognition – a recognition that would entitle all of us to make our differences a proof of infinite wealth and an inexhaustible source of benefit.

We may now proceed even further and assert that it is not sufficient to state that no culture is better than another, or that cultures are not classifiable in a hierarchy, as some may imagine. We must affirm that cultures cannot be compared or weighed against each other, nor should there be competition or rivalry between them. For each culture contains the specificities, identity and dignity of those who belong to it. Anthropologists, however, argue that due to the multiplicity of cultures there is relativity in values. Hence, what is accepted by one culture as “good” can be renounced by another as “evil”.

We must acknowledge that every culture has its own structures. They determine its people’s way of thinking, their scale of values and their modes of perception of the experience of life. We should, therefore, realize that every culture in itself represents an absolute identity and a complete value system. Whether a culture is expressed through a poem, another work of art, or a moment of existence, its significance lies in the fact and form of expression and is unique in itself.

Diversity and multiplicity are thus the essence of culture itself. They are not incidental. There could not be one single human culture, whatever that may be. Such a notion would be an attack on human creativity and against man himself. For culture, as we stated earlier, is the product of man and his first reaction to his own environment. It is the embodiment of the experience of existence.

Through recognition of the essential nature of culture, even in the teeth of difficult and hostile circumstances, we can defend cultural diversity as an expression of man’s victorious struggle to protect his dignity,

creativity and the right to be what he is. It is its essential diversity that makes culture a basic human right, as set out in international covenants and, as human wisdom tells us, when it is liberated from bias and the sway of narrow interests.

It is regrettable that some seek to appoint themselves guardians of the human conscience in the name of human rights or the values of democracy. They call for the dwarfing of “the Other”, of he who is different, as though no-one had the right to live – save those who adopt the one-and-only lifestyle, the one-and-only system of values, set of judgments and way of thinking. Those self-appointed theoreticians for the whole wide world are themselves narrow-minded. They have replaced abundance by scarcity, pluralism by unilateralism, barrenness by fertility. They have chosen to proclaim the end of history rather than understand the infinitely fertile scope of humanity so seeking, one feels, to drive their nations into a labyrinth from which there can be no way out, a labyrinth which enforces a cultural pattern intended to obliterate cultural and linguistic diversity.

This is an incomprehensible attitude and it comes from those who propagate theories that could certainly lead to wars. Humanity has witnessed in the last decade alone enough evidence to prove that the wars of yesterday, waged in the name of “civilization” or the “spread of civilization”, were no less devastating and destructive than the counter-wars declared in the name of cultural or ethnic dictates from which African and Europe have recently suffered.

We may wonder if there is incompatibility between the concepts of dialogue between cultures and cultural specificity. Dialogue requires a common denominator and shared ground, and seeks to create compatibility and understanding. Specificity may imply isolation or seclusion and, consequently, the inability to communicate with others. It is the desire to keep distances and the tendency to resort to violence to defend that which makes it specific.

We must admit that such an argument may be valid on the grounds that some have turned their cultural specificity into a shield protecting them from the evolution of history and the powers of change. They have adhered to an imaginary identity that drives them willy-nilly towards an illusory eternity which, they believe, will protect them from the melting pot that reduces all existence, values and concepts into a single destiny and a single fate. This defensive ideology urges its disciples to reject all values of modernization, either explicitly or implicitly, by subscribing to a past that is based on social customs so deeply rooted in their hearts and souls that they have become as sacred as holy, religious values.

The current attacks against and defamation of Islam, whether in bad or good faith, are to a certain extent prompted by the extremism, radicalism and fanaticism of some Moslems and their calls for the use of violence to impose a point of view. These attitudes have been exploited by those who seek to sew the seeds of global resentment against Islam, making it a byword for extremism, radicalism, fanaticism, and violence.

Thus the “objective meeting” of narrow, fanatic minds in Arab Islamic culture and the narrow, fanatic minds of its enemies reveals a rivalry. The result is that our nation has found itself in a global storm provoked by fanaticism that is both internal and external, religious and secular, Eastern and Western.

The mindsets of some of the sons of our nation are driving it to face-to-face with severe political and security problems, a situation that reflects an underlying issue – that of the relationship between education and the need to discipline individuals to think soundly and act reasonably without indulging in extremist politics. For politics should be an educational act that clears minds of the delusions planted in them.

There are two inseparable delusions that both the educator and the politician should work together to eliminate. First, the delusion of specificity when it is in contradiction with universality and, second, the delusion of identity when it becomes a reason for stepping out of history and rejecting the values of modernization, with all that it offers in the way of freedom of thought and expression and enjoyment of civil, political and cultural rights.

The first delusion can be dispelled by the specificities of the Arab Islamic civilization itself. It is a civilization built on strong foundations that bring together the enlightenment of Babylon, the wonders of Ancient Egypt, the paradise gardens of Yemen, the visionaries of India, the wisdom of Athens, the ambition of Carthage, the desert breeze and the glory of the sea. Arab Islamic culture is a multi-coloured texture woven by the dexterous hand of man and the bounty and generosity of nature. It is in the Arab Islamic part of the world that God has endowed humanity with sublime spirituality, a sense of righteousness, and a bounty of blessings

Thus, Arab Islamic culture is global in its origin, its structure and its intent – particularly in its religious outlook. For Islam is a religion for humanity at large. Many of the verses of the Koran address “All People”, calling on them to live in harmony.

The second delusion should be dispelled by the mere fact that there is no culture or identity that does not change or is not part of history. For those who accuse Arab Islamic culture of being rigid or set in stone do not

base such claims on the culture itself, but on the attitudes and behaviour of some of its sons who do indeed advocate rigidity and petrification. That said, those who describe Islam in those terms are victims not only of their own ignorance, but of methodological errors committed by the early anthropologists, who classified communities into ones with and ones without history. The implication was that the former contributed to humankind's history and were open to change and development, while the latter held fast to structures, institutions, relationships and values they deemed eternal as a means of maintaining their survival.

But again the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss shatter such thinking and expose its methodological error. For its proponents adopt an unscientific, unrealistic and even discriminatory attitude, the very same attitude that is upheld by those who have sewn the seeds of dissension by proclaiming their belief in the "clash of civilizations".

Elementary facts prove that there are no such things as communities with history and those without, but rather, as Lévi-Strauss puts it, "cold" and "hot" civilizations. The former seek to abolish the impact of passing time by establishing institutions that they create for themselves to maintain their existence, balance and continuity. The latter absorb the evolution of history and make it a factor for their growth and development.

Thus, discrimination is qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative in that it establishes barriers between communities, cultures and civilizations, which inevitably lead to racial and ethnic discrimination. Quantitative, and measurable, because the difference between one culture and another is not like the difference between what is immutable and what is historically changing. It is, rather, the difference between "quick" and "slow": it lies in the process of change itself, which is what all cultures and civilizations have in common.

We are actually in no need to compile arguments and proof that all cultures do, indeed, change in their theoretical concepts and practical values, in their technical means and artistic expressions. It is as though culture and the passage of time were twins, or as though the evolution of culture was an ever-flowing river, in which we never wash in the same water twice.

If we accept that Arab Islamic culture is universal in its structure, its consequences, its roots and its intentions, we shall immediately realize that making qualitative distinctions between cultures is a gross error which leads to racial and ethnic discrimination. Therefore, any comparison between cultures should be made not on the basis of their qualitative perspectives, but should be restricted to their quantitative

perspectives and their spiritual, emotional and, particularly, artistic forms of expression.

The painful truth is that it is this quantitative perspective that exposes our deteriorating cultural situation today. But, at the same time, it defines what we must do tomorrow. The stakes are high and call upon us to be courageous enough to recognize challenges, admit our failings and overcome them. For so dire is our situation that one sometimes feels that the malady is more bearable than the remedy.

I believe that you do not need to be reminded of the statistics that illustrate our economic, educational and, particularly, cultural status. They are now common knowledge. We venture into the twenty-first century with more than seventy million illiterates, while some ten million Arab children under the age of 15 have not even enrolled in school. For the past 30 years we in the Arab world, with its population in excess of 380 million, have translated less than 688 books – only a little higher than the number translated over the same period in Lithuania, whose population does not exceed four million.

Reliable sources of information indicate that the number of books published in Arabic countries in 1989 did not exceed 6,000, representing only 0.7% of global production. It is a contribution that is extremely modest for a nation known as the “Nation of The Book” (The Holy Koran) and one which represents 5% of the world population and covers 10% of the surface area of the world.

What is more, our investment in the field of scientific research does not exceed 0.2% of our gross domestic product. In Japan the figure is 3%. These statistics prove that we have not only sinned in the present, but that we have jeopardized our future itself, for poverty and illiteracy in the Arab world affect the young more than the old, and girls more than boys. Can any nation aspire to a meaningful future if it wastes and sacrifices its youth, particularly its girls? How can we, against this background, conduct a dialogue with other nations and call for the respect for the principle of equality necessary for any dialogue? Do we only seek moral equality? Is not dialogue in the absence of true equality anything but a formality, where social graces and courtesy reflect hollow affability and complacency?

We may draw two vital conclusions from the above:

That a pre-requisite for dialogue between civilizations is to renounce any superiority complex and accept the principle of the equality of all peoples. Only then can cultural diversity, civilizational differences and social specificities be acknowledged without jeopardizing the dignity of man or infringing any of his basic rights as provided for in international conventions.

That an Arab cannot conduct dialogue on the basis of equality if he does not endeavour to improve his present condition and status. For we cannot aspire to the respect of other countries while our citizens wait in long queues outside the foreign consulates in our capitals seeking to emigrate.

These two conclusions lead to a third on which we should focus, namely, the need to place cultural activities at the heart of comprehensive development plans and activities. This is an issue that concerns all of us, both the poor and the rich of the world. If we want dialogue between cultures to be more than merely token and to achieve the very minimum we hope from it, we have to admit its sheer difficulty against a background of growing injustice and prejudice.

One bone of contention in today's globalized world is that while wealth is increasing people are getting poorer. More than 800 million people do not have access to basic health services, one-third of the world's population live on less than US\$2.5 daily, and 850 million people are illiterate.

Another controversial issue in this age of high technology is that two-thirds of the world population are deprived of access to it.

This last point is proof of the effort that we need to make to occupy an honourable status in the forum of world cultures. For the dialogue between cultures, between civilizations or between religions is in essence a dialogue between peoples. It requires making our culture as well-known as possible all over the world by establishing Arab cultural centres in the various cities of the world, or endeavouring to enable our capitals, through true and serious partnerships, to follow in the footsteps of Paris which has established L'Institut du Monde Arabe (Institute of The Arab World). This concept was called for in the Paris Declaration of the Dialogue between Civilizations. Furthermore, cooperation between Arab universities and their counterparts all over the world should be fostered.

It is evident that what makes us the target for those who propagate sedition and dissent is that they rely on our negligence in making our civilization, our religion, our language, our values and traditions known to all. In other words, our absence from the international cultural arena facilitates our enemies' task of launching malicious, deceptive campaigns against us. For "life does not wait for those who sleep".

But this process of making ourselves familiar to ordinary people cannot usefully be undertaken through universities or cultural centres. We should endeavour to take our culture to the masses worldwide through the popular means of the mass media – and there lies the difficulty. For the

propagation of cultural values is now totally in the hands of those who monopolize what has come to be known as the “culture industry”.

This novel industry has a rich, diversified scope which encompasses publications, the multi-media, movies and other audiovisual productions, sound recordings, architecture, the pictorial arts, the manufacture of musical instruments, and cultural tourism.

This field has genuinely flourished in the past two decades, yet remains the monopoly of a few countries only. The Japanese, Americans, Germans and British alone account for the half of the media industry’s total global exports.

Moreover, 74% of world cultural industry imports come from America, Germany, Britain and France. In brief, only five countries control 35% of the world’s total exports and 75% of the world’s total imports of the new cultural industry.

There is no doubt that, as a result, most of the world’s countries and cultures run the risk of being excluded or marginalized. For attempts to make others aware of oneself and one’s culture in this era of information technology have been severely hampered by the transformation of culture into an industry and cultural goods into commodities, subject to the market laws of profit and loss.

That is another controversial side to the age of communication technology, which is said to have turned the world into a “global village”. For the greater the hold which information and communication technologies exert over societies, and the greater their technological efficiency, the deeper the misunderstanding among peoples, the sharper the severance of relations of cooperation and coexistence, and the stronger the domination of separation over rapprochement.

Under these current circumstances and realities, it is our duty, when conducting dialogue among civilization, cultures or religions, to take into consideration two fearsome obstacles to be overcome. First, the avalanche of preconceived ideas and judgments that link us, our religion and culture with terrorism. Second, the overflow of communication technology, of which we have had only a few drops. Without these drops, however, we would be talking to the wind, especially as the reverberation of gunshots is louder than the rational calls of wisdom.

Our world has acquired the ability to destroy and the capacity to waste the virtues of reason, reform and constructive behaviour. There is no doubt that all these circumstances make it incumbent upon us to acquire communication technologies, skills and capabilities, which in turn makes it imperative for us to reform our educational systems, so that we may

better develop the abilities of our children to understand and master modern technologies, and even contribute to their development.

I would not have mentioned some of the negative aspects of our current circumstances had neglecting them not been an oversight. Disregard, denial and stubbornness could only aggravate the perils of our negativism. Even more dangerous is to address such issues without due caution when we address the youth of our nation. For awareness of painful realities may at times lead to depression and despair. Furthermore, becoming aware of our flaws may produce a kind of self-castigation that weakens our determination.

For arrogance and self-punishment are two troubling attitudes that prevent action and hinder progress. They must thus be distinguished from self-criticism, which is a virtue that enables defects of the present to be understood and brings motivation to overcome them in the future.

Our nation, therefore, is in dire need of a political incorporation that combines both critical insight and the will to act and achieve. For this is the surest practical way to improve our current circumstances so that they may enable us to fulfil our aspirations and ambitions and help our nation regain its historic leadership in a way that reflects our past glory and the nobleness of the message that God has communicated to us. It is the only way that our nation may become able to partake in shaping the world and dealing with other nations and peoples, not only on the moral basis of equality, but also on the basis of comprehensive development.

It is therefore, and in all truth, our duty to point out that our nation has taken major strides along the path of comprehensive development. It neither waited for the fall of the Berlin Wall nor for the devastating attack of September 11 to change itself. Modernization and the drive to keep pace with temporary culture and values have been our goals, both as peoples and as leaders, at different times over the past two centuries.

Please allow me to cite some examples which, elementary as they may be, illustrate the Arabs' sincere wish to step into this age through the front door and to gain the knowledge and acquire the skills needed for a nation to progress and advance.

Egypt enacted a law back in 1948, which made education free for all, unified the syllabuses and institutions, and allocated 15% of the state budget to education.

In Syria the number of primary students rose from less than 100,000 in 1946 to 205,769 by 1949. In Saudi Arabia the education budget, at current price levels, increased from 900,000 riyals in 1945 to 7,500,000 by

1951, while the overall number of students climbed in one year from 1,362 in 1949 to 37,450 in 1950 – an astonishing rise.

Along the same lines, the Kuwaiti education budget increased from 3,000,000 in 1950-1951 to 27,000,000 dinars in 1952 and 42,000,000 by 1952-1953 – a very sizeable increase.

That tremendous commitment to improve education – which now seems like a miracle – was undertaken by a number of Arab countries on gaining their independence. For example, as soon as Morocco became independent in 1957, the number of students rose by 50% in a single year, while in the Sudan the figure ranged between 20% and 23% in the year after independence, i.e. 1949 to 1950.

I did not cite these facts and figures as mere historical background, but so that the world at large may understand their significance and understand three points relating to the Arab world.

First, the Arab nation is in no need of an external “super ego”, as a psychoanalyst might say, to attend to its duties towards its youth, its science, knowledge and enlightenment. Although I mentioned past educational statistics only briefly, they nevertheless reflected a profound, genuine Arab awareness of the requirements of the age, on the one hand, and of the means for fulfilling them, on the other. For the educational drive in the mid-twentieth century was a revival of a well-established Islamic principle, namely the respect for knowledge and scholars. After all, God’s first instruction to man was “Read!”

Second, when we resume the reform of our educational status, we will actually be picking up where we left off more than half a century ago and continuing our efforts to ensure our revival and strength now and in the future.

Third, a lesson to be learnt is that there is a wide gap between the tremendous effort put in and the insufficiency of results produced, important as they may be.

Thus, much as we despise arrogance, we must warn against self-deprecation. It should be replaced by self-criticism, for it is wise to examine the circumstances of the present and seek to improve them, so that they may be compatible with our aspirations to glory and respect. In this sense, the principle of self-criticism in no way contradicts the logic of self-defence.

Self-defence, if properly pursued, takes two paths. One arrives at its end by surmounting difficulties, rectifying defects and seeking self-enrichment. The other stands fast before injustice and refutes degradation, debasement, subordination, marginalization and exclusion.

The first path is one of endurance, where we bear that which we do not like until we are able to achieve that which we like and claim our dignity, our honour, the independence of national decision, and the freedom of our intellectual and cultural creativity and religious practices. It is a path of perseverance, which we follow to attain victory in the battle for full development, where our enemy is our own backwardness and our destination is progress and prosperity. Our access to a better future is through work, more work, and even more work.

The second path requires us primarily to assert our identity, prove ourselves and foil the action of the ill-intentioned by clarifying facts, exposing conspiracies, revealing faults, restoring our image and undermining false stereotype – in short by replacing the culture of spite and resentment with the culture of peace, by defeating ignorance with knowledge and dispersing darkness with light. We must be fully confident that our duty is to make things right by doing right, not to let new ignorance supersede old ignorance, for that is the shortest, surest way to provoke antagonism, fuelled by countering agitation and tension with more agitation and tension. That can only lead to the wars we are now witnessing between fundamentalists of all kinds, for sedition ignites more sedition, and killing provokes more killing.

Dialogue, however, offers ample room for rapprochement. That is why dialogue today, difficult as it is, is a necessity for maintaining world peace and a prerequisite for attaining comprehensive development.

We already know some of the elements that could enable us to answer the question which we have raised, namely how to bridge the yawning gap between our exertions and our achievements since the middle of the last century.

For, in addition to the remnants of colonialism that accumulated from the nineteenth century to the 1960s, the disaster of Palestine has become an additional burden. At the same time, other obstacles and hurdles have piled up against us, crippling us and slowing down our march. Our efforts have at times been directed towards resistance and at times towards the mere defiance of others in the defence of our rights, land, and honour.

It is objectively necessary for us, therefore, not only to stop demeaning ourselves, but also not to deny the overt and covert roles played by imperialist powers in forcing us into situations that we can no longer accept.

There is no doubt that the feeling of extreme bitterness that we have experienced, and still do, is the result of our unjust treatment at the hands

the great international powers and their complete indifference to our rights. It is such behaviour that has fuelled hatred and entrenched animosity against those powers, which show consistent bias in favour of the Israeli aggressors. It is undoubtedly the Israel-Palestine situation that constitutes the most insurmountable obstacle to dialogue among cultures and civilizations, not only in the Middle East, but all over the world. For Palestine is deeply cherished not only in the hearts and souls of Arabs and Muslims, but in those of peace-loving people all over the world.

The will to engage in dialogue cannot be separated from the determination to maintain peace – the absolute opposite, in other words, of enforcing a *fait accompli* or oppressing others into accepting marginalization, exclusion and inferiority. That is a ruse – not a dialogue – designed to deceive others in order to maintain the status quo of power and domination.

For every time that humanity succumbed to the balance of power it was actually in a state of deferred war. Perhaps it would be best here to refer to a verse in the Holy Koran that was revealed when the Muslim nation was actually in battle. It says: “and if they cleave to peace, cleave thou also to it”. In his interpretation of this verse the celebrated Sheikh Mohiyeh El Din Ben Arabi wrote in his book, *Mecca Conquests (Al Futuhat Al Makkeyah)*: “He who fights me must expect me to fight him and vice-versa. Therefore it is better to incline to peace.” Is there a better, safer way to maintain peace than to conduct dialogue?

It is needless to say that peace is better than war and dialogue is better than alienation. But it is not sufficient to express our willingness to maintain peace or to conduct a dialogue. For no-one can spurn peace and dialogue, at least verbally. What should be done is to break this vicious circle around us. For if peace is a prerequisite for dialogue, and if establishing peace calls for a dialogue between adversaries, then we should understand that the best and strongest are those who initiate dialogue and establish peace at the same time. In this respect the peace initiative approved by the Arab League summit meeting at Beirut in 2002 is sufficient, clear evidence that the Arabs are determined to engage dialogue and establish peace at the same time, provided that it is not at the expense of their rights or their duties towards themselves as well as towards others.

Signs of the Arab determination – a reflection of the spirit of our religion – to serve the interests of our nation are that our Arab organizations have, with the generous support of distinguished Arab leaders, held dialogues between cultures and civilizations. They include the Euro-Arab dialogue, held in Paris in July 2002, and the Arab Hebrew

American Cultural Dialogue in Tunisia at the end of 2003, not to mention other important meetings and activities. In this respect preparations for Arab participation in the Frankfurt book fair should be mentioned. We plan to seize this valuable opportunity to resume rapprochement between Arab intellectuals and Europeans, particularly the Germans.

Moreover, Arab leaders have shown their determination to support and promote Arab thought and encourage the development of Arab culture. They are increasingly turning their attention to artists, writers, scientists and teachers and giving them the chance to dialogue with their counterparts from all over the world. This trend is a reason for optimism.

Humanity expects us to add a spiritual touch to globalization to help the world regain its usurped humaneness and dignity, flouted for so long by short- term interests, national chauvinism, and many other forms of religious, doctrinal or ethnic fanaticism.

Humanity likewise expects us today, in this world of rampant resentment and overwhelming misunderstanding, to spread the culture of human brotherhood, rapprochement and tolerance.

Humanity expects us today to teach the wisdom of our forefathers, who fearlessly absorbed culture from all over the world and contributed to humanity generously and without reproach. Such wisdom could only be achieved by learning to think critically, by gaining the knowledge and skills of our age, by opening up to the world's cultures and values, and by mastering its languages and understanding its meanings. For every meaning reflects a true, but different, human experience and a specific civilizational vision which may help humanity prosper and progress.

We are the "Nation of The Book" (the Holy Koran). It is, therefore, our duty to propagate a culture of dialogue and peace, to proclaim and advocate human rights in their entirety and to continue our call for tolerance and freedom.

James W. Rawley

United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Republic of Yemen

It is an honour and privilege for me to be here today to discuss “Globalization and the Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations”. Holding this important Symposium on cultures and civilizations in Sana’a, Yemen in 2004 is highly appropriate for many reasons. According to Yemeni belief, this is, after all, one of the birthplaces of modern civilizations and culture. Sana’a, according to tradition, was founded by Noah’s son Shem, and is one of the first sites of human development. Moving forward until today, Sana’a, as you know, is the 2004 Arab City of Culture.

This landmark Symposium also builds on successful initiatives recently held or currently underway by the French, German and Italian governments, for example, to promote cultural exchanges, learning and dialogue between Yemeni, Arab and European artists, musicians, writers and scholars.

Finally, celebrating this symposium in Sana’a is auspicious for another reason. 2004 is the year when the Human Development Report, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), celebrates its fifteenth anniversary by focusing on “Building Inclusive Societies for Human Development in a Multicultural World”.

For all these reasons, Sana’a, with its history and unique blend of cultures, provides the perfect backdrop for promoting dialogue and exchange between different cultures and civilizations.

At the beginning of the twenty-first Century, the Arab region is undergoing a period of important, and often difficult, changes brought about in part by globalization and the current economic and geopolitical situation. These include moves towards democracy and the greater observance of human rights, including women’s rights. Yemen’s evolution, from a divided country into a unified state, and progress in areas such as democracy and human rights, exemplifies this change.

Despite this progress, the region is facing serious challenges. The first Arab Human Development Report, published in 2002 and co-sponsored by UNDP and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, identified three cardinal deficits affecting the region - knowledge, freedom, and women’s empowerment.

It is true, as these Reports mention, that the solutions to these problems must ultimately come from within Arab societies. But it is certainly also true that in an increasingly interconnected world, events in

one place often have profound effects on another. And international dynamics have played and continue to play an important role in shaping the region, both negatively and positively.

The tragedy of 11 September and the restrictive policies and procedures that have followed it continue to have repercussions across the region that are inimical to human development. As the Second Arab Human Development Report indicates, the erosion of civil liberties and the ethnic profiling of Arabs under the pretext of the war on terror in some Western countries has further deprived Arabs of their basic human rights, interrupted cultural interaction, and reduced the number of Arabs studying abroad - clearly a set-back to building an Arab knowledge society and to fostering increased dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Similarly, as noted in this Report, the region has recently encountered grave threats with the intensification of conflict and instability as a result of the continued Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces.

But, at the same time, more than ever before, the potential and knowledge exist, thanks in part to global communications and knowledge sharing, to make quick strides on the region's human development agenda. As both the Arab Human Development Reports point out, the second of which focuses on building knowledge societies, the region suffers a critical backlog of deprivation in terms of human capabilities and opportunities.

A good case in point is the chasm that separates Arab society from the wired world of the Internet, e-governance and new knowledge. Despite having more personal computers per person than any other developing region except Latin America, Arabs have even less access to the Internet than people in sub-Saharan Africa.

What needs to be done, therefore, is to harness the forces of globalization that can bring about the required changes in the region to promote human development. One vital area where this can be achieved is enhancing dialogue among and between cultures and civilizations. This is significant for at least two reasons.

First, through such dialogue based on learning and tolerance, the region will better be able to overcome the difficulties inherent in the current process of transformation affecting it. The region will be able to learn from the experience of others. Indeed, such dialogue will help the people of the region in their efforts to expand the knowledge of the citizens of the region and allowing for more freedom of expression; deepen democracy; and empowering women so that they are included in decision-making processes. In other words, such dialogue is a powerful tool to be used in addressing the region's three key deficits.

At the same time, and since dialogue is a two-way street, this form of communication is just as critical for the West and the rest of the world. It will allow the Arab region to share its own profound wealth of knowledge. Moreover, this dialogue will help dispel misconceptions and do away with existing prejudices that cloud current perceptions, result in unnecessary and avoidable tensions and, generally, hinder the formation of better relations between the Arab world and other cultures and civilizations.

Second, promoting dialogue among cultures and civilizations is of vital importance for another reason - enhancing human development. As the forthcoming global Human Development Report 2004, will emphasize, cultural liberty is an essential component of human development.

Indeed, the human development approach involves the search for an understanding of development that goes beyond the narrow and constricted focus on goods and things, concentrating instead on the lives that people can actually lead and the freedoms they can enjoy. As the global Human Development Reports have argued, development is about expanding freedoms and the choices that people have in order to lead full and creative lives. Of the many choices people have, cultural freedom, or cultural liberty, is important to human well-being, to creative expression, to life-style choices, and to identity. In short, cultural concerns are as much a part of human development as are social, economic and political concerns.

And, increasingly, cultural concerns are coming to the forefront of debates surrounding globalization. In our world, made ever smaller by the globalizing power of instantaneous communication and easy travel, new patterns of cultural interaction have led to new types of intermingling among cultures. In this situation, people are increasingly concerned how interactions with other cultures affect their own culture and well-being. After all, people have reason to continue to value acceptance, participation and recognition. The freedom to be included on favourable terms is a central human priority.

Cultural inclusion is no different, and is of great importance because cultural deprivation can impoverish human lives. In addition, the correct forms of cultural inclusion can also play a very crucial role in making a society less contentious and more liveable.

It is therefore essential that peoples' cultural liberty is respected and that different cultures and civilizations are not only accepted and tolerated, but indeed appreciated and celebrated. And this is precisely where the value of dialogue among cultures and civilizations becomes so important. As the

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan so eloquently put it: “A Dialogue among civilizations is humanity’s best answer to humanity’s worst enemies.”

This sentiment has also been embodied in the historic Sana’a Declaration that was recently adopted by all governments of the region at the conclusion of the successful Inter-Governmental Regional Conference on Democracy, Human Rights and the Role of the International Criminal Court, hosted by the Government of Yemen.

In that Declaration, delegations reached the following principle:

Cultural and religious diversity is at the core of universally recognised human rights, which should be observed in a spirit of understanding in the application of democratic and human rights principles; this diversity should not be a source of confrontation or clashes but should be a source of dialogue and building bridges of understanding between religions and cultures.

This principle of dialogue and tolerance also implies that individuals have the opportunity to embrace other lifestyles and cultural backgrounds if they so wish. In contrast, the insistence on cultural conservatism that is sometimes proposed as a remedy to preserve culture, entails people being discouraged- or even prevented- from moving to a different lifestyle, and can also mean defending cultural traditions that are contrary to basic human rights, such as equality of women.

In all this it is also important to remember that there are other reasons why cultural diversity is beneficial. For example, a culturally diverse society can bring benefits to others in the form of experiences that they will be able to enjoy. And throughout the ages cultures have learnt, and continue to learn, from each other, and this has proved a key ingredient in expanding knowledge. More specifically, the Arab world and the rest of the world have much to learn from each other.

The main point is that to deny people choice of cultures and identities when such a choice exists would be a mistake. When this basic freedom to live as one chooses is threatened, conflict, violence and suffering become increasingly likely. A dialogue among cultures and civilizations is a central pillar of the global response to conflict and violence, particularly when it is based on intolerance. And, in our globalizing world, tolerance is more essential than ever.

However, in promoting cultural liberty, the process of globalization, and especially modernization, presents some difficulties- difficulties that concerted action and dialogue can help overcome.

One such difficulty is this: if it is of vital importance for cultural liberty that people have the capability to live as they would choose, then

people should have adequate opportunity to consider other lifestyle options.

With globalization, however, people in certain civilizations or cultures may be restricted in the choices they make by their inability to resist the influences of modernization, often interpreted as Westernization, which may leave a heavy imprint on their way of life. Given the pace of modernization, there are some well-founded fears that native traditions may be drowned out. As is the case with other regions and cultures, Arab culture today is also challenged by globalization and its consequences, giving birth to worries about loss of language and identity.

Yet, it is also worth emphasizing that it is by no means inevitable that globalization will create a homogeneous global culture, destroying diversity. Cultural interchange has created many common values the world over, but cultures and societies continually change. Globalization is not about to change that.

Nonetheless, even if these threats to cultural diversity may well be difficult to avoid, the solution to preserving cultures and civilizations does not lie in stopping globalization. A more appropriate response lies in strengthening the opportunities that local cultures have to preserve their own identities. Providing support for local cultural activities would have the dual advantage of allowing these cultures to become stronger and to face a more equal competition.

One way of doing this is by allowing for greater dialogue between different civilizations and cultures- providing a forum, such as this Symposium, for cultures to learn about and from each other. In this way, knowledge and understanding can prevail over ignorance and prejudice.

Our strengths as humans lie in combining the familiar with the foreign. Moreover, in addition to cherishing our diversity, we also need to forge a common sense of identity with universal core values, such as those defined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A dialogue among cultures and civilizations, therefore, plays a key role in the balancing act required to meet the challenges brought about by globalization and modernization while at the same time safeguarding unique cultural identities and striving to build consensus around a nucleus of shared values.

In this light, this Symposium is a welcome and important effort to promote tolerance and learning here in Yemen, in the broader Arab region and indeed in the world as a whole.

Dialogues such as these should also go hand-in-hand with efforts to make global governance a force for global cultural inclusion. For instance, restrictive intellectual property rights regimes often block true knowledge transfers to countries that need them most. Divides such as these may prevent many from joining a vibrant and diverse global society. As such, fair and effective global governance arrangements could bolster cultural dialogue and help create more favourable circumstances for cultural exchange.

A New York Times article in 2001 discussed this issue of tolerance. The article told the story of a Turkish immigrant in Germany who summed up the linkages between globalization and the importance of dialogue among cultures and civilizations with the following, and I quote: “Does integration mean I have to give up my Turkish identity? Then I say no. Does it mean Christianity? No. Or does it mean that I learn other things and Germans help me to do so and we talk and reach out to each other? Then I say, yes.”

This conference is one of many steps needed to be taken to ensure that we too say “yes”: yes to understanding, dialogue, and mutual enrichment among and between cultures and civilizations.

Eric Rouleau

Journalist and former French Ambassador to Turkey and Tunisia

Since the media is a major vehicle of the ongoing dialogue, I would like to make what I believe is a central remark. It relates to the notion of terrorism. There are, as you know, many ambiguities and many different definitions that I am sure we will seek to address. But we have to concede, unfortunately, that the media has made little progress when it comes to dialogue. I would like to make one more remark on this subject: whether we like it or not, Muslim public opinion is, by and large, convinced that the war on terrorism is, in practice, a war against Islam.

Unfortunately again, Islamophobia – in my view, at least, and in my country, France – affects people through fear. They confuse the issue of Islam as a religion, let us call it political, non-violent Islam, with terrorism, which is much more dangerous. Political Islam and terrorism have become the same thing in large sections of Western public opinion. It is a deeply saddening development, for such perception is a serious form of prejudice and racism against Moslems.

Without entering into detail, I believe that there are many people and institutions that must bear responsibility – quite apart from the media that, I think, have been unable to do anything to change perceptions of Islam. I think that Western governments have to seriously address the situation, on which subject I would like to add one further point.

Western governments have not tried at all to analyze the provenance and roots of terrorism as being political, economic and social, which I think is the most important question. Some governments consider terrorists evil. Evil cannot be analyzed! One does not try to understand why there is evil, any more than a magic spell! One just fights it. Unfortunately, terrorism will not disappear simply by fighting it with security measures. Terrorism can be fought by addressing what is behind it – at what is behind the evil. This has not been done in the West.

Arab governments are also responsible, however. Many refuse their peoples the freedom to air their grievances at the world system in this age of globalization. Nor are they free to express their anger either at their own governments for not doing what they should, or against foreign powers which are playing a very negative role in their countries. To conclude, then, both Arab and Western governments bear their share of responsibility.

My last word is about the Western media, which, unfortunately, have not always played a positive role. I believe their prime failing is ignorance of what Islam is. The media have not asked why there was no so-called

“Islamic terrorism” 15 years ago, when Islam has existed for centuries? Why did it become terrorist just 10 years ago? Why was there no Ben Laden in the 1960s, the 1970s or the 1980s? If the media had put this question, we would come closer to the truth. Unfortunately, the media is full of ignorance. Westerners have their prejudices as much as Arabs have theirs. I think that this is the area in which we are interested and I am sure that it will be worth discussing.

Martin Woollacott

International affairs columnist, The Guardian, London

The controversy 25 years ago about a “New Information Order” recalls an era when globalization was already an issue and the relationship between civilizations already a focus of people’s concerns in discussions on the media.

The issue then, as many saw it, was a profound asymmetry between the power of the Western media and the limited reach in resources of local media, in what was then called the “Third World”. Western media defined the news in such regions not only for their own audiences, but, via the powerful news agencies and world broadcasters like BBC, for local audiences as well. The critique had large elements of truth in it while the remedies proposed were not very convincing. Now, by contrast, we have a much less asymmetrical situation and a much more diverse situation, a better situation – not much better, but better.

This is particular the case in the Middle East, which is important because the Middle East is the location of at least three of the major stories, or histories if you prefer, in which dialogue can easily fail. They are of course the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the emergence of terrorism and the situation in Iraq. The Iranian political evolution could possibly be added to make a fourth.

The media are the first and most frequent messengers in dialogue, and I would suggest that the new international media scene is characterized by what can be called the three “C”s – Co-operation, Competition and Comparison. By co-operation I mean that outside and local media are now much more cautiously involved – and that comes down to personnel. When somebody in CNN is killed in Iraq it is no surprise to find that the victim is Arabic. When a BBC man wins a prize for his coverage in Iraq it turns out that he is of Muslim background, although educated in the UK. Even if, as individuals, such men and women are employees of Western agencies, their knowledge and their sensitivity make a difference.

The whole of the big foreign media effort in the Middle East has in fact been internationalized. Correspondents are supported by a cast of assistants and interpreters who are brought to the fore by the fact that they are indispensable, and sometimes equal or more than equal, partners in the production of news.

Then there are the local media themselves, also often indispensable to outsiders. One example is Al-Jazeera, although it is now a world force.

Al-Jazeera, of course, leads us onto the second “C” – competition – because it is the outstanding example of how the once-dominant Western media of the old era now face credible and effective competition. There is one way of interpreting the wonderfully worded motto of Al-Jazeera “More than one opinion” – that there is now more than one sort of voice. There is now more than just a Western voice.

The last “C” is comparison, which arises from satellite coverage and the Internet explosion, which have fuelled developments we all marvel at. Every morning at The Guardian, people sit down to read the paper on the Internet. They read Dawn, The Asian Age and Ha’aretz. They read mainly in English, but, thanks to the arrival of reporters from migrant backgrounds, in Hindi, Arabic and other languages as well. In newsrooms all over the world the day begins in a similar way. Twenty years ago people would look at the three – or maybe four or five – big agencies and not much else. That is a change in the journalistic world: there is a new kind of reader, listener and viewer, too, who ranges from side to side, from channel to channel and who is, therefore, capable of a range of comparison and criticism that were simply not there before.

Again on my paper, the number of letters from readers from abroad outnumbered those that came from Britain in the run-up to the Iraq war. True, most of those letters and Internet messages were from Americans, but a considerable number were from Pakistanis and Indians, while some were from the Middle East. The reading is obvious: even if the numbers of particular regions are relatively small, there is an international class of viewers, listeners and readers that is growing in size and in its capacity to compare different versions of events as they develop.

Even as this goes on, the story on the ground in my view is being covered in a more coherent way by a more internationalized media corps. The media corps is a group that has its own sociology, its own internal dynamic. It argues things through, learns from leading figures, has arguments and comes a sort of consensus. This consensus is reflected in what is sent home, whether it is stories for the print media, pictures and stories for the television, or reporting for radio.

There are differences in the way correspondents approach stories on the ground in the Middle East. But the significant differences occur in the treatment of those stories when they reach home and when they are considered and understood by people in the region itself. Everywhere there are bodies of commentators, spin-doctors, interveners and interpreters who set the news in context. They range from enormously serious and respectful people to the most errant lobbyists. They are capable of reflecting

and shaping messages as they come from the field. I think it is indeed in the ranks of these people where we can find the distortions that Eric Rouleau referred to earlier. This is how we explain the large differences in perception of events between people in the region and people outside, between Middle Eastern and Western countries and, within the West, between Europe and America. The messages are being interrupted and set in the wrong context.

So the picture is mixed. On the one hand, media coverage of the Middle East that is no longer quite so completely dominated by the West as it was before. It has some promising elements of convergence that suggest greater interaction between civilizations even in the practical day-to-day sense of more arguments, interaction and discussion between reporters of different backgrounds who are on the spot as stories develop. On the other hand there is also apparent a kind of constant ambush of the truth which is handled in different ways and for different motives in all our countries. It is in this ambush that I believe lies the greatest danger.



L to R: Hans d'Orville, Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO; Eric Rouleau, Journalist and former French Ambassador to Turkey and Tunisia; Abdul-Salam Al-Majali, former Prime Minister of Jordan, President of the Islamic Academy of Sciences; Abdul-Aziz Al-Maqaleh, Advisor to the President of Yemen, Director of the Yemen Center for Studies and Research; Qaderi Ahmad Haidar, Researcher at the Yemeni Center for Studies and Research, Sana'a

Vittorio Ianari

Representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio, Rome

It gives me great pleasure to be addressing this meeting attended by so many people of different religious backgrounds, believers and others.

Many things have changed, and changed radically, since 11 September. Worries, uncertainty, mistrust, anxiety about the future have appeared on the international scene. We can understand why Alexander Adler entitled an essay on geopolitics: "I have seen an old world pass away". A world has indeed ended: we have here a strong sense of deep shifts in the way peoples interrelate. Perhaps this is the end, too, of a certain optimistic view of relations among cultures and peoples, now shown to be too naive. There are those who ask: "Has not the time for dialogue passed? What is the point of dialogue between one culture – or people, or religion – and another?"

The presence here in Sana'a of so many religious leaders and cultural figures stirs some kind of deep response: the will to meet and get to know each other, to give and receive explanations – in short, to engage in dialogue. Their presence makes tangible the urgency of dialogue; they are expressing the firm belief that human communities do not want to live in isolation from each other. And for my part, I should like to say something about that, especially touching religious communities.

In this modern world not even the most exclusive communities can live isolated and alone unto themselves. Each can be reached by others instantly. Living together is one of the great challenges globalization puts to our religions: we are right next door to each other, and next-door neighbours can sometimes end up mutually hostile.

This cohabitation, this living together, spurs us to think about identity in novel terms, not least when it is a novel experience. Sometimes, unfortunately, enmity arises; people can find it difficult, in some cases, to live two things at once: the certainty of one's own faith, and a peaceful life in common with those who do not share that faith. Sometimes a fundamentalist arrogance gets the upper hand, an almost childish reaction to others who are both nearby and different: proud fundamentalism brings consolation when proud solitude is impossible. Fundamentalism of all kinds is a slippery slope, leading to scorn and then to the violence that grows in a great spiritual void.

A world so full of conflict as ours is, so driven by divides, will in the end drag its religions into its patterns of hatred. Religions can be used like petrol to fuel the flames of war, to make war flare up stronger and more

brutal; but they can also - and this is their vocation - be the water which quenches it for good.

Indeed, we have witnessed, throughout the terrible twentieth century, not only many conflicts (some of them with religious overtones), but also the emergence of a message of peace that comes from the very core of religion. The unbearable heat of these wars caused a message of peace to spring from the world's religions, stated by each tradition in its own spiritual language but converging nonetheless. This message of peace made a powerful appearance in a world still gripped by the Cold War when in 1986 representatives of the various world religions gathered together for the first time to pray for peace in Assisi.

Religious leaders must be aware of their responsibility for communicating hope and at the same time bringing about a real climate of peace, an education in the love of peace. This is the religions' responsibility. The twentieth century, that most secular century in all of history, looked until recently like a time of very grave, possibly fatal, crisis for religion. Yet it has ended in a period when religions have become major factors in history, and the responsibilities of religious men and women have become greater than could have been imagined only yesterday. These responsibilities, though, are not only towards their own fellow-believers but, in a globalizing world where we live much closer together than in the past, they are responsibilities towards those outside their own religious communities as well. For what must be the first time in history, some religious communities have had to give serious thought to their responsibilities to those of faiths other than their own. If, in our modern world, individuals cannot live only for themselves, then how much less can any religious community concentrate solely on itself and its own issues, however noble? This is a considerable change, especially for those religious communities which have been used to living alone; today things are different: we no longer live alone, we live no longer just for ourselves.

Peace, then, means a spiritual life lived together, one rooted in our several religions. This spirituality may be inspired by different motivations, but no religious tradition denies it, or is unaware of it. It is this spirituality of living together which needs to grow in our shattered world, which needs to develop in the most intractable parts of our societies, on the great anonymous housing estates of our big cities where hostility takes root in the relations among different ethnic and religious groups.

Our religions speak of one-ness precisely because they are different. Régis Debray, a non-religious humanist but someone not dismissive of religious subjects, once wrote that religions have a mission to "reintegrate

the shattered man with himself, with others and with the cosmos. Meaningfulness, though always welcome, is a product of connectedness, not the other way round. To make a connection... is to foil the deadly forces of disintegration, once thought of as the forces of the Devil". Yes, the shattered man or woman, lost among the great nameless frontiers of the world, sick with a deep loneliness, is a figure more and more often to be found among us; and it is religion which speaks of a link that can join the individual to the world, to others, and to God.

Peace: a global concept

The link between religions speaks of peace. Aghast at the capacity of conflict to cause harm, and at the all too widespread readiness to use violence, we talk of peace as part of the construction of the human personality, something which can penetrate the human heart and its capacity for action. The word "peace" rings out as an end to the horror of war; but its overtones are of the development of peoples, and it also speaks of spirituality, of the heart, of deliverance from hatred, of love.

"Peace" is a word written in different characters in very many of our religions' holy books, a word as old as our religious traditions, yet still full of relevance today.

"Peace" is a comprehensive expression, which links the spiritual life with the political, the relations between individuals with those between nations; though related to prayer and spirituality, it does not loftily dismiss the history that our peoples have actually lived through.

The modern world is calling for religions to make their contribution to peace; and what brings to light this treasure of religious peace is dialogue. Dialogue is the art of living our lives by that which unites us in our diversity; it is the art of unlocking the power for peace that is inherent in our religions.

A sign of hope

This symposium is a sign of hope. The temptation, for religious communities in this world of ours, is to turn inward, ignore their neighbours, dig themselves in behind mistrust and lack of interest in the issues that affect us all. That is an attitude which lessens the scope of our religions' mission of peace. In the Christian world some speak of a crisis of the ecumenical movement. Others watch with concern the deterioration of relations among the great religious communities or,

worse still, the emergence of aggressive or exclusive attitudes that threaten to make dialogue among religions a useless and empty exercise.

Perhaps, though, we should also reflect that one of the great preoccupations of our time is precisely this lack of confidence in the art of dialogue, regarded at best as a mere expression of what is “politically correct” – not only in the world of religion, but in international relations also. This impoverishment of dialogue is connected with a faltering in our ability to dream, our passionate desire to change the world for the better. We are surrounded by far too much pessimism; it is a sorry education for our youth, a poor counsellor in our decisions. Pessimism becomes a habit of thought; it is passed off as realism. Pessimism in the face of the inevitability of war; pessimism over the scandalous proportion of the world’s people excluded from well-being and condemned to poverty; pessimism about conflicts, the gangrene of our world, such as that between Israelis and Palestinians, when what is needed is the courage to explore new paths of honest dialogue.

This pessimism befouls the air we breathe in Africa, as well, that proving-ground for international policy. The poverty that afflicts many of the continent’s regions is desert enough for many, yet a fertile and dangerous breeding-ground for extremism of all kinds. We do well to recall this, as the tenth anniversary of the 1994 Rwanda genocide approaches: 800,000 Africans were massacred in April of that year, most of them civilians, 44% of them women and children.

Pessimism is leading to resignation and powerlessness in too many people. It is undoubtedly a consequence of the shipwreck of many ideological utopias, facile optimisms with ambitions for changing the world, which became tainted with blood or only made things worse. Powerlessness, also, before the “implacable” laws of the market, the recognition that the individual human counts for little or nothing in such a vast, all too inhospitable and uncaring world... So what is the use of working at dialogue, when changing or improving the world seems barely possible? These are the pessimistic feelings and thoughts in so many people’s hearts.

In the face of this virulent modern pessimism, people are searching for hope; there are many who long for a vision of hope. This is the Bible’s dream: to see hope. That hope is not a policy, which might always shift, nor an ideology with the face of an idol, mute but devouring. Religions are the soil in which hope flourishes, where hope can put down deep roots. We must have the courage to light up our modern world with hope. We must

have the courage to make it dream: to make it dream of peace, the loveliest of all humanity's dreams and the most realistic.

Conclusion

Those who believe are called on now to rid themselves of all feelings of violence and to lay down all the arms of hatred. In the face of what Serge Latouche has called the “economicization” of the world, the faithful are bringing a breath of spirituality and humanity, to waken hearts lulled by consumerism into crass insensibility, hearts resigned to pessimism. We need a strong wind – the wind of spiritual awakening, not of market forces, not the squalls of violence but a fair wind of peace – to stir up our deepest thoughts and feelings. A wind to shake people out of their resignation and urge them to new feelings of peace and thoughts of solidarity, in a world where, at present, just one fifth of the people seem to think they can do without the rest.

Religions can, with their art of dialogue, their witness to peace and the ancient strength of their experience, do much to support many people's dreams of peace. Our human race was not made for war; it is an evil thing on our earth. There are no holy wars, for only peace is holy! Our religions must bear witness that man and woman are made for peace, and peace is their destiny.

Michael Abiola Omolewa

President, 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO,
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to UNESCO

Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to participate in this important and timely symposium, which has been jointly organized by the Government of Yemen and UNESCO.

I have consciously described the symposium as “important” because, in addition to myself, the Chairman of the Executive Board and the Director-General Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura have an intimate knowledge of it and send their warm wishes. When I say “timely”, I am thinking of two points.

Firstly, I am referring to the way in which dialogue has assumed growing significance over the past few years as a vehicle in international relations, and has thus become a tool for enhanced mutual understanding, tolerance, peace and mutual engagement.

Secondly, it is timely because it is the first regional event following a landmark resolution by the UNESCO General Conference, adopted last October, where all Member States agreed that dialogue activities must be intensified and concretized within the framework of the New Delhi Declaration. The New Delhi Declaration was adopted at the conclusion of the very first International Ministerial Conference on the subject, held in New Delhi in July 2003.

I should therefore like to thank the organizers of the conference for assigning to me the field of education, which is really my first love. I must commend, as usual, the staff of the Bureau of Strategic Planning for challenging my thoughts and providing me with the general ideas contained in my contribution.

The commitment to dialogue is clearly more than an academic exercise. At the same time, however, there is no greater determinant for a successful dialogue than knowledge. And knowledge is primarily obtained through education. Education at all levels – through formal, non-formal and informal approaches – has an inherent ability to release the potential of dialogue, provided it is accessible to all. Education’s contribution to mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for cultural diversity is therefore both undeniable and crucial.

First of all, contemporary educational programmes must not focus on differences, thereby “exoticizing” them, but on the ways in which diversity can enrich our lives and on “learning to live together”, the fourth pillar of education for the twenty-first century identified in the famous report by Jacques Delors.

A key modality for enhancing understanding of the other is the improvement and revision of textbooks and teaching materials and the training of teachers. It is in this context that I consider the introduction by Ambassador Ahmad Jalali of great relevance. What should we do with our history textbooks? How should we teach history? Who does the writing? Who analyses the writings? What is the impact of the history that is taught in school on the development of future generations?

Take, for example, the history that is provided in civil conflicts areas and the way it apportions blame and the way people understand the issues involved. What if we take this year's commemoration of the abolition of slavery 200 years ago? Who wrote the history of slavery? Who is there to teach the history of colonialism? How do they interpret these two important epochs? What impression is made in the minds of the young who begin to read what is contained in history?

The international standing conference on the history of education which I attended in Geneva and Brazil recently addressed this issue. We are sure that it is possible to propose a unified theme that brings people together, shows understanding, and seeks to promote cultural practices and other approaches that offer a common vision and a common goal instead of apportioning blame and identifying episodes that will further divide future generations.

Revisions of history should aim to provide impartial, dispassionate and comprehensive knowledge about cultures and civilizations. The continuous reappraisal of assumptions and erring projections in relation to other people is an important exercise – for all of us. However, it is particularly crucial in conflict and post-conflict situations, where forums for research and dialogue among concerned specialists – historians, social scientists, and experts on religions and literature, for example – must be given special attention and support.

The formulation of educational policies and strategies that promote cultural and linguistic diversity throughout the curriculum are likewise a central part of textbook revision processes. Everyone should be enabled to find their place in the community – in most cases local – to which they primarily belong and, at the same time, be given the means to open out to other communities, values, belief systems and faiths.

Moreover, focus on human rights education and civic education is essential, especially in situations where the process of textbook revision and educational reform forms part of reconstruction and reconciliation processes, and where it can encourage students belonging to different communities to develop a new sense of shared destiny.

But education must also answer the crucial question as to why we live together and must give everyone, throughout life, the ability to play an active part in envisioning the future of society. To safeguard independence of conscience, education in general, from childhood throughout life, must also build up a critical sense that makes for free thought and independent action. It is thus education in general, as a process for constructing the faculty of judgement that is being called into action.

This is perhaps one of the most challenging tasks that education can take on board today, when stigmatizing and generalizing categories like “Islam” and “the West” – or “the West and the rest” – are, on an almost daily basis, spilling out of conference halls, newspapers and pretentious academic debates.

UNESCO encapsulates all these activities in education in the term “focus on quality education”. It is not only the output and performance of an educational system that counts but also, and often more importantly, the qualitative input. Please permit me to note with satisfaction the work of UNESCO in encouraging inclusion and access to education through its prosecution of Education for All (EFA) and, lately, its coordinating role in the UN’s Decade for Literacy Programme. The idea in this major UNESCO project is to ensure that exclusion, which is an essential tool for priming ignorance and alienation, is not allowed into the process of building general dialogue at all levels of education.

UNESCO does pay particular attention to the issue of quality education ensuring that education assists in the generation of knowledge about other people and the fostering of the spirit of learning how to live together. Such efforts have to combat prejudice, the dispersion of ideas and what Martin Woollacott described as the ambush of truth. The process of encouraging the quality of education also leads to the promotion of quality teacher-training and the necessary improvement of the working conditions of teachers who are often the last and least paid.

Through its initiatives and programmes, UNESCO also pays the necessary attention to promoting non-formal education, building indigenous knowledge, using indigenous languages and keeping bodies healthy through the practice of sports in school.

In this, and in most other, processes in which UNESCO engages, dialogue is key. We wish to see dialogue among civilizations and cultures become an effective instrument of transformation, a yardstick for peace and tolerance, and a vehicle for diversity and pluralism. And as I emphasized at the beginning of my presentation, our Member States are turning to

UNESCO as never before, highlighting its unique role in building new bridges between civilizations and cultures.

In conclusion, let me share with you a passage from the “Message from Ohrid”, the text that concluded the international conference held in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in August 2003, attended by eight heads of state from Southeast Europe. I personally appreciate this passage very much. It reads: “A new era is dawning where dialogue, understanding and reconciliation are poised to replace the tribulations of history, and where unity can be found in and nourished through the rich diversity and humanity of the peoples. Forgiveness will help rid the region of the biases and ignorances of the past. Drawing lessons from history, we agree that reconciliation is the path for our common future. Dialogue must become a new refrain that will echo throughout the region and the world at large.”

Saleh Ba Sowrra

President of the University of Sana'a

Education and Learning as Cornerstones of Peace and Dialogue

Education in its different stages and numerous fields of training – be it of scientists, academics, philosophers, administrators, businessmen or architects – is a major driving force behind human civilization and a prime factor in promoting its development. This is, and has been, true of all civilizations at all times. Even long after the firm establishment of human civilization, education remains one of its most vital components and most salient features. For without education and its practical and theoretical applications in the furtherance of know-how and knowledge, human civilizations would not have been able to develop or communicate and so affect each other.

Indeed, the status of human culture and civilization in this age of information and communication technology is the fruit of continuous contacts between contemporary civilizations and the legacy of successive civilizations over the ages. Education has always been a vital channel of transmission. It is the nucleus of all civilization and the engine of its development. Therefore, when education is weak or relapses into mere traditional teaching that fails to produce, civilizations go into decline until they finally petrify or collapse.

Islamic civilization was characterized in its golden age by its deeply committed, highly diversified education system, which was receptive to both early and contemporary civilizations. It produced great minds across all fields of Islamic knowledge, a heritage central to the rise and development of the Renaissance in Europe, that era of enlightenment, geographic discovery, invention and industrialization which laid the foundations of European civilization as we now know it.

Education in Arab Islamic countries has seen great quantitative growth in the past two centuries. Sadly, though, it has brought qualitatively poor content and output. Several reasons, both internal and external to the Arab Islamic world, account for the mismatch between the quality and the quantity of education. It is a pattern that has been a common feature of Arab Islamic communities in the modern period. Because it affects education – albeit far from exclusively – education itself then becomes the problem, its cause and effect, all at the same time.

Since the middle of the last century Europe, the United States of America and some Asian countries have made great strides in the production and use of various fields of theoretical and applied knowledge. Education is a prime contributory factor to and outward manifestation of this swift development in the field of knowledge.

Most Arab Islamic countries, both rich and poor, however, as well as a number of African, Asian, and Latin American nations have experienced cultural declines, the most important feature of which is the poor standard of education and its output. There are several reasons, which can be traced back to the Ottoman occupation of Arab Islamic countries and the Western occupation of much of Asia, Africa and Latin America, Islamic or not. Chief among them are:

1. The nature of the Ottoman regime. It was little concerned with education in the Arab countries of the Mashrek (the East) or the Maghreb (the West). Turkish occupation was followed by Western occupation, which exploited the manpower and resources of the countries it colonized, making them subservient to the interests and growth of Western civilization. It paid no attention to the development of education in its colonies, except in the very early stages and only in capitals and major cities and, again, only to safeguard and promote its own interests.
2. Post-independence. When Europe's colonies gained independence they opened their markets to the products of the European civilization, pumping tremendous resources into European economies. Consequently, the percentage of gross domestic income which the newly independent countries spent on education and research was minimal, so producing only fragmented knowledge. Their education system could not provide production and reproduction of knowledge, particularly applied knowledge, and the modern technology linked with it.
3. The poverty gap. Poverty and poor education have drawn a dividing line between developing countries and the rich nations which produce knowledge. This knowledge divide has steadily widened. There are other factors, too, like language barriers and the scarcity of translators and interpreters.
4. The drain brain. The educated minority in developing countries leaves for the West for political, economic or social reasons. The West has encouraged it and continues to do so in many ways, so depleting developing countries of many enlightened, potential leaders who could have helped to steer the development of education in their communities.

5. Conflict. Most developing countries, including those in the Arab and Islamic regions, are embroiled in domestic, cross-border, ethnic, linguist or sectarian conflicts. Moreover, the world that emerged from the First and Second World Wars has nurtured conflicts in and among Europe's former colonies. They have spread and intensified since the collapse of the Soviet Union, which left a single world power. The causes of these instigated geographically limited wars are so obvious that they can no longer be ignored.
6. The absence of an educational strategy. Even if developing countries had educational policies, they would not be implemented because of the dire shortage of material and human resources needed and because of the fears that they might be successful should they be implemented.
7. Under-representation of women. They make up half of the population yet are disproportionately barred from the processes of education and learning.

The ever widening educational, cultural and economic divide between the North and South and the "Islamic East" and the "Christian West" has fuelled mutual hatred. Worse, elements on each side disseminate theories and take action to justify the divide. When there is violent reaction, they explain it on religious or historical grounds. These divisive words and deeds include:

1. Western theorists popularizing the idea of a clash of civilizations and religions, especially between the Western world and Islam. They have thus created conflicts between Christianity and Islam and prompted allegations that Islam is the cause of the backwardness of Islamic countries in the world today. Some publications have even accused Islam of propagating doctrines that breed violence, while certain Western thought leaders have called for ideological and military warfare against Islam to pre-empt the supposed threat it poses to modern Western civilization. It is noteworthy that such positions and publications have significantly increased in number since 11 September 2001.
2. Islamic religious opinion calling for jihad, to fight for the cause of Islam against the infidel West, seen as the cause of the backwardness of Islamic countries both now and in the past.
3. The emergence of Islamic military organizations conducting operations against the West and its interests in response to the call for Islamic jihad against the infidel West and the Islamic regimes that have dealings with it.

4. The alliances that the United States of America has formed with some European and other countries to wage swift military action against Islamic countries.

To halt the political, military and religious violence that endangers the modern human world and relations between the various parts of this global civilization, particularly Western and Islamic, dialogue between cultures, civilizations, religions and interests must become the watchword of global thinking. The United Nations, the Islamic Education Science and Culture Organization (ISESCO) and numerous other cultural forums worldwide have taken initiatives for dialogue. Programmes and plans have been drawn up for seeking ways to put dialogue at the core of relations between nations and countries and for depicting cultural diversity as a source of strength and a force for the growth of contemporary human civilization, not its destruction.

The fate of the world is at stake. Undertaking the historic task of dialogue is the responsibility of all – countries big and the small, Arab and Islamic, Western and Christian. But education and learning will be the cornerstone on which will rest the success or failure of peace and dialogue.

It is a matter of life and death, therefore, to reform syllabuses and teaching and improve educational output in all developing countries, including Arab and Islamic ones. It is a task that is the responsibility of both the advanced West and the underdeveloped East. To achieve such a goal these are some requirements:

1. Promoting true knowledge of the divine religions without any prejudices or preconceived ideas. For all religions must be considered as spiritual doctrines and beliefs that discipline minds, souls and attitudes, which differ only as to certain duties or acts of worship, while agreeing on fundamental issues like peace, tolerance, moderation and the respect for others. All faiths should call for the rejection of any overt or covert intent to force their teachings on others through coercion or the use of power.
2. Encouraging rich countries in the West, or outside it, to contribute to the modernization of education in the developing countries without interfering in educational practices specific to them. For such specificities are essential components of religious, cultural and even national identities.
3. True equality in political and economic dealings between the large and small countries on the basis of common interests that are beneficial to all parties. For the enforcement of policies will sooner or later lead to feelings of injustice and hatred which may, in turn,

unleash movements to protect their homelands and national interests. Education would then continue to be poor and might produce men who believe in and preach ideas of violence.

4. Stemming the brain drain and helping scientists and thinkers to remain in their homelands. There they could take part in the development of education, further enlightenment and contribute to the production of applied and academic knowledge in the interests of their countries and, ultimately, of all the civilizations in the modern world.
5. Allowing education and scientific research in developing countries to benefit from the modern technologies of the West, not only to produce consumer goods and services, but to enhance growth and development, including of technology itself.
6. Encouraging developing countries to direct sufficient funds towards the development of all aspects of education, at all levels and in all fields of learning. I believe that these countries, or at least some of them, have sufficient wealth and resources to build an educational system capable of absorbing and producing know-how and knowledge that could be beneficial to their community and to the world at large.
7. Broadening channels of communication and encouraging the twinning of educational institutions in the North, South, East and West. Experience and expertise would thus be transferred and shared, so elevating the language of dialogue, entrenching the principles of coexistence and spreading the culture of peace.
8. Developing dialogue among Muslims, organizing effective cultural and student exchanges between Islamic countries, and safeguarding the rights of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries and those of non-Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries.
9. Encouraging and promoting the translation of scientific works.
10. Including the culture of dialogue and understanding in school curricula and textbooks and removing any hint of scorn or contempt for other cultures and anything liable to stir up hatred or antagonism against them. Western and Arab Islamic schools alike should take such measures.

Some might think that there are other issues that should be given higher priority than education. But let us quote the New Testament by way of asserting the importance of education. "Man doth not live by bread alone" means that freedom and education are as much vital sustenance as food. The first verse of the Old Testament is: "In the

beginning was the word.” The “word” encompasses education, culture, thought and ideals.

The Holy Koran says: “Read in the name of thy Lord who created, Created man from a clot. Read and thy Lord is the most bounteous. Who teaches by the pen, Teaches man that which he knew not.” The word “read” is God’s first divine ordinance. The “pen” is the means of writing and learning – the first tool mentioned in the Holy Koran.

Educational reform is an essential pre-requisite for reforming the community. It is also the most wholesome means of refining the soul and behaviour. Furthermore, it is a channel of communication, understanding and cooperation between cultures and civilizations. For the strength of education in one place and its weakness in another is a danger that threatens the peaceful co-existence of cultures and civilizations.



L to R: Hans d’Orville, Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO; Gunter Mulack, Ambassador and Commissioner for the Dialogue with the Islamic World, German Foreign Office; Peter Clark, Chief Executive Officer, The Amar International Charity Foundation, London; Mongi Bousnina, Director-General, ALECSO; Abdul-Aziz Al-Maqaleh, Advisor to the President of Yemen, Director of the Yemen Center for Studies and Research

Ahmad Al-Asbahi

Deputy Secretary-General, General Popular Congress of Yemen

The Term Culture and a Definition of the Concept

The term “thakafa” spread across the Arabic world in the early twentieth century as the counterpart of the Western word “culture”. Yet it is an error – and one that is widely committed – to translate “culture” by “thakafa”. Indeed, the Western concept of culture has been translated by two Arabic words that are neither synonymous with nor even share the same generic meaning or linguistic root. At times it has been translated as “thakafa” and, at others, as “hadara”, or “civilization”. The implication is that culture, or thakafa, is equivalent to civilization, i.e. hadara.

If we refer to Arabic heritage and language we find no reference to “thakafa” taken as having the same meaning as “culture” in the West. In the two best-known Arabic language dictionaries, Lissan Al Arab (The Arabic Language) and Al Qamus Al Moheet (The Comprehensive Dictionary) the definition of the verb thakkafa can be translated as: “to understand”, “to comprehend”, “to be skilful”, “to regulate” and “to be successful”. Additional meanings are “to be clever, to be aware of one’s needs, to discipline, to prune, to improve, to correct”.

When someone is described as having thakafa, it means that he, or she, is intelligent, clever, and knows what he, or she, wants. The word thakafa, denoting the Western notion of culture was never mentioned by Ibn Khaldun, who is the principal reference in matters of Arabic sociology in the Middle Ages. It was not used in the Ommayad or Abbasid eras, either. There is no mention of it in the literary works or the official administrative language of those times any more than their history yields evidence of the existence of administrative rules for societies or activities related to thakafa, culture. Nor did any benefactor provide an endowment for organizations engaged in thakafa-related activities. Yet history has revealed that the Ommayad and Abbasid eras saw great progress and the flourishing of “Arabic Culture”.

Culture, in the heyday of the Greek and Roman civilizations, meant to plough the land, to cultivate. Cicero used it figuratively to reflect the same meaning when he called philosophy cultura mentis, i.e. the cultivation and development of the mind in order to train people to honour the gods. The term had a similar meaning in France, which used it to denote religious rites.

The Renaissance narrowed “culture” to its artistic and literary associations and applied it to the study of education and innovation.

During the seventeenth century philosophers tended to apply scientific methods to the studies of the humanities. They assigned a special place to processes related to the concept of culture. The word kept its linguistic root and the significance of its derivatives until Edward Taylor wrote his book, *Primitive Culture*, in 1871. In the very first paragraph of his book he sets out a definition of culture which, to this day, remains the most widely accepted in anthropological literature. He states that culture, in its broadest ethnographic meaning, is: “The complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, and custom and any other capabilities, traditions, and habits which man acquires in his capacity as a member of society.”

The German concept has acquired the collective sense of the development which man, a community, or humanity in general acquires. This concept is in accordance with the German notion of the history of humanity, whereby cultures’ intellectual levels are the basic criteria for distinguishing between various levels of development.

British intellectuals, on the other hand, engaged in the discussion of political and religious issues, began to examine the term, “culture”, as applied to scientific and other fields. Matthew Arnold defined it as the process of development towards human perfection, which was “to know the best that has been said and thought in the world”. He believed that religious culture, which teaches discipline and integrity, and secular culture, which crystallizes objective facts, together contribute to the development of human life.

John Dewey saw culture as the result of interaction between man and his environment”, while anthropologist Ralph Linton felt it was an integrated form of acquired collective behaviour, shared and transmitted by individuals in a given community”.

Definitions abound. Kroeber and Kluckhohn of Harvard University counted 164 in 1952. They included “learned behaviour”, “ideas in the mind”, “a logical construct”, “statistical fiction”, “psychic defence mechanism”, “abstraction from behaviour”, a substitute religion which plays a vital role in the improvement of human life, and a Utopia promising self-achievement and the establishment of understanding among communities.

Let us leave the innumerable definitions to one side. What is of interest to us here is to avoid losing our way in a labyrinth, either by considering the concept of culture as an absolute term without any

limitation, or by accepting the strictures of anthropological research that derives its concepts not from in-depth studies of Arabic communities, but of other communities that could not, and should not, be considered as having attained the same levels of development as past or present Arabic civilizations.

The concept of culture should be determined from within the Arab world itself. Therefore, when we think or speak of culture, we should do so not in the German or anthropological sense, but in the Arabic sense of the word. Although it is a new term, it is nevertheless characterized by the organic, linguistic bond between thakafa and its derivation, mouthakaf, i.e. he who is cultured. There is no such connection in European languages, where the linguistic roots of “culture” and “intellect” have nothing in common. What we mean in Arabic by “culture” – thakafa – is that which makes a person mouthakaf, that is, an intellectual.

Thakafa is, therefore, a vital necessity for establishing a civilization and a manifestation of civilization. For it means searching for, and finding, the meanings of truth, justice, righteousness, beauty and other values which improve, discipline and correct human existence, and help knowledge, emotions and behaviour contribute positively to life, making man a reformer committed to the cause and governance of his community. It is culture in this Arabic sense that makes man’s knowledge and scientific skills subservient to humanity at large.

Culture is not a compilation of contradicting information and knowledge. Nor is it a material process void of all discipline, rectitude and reform. But it is a concept of values that elevates man and liberates him from the restrictions forced on him by erroneous inherited traditions and customs that drive communities along a path which runs counter to their development.

Culture means cultivating the bounty of the earth as if building a civilization. God Almighty says through the Holy Koran: “Have you seen that which ye cultivate? Is it you who foster it or are We the fosterer?” We should always remember that the first word revealed to the Arabic messenger of God, Mohamed – may God’s blessings be upon him – was “Read”. That word was to be the seed of Arab Islamic Culture and the Arabs were to be the bounteous earth in which God’s word would first bear fruit. Hearing the Holy message, the Prophet ploughed the verdant, vigorous, blossoming Arab Islamic culture for 23 years, so that the land would produce a bountiful civilization. That civilization would have continued to flourish had the Arabs adhered to the specificities of their culture and remained aware of its characteristics.

Specific features of Arab Islamic culture

Arab Islamic culture is one that awakens, revives, educates, disciplines and reforms. It seeks to change awareness, inclinations, attitudes and behaviour and bring about, thereby, a resurrection of civilization. The individual, the community and the nation as a whole thus come to possess the creative will and innovative ideas that foster the sense of responsibility and freedom of action whereby one accepts the consequences of one's acts, virtue is its own reward, and morals are grounded in duty which is dictated by conscience and safeguarded by inspiration.

It is a culture with a message to humanity at large, for it addresses all mankind and proclaims the values of goodness, righteousness, justice, virtue, beauty and all that is related to civilization. It calls upon those who have understanding and wisdom to convey them to all and sundry, and it considers them sinful should they withhold or monopolize what they know and not use it to benefit the whole world.

In the Arabic concept of culture, all are born innocent, untainted by any original sin, offence or misdeed. All are free to determine their fate and destiny and are equal before God and the law. No one is compelled to renounce his religion or to embrace Islam. Once God's message is delivered, it is then God alone who does the reckoning.

Arab Islamic culture respects the community. It seeks to base a person's worth in life on his belonging to a human community and his contribution to its processes and prosperity. Maintaining one's individuality is a goal in itself. Yet it becomes nobler and more valuable if bound to the community and the nation, for they too are ends in themselves.

Arab Islamic culture constructs and establishes civilization. For God has created life to be lived, not to be denied or destroyed. God has created the world for us to enjoy. Nature is in the hands of man. He may alter it according to his wishes and plans. In the Arab Islamic concept of culture it is man's duty to promote and develop life and the world, and to fulfil himself through science, knowledge, piety and kindness.

Arab Islamic culture is rational. For it makes knowledge subservient to reason and sound thinking. There is no controversy between reason and learning from others. One does not negate the other. Arab Islamic culture allows the quest to understand, accepts differences and calls for dialogue and argument through proof and evidence. It eschews fanaticism, fallacies, superstition and controversies. It calls upon man to ponder the ways of the universe and the laws of life so that he may be open to all aspects of wisdom, knowledge and science to enrich his thought. It is the wealth of diversity that enhances the flourishing of culture.

Arab Islamic culture is a culture of tolerance. For it believes in dialogue between religions and cultures. It does not negate “the Other” nor force him to relinquish his faith, just as it accepts religious diversity. The Prophet – may God’s blessings be upon him – established a multi-denominational social system as manifested in the Medina Charter, a pact between the Prophet and the Muslims, on one hand, and the Jews on the other. Again, Omar Ben Al Khattab, a successor of the Prophet, concluded a covenant with the Archbishop of Jerusalem, guaranteeing Muslim respect of Christianity, in what came to be known as the Al Amreya Covenant. In the wake of the Islamic conquest of Persia, Omar Ben Alb likewise recognized the Zoroastrians as a community living within the Arab Islamic nation. After the conquest of India Buddhists and Hindus were granted the same rights as were the Zoroastrians of Persia.

The Arab Islamic culture continued to distinguish itself from all others by its fundamental tenets of tolerance and co-existence with non-Muslims at the religious, social and cultural levels. It never was, and never will be, a culture of compulsion or hatred.

It is the culture of the future, just as it is a culture of construction, urbanization, reasoning, creativity, innovation and modernization. It is a culture that aspires to a better future through its sense of responsibility towards the coming generations. These characteristics make Arabic culture the identity of a nation which brings together Arabs and non-Arabs, Muslims and non-Muslims. For all contribute in full freedom and awareness to the development of the Arabic civilization.

This distinct concept of culture is embodied in Arab Islamic civilization and was recorded in ancient books from our heritage. Although few have come down to us, those that have survived are evidence of what is specific to Arabic culture, clearly reflected in the abundance of cultural products that bear the hallmarks of innovation and modernization, creativity and development, revival and reform, adequacy and appropriateness, and clarity of thought and argumentation. All share a single purpose, namely, to reform mankind and establish truth, justice, goodness and beauty, together with other values that enhance the renaissance and progress of civilization. These concepts are enshrined in the *nakeleya*, the sciences of the exegesis of early scriptures. Established to enhance understanding of the Holy Koran and the teachings of the Prophet, they included language, the interpretation of the Holy Koran and the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet), Islamic legislation and jurisprudence, scholastic theology, logic and literature. The sciences of reason, *akleya*, included philosophy, medicine, pharmacology,

engineering, mathematics, astrology, chemistry, history, geography, music and the arts.

Despite the ethical and scientific nature of Arabic culture and its abundant production, as evidenced by the great books of our heritage, the cultural history of our nation was not spared the folly and manipulation of offenders and transgressors. For the ancient books reveal that the Arabic cultural heritage was subjected to attempts by different sides to appropriate it, to distort its writings to the ends and benefits of those in power in different eras.

Nevertheless, the Arab Islamic culture has preserved its essence and succeeded in safeguarding the highly esteemed scientific, creative value of its production. With its spiritual, ethical and intellectual components, it furnishes a strong moral basis for the unity of a nation that has fulfilled its universal, humanitarian mission both in times of prosperity and plenty and of darkness and decline.

In eras of liberation and conquest the Arab Islamic culture was a driving force for progress and spreading the word of God. At periods when Arabic civilization flourished and cities grew, it was an innovative power that enriched jurisprudence through its sects, theology through its scholars, philosophy through its schools of thought, and politics through its numerous parties. It also fostered religious pluralism. It always sought to safeguard national characteristics with their different languages and customs. Moreover, in arts and literature it boasted an openness to all cultures and civilizations.

It always remained strong, sublime and exalted, rising above conflicts, differences and disputes between reason and tradition, causality and interpretation, compulsion and choice, and between individual, independent judgement and established theological doctrines.

At times of partition and fragmentation, weakness and collapse, Arab Islamic culture afforded powerful protection for the unity of the nation. It bound people together in a wave of anger and fury against the princes and sultans who pillaged and oppressed. Arab Islamic culture was often an unflinching force that stirred people to overcome crises. At such times Arab Islamic literature lamented past glory and warned against the collapse of nations, while generously vaunting knowledge, science and the arts. Even in the darkest days, when sectarian kings ruled and brought about the political decline that saw the fall of Andalusia, Arab Islamic art, science and thought flourished. Indeed, it was a period that was as intellectually and creatively outstanding as the halcyon days of Al Walid Ibn Abdel Malek and Harun Al Rasheed – times of vast conquest, blossoming civilization and

wealth. In fact, it was during the grim period of collapse that the great scholar Ibn Khaldun planted the roots of sociology.

Even in the darkest hours of Arab history, when all was retreat, decay and deterioration, Arabic culture did not lay down its arms. Rallying calls of revival, resurrection and renewal went out, triggering the spiritual, ideological and intellectual awakening of the sons of our nation, arousing their spirit of resistance and causing them to rise up against injustice, despotism and autocracy. New movements were born and, at their head, great, imaginative leaders like Al Aziz Ben Abdel Salam and Ibn Taymiyyah, who revolted against the Tartars and finally defeated them.

The spread of Arabic culture

It was only normal that a culture of so many unique qualities should spread wide and exert an influence that transcends time and place. It was written that such a culture should excel, flourish and achieve unprecedented distinction in various fields of science and knowledge. Arab culture spread east to the borders of China and west to the Alps. Consequently, many peoples contributed to the establishment and growth of the Arab Islamic state. Some of them were heirs of earlier cultures and civilizations and would not have joined the Arabic fold easily had they not been persuaded through dialogue and argumentation.

It was only normal that this extensive new culture should speak Arabic, the language of the Holy Koran. For those who had newly embraced Islam had to understand it and abide by its teachings. The fundamental mission of Islam is to preach the worship of one God and to bring people to understand its teachings through the Holy Koran. Non-Arabs had therefore to be taught the Arabic language, as a means of communication and conducting cultural activities.

Three main factors explained the reach of this “new Arabic culture” which made so many countries part of the Islamic world.

1. The Arabs settled for generation after generation in the countries which they had conquered. Moreover, many of their sons there became distinguished scholars and scientists, thereby contributing to a flourishing of the arts and culture. They ushered in a new era of enlightenment, laying the foundations for the development of the sciences of the future.
2. The Arab settlers opened dialogue with others, showing tolerance and acceptance of their points of view and were thus able to spread the cause of Islam and the new Arabic culture. Dialogue was the only

means to such ends, as Islamic military conquest lasted for a mere 100 years and its impact did not outlast Arab Muslim political power. It is worthy of mention that most non-Arab Moslems embraced Islam after the end of the Islamic conquests.

3. The Arab settlers maintained the unity of the Arab Islamic nation even after the collapse of the central ruling authority, the Caliphs. In addition, monotheism had a long-lasting effect on the firm establishment of social unity and strengthened the unity of the Arab Islamic nation, the lifeblood of Arabic civilization's revival.

The influence and achievements of Arabic culture in the Old World

The Arabic region has been the cradle of deeply-rooted civilizations that go back more than 7,000 years. They have passed through successive, intertwined stages from the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Amorites, Canaanites, Phoenicians and Egyptians, to the Sabeans, Minoans, Hadharamauti and Hemites. They grew out of reactions to preceding civilizations, changing basic elements of thought, culture and civil behaviour, which have always been the mainstays of human civilization.

Their achievements include the founding of cities, bodies of law, architecture, irrigation systems, dam-building, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, mummification, and the trade in gum, aromatic herbs and incense burned in palaces and places of worship.

Two of the greatest gifts which the Arabic civilization bestowed on the world and have contributed incalculably to the advancement of civilizations throughout human history are:

- The Alphabet. It is considered one of the greatest achievements of human thought.
- Monotheism. The Arabic region was the cradle of religions and divinely inspired scriptures: the Scrolls of Abraham, the Torah, the Psalter, the Bible and the Koran. It is the land of prophets and holy messengers. It had to engage in doctrinal and intellectual dialogue in order to implant its values of culture and civilization. Dialogue was the beacon that cast the spiritual beam that lit all time and place. The humanitarianism and faith in civilization that is distinctive feature of Arabic culture spring from a philosophy, built on the following pillars:
 - Belief in monotheism. Man's worship of one God, creator of man, the universe and life itself, ensures moderation and measure, strengthens

awareness and conscience, elevates the civilizing spirit, and unifies all life into the one organic whole that is human civilization.

- Justice, equality, freedom and integrity. They flow inevitably from the belief in the unified origin of mankind and in the one human community where all are equal regardless, of colour, ethnic background place and time. Brotherhood, cooperation and mutual acknowledgement are nurtured, while rejection, contempt and denial of others are spurned. For a verse in the Holy Koran says: “O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo ! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.”
- The humanization of the universe. All the animals, plants and minerals on Earth and everything in the universe – space, stars, planets, galaxies – are controlled by divine rules and doctrines. They are all in the service of man, who, in turn, treats them with humanity and consideration. Such belief and behaviour protect the environment and maintain man’s physical and psychological welfare.
- The balance between the fixed and the evolving. Together they make people more diligent, life more purposeful, behaviour more disciplined and civilization a continuous, positive and fruitful process.
- Morality. It recognizes the humanitarian aspect of man’s nature, that is his soul, or spirit, its components of strength, desire, hatred, sympathy, pleasure and excitement. All such emotions are embodied in high morality, in the aspiration to maintain goodness and justice, and in the search for noble means to the noblest ends.

It was through such sublime philosophy that the Arab state was able to play the role of a globalizing civilization from the end of the seventh century A.D. to the end of the fifteenth century. For during those centuries material civilization gained force. Never before, even in the heyday of the Greek or Roman Empires, had so many peoples lived on such vast territories, producing such abundance of consumer goods. For the Arabs introduced to the ancient seats of civilization which they conquered luxurious standards of living and splendour that rivalled the cosmopolitan Arab capitals, Damascus and Baghdad.

Ibn Khaldun spoke of the universality of civilization and the accumulation of both industrial and cultural knowledge. In his research on the urban development of settlements he examined the stable and the changing elements of civilization, stating: “Arab scholars during the eras of the establishment of Arab Islamic culture considered science and wisdom

the common knowledge of all nations. Moreover one of the most important factors enhancing the maturity of thought during the European era of the Renaissance was that the Arab intellectual and civilizational glow of enlightenment did not monopolize either science or knowledge and did not preclude it from others.”

Scholars from all over Europe came to Andalusia, Southern Italy and Sicily as well as to eastern Arabic countries to enrol in the numerous schools, institutes, and universities and acquire knowledge and science. Furthermore, through the Arab philosopher Avicenna and his explanation and interpretation of the philosophy of Aristotle, many of them learnt the Greek philosophy of which they had hitherto known little. They even learnt the methodology of scientific reasoning and the interpretation of historical events. Another subject of study was political jurisprudence in Islam, through which European scholars came to understand the Arabic regime, the Arabic administrative system, the relationship between ruler and ruled, as well as the concepts and values of justice, freedom and equality, the emancipation of slaves, the breaking up of feudalism, religious tolerance, high morals, and the integrated development of individual and community.

Arabic libraries provided them with a wealth of intellectual, political, social and philosophical information and knowledge, much of it Arabicized Greek thought. The study of comparative philosophy made it accessible to European scholars, and enabled them to try to revive the ideas and concepts of their forefathers.

The universality of Arab Culture made the Arabs the first to develop a system of trade between peoples and countries. It was an example of the humanitarian nature of their civilization because it enabled people to be self-reliant for their livelihood. It did not require natural infrastructure, nor concentrations of capital, so tens of thousands of small merchants were able to ply their trade between various countries. This commercial system contributed to the prosperity and spread of Arabic culture up to 1600 A.D.

The Arabs likewise introduced systems that encouraged and facilitated trade transactions, such as bills of sale. They also established joint companies with Italian merchants and introduced a system of credit facilities.

Trade was a means of spreading the material gains their civilization had brought, as reflected in their mastery of skills like ship-building and maritime navigation.

Furthermore, the Arabs brought to the Mediterranean Basin the fruit of their experiences in the Indian Ocean, where they dominated trade

activities over a vast area from East Africa to India and beyond. They invented sea-going vessels with triangular sails which could sail against the wind in the Indian Ocean and which they brought to the Mediterranean.

The Arabs also contributed to the development of the compass which contributed so much to European maritime navigation. The map-makers of Genoa drew up ocean and sea charts from original maps drawn by Arabs in accordance with the canons of Islamic art.

Evidence of the great Arabic influence on Western sea-faring is the number of words that entered English and other European languages: “admiral” from amir al

behar (meaning the prince of the seas), “cable” from habl (rope), “sloop” from salloop (a single-masted sailing boat), and “monsoon” from mosom (season).

European geographical knowledge expanded and became more accurate through the efforts of two kings of Sicily, Roger II (1127-1154) and his son William I (1154-1166). They encouraged navigators to learn from the Arab scholar, Al-Idrisi (110-1166), whose great work, Al-Kitab al-Rujari, i.e. Roger’s Book, gave Moslems a full description of the geography of the then-known world. It included 70 maps, ten for each of the seven regions.

Arab cultural achievements affected other civilizations, too, in ways too numerous to be exhaustively listed here. Suffice it to say that many European words are derived from the Arabic in a wide range of fields where they introduced new knowledge and know-how. Let us look at some.

- Agriculture: “Sugar” from sukkar, “portokal” (Turkish for orange) from bortokal, lemon from limoon, “prunes/plums” from barkook, cotton from cotn, “aceituna” (Spanish for olive) from zaitun, “hazelnut” from loz, “aceite” (Spanish for oil) from az-zayt.
- Irrigation: Many Spanish words are derived from the Arabs who introduced irrigation engineering to Europe - “acequia” from sakia (water wheel), “alberca” from berka (lake), “alcontarilla” from al kontara (bridge).
- Architecture: Terms denoting Arabic building techniques and style have passed into Spanish - “Alarife” from al areef (supervisor), “albanil” from al bana (builder), “alcazar” from al qasr (palace), “alcoba” from al cobba (dome), “aldaba” from al daba (lock), “alfeizar” from efriz (frieze).
- Music: The Arabs introduced and invented musical instruments, which Europeans adapted: lute from oud, guitar from kitara, rebeck from rababa, noker from the nakkar. Arabic influence in

the music, musical instruments and dancing of Andalusia is marked.

- Law and administration: The Arab rule Spain was essentially urban-based. Their system of governance rested on advanced legal and public order systems, which are reflected in Arabic words in the Spanish: “alcalde” from al cadī (judge), “alcaide” from al ca’ed (leader), “zelmedina” from kadi el medina (city judge), “zoco” from suk (meaning market), “almacen” from “al makhzan” (warehouse), “advana” from al diwan (custom house), “almoneda” from “almazed” (public auction), “almolacem” from al mohtaseb.
- The Arabs also introduced new arts, crafts and industries to Europe:
 - Metallurgy skills and metals and ores like iron, copper, gold silver, tin, mercury and lead.
 - Silk: The Arabs brought with them the blueberry trees on which the silkworm lives and which were extensively grown in the Arab world. They also developed textile and paper industries.
 - The arts of the table: The writings of Zeriab explained which foods and drinks to serve on which occasions, how to present them, e.g. the superior elegance of glassware to gold and silver goblets.
 - Hairdressing and clothes: Again, Zeriab set out guidelines for hairstyles and modes of dress, which were widely adopted in Europe.

Arab achievements in the field of science and philosophy

In the chapter on astronomy and mathematics of his book, *The Arab Heritage*, Baron Carra de Vaux acknowledged that “the Arabs have truly achieved a great deal in the field of science. They have taught us to use Arabic numbers although it was not they who invented it. Thus, they have actually become the founders of the mathematics that we use in our daily lives. They greatly developed and perfected algebra, derived from the word (aljabr).”

They also laid the foundations for analytical engineering, while there is little doubt that it was they who invented trigonometry, a science unknown to the Greeks with its plane and spherical forms. In the field of astronomy, too, boasted some great minds:

- Al Khawarizmi: He was the first eminent Arab Scholar in the field of both mathematics and astronomy. The term algorithm derives from his name.
- Al Hassan Ben Al Haitham: He studied the Greek and Arab scholars that had preceded him in the field of mathematics and physics. He

wrote and excelled in the field of optics. More than 50 of his research papers still survive, of which the most famous is *The Book of Scenes*.

- Ibn Al Shatir: In the mid-fourteenth century he distinguished himself by simplifying the science of mathematics related to astronomy and constructing a sundial in Damascus.
- Al Batani: The well known Arab scholar laid down very accurate astronomical tables in 900 AD known as the *Astronomical Almanac*. His sound remarks on the eclipse of the sun remained the basis for comparison in this science until 1749 AD.
- Maslama Al Majriti: He was one of the earliest scientists in Andalusia in the field of astronomical and mathematical studies. After his death in 1007 A.D., he was succeeded by many other scholars such as Ibn Al Samah, Ibn Al Safar, Ibn Abi Al Regal, Gaber Ben Al Aflah and Al Bitruji.

Arab achievements in medicine

In the field of medicine, Arab scholars registered great achievements, which clearly demonstrated how they made the concept of globalization into a noble humanitarian enterprise.

They interacted with Greek and Indian scientific traditions, absorbing, developing and giving them to the world in a new form which reflected the Arabic sense of innovation and the belief in maintaining the universal heritage.

They developed the methodology of scientific research and widely translated works on medicine and anatomy. The original writers were given their full due and were never robbed of the fruit of their efforts. Such respect was a basis for the principle of intellectual property rights and characterized Arab attitudes to the work of innovators and scholars in the fields of pharmacology and medicine, who, regardless of their religion, were widely honoured. In fact, many non-Moslem physicians were employed in the service of the Omayyad and Abbasid rulers.

Non-Arab scholars from outside Arab Islamic states were made welcome in Arab Islamic universities, institutes and medical schools. The Hippocratic Oath was incorporated into the code of medical ethics without any qualms, although Hippocrates was not an Arab. Another non-Arab, Mussa Ben Maimun, was also much fêted.

The Arabs effortlessly borrowed many medical terms from other languages with no fears for their own language. For they were convinced at that time that, since Arabic was the language of the universal

civilization, it could absorb such terms and make them part of the Arabic language.

The Arabs' "medical globalization" mindset lay in the nature of the Arab Islamic culture itself which paid great attention to physical sciences just as it did to sciences related to religion. For they believed that both sciences complemented and strengthened one another. Interest in the physical sciences was a necessity for the purpose of developing urban settlements and a prerequisite for true progress on earth. For the acquisition of knowledge and skills leads to the creation of trade and vocations, and if those who ply a new trade or craft excel in it, then it is mankind and human development which benefit.

Medicine in the Arab Islamic civilization was greatly respected and cherished, for it sought to maintain man's physical and mental welfare and, consequently, that of his family and community. As practitioners of medicine, physicians were highly esteemed. Arab Islamic culture defined health in the same terms as used much later by the World Health Organization, namely as full physical, mental and social well-being, not merely as an absence of sickness or disability.

Arabs taught medicine to children regardless of whether they became doctors. Simple medical knowledge was taught to pupils in their homes where they received their first schooling. Students wishing to continue medicine went to study in independent medical schools and had their practical training in hospitals.

Hospitals and mosques were the first government establishments the Arabs erected in the cities which they built or which embraced Islam.

There were more than 40 hospitals in Cordoba during the reign of the Ommayad Calif, Abd El Rahman Al Nasser, in addition to the many built in Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid dynasty. Hospitals similar to those in Baghdad went up across the Arab world. The most famous was Mansuri Hospital, or bimaristan, in Cairo. Built in 1284 A.D., it was said to have had the capacity to accommodate 8,000 patients.

Treatment was free, the cost borne by the government and endowments from wealthy pious citizens. Hospitals had well-established admission practices. Patients had first to undress, wash, and don hospital garments. When they recovered they were given back their clothes and some money to help them financially until they resumed work.

The Arab Islamic civilization also introduced mobile hospitals. Camels carried beds, food, medicine and special pavilions for surgical operations and for quarantining those with contagious diseases.

Physicians, nurses, orderlies, assistants, administrative staff and servants also rode in the camel train.

The mobile hospitals used to travel between cities to treat the sick when epidemics broke out and tend to casualties from natural catastrophes. They also had musical bands to entertain patients. When a mobile hospital arrived in a city where there was no permanent hospital they rendered all possible medical services to the poor, the handicapped, wayfarers, vagabonds, the homeless and prison inmates. Their scope exceeded that of nowadays Médecins sans frontières.

Numerous distinguished Arab and Moslem physicians excelled in their knowledge of medicine. They include Al Razi, whose book *Al Hawi* (The Comprehensive) was widely read, Avicenna who wrote a book on the law of medicine, Al Ibn Abbas Al Magusi who wrote *Al Kanas Al Malaki*, Ibn Al Nafis who discovered the circulatory system, Abu Al Kasim Al Zahrawi who excelled in the surgery and the design of surgical tools, Averroes, Ibn Zuhr, Al Ashbilis Ibn Maymoun, Ibn Al Kaf, and many others.

In the field of chemistry Arab scholars followed a method of experimentation that is similar to present-day practices. A well-known scholar and scientist in this field was Jabir Ibn Haiyan who lived in the second half of the eighth century A.D. and from whose writings and discoveries many Western scientists and chemists benefited. Numerous Arab and Moslem scholars engaged in scientific studies and research were well versed in chemistry. They include Al Kindi, Al Razi, Avicenna and Al Beriuni. The latter was deeply learned in both pharmacology and chemistry and was able to measure the specific weight of many substances very accurately.

In the field of botany, zoology and metallurgy the Arabs excelled in identifying all kinds of plants, animals and stones and describing how they could be valuable to pharmacology and medical treatment. An eminent scholar of botany was the great historian Ibn Al Malki, who studied pharmacology. Outstanding in metallurgy and mining was the distinguished Al Hassan Al Hamadani, whose writings in various fields of knowledge made him worthy of his reputation as having encyclopaedic knowledge and a highly advanced scientific mind.

In the field of Arab philosophy several Arab scholars greatly influenced the West. They include Avicenna, Abi Hamid Al Ghazali, Abu Bakr Ibn Toufeil, Averroes and Mussa Ben Maimun.

Arabic culture and its distinctive features of tolerance and dialogue played, during its golden age, a vital role in promoting and developing

numerous branches of science, from medicine, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, geography and maritime navigation. It also engineered the establishment of the community of knowledge in its social and human aspects.

This essentially humanitarian, open nature of Arab Islamic culture has had its impact on all cultures, which proves beyond doubt that Islam is a culture of dialogue and of sharing of ideas. It has applied this thinking throughout its history, thus overcoming all obstructions that hinder human development and progress.

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The Contribution of African and Arab Cultures to Human Civilization

It is no longer possible today to describe Arab Islamic history and European history in terms of successive globalization processes, insofar as such an approach denies the major contributions to mankind made by African and Asian civilizations throughout ancient and modern history. Their contributions were not, in most cases, isolated, except by external factors which we certainly do not wish to examine now.

The logical thing to do, then, is to envisage human civilization as the result of cumulative processes of interaction and degrees of reciprocal information flows, even if we do acknowledge the notion of civilizations developing in isolation during periods of domination by colonialist or imperialist powers which sought to become exclusive bywords for civilization and progress.

Although we live in an age when the Global Village concept of universal civilization and world culture prevails, we should go beyond – to an age where civilizations existed as separate entities, at times just “there” and at times dominant. Some interacted and extended along the Nile Valley, through Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Niger, or, on a larger scale, around the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. With this in mind, we should today be pleased to see the processes of civilizational integration and human diversity that are at work and refuse to allow the Global Village concept to give in to new patterns of domination processes which isolate regional or national cultures and thus lead to conflict.

The Arab and African regions in particular experience various forms of contact and interaction. Their course has only been thwarted or interrupted by imperialist domination, which we shall consider as temporary and, therefore, to explore the continuing interaction between Arabs and Africans.

We shall try to come to a – quick – understanding of the processes of integration and isolation in order to bring about once more processes of reunion which, we hope, will not be impeded by modernization, exclusion or the self-appropriation of progress at a time when a new form of globalization is anticipated.

Conditions of the Historic Denial of African and Arab Cultures:

The causes of the historic denial of African cultures and civilizations and Arabic unity and interaction are still live issues.

Let us take the reader five or six centuries back to when European commercial activity developed. It was, at first, connected to other large-scale trade in the Arabic East and East Asia, before evolving into a lone, new form of sweeping capitalism.

European capitalism actually swept its trading partners away by going around the Cape of Good Hope, heading alone westward to the Americas, with the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English sharing the spoils of labour. Europe abandoned its partners of yesterday, namely the Arabs, the Mandinka, the Malaysians, the Chinese, etc. It was this turning point that saw the “Arab exit from history”, together with the kingdoms and empires of Western Sudan, the Congo Basin, the Zambeze, etc. I believe it was the “first exit” and that we should now beware of similar mechanisms in modern times that could produce a “second exit”, although it is not our contention that the mechanisms of the past, or ones similar, will automatically be repeated.

In the first period of sweeping capitalism, trade was blocked deep within the African continent. Such trade was meant for the exchange of commodities and agricultural produce, linking the northern part of the continent with the southern, eastern and western parts. West Africa then stopped its timber activities, textile production and manufacture of local iron for weaponry and tools. In their stead came the gold trade, whose aim was to build the new European colonialist empires, which quickly developed from exploitation to slavery and monopoly.

As a result of the material shock they had inflicted, the Europeans alone dominated the field in what can be considered as the “first wave of globalization”. They now had to dismiss those “other” cultures, grouping some as though they belonged to past history or had petrified and perished. That is what they did with Arabic culture through the introduction of “Oriental Studies” and Ancient History. They did the same with African cultures, speaking of peoples “with no history”, societies without a state, and similar concepts drawn from European anthropology. The Europeans thus created the image of “backward” African in major literary works by authors ranging from Montesquieu to Conrad and Hegel. They even transmitted this image to the “African mind” itself by colonizing both African peoples and their territories, getting them to wallow in their backwardness and to firmly and exclusively believe in the European civilizing message, church and culture. Furthermore, European weaponry

sought to destroy African social identity by instigating war, distorting culture, and resorting to other forms of destruction that Edward Said, the celebrated Arab thinker and writer, has exposed.

At the same time, Europeans compounded their moral and economic negation and destruction of Africa through slavery which saw more than 50 million taken into bondage. Africans were shipped across the Atlantic to the two Americas, thereby upsetting the demographic balance in the African continent, not originally densely populated. The Europeans turned the Mandinka, the Songhay and the Kanem into slave-traders who conducted raids deep into their own territories and brought about their own social disintegration by establishing internal slavery that would eventually turn into a worldwide trade. Other forms of internal trade ceased and so, consequently, did the wealth it produced. Local languages that would eventually have developed into national languages died out. Europeans succeeded in destroying relationships by denying the Arab alphabet that African people had used for 1,000 years to write their history. Thus, the new African was stripped of his material and cultural capabilities in one fell swoop, in what Walter Rodney and Amilcar Cabral have described as denial of history.

Cabral, the Guinean leader, and Rodney, the Afro-Caribbean thinker, were not attacking the Europeans when they spoke of the concept of denial of history that Europeans and European thinkers had propagated. Moreover, they observed African civilizations and cultures were denied through the European education of Africans. Rodney, Cabral and African intellectuals based their thesis on European philosophical expressions such as Hegel's "childishness of history" and its incomprehension of African reality, Herskovits' remarks on European notions of the "historic vacuum" and Montesquieu's views on "the barbaric peoples". Similarly, the image of the Arabs as slave traders, and even the national Nasserite state as an Arab empire, must have been deeply rooted in the minds of generations on both sides.

Denying the Denial

A great effort is needed now to reassemble the image and continuing history of Africans and Arabs in order to present to the world a historical perspective of African peoples in the north and south of the continent. In that way may we build or renew dialogue which has a certain measure of equality and is worthy of the civilizations of African peoples and the cultures that interacted on their lands. This would involve "denying the

denial of the past” and could lead us to rethink progress in a way that would naturally accommodate issues of “specificity” and “authenticity”. At the same time we could work to promote concepts of “national culture” under conditions of globalization in order to protect the identity of our peoples and promote the capacity of our future generations to nurture their feeling of belonging.

The “political kingdom” is the space in which Europeans built their arguments in the modern age. The kingdoms and princedoms of the Renaissance, which took Europe from the church-oriented Dark Ages to the Enlightenment, have not developed for the better under Gaullist France and English-speaking powers, even now at the start of the second millennium. They have reassigned to the Greek and Roman heritage only cities that were also linked with Arabs and Africans. With this holier-than-thou attitude of new states or princedoms bearing civilization, they have denied others the heritage of civilization. They reserved for Africa the greatest denial of all, arguing that it consisted of societies that had no history or statehood. When they were forced to recognize large states such as Ancient Egypt or those of Ancient Asia, they mummified and estranged them from modern history, setting them in patterns and moulds with which we are all too familiar – Egyptology and Oriental Studies. Anthropology gave African history the same treatment.

What if we were to intercept this “historical conspiracy” to record here, for example, how African kingdoms, in various parts of the continent, established well-known cultures at the same time as the European Renaissance? How great ruling East and West European families such as the Tudors, the Bourbons, the Hohenzollerns and the Romanoffs were matched by celebrated African royal families that reigned over huge, long-lasting kingdoms that even had contacts with Europe. We need only mention the Kingdom of Aksum on the Ethiopian plateau during the first century, or the Kingdom of Ghana in West Africa – named after its King – which flourished from the third to the eleventh century.

Such kingdoms were historically important because of their sheer size. Adulis and Mattara in Aksum were two of the world’s biggest sea ports. Aksum extended to the Kingdom of Kush and Nubia, recorded as flourishing hundreds of years earlier. Kush was famous for its cities of Meroe, Karima and Nabta. Both Kush and Aksum built pyramids, as did the Pharaohs, to eternalize their historic presence and as proof of their political and economic strength, as Davidson has pointed out. Not only did they enjoy an ancient presence, represented in administrative, irrigation and agricultural systems, but they adopted Christianity as soon as it

appeared, joining the authentic Egyptian Coptic church, with its belief in Christ and monotheism. They adopted Ge'ez instead of Greek as their national and religious language. The unity of the kingdom continued and it became an empire a few centuries later.

On the opposite flank of the continent, the Kingdom of Ghana formalized the great Mande culture of the region. Its central capital in the great desert was Kumbé-Saleh, which lay at the meeting point of the trading route from Sanhaja in the north and Asante in the south. It stood unwavering against the Islamic Almoravid troops in the desert. Only when it accepted the new, Islamic faith did it finally surrender to the family of the new Empire of Sundiata.

The Sundiata Empire was considerably more far-flung than Ghana. Its commercial reach extended from the Berber lands in the north to the rising empire on the Niger River; to Nigeria and present-day Ghana in the south, and to the watershed of the Senegal and Gambia rivers in the west. Celebrated kings, such as Sundiata Keita and Mansa Musa, established great capitals in the fourteenth century. These were Timbuktu, Gao and Guinea, which Ibn Battuta, the great Arab traveler, wrote about at length. Chroniclers in the east and west glorified Mansa Musa's famous pilgrimages to Egypt and Mecca.

We shall not dwell on the uninterrupted sway of the Kingdom of Songhay from Sunni Ali in the mid-fifteenth century to Mohammed Ture Askiya, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Suffice it to say that the Songhay sowed the seeds of a great civilization, making the empty desert a fertile place – a feat at which ancient and modern historians have marvelled. The cities, military organization, law and systems of education and administration of the Kingdom of Songhay astonished Arab explorers and Western scientists. It represented one of the greatest African civilizational accomplishments, flourishing immediately before the European take-over.

Worthy of mention is that the supposedly barren desert had produced, through systems that ranged from herding to long-distance trade, political kingdoms like Ghana and Songhay whose influence extended beyond their borders, thus defying the notion of "historic isolation". Historians have amply described the routes across the desert, opened as much by desert-dwellers heading north as by Moslem conquerors heading south. The West African kingdoms had contacts with the Berbers in North Africa prior to the coming of Islam – the kingdom of Ghana dates back to the fifth century – and before the large-scale merger which succeeded Ghana and led to Kingdom of

Mali. They traded gold, ivory and slaves in return for textiles, salt and books.

The Arab reader will doubtless be astounded to learn that medieval Arab historian Al Umari – backed up by contemporary Western historians like Davis – recorded the attempt by the predecessor of Mansa Musa, Abubakar II, to set sail from the River Senegal and cross the Atlantic Ocean in 1323, a century before the King of Portugal and Columbus. Historians have confirmed the truth of accounts, arguing that Columbus chose the mouth of the river to set out on his voyage to the Americas. They also claim that an African of an unknown identity accompanied Columbus, and that the latter read books written by African travelers before setting off. All this points to West Africa's kingdoms being highly advanced and able to expand both on land and sea before the great European powers of Spain and Portugal with their vast economic and political influence.

Let us linger a little more on West African civilization, equal to that of Europe, but cut short by the first wave of capitalist globalization. To the south of the desert on the Atlantic coast, lay the wealthy polity of Benin that today covers southern Nigeria, Benin and Ghana. The achievements of Benin in the production and craftsmanship of wood and iron are well-known. What is more, its confrontations with Europe in resisting the Atlantic slave trade and turning its ironwork to the production of weapons indicated that the economic and cultural development of its seaboard cities rivalled those of Portugal and Holland. Europeans like to draw comparisons, so let us take one as an example of the light it sheds on the level of Benin's civilization. Dutch documents record impressions of Benin in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One was the following description of the city of Benin (translated by Walter Rodney): "It was a very large city where you could walk along a big and wide unpaved road perhaps seven or eight times wider than Weirmuse Street in Amsterdam. The city consisted of thirty main vertical streets, each as wide as 120 feet. The people there were no less clean than the Dutch. The King's Palace extended over a large area; it had wings for the ministers of the Prince, and halls such as the stock market halls of Amsterdam. There were brass-coated wooden pillars supporting these halls with engravings depicting their victories."

What of other regions of Africa? The empires of the Congo Basin and Central and East Africa? What of the Kingdom of Buganda – which still exists as a part of Uganda – and the monuments of Zimbabwe that boast of the movement of modern African history? What, too, of the struggles of the Zulu, Shona and Matebele against the Europeans that date back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? All are evidence of truly admirable

political, social and economic entities (see UNESCO's General History of Africa).

Let us now head further south to the land of the Mutapa Empire (on the Zimbabwean plateau), whose skill in working iron enabled it to spread its influence in the first millennium. It also built stone cities, established an administrative system and appointed governors to run its many provinces in Southern Africa between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries. One European writer spoke about the strategic significance of iron smelting, which became known to Europe only in the eighteenth century. The iron culture of the Bantu people and the similarity of their languages were aspects of the unity of the empire, destroyed by the advent of European capitalists who, although they belong to modern history, acted as though they alone existed in this world.

Writings on the Southern African Zulu kingdoms, organized military entities which flourished and expanded between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries from Natal to Lesotho and Swaziland, testify to a social system that bears no relationship with the anthropological descriptions of "tribes" scattered across the continent. There have also been many books written on King Shaka, ruler of the Zulus in the first half of the eighteenth century, which likened him to great leaders, such as Napoleon, Caesar, Hannibal and Charlemagne. Of the several defeats the Zulus inflicted on the British army, one most resounding was the Battle of Isandlwana, led by King Cetshwayo, and the worst the British ever experienced at the hands of native troops, according to Kwame Gyekye. The Kingdom of Zulu was renowned for its organization, which enabled it to wage battle against Western invaders in the eighteenth century.

The history of the Europeans in Africa was always one of repression and violence aimed at destroying the pride and very existence of peoples such as the Zulus. However, we should remind ourselves of the resistance Europe encountered with figures like Mohammed Ali, Abdelkader Al Jazairi and Khair ad Din Pasha. Yet even they ended sadly as Europeans destroyed their countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while the great Egypt of Mohammed Ali became the weak Egypt of Khedive Said and Khedive Tewfik, simply because these rulers, like Khedive Ismail, went along with the Europeans and even imitated them. A similar fate befell many African kingdoms and princedoms, with numerous leaders referring to such compliance with Europe as Africa's "new leadership" for fear of exposing themselves to the destruction other countries had experienced.

We have seen how the prosperity of Africa in history led to trading links across the desert with Arabic North Africa and across the Indian

Ocean with Asia. Such relationships were established on an equal footing. Their fruitfulness reflected their stability over a long period of time. Arabization and Islam in Africa did not lead to economic and cultural devastation as did contacts with Europe.

Another example of the difference in ways of dealing with Africa was Christianity. It was misused by Europeans, even though it created scope for another form of contact between the north and the south of the continent, with the Africanization of Christianity in Ethiopia, which, as an authentic belief system, spread to southern Africa. It came to be known as Ethiopian Christianity and liberate not destroyed.

At this point we should be clear about the issue of reciprocal culturalization, and its role in African regions on the one hand, and Asia and the Arabic region on the other. This is quite different from the culturalization that the European anthropologist Malinowski spoke of to justify European penetration of African culture through settlement. Its only result was to produce the apartheid system and destroy African kingdoms along the way.

Complete European domination over such a long period of time – what may be called the first wave of capitalist globalization – led to widespread ignorance of the searching debate on Arabic and African cultures. Furthermore, colonialist containment of both regions had led to the creation of a unified Western system of knowledge, with the only variations having a national European flavour, i.e. Anglophone and Francophone. The peoples of the South and their intellectuals became one unified bloc facing the “Other”. We may as well say that we had become the strangers, if not the barbarians, in our own lands.

As Arabic culture had, broadly speaking, integrated Islamic early on, it was not alone able to promote its culture to regional African societies, whose territories were sometimes as small as Arabic ones. This was due to Islam’s ability to settle in the different countries on the one hand – as Ousmane Kane has argued – and to imperialist intervention against Arabic culture, though not against Islam, on the other. As a result, only religion was shared between contemporary Arabic and African societies. Some considered this development as a choice for this life and the next (e.g. Islamic Jihad movements), while others took a worldly view, endeavoring to understand how human cultures sometimes progressed through modernization and sometimes through affiliation to other cultures. It is, therefore, easy for us to understand the wide-ranging influence of great Moslem scholars like Jalaeddin Al Siouti or Ibn Abi Zayd Al Qayrawani at the popular African level, compared with the

limited impact of geographers, travelers or the elite with their up-to-date knowledge.

Few noticed the emergence of “national culture” which followed the era of political liberation in the 1960s. In the 1970s nationalism had, to a large extent, taken root among the people, whereas conflicts between modernism and tradition continued. At the same time there was much debate over Arab-African relations, cooperation, solidarity, etc. Both were, at the same time, searching for ways of asserting their distinctiveness in readiness for the return of imperialist infiltration and the new globalization initiatives.

A genuine African scholar by the name of Mokhtar Mbow raised the question of national culture at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico. Also addressed were the issues of what is authentic, contemporary, regional and universal or globalized in our national cultures. There appeared at the Arab and African levels very dangerous currents of which we had not been aware. Arabs talked of the duality of “nationalism” and the “Islamic element”, while Africans discussed the duality of “the popular authentic element” and the “imported Arab factor”. Sometimes, tendencies upholding Islam and not its Arabization gained the upper hand, while at the African level ideas closer to racism than to nationalism sometimes prevailed. The two parties, whose institutions of cooperation attempted to find common ground, failed to perceive the serious threat from a process that was already bringing them together, namely, creeping globalization. Its proponents dismissed Mokhtar Mbow’s position, pushing ideas like “information flow,” the “Global Village”, and the “end of history”. They acquitted world Zionism and denied national identities, described, in the name of globalization, as disintegrating, so much so that even the French Minister of Culture, Jacques Lang, cried out against “cultural imperialism”.

In the absence of a sustained intellectual endeavor to support it, national culture was shaken by the return to the notion of denial of history which had accompanied traditional and colonial imperialism. In those days, Europeans preached the word of the Western civilizing mission and depicted our countries as lands without people that had failed to grow into nations or states and our peoples as not having entered into history. These same ideas re-emerged in one way or the other under the Global Village slogan. There was talk of a “clash of civilizations” on a global scale and “ethnic conflicts” at local levels. The term “regional” was confined to economics and it was neither accepted nor acceptable that it should have a cultural, national or even continental dimension. In such an atmosphere it

was only to be expected that Arab-African relationships and cooperative institutions should be negated and denied.

Problems of dialogue

Evaluation of ties between Arabic and African regions, particularly as they face the same new challenges, reveals that they have been compelled to turn to what is sacred, ideological or religious to protect their ties from the hostile attacks of the imperialism of old and modern globalization. However, in spite of the value of the sacred in cementing social cohesion and protecting the heritage of close Arab-African bonds, we should not ignore two important considerations:

- A. Imperialist forces were able to block national reform movements during early religious upsurges. They turned authentic religious forces into focal points of cooperation on the pretext either of helping them to confront modernization, or of fighting communism. They created ruling elites at their service, which were at times a religious character.
- b. Arabic and African intellectuals and leaders paid scant attention to the importance of historical and social analyses of Arab-African relationships. Most of them fell into the ahistoric pitfalls set by old schools of thought or vehicled by Oriental Studies and anthropology and their views of peoples, their progress and their goals.

This ahistoric analysis drove Arab and African thinkers into a process of reciprocal denial. It is a stand that should be revised, as it was created by abundant literary works interested in little but the spread of Arabism and Islam in Africa. Moreover, some intellectuals drew on books about Arab explorers and geographers that looked at them from one angle only. Others contented themselves with writings about Arabic influence on African languages and cultures, entering into arguments with writers from colonialist anthropology who also adopted narrow viewpoints.

Consequently, the image of the African in the Arab world is the image that the Arab wanted for him – as someone who is subordinated to his religious belief, not a member of an evolving society who wishes to dialogue about African differences and secure recognition of that diversity for which Africa, past and present, offers ample evidence.

Despite the availability of major Arabic and even European works on the diversity of African society, the Arabic world's mainstream scientific and media culture forged an image of Africans that was self-satisfied or, to be more accurate, self-centred. Furthermore neither the culture of national

liberation, nor its accompanying political propaganda – we regret having to use the word “propaganda” instead of “culture” – have succeeded, by virtue of their nature, in changing much in these traditional images. This has not helped in bringing about any social or intellectual rapprochement between Arab and African art and literature.

Nevertheless, colonial anthropology did influence Africans in determining the African identity, or self. They sought to propagate the concept that the roots of this identity go back to the pre-Islamic past in particular, as formulated by the concept of Negritude or presented by anthropologists’ images of societies without a state or, as some British anthropologists maintained, entirely devoid of social history. These new lines of thinking denied the African intellectual, the long history of Arab-African interaction, and social and historic reality itself. No one was interested in analyzing the history of some ten centuries of African Islamic kingdoms or the significance of national Islamic thinking and African writings, dismissed by Arabs themselves as “foreign” or “non-Arabic”.

Indeed, African intellectuals continued to adhere to colonial analyses of African history and society until recently. Although old imperialist currents have all but vanished in the age of globalization, new schools of thought are still passing on a kind of anti-racist sentiment which does not take into consideration African historic and social analysis nor justifications for it. Some interpret this trend as a new self-absorption due to fears of globalization. It is these same fears that sometimes drive isolated fundamentalist currents in the Arabic world to be self-focused.

Reading the socio-cultural development of the two sides as independent of each other sometimes leads to isolationist interpretations of relations between Arabic and African works, which, in turn, results in self-absorption and tension. Development of the Arab Islamic state was not achieved in isolation from other cultures or civilizations, as there was always a process of influencing and being influenced. We know that the state of Ghana extended to the edges of the Arabic Maghreb region from the third century, that is, prior to Islam, until approximately the eleventh century. Conflicts and interaction went on in this region in a remarkable way that was quite different from what took place on the East African coast and in the Central African kingdoms.

The Maghreb region interacted with the Nile Valley in the same way as Ghana, Mali and the Songhay interacted with Morocco, and as the Kingdom of Aksum extended to and interacted with Kush, Nubia, Meroe and Nabta before and during the spread of Christianity, whose influence

grew in the same way as the influence of Islam through the Al-Azhar Mosque and Al-Qayrawan University after that.

Schools of thought that emphasized the Arab self or excluded the African self contributed to the forms of mutual denial which we have spoken of. The two cultures were not concerned with strengthening their identity through interaction. Each remained self-absorbed until they awoke to the colonialist situation and, more recently, to globalization.

Focus on the issue of Arab and Islamic influence, on the one hand, and Arab enslavement of Africans, on the other, is an example of the intellectual deviation of both sides. The Arabs never became acquainted with African self-expression or with African writings in the Arabic language produced at seats of learning like Timbuktu, Sankore and Takkeda. They did not read manuscripts on African history written by Arabs and non-Arabs, nor did they contribute historical accounts of African society in the same way as they did with Islamic jurisprudence. They did not dwell long on the implications of no Arab polity ever establishing itself in the desert, where African kingdoms and cities developed independently. They did not explore the penetration of the Hausa or Swahili languages as reflections of social interaction, preferring to see them as having a coercive influence. The Swahilis responded by wearing themselves out trying to prove that the origins of Swahili culture were Bantu, not Arabic.

There is an even deeper significance to the fact that there are about 20 African languages built on the Arabic alphabet, which they use to write their literature. It would have been better had Arab thinkers examined the reciprocal impact of Arab and African cultures and civilization on each other, so as to identify aspects of development that occurred in African civilizations at the same time as similar ones unfolded in Arab or European polities. Instead, they bragged only of the influence of their own Arabic civilization, denying African identity and history that ran parallel to their own.

In this context, we should remember that colonialist modernization, and the ensuing era of globalization, have left significant room for the philosophy of national identities and demands for their recognition. It would have been useful if Arabic culture had supported the identities of major African cultures, such as Hausa and Swahili, and if certain concepts had been formulated earlier in a sound and balanced manner. However, Arab culture pursued its major projects – spreading Arabism and Islam, collecting Arabic manuscripts on Arab heritage in Africa – but without seeking to establish inter-cultural and intellectual relations with Africans.

That said, Africans long subscribed to colonialist arguments on issues of slavery and Arab exploitation of Africa. The constantly defensive, and sometimes even apologetic Arab response, has helped in perpetuating these mutual patterns. African intellectuals were unaware both of the social analysis approach to African and Arab development, and of the significance of Arab political developments at various points in history. The defensive Arab approach mentioned above contributed to igniting the flame of defiance. Conflicts among African kingdoms and cultures under semi-feudal and para-military conditions during ten decades of intervention were sufficient to create phenomena of slavery on both sides.

Neither the Arab slave trade with the African ruling classes nor commerce based on the exploitation of peoples' heritages by both sides can be denied. We have to acknowledge the nature of the social and political realities of the time: slavery was an Asian, Arab and African practice, just as social revolutions and major upheavals were Asian, European, African and Arab. The Arabic world had leaders like Kafur the African and Mohammed Ali the Albanian and experienced the rule of the Circassians and Turks. Africans, however, were never subjected to Arab authority. Their kingdoms from Ghana to Sanhaja and Kanem-Bornu were established by their own sons, and their seats of learning were filled with their own prominent scholars such as Ousmane Dan Fodio and Omar Tall. Of these some came to power as a result of a local conflicts between, for example, the Hausa and the Fula, just as Mowahedeen and Almoravids in the Arabic world long held power .

In another stage of history, namely, that of national liberation, political and social progress led to the emergence of the nation state. It discarded former economic and social patterns and engaged in revolutions in rural and urban areas, in the mountains of Maghreb, in Al Azhar and in the east, where nationalist military movements were struggling. Millions were liberated from the slavery of capitalist colonialism, and liberation movements extended from the Cape to Cairo, from Rabat to Damascus, and from Mogadishu to Dakar, creating close cooperation between the Arabs and Africans. It was a pattern that was fundamentally different to the Western capitalist slave trade. Although the West tries to forget the millions it shipped across the Atlantic, racial discrimination, slavery and exploitation of Third World peoples form a persistent trend. Here lies our common battle, under the prevailing conditions of international domination.

Unfortunately, the misunderstanding between Africans and Arabs persists. For they are caught in the existing political culture and

modernized terms of reference – Oriental Studies and anthropology – of Western capitalist analysis which remain our only tools for understanding ourselves and each other. Yet we cannot deny that, drawing upon our national liberation momentum, we did make great efforts in many fields. They were about to pay off. However, speedy new Western suppression, which started in the 1970s, aborted these efforts. It continues to do so, through its media which dominate our national political cultures.

In this age of globalization Arabs and Africans are wavering between marginalization and merging – a subject of much cultural and social discussion. The terms of reference, however, lie in the process of globalization and not in the search for an identity in the age of globalization. In response to critiques from economists and thinkers on the risks of marginalization, Arab and African politicians always declare their sincere intentions to join the global market and the process of globalization. Although there are obvious grounds for the growing misgivings of Arab and African economists, politicians' wishes to join the global community are understandably based on the fear of foregoing international legitimacy. Yet their countries possess some of world's greatest wealth and most powerful economic organizations. OPEC, for example, is a highly influential international body.

However, as our essential concern here is the cultural issue, we shall leave economics to economists, while recognizing the importance of an integrated approach to the situation facing us.

Conclusion

The world around us places cultural and ideological issues at the forefront of dialogue between different systems, be they social or economic. For although globalization is fundamentally economic – indeed, financial – in nature, and although it manifests itself through military oppression as if it were traditional colonialism reborn, its prevailing facade takes on a cultural guise. Into this cultural vacuum the media, information technology, legislation, and even various forms of artistic expression pour forced unity. Like waves they spread the new social norms propagated by this unity in the shape of ideas like world citizenship, the American way of life and consumerism, and social policies pertaining to women and children, and civil and political rights and duties.

In all these fields the initiators in the countries of the North still take the lead, while the peoples of the South are lost in a labyrinth searching for their identity. Their identities look likely to weaken and crumble as

nationalism overrides the rights of classes, and ethnic or local minorities, and social justice seems hard to achieve because of the ruling classes' commitment to the economic and social policies of globalization.

Where, then, does cultural dialogue come in for all those human communities and regions that have not been touched by the globalization process? This question begs others:

Will globalization embrace national trends of an independent nature and identities that are national in character?

If globalization does not accept the development of regional organizations in Asia or in Africa, even though they would be limited to an economic framework only, would the nature of the dominating globalization process, as it is at present, accept regions with a special culture, such as the Arab region with its nationalist character, or the African region, with its community and unionist movements?

Will the thinkers of globalization be able to understand concerns regarding ethnic, religious, local and otherwise distinctive identities, even though they reject the national concept and consider it an impediment to the process of globalization?

Arab and African cultures face a hard choice at the international level. They must respond to the difficult questions concerning their national, regional and unionist choices. Their answers require, first, the capacity to build developmental states, where social justice prevails and firmly contains revolution and authority, states that would be capable of preserving their historic role of safeguarding identity. Only then would the development movement – regardless of its numerous patterns – be able to bring dialogue at Arab and African levels, in the interest of a bigger and more effective bloc. It would be a bloc that that would not seek isolation from the rest of the world, as was once the case, but a wider dialogue based on intellect and culture. It would be a bloc capable of proceeding confidently forward to achieve its material, economic and social goals.

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The Linguistic Foundations of Arabic Culture

I will focus on the study of the linguistic foundations of Arabic culture – that is to say, the semiotic organization of that culture's means of expression – the fushâ, or formal Arabic – from the time of the pre-Islamic Jâhiliyya or Time of Ignorance, down to the present day. It is without any doubt one of the richest of human languages, one of the most potent in terms of rhetorical effect, as well as one of the most complex in its intimate blend of technical precision (that is, before the invasion of modern technology with its endless appetite for terminology) with the capacity for sublime poetic expression. These qualities were forged, many centuries before the revelation of the Koran, in contact with neighbouring peoples at a time when the Arabs had as yet no written literature. They were the only Semitic people whose linguistic and cultural heritage was kindled and maintained in oral form until just before emerging into the light of history. This accumulated treasure of human abilities, concentrated in the Arabian peninsula and just over its northern borders in Lower Mesopotamia, Palestine and Greater Syria, burst forth suddenly on the world, in the seventh century, with the miraculous coming of Islam. A new message of adoration of the Universal Creator then spread, at astounding speed, until it reached the boundaries of the known world. The ancient Arabic culture – rich, varied, by no means to be identified merely with the stereotyped image of the Bedouin with his horse and camels – was then writ large, transformed under the two influences of Islam and of contact, now uninterrupted, with Greek, Iranian, Egyptian, Amazigh and Iberian cultures. Their impact on each other made the Islamic world of those early centuries a human crucible without parallel in history, generating a light that shone so far and wide that it illuminated the medieval West at its chrysalis stage. For lack of time, I mention only two of these unforgettable beacons of light: the Abbassid and Andalusian civilizations.

The credit for this long dialogue, managed without ever exterminating conquered peoples, or ever penning them up in reservations or refugee camps, or ever raising a Wall of Shame, the credit is due to the message of the Koran itself, and to the believers who took the essence of that message and put into practice its spirit of openness and human kinship, and its aspiration to knowledge of this nether world. If we dig

deeper and look for the mental underpinnings of this expansion (unrivalled in its historical time-scale and in its civilizing quality), we come at last to one of the essential constituents of Arab identity and Arab unity, beneath the superficial, deceptive and indeed mutable symptoms of disparity and division: the Arabic language; or rather, the Language; or, indeed, The Language, the one in which the ultimate Prophecy was expressed, the engine and medium of the ministry which embodied a vision of humanity in progress towards a future life.

The fascination exercised on those peoples whose language this became, by it and by the values it conveyed in the Book, found outward form in a new aesthetic, in arts such as calligraphy which reached new heights, and also in non-figurative surface decoration, either geometrical or with stylized motifs from the world of plants; and this fascination spread to the West, which gave it the name of “arabesque” in open and well-deserved admiration. So much so, indeed, that the Christian clergy was even in the Middle Ages importing brocades from Syria and Egypt for its sacerdotal vestments; and as for our own time I need only mention (more telling even than modern Spaniards’ concern to conserve and restore the magnificent heritage of Andalusia) the extensive technical and artistic dialogue between European and Arabic cultures represented by French architects’ contributions to the palaces and great mosques of modern Morocco. I would also add, that the structural osmosis between the Arabic language and the aesthetic principles of the decorative style known as “Arabesque” is clearly to be seen today in my own work on the semiotic structures of classical Arabic. This osmosis has much to teach us in many ways, and bears witness to the coherence of form and content in Arabic culture, whatever the means of expression.

Europeans nowadays have an insufficiently precise and over-generalized image of the Arabs, whether of the past or of today. The contribution made by Western orientalists has, like any human creation, been a mixture of positive and negative; this is not the place to go over that ground again. Arabic is now being taught more in our high schools and colleges, but never enough to meet our need to learn, or the challenge of the ever-lurking racist ideologies. Translations of Arabic texts abound in our libraries; history textbooks, for all their obscure patches and occasionally distorting illumination, are nevertheless beginning to shift our schoolchildren’s minds with some knowledge of the immense contribution the Arabs made to what is called “modern Western civilization”. I should also mention the role of Arte, the Franco-German television channel based in Strasbourg, which produces documentaries of rare objectivity – and

sometimes great beauty – on the medieval and contemporary worlds of the Orient. Here viewers can, among other things, find out about the people, actions and events of the Middle East crisis even when they do not have access to the images and comment available on Arabic-language channels. But there are certain obstacles in the way of free reporting in the European media, and it is hard, for example, to suggest a photographic exhibition on the Palestinians' half-century of martyrdom without falling foul of accusations of making anti-Semitic propaganda. The Geneva initiative was recently described by the private television channel TFJ as “the third destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem”, and the participation of prominent Jewish and Israeli figures as a “sacrilegious dividing of the Jewish people”. Clearly, the conditions for dialogue about the region's problems are far from being met; and it is the duty of men and women of goodwill to work for the return of peace, on the ground and in people's hearts.

Now I must return to another obstacle to intercultural dialogue that has to be removed: the languages of the parties involved. Despite all the skill and effort of translators and interpreters – and I have been both in my time, in the realm of modern literature and in Franco-Arabic politics – I am more and more convinced as a scientist that our understanding of other people depends on our knowledge of their language, which needs to be as thorough as possible. Real dialogue between individuals or between peoples only ever gets started on a basis of equality. And how is it to be brought about without each party being acquainted with (at least), let alone sharing (at best), the intellectual, emotional and spiritual values implicitly associated with the other's words – beyond what they merely denote? And here the Arabic language is exceptional, in my professional opinion, among all the languages (in more than one linguistic family) that I have been able to study, by its superlative capacity to invest every word and every meaning with a network of associations for which “cultural” would be too vague, but “semiotic” too technical a term, but for which Arabic itself has a most poetic phrase: “the shadows of Meaning” (*zi lal al-masnâ*). It is this network, produced by the Arabic vision of the world and registered in language, that no translation can express because it does not correspond, deep down, to the way the other person sees the world we see. Each party's peculiar essence is not accessible to translation; and the understanding which dialogue (by definition) seeks therefore requires a personal familiarity with the other person's language. Without this, the parties get progressively bogged down in unacknowledged misunderstandings – what we call, in English or French, a “dialogue of the deaf”.

I should like to end by offering, as counterweight to this relative pessimism, the high hopes we must always have for the message of peace and comradeship which an open-minded reading of Islam has in every age developed more fully as a means to better dialogue. We need to close our ears to the false preachers of the crusade of Good versus Evil, and to open our hearts to acknowledged diversity, to accepted plurality. For diversity, and not uniformity, is what has characterized life on this planet ever since its origins – life arising from the waters, as the Koran explicitly put it long ago – and it is this acceptance of differences which distinguishes humans from the brute behaviour of the law of the jungle and the doctrine that might is right.

Peter Clark

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I wish to make seven points about the translation of contemporary Arabic literature into English. I speak as one who has translated seven books from Arabic into English – on history and science, as well as works of fiction – over the last 25 years. In addition to the books, I have also published many short stories and plays in magazines and anthologies.

There has been much controversy on the issue of cultural difference. First of all, it is sometimes said that there is a resistance to Arab culture in Europe and the United States. I do not accept that. If you look back over the last 200 years, there have been over 100 translations of *Alf Layla Wa Layla* (One Thousand-and-one Arabian Nights). The work has become part of European culture. The stories influenced people like Charles Dickens. Every year in London we have a pantomime, *Aladdin*, which originated from *Alf Layla Wa Layla*.

Another point made about translation, especially translation from Arabic is that there is a kind of huge cultural difference. I cannot see that this is any difficulty at all. If there were a huge difficulty in appreciation than there would be no taste for fantasy or science fiction. And the most popular books of today are Tolkien's works and the Harry Potter books, which are far more alien to reality than a lot of contemporary Arabic-Islamic literature.

A third point to reinforce is a point of appreciation of Arabic culture. Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* in English translation has sold more copies than all his work in Arabic. That is a very significant point. However, there are problems, some of which can be resolved.

My fourth point is that publishers, certainly in Britain, tend to play safe. There are only four contemporary Arab writers that are published by mainstream publishers, with all their commercial and marketing resources. These are Naguib Mahfouz, Hanan Al-Shaykh from Lebanon, the late Abdul Rahman Munif who died last month, and Tayeb Saleh. Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* was recently republished by Penguin Modern Classics. It has really entered the mainstream that way. Most publications, and I reckon that there are about 20 per year of contemporary Arab literature in English, are published by niche publishers, like Interlink in the United States and Saqi in London.

But there are changes. Related to this over the last 40 years are some great pioneers. One is Denys Johnson-Davies who has translated something

like 30 or 40 of contemporary Arabic literature into English. He started in the 1940s and he is still at work, a man of enormous value.

The best contemporary Arabic literature is poetry and short stories. Each work poses problems in translation, especially poetry. Transposing the feel and quality into English is a formidable task. And the short story I think is a marvellous creation, but there is somehow not a great demand for short stories.

Arab consciousness is increasingly expressed through other languages, especially English. We have what I call "translations without translators". In Britain we have Ahdaf Soueif and Fadia Faqir from Egypt and Jordan, respectively, and Jamal Mahjoub from the Sudan. Each expresses a consciousness of their own country but they are creative writers achieving great critical distinction in English. In the United States you have poets that are reaching the mainstream. I think of people like Nathalie Handal who edited an excellent anthology in English of poetry from Arab women. She is also an accomplished poet in her own right, as is Naomi Shihab, also in the United States. These people are enjoying the mainstream of American poetry in the same way that Ahdaf Soueif and others are entering the mainstream of British fiction.

I hope that the seventh point might work its way into a kind of a recommendation of the conference. We translators need encouragement. Someone once said: "Have you ever seen a fat translator or a thin publisher?" I think that if the Arab world wishes to get its enormously rich creativity across to the English-speaking world, it does need subsidies and support. Publishers in Britain are not keen to take risks and I believe that this is the same in the United States. But the guarantee to purchase 500 copies of a book would right the balance. If there were a foundation, individual or government that were ready to do this, it could make an enormous difference. Similarly, I would recommend the idea of prizes for translation. In Britain there are prizes for translation from a number of European countries, often subsidized by the governments of the countries concerned, e.g. Spain, Denmark, or by an individual endowment. There are no prizes for translation of Arabic work into literature. There is a gap that needs to be filled. Another point is that translations from European, or languages other than Arabic, need more encouragement. The pay for translators is appalling. I would at the same time encourage Arabs themselves to improve their English to levels where they can translate themselves. Ahdaf Soueif translated a marvellous book by Mourid Barghouti, I Saw Ramallah, a year or two ago. She is of course an outstanding writer, but there are opportunities for Arabs in all countries to

improve their English so that they can choose, select and promote their literature that people feel should be known in the West.

These kinds of initiatives – prizes, encouragement for translators, subsidies for British and American publishers – would tip the balance and make a lot of contemporary literature better known and offset the hazards of taste in the market.



L to R: Hans d'Orville, Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO; Ahmed Sayyad Assistant Director-General, Sector for External Relations and Cooperation of UNESCO, Representative of the Director-General; Abdul-Aziz Al-Maqaleh, Advisor to the President of Yemen, Director of the Yemen Center for Studies and Research; Khalid Al-Rowishan, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Yemen

Qaderi Ahmad Haidar

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Our research considered conflicts between cultures, not between civilizations, as part of an approach towards plurality and respect for the opinion of others. It focused on the following points:

History of conflict in a social age, which takes place through the individual and the development of human action in history.

The deeply historical nature of conflict, which is a way of apprehending and interpreting history in its movement and progress.

Conflict comes about through movement and change, as there is no conflict without movement and no movement without conflict, which brings change. Movement, conflict and change unfold and interpenetrate through different forms of internal dialogue that reflect stages in history.

Wars are not always the one decisive factor, nor are modernization; democracy and civilization brought achieved war, because they are an internal objective and the result of natural growth.

There are attempts to deny, misrepresent or conceal the essential nature of conflict. Some attribute its causes and components to secondary and non-essential factors, deliberately overlooking economic, political, military and strategic causes. Our research shows how, in the post-modern age of technology, philosophical approaches and concepts and holistic understanding, theories and views were renounced for the benefit of partial, fragmented readings.

We disagree with concepts like the end of history and the clash of civilizations. We regard them as generalizations and simplifications which add nothing to philosophical and theoretical thought and historical knowledge. We deliberately did not refer in the title of our paper to conflict or dialogue between civilizations – quite the contrary. We believe that what is actually taking place is dialogue and conflict between cultures, which is an extension of the building of civilizations that prevailed and dominated, then retreated and declined. They no longer possess either the objective material or the historic, political conditions that enable us to deal with them as existing civilizations.

Our research also makes a distinction between globalization as a monetary objective and historical movement and the force for domination that it has become. It reaffirms that the seeds are being sown for an alternative form of globalization, one that is opposed to the power-seeking nature of present-day globalization.

We do not agree with concepts of dualities, like authenticity versus contemporary, Islam versus Christianity, Arabs versus the West. We place emphasis on the idea of criticism, diversity and the right to disagree and err. We argue, in more than one instance, that current world civilization has not yet reached its apex, but is still evolving and has yet to assume its final form and characteristics. We believe that we, the Arabs, live in the shadow of a civilizational unity, for we are consumers and followers, not producers or innovators.

Today's world is faced with ignorant, chaotic aspects, each producing and reproducing the other. We disagree with the idea that problems should be solved through security and prevention and believe that the only way forward for human progress is through the return to dialogue, respect for plurality and acceptance of the opinions of others.

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Secretary-General of the General Popular Congress
Former Prime Minister of Yemen

This symposium is being held in the 2004 Arabic Capital of Culture, Sana'a, a historical city in the Republic of Yemen. I cannot but extend my warmest thanks to the Yemeni Centre for Studies and Research and to UNESCO for hosting the symposium here. It is one of a series that have been, and are to be, held on the subject of dialogue among cultures and civilizations on a world-wide level.

The theme of this particular session is maybe the most important. It is entitled, "The Role of Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations in Curbing Terrorism in all its Forms and Establishing Lasting, Universal Peace".

As the President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, said during his recent visit to Egypt: an international tragedy requires international co-operation. Terrorism has never been, and never will be, confined to a specific culture, race or region. We here in the Republic of Yemen have become very concerned, even disturbed, by the unfair, unwise and even false attempts to attribute this terrible phenomenon to Arab and Moslem countries and cultures. Therefore, I would like to quote a verse from the Holy Koran and I know no sacred verse better suited to the phenomenon of terrorism:

"All believers, we have made you of male and female and we have turned you into people and try to be acquainted with each other. The most blessed amongst you will be those who believe the most."

Adib F. Farha

Advisor to the Lebanese Minister of Finance and Member of Lebanon's National Audio-Visual Media Council

The topic of this session deals with how dialogue among cultures and civilizations can be instrumental in curbing terrorism. Therefore, a closer look at what we mean by "terrorism", as well as an examination of the concept of the said dialogue, is warranted at the outset.

The United Nations defines a terrorist as "any person who, acting independently of the specific recognition of a country, or as a single person, or as part of a group not recognized as an official part or division of a nation, acts to destroy or to injure civilians or destroy or damage property belonging to civilians or to governments in order to effect some political goal". It defines terrorism as "the act of destroying or injuring civilian lives or the act of destroying or damaging civilian or government property without the expressly chartered permission of a specific government, thus, by individuals or groups acting independently or governments on their own accord and belief, in the attempt to effect some political goal" and states that "all war crimes will be considered acts of terrorism".

According to this definition, all acts of violence against civilian lives as well as acts against civilian or government property are considered to be terrorist activities. Nevertheless, the UN definition further states that "attacks on military installations, bases, and personnel will not be considered acts of terrorism, but instead acts by freedom fighters that are to be considered a declaration of war against organized government".

Here is where the endless controversy starts. When are perpetrators of such acts of violence terrorists and when are they freedom fighters?

Many of us consider attacks by the disenfranchised Palestinians against the Israeli occupying forces in the West Bank as the work of freedom fighters. Yet Israel and its proponents claim that these acts are acts of terrorism. It is from this dichotomy that the schism has evolved between the way the Arab and Moslem worlds view the struggle for the central issue that pre-occupies Arab and Moslem hearts and minds, on the one hand, and the way the West, in general, and the Judeo-Christian world views the same issue, on the other hand.

Turning our attention to the concept of dialogue between civilizations, I tend to agree with the Islamic scholar, Dr. Ridwan al Sayyid, that the expression "dialogue among civilizations, as well as the expression 'clash of civilizations' do not carry much meaning". Al Sayyid maintains that "civilizations do not carry out dialogues nor do they clash because

they are not effective elements nor are they phenomena that affect ongoing events". It is perhaps more relevant, therefore, to speak of the relationship among cultures or civilizations and of mutual understanding and tolerance of "the other", whomever that "other" may be in each case.

Moslem fanaticism is rooted not in the Moslem faith per se, which preaches justice and tolerance, but in the political, economic, and social bankruptcy of most Arab and Moslem leaderships. Any and all verses correlating Islam with hatred and rejection of "others" is simply the result of selective retrieval, a practice of which Bin Laden and Western proponents of the clash of civilizations are equally guilty.

On the other side of the world, an equally vicious witch hunt is ongoing to identify, interrogate, and flush out so-called "Moslem sympathizers". The parallels between the dragnet for allegedly subversive elements who share the same religion with the terrorists of Al Qaida and the dragnet cast for communists during the McCarthy era are uncanny. Anyone in the West who has ever associated with a practising Moslem can be deemed guilty by suspicion.

So how did we get here and what is the exit strategy?

The notion of a clash of civilizations did not start with Samuel Huntington. It was Bernard Lewis who first used the expression in 1990 in his essay "The Roots of Moslem Rage". It was the same Bernard Lewis who laid the foundations for the late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meier's claim that Palestinian Arabs had no historical claim to a state because, according to Lewis, Palestine had not existed as a country prior to British rule in 1918.

A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* tells of many academics who feel that Lewis's descriptions of Arab and Moslem failures epitomize what the late Edward Said dubbed "orientalism" – the shading of history to justify Western conquest. It quotes Middle East historian, Juan Cole, who feels that Lewis's writings in recent years tend to caricature Moslems as poor, losers, helpless, and enraged: "Mr. Cole is among those who say Lewis's call for military intervention to transform failed Moslem states risks making the culture clash between Islamic lands and the West worse. So far, he says, Iraq looks more like a breeding ground for terrorism than a showcase of democracy".

The clash of civilizations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy unless everyone does his share to put an end to this craze sweeping both the Moslem East and the Judeo-Christian West. There is good and evil everywhere – and there always will be, as long as humanity perpetuates itself. And as long as the world continues to engage in stereotyping and

pre-judgements, it will continue to propagate the same dangerous notions.

Nevertheless, it is not a clash of civilizations that has fuelled the current wave of terrorism but a fundamental and chronic conflict that remains unresolved. The root cause of this wave of extremism is the Arab-Israeli conflict. This festering crisis creates a bitter attitude of frustration, humiliation and rage among Arabs and Moslems for whom this conflict is a core existential issue. When dialogue stops, extremism and subsequent acts of terror take hold.

Admittedly, the Arab and the Moslem worlds suffer from domestic problems related to the absence of democracy in most countries, poverty, poor economic performance, and high illiteracy. Yet the Arab-Israeli conflict remains the core issue in the region and has itself contributed to the social and economic crises there. Only by resolving this chronic issue can there be peace in the Middle East and indeed in the world, and only then can we all start winning the war against terrorism.

There is but one solution that can serve the twin objective of quelling the breeding ground for escalating extremism in the Middle East and attaining world peace, which includes our long-troubled region. That solution has to be based on the principles of the Madrid Conference, namely, land for peace, a comprehensive solution to the entire Arab-Israeli conflict, and a fair and just solution for the Palestinian refugee problem.

A strategy to eradicate the root cause of terrorism and restore normal relations between the cultures and civilizations of the East and the West has to be based on an even-handed American Middle East policy leading to a just, permanent and comprehensive peace. Only by resolving this festering conflict can the root cause of terrorism be removed.

As dangerous as the concept of a clash of civilizations is to world peace, an equally ominous trend, and one that seems to be growing in parts of the West, is the societal insistence, often backed by government decrees, on the assimilation of all components of a society into one, single mould. This is in sharp contrast to the notion of diversity within unity.

The pressure toward assimilation is nowhere more evident than recently in France. In the name of safeguarding French secularism, or *laïcité*, the French President has decided to ban the wearing of the Islamic headscarf, or hijab, in public schools. The decree forbidding the hijab also bans symbols of Christian and Jewish faiths.

We must join hands in reaffirming that unity does not necessarily mean individuals should abandon the practice of the traditions of their ethnic, racial, or religious groups; that diversity in unity is a source of

strength for nations; that quelling the right to be different stifles creativity and shakes the foundations of loyalty to the nation.

The agenda for saving the world from the possible apocalypse of a widespread clash of civilizations is obvious. It can be summarized by the following items:

- Resolving regional conflicts. A fair and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East crisis is absolutely central to the fight against terrorism. A Norwegian study on terrorism warned of the dangers from “the development of a conflict trap, where attacks of revenge fuel further strikes. The logic of conflict itself feeds the process of escalation.” Only by eradicating the root causes of terrorism can the campaign for a terrorist-free world succeed.
- Mutual understanding among various cultures. We have an Arabic saying that “man is an enemy of whatever he does not know”. The more we know of the “other”, the more commonalities we can identify and the less frightening he becomes.
- Mutual understanding automatically leads to tolerance. Herein lies an appropriate job for religious leaders of all faiths: to stress tolerance and love of the “other” rather than fear and enmity. Through selective retrieval one can easily quote, out of context, calls for hatred from all religious holy books. However, more learned leaders and level-headed scholars can easily rectify these misunderstandings by showing the forest rather than the trees.
- Fighting stereotyping in books, movies, TV shows, and school curricula.
- Education can play a double-edged role. It can play with fire and promote fanaticism. Or, more prudent minds can take a fresh look at school curricula and weed out the unorthodox parts therein. A careful and thorough review of school curricula in both the East and the West is pressing. Moslems need to realize that Christians are not cannibals because they “eat and drink the body of Christ” when they partake of communion and that Jews do not use the blood of Christians in preparing certain religious offerings. Christians and Jews must, by the same token, realize that Moslems are not evil terrorists out to convert people into their religion by force.
- Social and economic development. Channeling funds away from the war machines into programs for social and economic development creates job opportunities. Poverty and illiteracy, as well as graduating dysfunctional members of society or graduates in irrelevant fields of speciality that are of minimal practical application, contribute to unemployment. Unemployment breeds discontent, frustration, and

rebellion. Idle minds are dangerous. As a study by the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs correctly stated: “A career in terrorism should be made less attractive by offering alternatives to it.”

- Expanding the participation of people in governance – democracy, in other words. The establishment of participative, transparent and accountable political and administrative processes is imperative. Except that this is a concept that has to emerge gradually and must be rooted in the culture and religious background of the people.
- An end must be put to the principle of pre-emptive wars and to the emerging divisive concept that splits the world into two camps, good and evil, or black and white.
- Accepting diversity within unity as a source of enrichment to society rather than as a source of potential conflict.

In all of this, we the Arab Christians have a crucial role to play in promoting dialogue among religions and cultures. We are not a bridge between East and West because we are an integral part of the East. Yet our peaceful coexistence with our Moslem brethren for fourteen centuries is a forceful testament to the fact that the dialogue and tolerance we seek is viable and deserves to be promoted. A few of us have contributed to this effort whenever forums were made available, but a more activist role is necessary.

By the same token, Arabs have to realize and admit that there is a pressing need for change in our societies. This needs to be a change that preserves our own existence and our vital interests. This can only be achieved by way of wide public participation in governments through elections, a system of checks and balances, and assigning a high priority to economic development in order to rectify other societal problems. It seems to me that part of the problem of violence in the Arab World lies in the fact that extremists feel that those in power do not have any more legitimacy than they do. Fundamental reforms are required without delay to bring people into power and to give power back to the people.

The dialogue among cultures and civilizations, or rather, mutual understanding and tolerance among religions is the most significant challenge facing our generation. Conferences such as this one, and efforts like the ones undertaken by UNESCO and other UN agencies, can play an instrumental role in promoting much-needed tolerance.

Whether we call him God, Allah, or by any other name, He is a God of love, tolerance and forgiveness. A return to true religious ethics instead of the sick and warped misinterpretation of religion that a few misled individuals are disseminating is imminent.

Wahebah Farie'

President of Queen Arwa University, Sana'a

Dialogue in itself is a sign of human relations that have reached an advanced stage. The same is true of high-level international relationships which focus on the discussion of controversial issues affecting the interests of the parties involved. Such dialogue must be conducted in an atmosphere of rapprochement and freedom.

Do dialogues between different communities bring their points of view closer or drive them further apart? In other words, do communities in the East and West basically believe in the principle of dialogue? What are the issues that could prompt such a dialogue? To initiate a dialogue there has to be at least one issue of joint concern to the parties involved. What, then, are the issues where the interests of East and West are at stake? Cultural diversity, the communication of knowledge, politics, economic questions?

All are important reasons for engaging dialogue, particularly as the Arab region – and the whole world for that matter – has experienced political, social and economic upheaval since September 11, 2001, and the occupation of Iraq in 2003. The damaging effect on Arab countries' economic, cultural, societal and foreign relations has raised questions:

- Does the West understand their circumstances?
- Are there issues of more importance to the citizen in the West than those of armed conflicts in the Arab World?
- Do religious fanaticism and terrorism, together with all their doctrines and ideologies, constitute elements of dialogue and, if so, to what extent?
- Does the West understand the economic and political pressures which Arab communities are currently undergoing?

Other, similar, issues also impinge on Euro-Arab relationships and could – with the exception of those related to ideological or doctrinal differences – serve as a basis for dialogue because they are of concern to all. Lying at the root of world problems, they need to be examined searchingly. They are issues connected with the new, so-called “one world” and relate, essentially, to controversy between rich and poor countries. The stability of the former has enabled them to achieve ever-growing integration of their economies, while the latter have seen their wealth squandered and financial and material resources drained. Developed countries have exploited their political turmoil and socio-economic plight.

Moreover, the Arab-Israeli conflict is, uniquely, characterized by international complications in the absence of an honest broker and any

true understanding of the nature of an occupation that has now spread to other countries in the region.

It is against this background that the Arab world has come to be blighted by severe problems:

- Growing arms stock-piles fuelling continuous tension,
- Terrorism and extremism,
- Absence of democracy and respect for human rights,
- Poverty and unemployment,
- Backwardness of the status of women and education,
- Limited access to technologies,
- Damage to the environment, and
- Brain-drain.

The September 11 attack has forced new mindsets on the whole world. Distrust prevails in the international community, particularly between Arabs and Westerners. It has led to international crises and violation of international law and human rights, which has robbed of their credibility a number of countries that had always proclaimed their commitment to the principles of democracy, justice, freedom and equality.

It is a catastrophic situation that afflicts us all. There is no reasonable explanation acceptable to all parties in the absence of hard facts and as long as a sole political, economic bloc exploits the turmoil to strengthen its domination. Tellingly, the consequences have not been confined to the overthrow of regimes in the region, or to the destruction of its socio-economic infrastructure. If they persist, they will run even deeper and spread on such a scale that they will uproot and shatter all patterns of international rapprochement, cooperation and understanding.

Therefore the central focus of dialogue should be on people. The roles of all peoples in the past and present development of civilization and in humanity's heritage should be stressed, with emphasis on the potential of continuing cooperation and understanding among civilizations and cultures. The importance of eliminating the causes of tension and its impact on the whole world – particularly now – should be underlined. For all nations have contributed to the political, social and economic facets of civilization. The oppressed ones, too, have proudly played their role in the universal human heritage.

Denying the existence of “the Other” on the grounds that he is poor or weak can in no way serve universal rapprochement or dialogue. For even the weak and poor have been, and are, active players in the formation of world civilization today. Therefore, accepting “the Other” as he is and

stimulating his potential is the only way to promote understanding among the people of the world.

Accepting “the Other” means accepting cultural diversity. Such acceptance is essential to consolidating respect for the principles of freedom and human rights and furthering mutual respect for specificities and different identities. This is a basic principle of democracy which should be respected by countries in their dealings with each other. For no democratic country would be worthy of respect if it did not respect other democracies and people’s right to choose their own political and social systems. No country can be worthy of esteem if it does not adopt a culture of peace founded on justice in word and deed.

For accepting ideological and social differences is a just, universal principle. Therefore in such gatherings such as this symposium, it is our duty to express our true intentions, demonstrate our will to understand the nature of “the Other”, and to discard any pre-conceived ideas which may jeopardize good relations.

When an opportunity to conduct a dialogue such as this one arises, we must spurn all preconceived notions that “the Other” has no independent opinion or can take no independent stand on what we believe is a non-negotiable right.

But in this dialogue among cultures, others parties should prove their credibility in their dealings with the Arabs. Arabs have had several rounds of dialogue with the West in the Euro-Arab dialogue, which have given the impression that the Arabs alone stand to benefit from such unlikely meetings – as if they were beggars.

In fact, both sides share common economic and cultural interests. A clear European stand on the Arab cause in the Arab-Israeli conflict and on exploitation of Arab resources and wealth could enable Arab citizens to understand the European viewpoint and the nature of the role that the West could play. The prospects for rapprochement between the two sides would be enhanced.

For example, previous rounds of the Euro-Arab dialogue could have led to an understanding. But instead of seeking to understand Arab arguments, Europe tried to quash them and leveraged the Arab countries’ potential resources in order to settle the problems of other developing nations. It is a stand that the Arab peoples find difficult to understand.

Had Europe, for example, addressed the agricultural, food, environmental or technological development in the Arab world, the Arab

peoples would have been able to understand better the European stand on issues of democracy in the Arab world.

Again had Europe, for example, addressed more closely the flagrant violations of human rights under Israeli occupation, then Arab citizens would have understood Europe's keenness to maintain human rights in a clearer, more positive light.

Dialogue between cultures, which concentrates on the human dimension, is vital in promoting good relations between peoples – in particular between the Arab region and the West, for reasons of common interest. If dialogue is to be more effective, it has to take place between cultural and civil society organizations from both sides.

In this respect, the issue of dialogue would acquire a significance and a logic that would attract all cultural and political groupings – governmental and non-governmental, international and local – who would combine their efforts to serve the interests of the Arab region and the West.

Survival in the future will depend on ICTs and other technologies freeing and empowering human activity and reducing economic and political conflicts and tension. Dialogue should also include cooperation in the fields of technology and education and address their social and cultural aspects. It should not overlook the scientific perspective as a way towards understanding between nations and civilizations.

Gunter Mulack

Ambassador and Commissioner for the Dialogue with the Islamic World, German Foreign Office

Germany Promoting Dialogue with the Islamic World

Traditionally, Germany has always enjoyed good cultural relations with the countries of the Arab world. We were never a colonial power in this region. We have always believed, as we still do, in the power of good political, cultural, economic and social relations. German orientalist play a very eminent role in the study of Arab culture and literature, as well as in Islamic studies. We have intensive cultural dialogue with the Arab world, which includes extensive cooperation and a great number of programmes and exchanges in the fields of culture, science and higher education. In October 2003, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder opened the first German university abroad in Cairo.

Our dialogue with the Arab world is conducted not only by government officials and leading intellectuals, but also by many other people who represent their respective cultures. Culture in this sense should be understood as also comprising socio-political aspects. This dialogue can only be conducted through cultural interaction. It should be clear to both sides that our views and perceptions, as well as actions and reactions, are deeply rooted in our respective cultures.

In order to have an open exchange of ideas and real interaction, we must be frank when exchanging arguments, views and convictions. We will not always agree, but that makes the debate fruitful for all sides. A serious dialogue should be founded on mutual understanding and respect for cultural diversity, as well as on the search for common ideas and values. This interaction should take place between societies through a pluralistic approach with a view to improving our knowledge about one another, identifying existing problems and finding possible solutions.

The future relationship we are aiming to achieve should be based on peaceful cooperation and should actively work against the prevailing mistrust and hostility that is expressed in the slogan "crusade versus jihad".

The situation is not an easy one; almost daily, relations between Europe and the Arab world are confronted with new challenges.

The events of September 11, the continuing violence in the Middle East, international terrorist acts perpetrated in the name of Islam, as well as growing suspicion of Moslems, have all led to new mutually perceived

threats, fears and stereotypes. In many – though not all – Arab countries, growing hatred, frustration, identity crises and negative images abound. Here, public diplomacy plays an important role in informing people about the real situation, in promoting the discussion of critical issues and in working to achieve trust and better understanding.

The task facing us now is to explore how we can manage this crisis together, how we can effectively tackle the challenges that lie ahead. Here, I am not only thinking of the real political crisis concerning terrorism, wars and occupation, but also of the general malaise that is felt in the Arab world. How can we help the Arab world respond positively to the challenges of globalization and modernization? More than ever, we need closer contact and more dialogue in order to achieve both better understanding and comprehensive cooperation between the West and the Arab world. That is why Germany has established a special Federal Foreign Office Division for Dialogue with the Islamic World, to which I have been appointed Commissioner. Our aim is to develop dialogue through interaction with the governments and societies of the Islamic world, and to better coordinate our different policies in this field. By promoting dialogue and understanding, we want to discourage violence and terrorism. Public diplomacy plays a very important role in this effort.

In Europe, Germany has taken the lead by creating this special task force to strengthen our capabilities for dialogue, not only at Federal Foreign Office level but also at our diplomatic missions abroad. Only with the necessary expertise and knowledge will we be able to better understand each other and to analyze, for example, the role of political Islam and radical Islamic groups, as well as the threat they pose to security.

Europe and the Middle East are close neighbours. It is therefore in the interest of both sides that we improve communication and cooperation, and focus on our common challenges. This can be done bilaterally or multilaterally, for example within the context of EU relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). But we must start by taking concrete action, and we must prepare a strategy for the future.

Conferences and workshops are good, but not sufficient. We need substantial cooperation in fields such as higher education, media and research, to name only a few.

We are confident that Germany's activities are also setting an example for other European partners.

Such a dialogue does however face obstacles and difficulties; it is not supported by everyone. Wars and conflicts undermine peaceful dialogue, but they also underline the importance of abandoning the use of force and

returning to peaceful means of addressing problems. Too often the language of dialogue and debate is muddled by the language of power and armed confrontation. We in Europe are not at war with the Ummah, nor with Islamists as a whole. We are fighting only the minority of radical Islamists that seek to attack the West.

The Arab world is traumatized by the unresolved conflict in the Middle East and the ongoing violence in Iraq. When emotions take over, dialogue becomes difficult. But it is our duty to analyze the situation and to find common approaches and shared solutions to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

What is the current state of Europe's relations with the Arab world?

The challenges facing the Arab world have been extensively analyzed. In particular, The UNDP Arab Human Development Report of 2002 and the follow-up report of October 2003 measured the development of the Arab region in relation to other regions. Its findings show the Arab world is lagging behind, economically, socially and politically. The World Bank report *Better Governance in the Middle East and North Africa: Enhancing Inclusiveness and Accountability* underlines the weakness of governance in the MENA region. These reports highlight the need for reforms and conclude that Arab societies need to review, restructure and reinforce governance. Reforming education systems plays a crucial role in this effort. Education is a fundamental factor for improving Arab countries' prospects for development in today's world. The key to enhancing human development and creating employment opportunities is improving the quality and accessibility of, as well as equity in, education and training. This is particularly important with a view to empowering women and enabling them to develop their full capabilities in Arab societies. Through different instruments, the EU is already contributing to the efforts of Arab countries in addressing many of these issues.

There are two levels of cooperation between Europe and the Arab world:

1. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy. This forms an essential element both of the bilateral Association Agreements and of the multilateral framework governing relations between the EU and its Mediterranean partners. The 1995 Barcelona Declaration, which

established this partnership, committed its signatories to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, to act in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to strengthen democracy and the rule of law and to ensure respect for diversity and pluralism in their societies. The MEDA programme objectives and rules for implementation aim to promote these same values.

Varying degrees of progress have been made in these areas. Further substantial efforts are needed to improve the overall situation in the region with regard to respect for human rights and democracy. The findings of the UNDP Human Development Reports have highlighted the importance of issues such as good governance, human rights, gender and democratization. Addressing these issues, which is important in itself, is also essential to achieving lasting economic, social and human development, as well as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's goal of a region of peace, stability and prosperity. Human rights and democratization issues should be an important part of the political dialogue between the EU and its Mediterranean partners at both the regional and bilateral level, specifically within the framework of the Association Councils and Committees as well as the various ad hoc reinforced bilateral political dialogues.

2. Cooperation between the EU and the GCC

Up to now, EU-GCC cooperation has focused on trade and economic relations. The Cooperation Agreement with the GCC covers a number of areas of economic cooperation; the EU and the GCC also hold political dialogue meetings. Negotiations for a free trade agreement are still in progress. Since they have strong underlying interests in reciprocal trade and investment, both sides should make an effort to overcome the remaining obstacles. The major challenges for the GCC region are ensuring consistent and comprehensive political development towards more open societies, as well as achieving economic diversification.

The Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the GCC was concluded in 1988 in Luxembourg and entered into force in January 1990. It is the basis for economic and trade relations between the two regions. The aim is to conclude a free trade agreement. Since 2001, anti-terrorism cooperation has also been an issue.

Once a year, the Foreign Ministers hold a joint council meeting. It should be understood that the current aim is to achieve free trade, not political cooperation. We therefore still have a long way to go, and we need to further intensify our bilateral dialogue.

With Yemen and the five Arab countries in the ACP framework (the Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, and the Sudan), the focus is on

development cooperation. Priorities are the eradication of poverty, as well as human development, in particular food security, health and education. Relations with Yemen are conducted within the framework of a Cooperation Agreement and should be further developed through a more structured political dialogue and an increased focus on collaboration in the fight against terrorism and the protection of human rights. Relations with ACP Arab countries are governed by the Cotonou Agreement, which covers countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Among ACP Arab countries, the Sudan and Somalia are particularly affected by instability and poverty.

In Iraq, after the fall of the regime of Saddam Hussein, the following must be guaranteed if reconstruction efforts are to be successful: an adequate security environment, a strong and vital UN role, a realistic schedule for the handing over of political responsibility to the Iraqi people, and the establishment of a range of instruments through which Iraq can conduct relations with the Arab world. Two of these instruments are already firmly established: the Barcelona process (which has been enhanced through the "Wider Europe" initiative) and the ACP framework. They allow for both a multilateral and a country-by-country approach, tailoring EU relations to the specific concerns and needs of individual countries, and to progress that is achieved. On the other hand, EU relations with the GCC, Yemen and Iraq are less developed. The economic and social characteristics of these countries call for instruments of a different nature than the programmes within the Barcelona framework. Recent developments point out the need to establish a regional stability strategy for this group of countries which, with the addition of Iran, could be defined as the "Wider Middle East". From a strictly political point of view, relations with the ACP countries revolve around a different set of issues. The EU will be pursuing a two-pronged strategy in its relations with the Arab countries, with both a Mediterranean and a Wider Middle East component.

Multilateral institutions are often bureaucratic and not very effective in adapting their policies to new challenges. Therefore it will remain very important that countries like Germany develop their own approach in their relations with the Moslem world. By setting a good example, we are encouraging our partners to follow the same path.

To sum up, we want to engage more actively in the process of fostering understanding of, and promoting dialogue with, both the Arab world and Moslem communities within our own European societies. It is crucial that we work together to counteract negative stereotypes, and that we identify

where we have common ground. We need honest partners for our dialogue, and we should include all representatives of other cultures in this dialogue, in particular intellectuals, women, young persons and civil society representatives. We must overcome suspicion and create an atmosphere of trust in cooperation. Only in a true partnership of the willing will we be able to bridge the growing gap between the West and the Islamic world.

The demand for mutual tolerance and respect is growing more urgent. Despite all our cultural diversity, we must look for the common ground, values and principles that are also inherent in Islam.

One thing has become clear over the past few years: this dialogue can only succeed if the partners are also committed to dialogue within their own societies. We, for our part, must therefore do whatever we can to encourage efforts that nurture dialogue and pluralism within Moslem societies. Young people in Islamic countries basically have the same dreams as young people in the West. They want to lead a life of freedom, dignity and prosperity, a life free of repression and violence. If we want to help overcome some of the frustrations that exist in the Islamic world, especially among young people – and which in many ways contribute to violence – then we must assist countries everywhere in their efforts to combat poverty, raise education and living standards and encourage their citizens to participate fully in civil society. Not everyone wants change. Many regimes are resistant to it and afraid of pluralism. In response to the European Union's offer of closer economic and political cooperation, partner countries in the Arab world should commit themselves to a process of modernization and civil development. To meet these challenges, it is important that an authentic, broad-minded, enlightened and knowledge-based model of society be established. The promotion of cultural diversity and pluralism in Arab countries, as well as stronger interaction with such cultures, are absolutely essential. The European Union and its member states could provide further assistance to help improve education and research, promote sustainable economic and political development and enhance democratic standards and the rule of law and pluralism, also in the media. In particular, the EU can help promote the participation of women in society – I think in this respect, the region lags far behind comparable countries in Asia!

The Middle East is a cradle of civilizations and religions that have all influenced Western civilization. Europe cannot afford to look on without taking any action while one of its neighbouring regions experiences economic, political and social deterioration. It is in our interest that we build a better partnership for a modern and peaceful future.

Michael Hudson

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The well-known Italian political philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, urged intellectuals to speak truth to power. And that, I think, is the role of the educational and the intellectual community in the USA, other Western countries and in the Arab world, particularly in these difficult times when the degree of tension and antipathy in the public and political discourse between the US and this part of the world is so great.

I would like to begin with a pessimistic observation. I think that the gap of misunderstanding is actually widening, not narrowing. We used to think that we were increasing the level of mutual comprehension and understanding through the extension of educational programs. In our country, in America, there are programs that try to convey objective knowledge about the history of the cultures and civilizations of the Islamic and Arab world to the public and young people, who initially do not have very much access to that historical tradition. But owing to the deterioration in the public discourse of our nations, I fear that the gap is widening.

I would like to make a distinction between levels of dialogue and to suggest that public discourse – political discussion and debate – constitutes a monologue, rather than a dialogue. This is particularly true from where we stand at Georgetown University, Washington D.C., The political establishment in Washington is concentrating its energy on increasing its own voice, by establishing new satellite television networks, new radio outlets and a new media culture to try to influence what they consider to be illegitimate forms of misguided public opinion in this part of the world towards the US. All of this arising out of the tragic events for Americans of September 11.

There are other levels of discourse that relate to public discourse. Education is maybe the most important. It is another domain with which we can influence the larger public political debate. Here I am not so pessimistic, because, in our country, I think that at the level of the educational and intellectual community, dialogue is very much possible and indeed is encouraged, especially after September 11. I believe that there are practical ways in which this dialogue at the educational level can be strengthened even more. So, even if the political domain is polarized, it is still possible and even more necessary, as Gramsci said, for intellectuals to speak truth to power. And if the politicians have it wrong, if they are utilizing information for fraudulent concepts in the name of natural

security and the war on terrorism, then I think that it is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak truth to power.

Education – and I am speaking particularly of the area that I know best, the United States – is a powerful tool for promoting dialogue in this part of the world. If it is misused, however, it can have a very negative effect. It can create barriers and hostility. So we have to be very careful as to what kind of education is actually being generated in thought. We have to be very careful about the objectivity of the educational content that we deliver. There are strong pressures generated from certain quarters of the political establishment on the educational establishment to shape teaching about the Arab and the Islamic world to reflect the preconceptions of the political elite.

Education can be positive; it can be negative. Many Arabs and Muslims think that the US educational system was, and is, inefficient for failing to provide enough objective study of Islamic and Arab cultural civilization and history. I am not saying that there is not a certain degree of truth to this criticism. On the other side, many Americans, and especially those who lean to the conservative direction and especially these days, blame the Arab educational system, establishment and intellectuals for fostering hatred of the US and even encouraging terrorism, indirectly if not directly.

I think that up until 9/11 the US academic establishment, particularly at university level, had done a pretty good job in fostering dialogue and mutual understanding. But since 9/11 this establishment has been under considerable attack. Because of the post-9/11 national fixation in the US on “the war on terror”, there is real concern about how and what to teach American young people about Islam and the Middle East. The roots of terrorism, according to the neo-conservatives and their allies, lie in the religious education offered in some countries to young people, which encourages them to be fanatical and engenders hatred of the West, and especially of the US. This perception has created widespread concern and has become a huge national security issue. The American educational establishment that studies and teaches Middle Eastern history, culture and language is being blamed for not alerting the public and the government to what neo-conservatives call the danger of Islamic fundamentalism and the Islam of terrorism.

Some of you might be familiar with a website called CampusWatch. It was created by some not very well-known professors, who have established a public monitoring system to keep an eye on the academic establishment studying the Middle East. Currently, an amendment has

been attached to the new education legislation going through the US Congress. It calls for the setting up of a so-called advisory committee to be appointed by Congress, on which members of the US national security agencies will sit. Its task will be to examine the content of Middle East study programs in the US. We at Georgetown University have been singled out as targets along with colleagues from other universities, notably Columbia University, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Chicago and others. So we will bear a little bit of pressure.

It is not just American academics commenting on the Middle East who are under pressure, there is also a lot of criticism from political circles directed at the Arab educational and political establishment.

The good news is that since 9/11 there has been an enormous growth of interest in Middle Eastern cultures and civilizations. There are more students applying for university places, more money has been made available, and there is more support for programs such as our Contemporary Arab Studies course at Georgetown University. We are finding that, despite the criticism, there is new concern and interest is enjoying a boom. We are enjoying good times, even if we have to cope with critics.

In conclusion, then, where are we now? On the American side it is important that we try to encourage educational co-operation between our universities and those in Arab countries. Also important is that we continue to enrich curricula at the level of secondary and primary schools. It is critical to work harder in the educational field to connect our knowledge and expertise with the world of policy. It has to be clear that the academic community, when it comes to the Middle East, is largely marginalized in terms of contributing to or being consulted about policy issues. We need to work harder if there is to be a more substantial input of academic knowledge into the policy-making process and if we hope to eliminate, modify or correct the often simplistic and wrong images that many policy-makers have.

So, what we need to do is speak the truth to power. There is, in the US at least, a concern that some of the educational systems in this part of the world teach hatred and intolerance. There are calls for the Arab Human Development Report – which severely criticized the state of what it called the Arab “knowledge society” – to receive more attention and for there to be more American Studies on the Arab side in order to share knowledge of policies and cultures.

Olaf Gerlach Hansen

Director, Danish Center for Culture and Development

Images of the Middle East – a Mechanism to Foster Intercultural Understanding and Dialogue in Denmark

The advancement of intercultural understanding and dialogue is an important basis for the strengthening of future co-operation in all fields. Images of the Middle East seeks to address this through a number of activities culminating with a nation-wide cultural festival in Denmark in 2006.

The aim of Images of the Middle East is:

- to strengthen cultural understanding between Denmark and the Middle East;
- to advance the dialogue between Denmark and the Middle East; and
- to bring people from Denmark, the Middle East and the rest of the world together in order to try out new models and inspire each other to new forms of cooperation.

Images of the Middle East is based on the values of dialogue, cooperation and exchange, as well as on the values of the United Nations regarding cultural diversity and global ethics as initially formulated by the World Commission on Culture and Development.

Images of the Middle East embraces the wider region from the Atlantic in the West to Afghanistan in the East and from the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean in the North to the Arabian Sea and the Sahara in the South. The main focus will be on the geographical Middle East, but to a lesser degree, Images of the Middle East will also include persons of Middle Eastern descent from Denmark and other parts of the world.

The Images of the Middle East will be open to all within the framework established by the overall aim and through the general criteria of artistic quality, educational ability, spirit of dialogue, multiplier-effect as well as financial and pragmatic criteria. At the same time, Images of the Middle East will throw light on a number of areas that have not been exposed adequately in Denmark thematically or geographically.

Images of the Middle East will focus on contemporary culture and current changes in the Middle East.

Identity in the contemporary Middle East is the central theme. The theme will be interpreted through the following sub-themes:

- Space: The city space, the media space and the private space. Physical, virtual, symbolic and spiritual spaces.
- Generations: Generation-specific cultures. Youth. Children. Dreams, wishes and realities.
- Gender: Women and men. Love, desire and beauty.

Reflection about identity is not least seen in art, education, and the media in the Middle East, and therefore these areas will have a central position in Images of the Middle East's programme. Here the tensions caused by cultural changes can be expressed and reflected upon, and here awareness can be drawn to the opportunities and threats of the future. Here dialogue can begin.

Programme and activities

Images of the Middle East consists of:

- The Images of the Middle East core-programme, which includes a cultural festival in Denmark within the period of June – October 2006 as well as an educational and informational program from the end of 2004 – 2007. The artistic-cultural program will include music, theatre, dance, visual arts, exhibitions, film, literature. The educational-informational program will include conferences, meetings, workshops, media-productions (written, radio, TV, internet), publications, educational activities for children and youth. The core-programme is co-produced through a cooperation by DCCD and a number of institutions in Denmark and the Middle East. This programme will reflect the requirements to Images of the Middle East's core profile. Co-operation and allocation of DCCD's own financial contributions are determined by Images of the Middle East's core profile.
- A supplementary "off-programme" in which the individual items of the programme in the main have to comply with the general principles of Images of the Middle East. Mainly, this has to be self-financed but DCCD will seek to provide the framework for a central outline of time and place, general PR, and other limited support.
- A supplementary network- and capacity building program, which seeks to strengthen partnerships with the Middle East in the field of cultural cooperation, intercultural education and training. DCCD will help provide a framework for activities.

The requirements of the Images of the Middle East's core profile are as follows:

- Images of the Middle East's aims and themes must be reflected very clearly in the productions.
- A regional profile for the projects. This implies that the individual core projects:
 - involve partners in the Middle East as co-producers as far as possible.
 - hold an element of intra-regional co-operation in the preparations and productions. This should as a minimum involve participation from the Levant, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula as well as Iran.
- Dialogue and mutual understanding. All of the items of the programme must have an education/information strategy in the form of activities within the fields of education, media, meetings and conferences, publications, as well as information and PR.

The Images of the Middle East programme will in general have a profile with emphasis on:

- Change and development,
- Similarities and connections, historically and currently,
- Cultural diversity, co-operation and exchange, and
- Global ethics, spirituality, and religion

Abdul-Salam Al-Majali

President of the Islamic Academy of Sciences, Amman, and former Prime Minister of Jordan

Dialogue to achieve what?

Towards solidarity and leadership for a global civilizations

We talk quit a bit about “dialogue”, but I think we must ask: “Dialogue to achieve what?” I suggest one answer can come from Arabic history.

Ibn Khaldun, scholar and historian of the fourteenth century studied the concept and history of civilizations and explained why they came and went. He also developed the idea of sociology (umraniyat) well before European scholars.

He proposed the idea of asabiyah, which means “a sense of solidarity”. In the pursuit of asabiyah as an ideal, the leader strives to identify psychological, economic, environmental and social factors that contribute to the advancement of human civilization and the currents of history. Although the pursuit of asabiyah was limited to the family context, there was the notion of shared vision as an objective. Ibn Khaldun analysed the dynamics of group relationships and showed how group feelings construct asabiyah. He was clear that it did not only apply to Arab society but to all societies.

Surely, the first purpose of “dialogue” is to build solidarity – solidarity within our regional civilization and within our global civilization.

Ibn Khaldun was also the father of Arab leadership studies. He said that leadership exists through a strong dynamic relationship between leaders and followers and this only comes though asabiyah. Strong asabiyah entails good character and good relationships. A basic qualification for a good leader is that he should willing to respect those who are loyal to him and vice-versa, which creates solidarity between leaders and followers.

He made a distinction between leadership and domination, and said that civilizations failed when leaders became dominators. That surely provides a message for world leaders, particularly in the most powerful countries of the world.

We need to teach young leaders to understand that if they become dominators, they will bring about the downfall of the societies, communities, institutions and, ultimately, the civilizations that they lead. Not to mention their own downfall.

Ibn Khaldun also makes another distinction that is very relevant to debates in the Arab world. He said that if leaders rely too much on powerful groups or people who are not in a state of *asabiyah*, civilization will fail. The message regionally is that there is a difference between constructive dialogue with leaders from other civilizations and being bought off and controlled by them.

In the twenty-first century we are living in the so-called “globalized world”. How can we build “global *asabiyah*”, i.e. solidarity for a global civilization? How can leadership education help to overcome the ignorance and prejudices which exist towards the ways of life and customs of different peoples?

At Jordan University, we established a programme called “Potential Leadership”. We pick the top three students from every department in the university. A committee of three deans then meets with these students and selects one or more from each faculty with the potential to become a leader.

The group was expanded to 30 students who meet once a week for three hours with Jordanian decision-makers: His Majesty the King, the Crown Prince, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Army Chief-of-staff, the British Ambassador, the American Ambassador and Japanese Ambassador. They sit with one of them, who talk about anything he likes and students respond.

At half-term, they visit an Arab state to meet with its leading figures for two weeks. In the summer, they spend one or two weeks in a European state for the same purpose.

In simple terms, the plan is, first, to create vertical solidarity within the country by dialogue: the bright students from all social classes meet one another, then the political elite, then other leaders. This builds top-down vertical solidarity. This is not new in the Arab world. Part of the traditional training for young sheikhs was to go and live with the Bedouin people, share their way of life and be exposed to the problems they faced.

The second objective is to create horizontal solidarity on a global basis. Those students go out to build edge-to-edge horizontal solidarity across the world.

Future leaders will not learn much by having knowledge imposed on them through lectures. They will learn by being exposed to their seniors and peers – exposed vertically and horizontally. I believe the best education is the interaction of minds between people of different professions, religions, civilizations and social sectors.

The United Nations University International Leadership Academy was set up some years ago to give young potential leaders from all states and all walks of life the opportunity to be “exposed” in this way.

They are selected by their own states from people aged between 30 and 40 years old who have shown aptitude for leadership. They are provided with a ticket to Amman and per diem expenses. At Amman headquarters they interact with each other and select, invited leaders. States are divided into groups of ten, two from each continent, with all backgrounds represented: rich, poor, Moslem, Christian, socialist, capitalist, small, big... etc. The participants, divided into 19 groups, visit one group of states for one week to take advantage of the opportunity of meeting and interacting with the leaders of that country.

When the ten weeks of visits end, all return to base and give their groups briefings of what they have seen, heard and think, all of which goes into a book for publication. Present leaders are teachers and learners, so the gap between them will be bridged.

The problem at present is that many world leaders have never been outside their own countries. Yet, in a globalized world, they take decisions about other countries which could create differences between civilizations.

To “expose” is not selfishly expose one’s views to others. It means letting others expose their views, too. This starts through listening. Let me quote a former US Democrat Senator from Georgia, Wyche Fowler, who became ambassador to Riyadh. He said: “I enjoyed spending many hours drinking tea in the desert with the Arabs late into the night. They want to tell you about their family, and want to hear about yours. They would tell me about their father raising camels, and I would tell them about my father raising cows.”

This beautifully illustrates how finding common ground in difference creates the path to solidarity. Religion offers similar instances. Mohammed says: “Treat others in the same way you like them to treat you.” Jesus says: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” Two different religions, which teach the same attitude towards others. Treat other leaders, governments, companies, people, etc., as you wish to be treated. This will create the solidarity that helps everyone to survive.

What I am trying to say here is that, just as no two people are the same, there is no uniformity. There have to be different approaches to different realities and things, which does not prevent us from perceiving things in the same way. But to discover our common perceptions, we need to meet. Indeed, nothing can replace sustained, direct human interaction

in the search for the common ground that helps to humanize rather than demonize “the Other”.

The question therefore arises as to how to resolve the contradiction between being a national and an international leader when the national interest comes up against global interests. Personally, I do not think there is any contradiction. I believe it is just in the person. If you have learned to put the public interest before your personal interest, then you will survive as a national leader. Anyway, your private interest will be included in the public interest. The same thing happens at a global level. In the end, the national interest and the global interest are the same thing, and leaders who recognize that will survive best.

Human rights, for example, need attention in this way. There are many ways of addressing human rights – vertically as well as horizontally – within a community, a country, a region and the world as a whole.

Dialogue must take place between the leaders of the Arab world and those of other civilizations. It should also take place within our civilization – among the different nations and cultures which compose it. We need Arab solidarity, too. I believe this has not happened enough, and one result is our slowness in catching up with the global outlook.

In the 1940s many countries in East Asia were poorer than those in the Middle East. Now most East Asian countries are much richer, even though they have faced problems similar to ours – colonialism, wars, external interference and development problems. Their success is sometimes attributed to so-called “Asian values”. They do not tell the whole story, but it is true that Asian leaders created a shared vision of national development – a development-oriented solidarity. The question is, then: “Why have we not done the same?” After all, we share “Arab values”, which could be the basis for a unified outlook.

A lot of major political problems for leaders stem from the fact that people do not understand or listen to one another. They do not share knowledge. Some Israelis – in their teachings, in their books or in the media – have preached that Palestine is the homeland of the Jews, which means that they deny the existence of others. At the same time, the Arab side believes that Palestine has been an Arab country for thousands of years and that it became a Muslim homeland in the early days of Islam. If Jews and Arabs knew the truth of one another’s histories, leaders would not dare to promote contradiction, because they would both be seen as false.

Is the idea of a homeland for any one group over the rights of another relevant in the twenty-first century? It appears completely anachronistic in an age where the most successful societies are the most

multicultural and change-oriented, where the most enlightened among us cherish multicultural coexistence and shun cultural isolation. Both parties in the Middle East conflict will be losers by exalting such isolated, culturally exclusive states of being. The exclusive mindset – so starkly symbolized by the building of walls, not just of concrete but of ideas – inevitably leads to exclusion of the good as well as the bad. All those affected will be the poorer for it.

My conclusion is, therefore, one simple idea. We must increase solidarity: create regional and global asabiyah by exposing our young people and potential leaders to one another.

We must expose them vertically – from the top to the bottom of Arab society, and horizontally – from edge-to-edge of the Arab world and the globalizing planet.

I believe dialogue is an interactive medicine for most of the ills of individuals, groups, societies, nations, and the world. The more leaders listen to each other and talk to, not at, each other, the more they will understand each others' views. And this will help to create global asabiyah.

Ahmed Jalali

Permanent Delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran to UNESCO,
former President of the General Conference of UNESCO

I would like to emphasize the importance of the role of education in dialogue. We know that the future of our world is in the hands of the young generation. The future of dialogue and coexistence will be their task through the education that we provide for them.

Institutions like UNESCO are not political as such, but become political because of the impact they could have on policy-making processes. It is important that we come to a conclusion to be included in the final declaration.

How can we come up with clear and concrete suggestions for educational systems in the world, enabling them to teach and to promote dialogue for a more comprehensive education?

A good example, which was a test for UNESCO, took place in a school in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Schoolchildren were taught that their neighbours, who were Christians, Serbs or Croats, were their enemies. UNESCO introduced a project to change textbooks so that the pupils came to understand in their lessons at school that their neighbours were not their enemies.

Another general topic that we can discuss is how we should teach history in our schools. In our generation we used to read history as being about enemies, wars and battles. Our filmmakers and our writers focus heavily on times of war and clashes. For example, one century of crusade wars between the Islamic and the Christian worlds has been magnified by countless films and books.

When we talk about the “crusades” everybody understands what we are referring to. Yet the crusades – a very negative time – lasted for just one century, while for 600 years there was co-operation between Christianity and the Islamic civilization. We do not see anything like as much mention of those six centuries as we do about the one century.

During the course of history there have been periods when civilizations entertained good relations and engaged in dialogue. They were very positive times. Why should we not rewrite and reread history from this point of view? Why should we not teach our kids history from the point of view of dialogue?

Albert Sasson

International Consultant and former Assistant Director-General of UNESCO

I will use a telegraphic style to make a number of points about the nature and prerequisites of dialogue.

I have been involved in many similar endeavours to elicit dialogue. I believe that there is a category of people who do not want to speak about it. They simply do not want dialogue. That is the way they look at things and I do not think that we should waste much more time trying to change their minds. At the other end of the spectrum are those who need no convincing that dialogue is necessary. They are involved and committed and will carry on whatever happens. In other words, we are preaching to the converted, a category to which many of us belong.

In between lie the vast majority of people all over the world. They are puzzled, hesitant, do not know which way to turn. They are the reason we have to make an effort in areas like education, scientific and technological co-operation, culture and heritage. They are our target.

I remember a one-day gathering on inter-faith dialogue we held in Morocco in February 1998 under the aegis of the late King Hassan II. Cardinal Etchegaray, who was representing Pope John Paul II, argued that when we meet we always agree because we preach to the converted, but that in the world at large there is the vast majority, to whom we have to teach what we agree upon. That is where the problem lies: in the street, in schools and in the community – not amongst those of good faith who recognize that we have to move ahead.

Dialogue is not new. Throughout history we have even had magnificent periods of dialogue and co-operation – and that includes the Arabic world, or, to be more precise, within the Arabo-Islamic civilization. In contemporary times, too, there has been dialogue. Let us not be too pessimistic, for many positive initiatives exist.

Dialogue should continue and be fostered. Why? Because, pragmatically, it is reasonable, and the alternative is to remain entrenched in one's certainties. But the task is difficult, because it is not easy to move from one culture and understand another. If we each consider our own experience, we realize that what I am saying is true – dialogue is difficult. Yet it is imperative.

Dialogue is multifaceted. There are many kinds. Consequently, the tools which we use are also diverse. We have spoken about the basic tool – education at all levels and at all stages. We must always learn from everybody and each other.

Few, though, have spoken about science and technology. Having devoted 46 years of my life to co-operation in science and technology, I can tell you that there is a great deal going on in the field. And it goes beyond merely resolving problems related to science and technology. Those who have worked in foreign laboratories know very well what I am saying. We know our colleagues, we understand them, we co-operate with them, we invite them back to our countries to teach, we go to their countries on post-doctorate fellowships as visiting and assistant professors. All this creates ties and knowledge, the sharing of experience and mutual understanding.

Look what is happening in Asia. Sana'a is in Asia. Yemen might belong to the Arabo-Islamic civilization, but it is part of Asia. In science and technology, countries across Asia are moving fast. They are not closing themselves to the rest of the world – on the contrary, they are opening up to the West without losing their traditions or customs. A Japanese is still a Japanese. I believe that we need an Arabo-Islamic country to set a good example. The Maghreb states of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia – and some even further to the east – have numerous links with the European Union, which should be extended and strengthened. We need not start from scratch; there are many existing initiatives.

But, and this is my conclusion, we need to do more and better. We can look for assistance from UNESCO, ALECSO and ISESCO, from international and regional organizations, NGOs and civil society groups, which is where our roots are. We have no time to lose. Time is against us. Consequently we have to plan – no more theoretical meetings.

I hope that the agendas of the next meetings will be about results. What are you doing? How successful are you? What is the deadline? What is the commitment? Is it financial, cultural or political? Here we should bear in mind what Ahmed Jalali told us: that we have to convince political leaders and policy-makers. But if we – members of civil society, intellectuals and academics – had the will to take the initiative, they would follow us because it is in their interest. The media should also help. They have so far failed to do a proper job, so we would ask them to do better. The communication pillar of dialogue is important.

Let us hope that this gathering will be a springboard that we can use to do more and better. We can meet deadlines and conduct appraisals, and as for money, there is always money when there are good projects. The problem is the will to undertake those projects; forget the rest. We know that the world is going horribly wrong. Because dialogue is difficult and because there are so many obstacles facing us, we have to act, and act quickly.

Caroline Fourest

Journalist, Co-founder and Chief Editor of “Pro-Choix”

Crossfire

September 11 could have raised common awareness of the danger of fundamentalism, i.e. the abuse of religion for reactionary political purposes. However, the world chose to focus on “terrorism”.

If the “coalition of the willing” had declared war on fundamentalism and not on terrorism, it would have not only prevented the emergence of the random categories of a humanist camp fighting against obscurantism, but it might have brought to a standstill the allegories of Islam and fanaticism or Muslim and fundamentalism.

In “Crossfire – The war of Jewish Christian and Muslim Extremists against Secularism” (Calmann Levy), the book I wrote with Fiammeta Venner, we studied and compared Jewish, Christian and Muslim fundamentalisms. All of them have the same vision of women, one that favours men under religious pretexts. May I quote that Saint Paul said in the Bible: “God commands men and men command women”. Certainly an archaic vision that liberal Christians no longer believe in, but that remains vivid in the eyes of Christian fundamentalists, especially those of parishioners of a little traditionalist church close to the French far-right in which women veil themselves “in sign of submission” when listening to masses spoken in Latin. In the same way, in certain districts of Jerusalem, ultra-orthodox Jewish women shave their heads or veil themselves in sign of submission, a situation which is about as enviable as that of women living in Iran or Afghanistan.

Fundamentalists also prove to be intolerant towards sexual minorities. Likewise, they systematically confuse culture and morals.

The three fundamentalisms are not only similar, but they are also mutually reinforcing.

Islamic fundamentalism is fuelled in two different ways: the absence of secularisation legitimates the ever-increasing religious activism of Islamic fundamentalists. The absence of democratisation enables them to present themselves as a source of hope and a political alternative.

Indeed, it should never be forgotten that it is Arabs and Muslims who pay the highest price of obscurantism. As much as Islam does not have a monopoly on fanaticism as much are those who resist Islamic fundamentalism often obliged to display the greatest courage so as not

to see extremists distorting their religion and misrepresenting their country.

Indeed, one has to underline that, although the three fundamentalisms look alike, Muslim fundamentalism makes without any doubt the most victims. Christian and Jewish fundamentalisms exist within democratic and secularised countries. Their victims can therefore protect themselves by going to court, by sheltering behind the state, the Supreme Court or any other secular institution.

That is the difference and it is fundamental. Any “Western” administration has to deal with democracy, public opinion, the media, civil society and a Supreme Court that limit the effects of its policies. Islamic fundamentalism, on the other hand, evolves in far less democratic and less secularised countries, where it faces fewer counter-powers.

If there are extremists on all sides, democrats and secularists also exist on both sides. A common resistance will give birth to a hope for real change. On what grounds? Not on that of a simple dialogue between cultures but on that of a real exchange and a common will, which is conditioned by a maximum effort to avoid simplification and confusion.

The first simplification is to believe that there really is a clash of civilization. There is no monolithic West as much as there is no monolithic East. Europe is not America; North Africa is not the Middle East. These geographic spaces might give the impression of having common interests, but they gather a diversity of individuals whose identity and choices cannot be reduced to their birthplace.

The other simplification would be to confuse the “defence of cultures” with the refusal to share, under the pretext of a – legitimate – resistance to globalisation. Religion as culture is a source of wealth. Religion as ideology is a source of suffering, discrimination and conflict, which we must fight if we do not want to risk the unity of mankind.

In this regard, confusing “respect for cultures” with “indifference” would be the proof of selectivity. No cultural respect will force me to renounce my solidarity with one of these women, Afghan, Iranian, or Yemenite. They are my sisters in humanity.

I refuse in Islamic fundamentalism what I refuse in Christian fundamentalism. I respect all cultures as a source of cultural wealth and diversity, but I refuse the invocation of difference when it serves to conceal oppression.

Faruk Sen

Director, "Stiftung Zentrum für Türkeistudien", Essen

Migration and New Cultures

In recent years the subject of dialogue to promote understanding between cultures has taken a key role in discussions. The main reasons are probably linked to aspects of globalization like global economic development, EU enlargement and the subject of integration as well as more sinister developments like September 11, 2001, and war. However, the questions which one should ask are how we eliminate the problems linked with globalization, how we go about it, and where we start to promote dialogue.

The most obvious answer to this question is by promoting knowledge, and thus, education. The assumption made is that education is of importance, but making the assumption and not transforming it into reality is often the mistake that is made. Education, therefore, should not just be used as a vehicle on paper, but also in practice. An area of focus in this paper is migrants, particularly Turks and, therefore, Muslims living in EU countries, and the building of dialogue between the EU countries and its neighbours.

Real experience of immigration in northern Europe came about mainly after World War II, when European countries were forced to take on people from abroad to help them overcome their shortage of labour at a time of economic boom. Many of the migrants, who came to Europe between 1960 and 1980, originated from Muslim countries. On the one hand there was migration due to the manpower shortage. On the other were countries like France which, due to their extensive number of colonies, had relations with Muslim countries and, therefore, took in additional Muslim migrants. The United Kingdom also experienced immigration from many Commonwealth countries. In more recent years, political turmoil has also led to increases in the number of migrants to Europe.

For many European countries migration was only supposed to be a stop-gap measure, while the Muslim migrants chose to stay. Their choice influenced not only their way of life, but also policies in European countries. In Germany, for example, recruitment, which had started in 1961, came to a halt in the 1970s due, primarily, to the oil crisis. This changed the format of migration into family reunification which, when

completed by the 1980s, resulted in an increase in the number of migrant workers choosing to stay in Germany. German society was now confronted with a new phenomenon and began to realize that it had not considered the social consequences and aspects of migration.

The authorities and national health services were not equipped to handle the special needs of this part of the population. They were “not equipped” in the sense that they had very little knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the migrants, their customs and traditions. Moslem migrants, particularly, constituted a dramatic cultural change in Europe which could not have been envisaged at the time migration had started.¹

The definition of identity, at a time when the EU is focusing on European identity, thus becomes a major issue, which can only be resolved through social engineering supported by political action. How are we going to define what it means to be European in the future? What values and signs will this definition be based on? With its current perception of European culture, the EU is not ready to face the future as a society in which all its communities are at peace with each other and share the sense of being European.

The social integration of migrants has been difficult mainly because it was expected that they would adapt to the society in which they lived. However, policies to adopt Europe to them have lingered. Europe has to redefine European culture. New cultural signs from its immigrant communities must be included in the definition. These could come from literature, art or mythology. They would help future generations of immigrants to feel part of society and part of Europe.

In every country, whether already a member of the EU or is an accession candidate, people have certain characteristics which form part of their identities. In the case of immigrants from Muslim countries, religion is a part of their identity. It is, therefore, critical that host countries should not use it against them, but consider it an asset to European identity. Lack of acceptance could endanger both the integration and the enlargement processes of the EU. Therefore, it is important to start at the source of the problem and look at the systems in individual countries and the improvements that could be made.

The education system in Germany has had to face many problems recently. As regards the education of migrants, their needs and interests are often not considered or cannot be met. Isolation or “special” treatment is the result.² To be able to answer particular needs, the German curriculum is divided into various sections, which includes the provision of schools for those with special needs – Sonderschulen. However, as state populations

have become more diverse due to the increase in the number of migrants and the rapid pace of Europeanization, the measures in place no longer look able to cope with problems in the educational system.³

School attendance rates for migrants who thus receive basic education are low. However, a clear distinction can be drawn between first-generation immigrants and the second and third, more of whom access education. Although it may appear to be a positive sign, it comes with many problems, since the second and third generations form heterogeneous groups.

Migrants who are well-educated and highly qualified stand out against the significant number of young people who are not. Education and labour thus collide. Important to note is that a good qualification does not automatically bring a migrant equal integration.⁴ However, education generally increases not only migrant children's self-esteem but also increases their skills in handling cultural difference, which helps them gain acceptance into the host society.⁵

But integration cannot be one-sided. The host society, too, must act upon the fact that its multicultural nature is not temporary, but permanent and continuously evolving as the world develops into a tightly knit network.

Education plays a central role in the integration process of children into host societies. Besides the obvious standards which one associates with education, it also offers children a concept of ideals, values and social competence.

Dialogue should be built to last and be adopted by all. Certain norms have to be established which can be used in everyday dealings between people, not just in the political arena, but also in day-to-day life in civil society. Hence, conditions for dialogue have to be established in such a way that it suits all and can be used by all.

The best way to do this is through education. Instead of feeling threatened by the new cultures which are present, civil society should see it as an asset to be able to call itself multicultural or multi-ethnic, since diversity adds to the value of a society. Living and being confronted with different cultures does not come without tension, feelings of foreignness, fear and rejection. To be able to harbour peaceful, multicultural communities, society should ensure continuity in its education system based on intercultural teaching. The aim should be to strive for intercultural dialogue with education as the primary source for steering society towards that goal. The core elements for an intercultural education system are tolerance, acceptance and respect.

The best way towards integration is for children to learn about each others' ways of life, religions and culture, which is best done in schools. That involves providing conducive conditions. Changes have to be made to school systems and assessment methods must use a single set of standards: this is the task of international organizations like the UNESCO and UNDP.⁶ Subjects which must play a key role in the education system should include religion, literature, history and languages.

The move towards Europeanization should be a sign that bilingual people are an asset. The use of the mother tongue should be encouraged by teachers. Aspects which should, therefore, be integrated into school policies include promoting the use of the native tongue by allowing lessons to be conducted in it or by forming bilingual schools. In a time where globalization is taking its toll, it is critical for the youth of today to be able to speak more than one language. This not only improves communication between nations, but contributes to a country's competitiveness.

Curricula can include foreign literature in class. Authors with migrant backgrounds often write about their experiences, their culture, the aspects of life with which they are confronted and their future expectations. Foreign literature would help children to understand each other better. In geography classes countries should be studied so as to introduce migrants' origins. Religious education should be made available with contributions from experts in the individual faiths.

Through these means cultural identities can be formed and individuals' levels of awareness raised. Understanding and knowledge help integration and prevent discrimination. Most important, however is that teachers, too, have to be educated. It is no use setting standards for dialogue through education, if it remains theory and does not become practice.

What is needed is decision-makers who are willing to introduce changes and to make education a top priority. Support from international organizations is essential as they have knowledge that extends beyond state level. Religious diversity and freedom of expression are important and should not be neglected or, even worse, rejected. Trying to make other people like oneself is no way to get along with them, for it involves forcing them to stifle their identity which will, sooner or later, break out and could be the result of conflict. The most effective way to achieve understanding and knowledge is through education where different identities are respected.

"Education is at the heart of our recommendations, the crux of the whole system, without which there is no point to dialogue because there

will be no participants, no partners capable of receiving or transmitting knowledge.”⁷

If the aims adumbrated above are taken seriously and put to the forefront, it is possible to create long-lasting intercultural dialogue based on shared knowledge and understanding, which will bear fruit not just socially, but economically, too. Globalization is an ongoing process which does not seem to have peaked. If everyone is to profit from it, understanding between cultures is essential. In the long run, the best way to achieve that understanding is through education – not just for children, although they are the future, but also for adults. Adults are the role models of children, who are the adults of the future.

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1. Allievi, S. Islam in Italy p 77 in Islam, Europe's Second Largest Religion. The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape Edited by S.T. Hunter.
 2. Gogolin, I & Neumann U, Schulbildung für Kinder aus Minderheiten in Deutschland 1989 – 1999 Schulrecht, Schulorganisation, curriculare Fragen, sprachliche Bildung Interkulturelle Bildungsforschung, Waxmann Münster 2001 p7
 3. ibid
 4. Goldberg, A ; Halm, D & Sauer, M Migrationsbericht des Zentrum für Türkeistudien 2002, Lit Verlag Münster 2001 p21
 5. For further details see Meyer, A Schulische Integration ausländischer Kinder, Stand und Entwicklungen ZfT-aktuell Nr. 82
 6. Report by the High Advisory Group Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean Area, European Commission, Brussels October 2003, p 27
 7. ibid.

Hans d'Orville and Ann-Belinda Preis

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Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO

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Promoting a Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures in an Arab World

1. Background and setting

The International Symposium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations to be held in Sana'a, Yemen, 10 -11 February 2004, as a joint effort between the Government of Yemen and UNESCO, and support from Japanese Funds-in-Trust, reflects a commitment to the important role a dialogue among civilisations can and must play in our contemporary world, notwithstanding difficulties, complexities and ignorances. The Symposium is set in the larger, global framework of the UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace¹, the United Nations Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations², UNESCO's "New Delhi Declaration"³ as well as UNESCO's "Message from Ohrid"⁴ – all of which set out new approaches, concepts and perspectives for future activities of UNESCO in the area of the dialogue among civilizations at the global and regional levels. Capping this array of international efforts is the landmark resolution adopted by the UNESCO's General Conference at its 32nd session in October 2003, by which it welcomed "the lead role UNESCO has taken at all levels in promoting a dialogue among civilisations and cultures" and highlighted "its unique role in building new bridges between civilisations and cultures."⁵

Dialogue among civilisations and cultures has the capacity to strengthen human rights, democracy and tolerance, and to foster peace and peaceful practises and discourse, in general. Dialogue is critical to convey and purvey a realistic picture of the diversity and riches of inter-civilisational relations. Likewise, dialogue and exchanges also have an inherent potential as a moderating force and they can play a significant role in countering terrorism or terrorist inclinations. In that context, it is crucial to reconcile the promotion of common universal values with cultural diversity, and to highlight the importance of education both as a basis of a culture of peace and tolerance, and as a crucible of development

and poverty alleviation. Similarly, the contribution of the Arab-Muslim cultures to other civilizations of the world deserves genuine, scientific scrutiny and other appropriate attention.

The Sana'a event is then the first regional event after the UNESCO General Conference has debated this issue (in plenary), operating within the newly validated framework. The Symposium seeks to elicit and yield more than general statements and agreements about the positive effects of dialogue, aiming at the identification of practical measures and the stimulation of concrete action, which may be a building bloc in the construction of an effective and sustainable dialogue in the 21st century – indeed, the grand ambition could be described as nurturing and forging a culture of dialogue.

The Arab region straddles two continents. It is not only the cradle of Islamic civilization, but it gave also birth to two other Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Judaism. Yemen, situated in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, lies at a crossroad of these and other different civilisations. The country has a very rich cultural heritage - three of its cities, the old walled city of Shibam, the historic town of Zabid and the capital, Sana'a, are inscribed in UNESCO's World Heritage List. Sana'a has been inhabited for more than 2,500 years, becoming a major centre for the propagation of Islam in the 7th and 8th centuries. This religious and political heritage is still very present in the 103 mosques, 14 hammams and over 6,000 houses, all built before the 11th century – which form a vivid and most impressive background for a Symposium focusing on the dialogue among civilisations and cultures.⁶

Yemen's evolution from a divided country, the sufferings of a civil war in 1994 into a unified state stands as a perfect example of the region's transformation. The development of concrete activities and approaches within the field of dialogue among cultures and civilizations is an essential element in order to meet the challenges of globalisation and modernisation, while preserving distinct cultural identities within an international community seeking to build consensus on and around universally shared values.

2. Building an international framework to promote a dialogue between cultures and civilisations

The UN General Assembly proclaimed the year 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, highlighting new dimensions of the dialogue against the growing interdependence of

communities, nations, cultures and civilizations, and setting the stage for a broader international debate - and a renewed commitment to dialogue at all levels. UNESCO was, among others, invited "to plan and implement appropriate cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations, including through organizing conferences and seminars and disseminating information and scholarly material on the subject".⁷

UNESCO's Action Plan for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilisations (2001) emphasized the necessity of defining "civilisation" as a universal, plural and non-hierarchical phenomenon, for the simple - yet often neglected - reason that civilisations have always been enriched by contact and exchange with other civilisations, hence always involved in a dynamic process of change and redefinition of "self". Civilisations are inherently "inter-cultural". Cultural monologues or cultural fundamentalism, which freeze "the Other" as an alien, and as such a potential enemy, run counter to this constitutive feature of human civilisation and social organisation.

Meeting the practical challenge, UNESCO initiated, organised and sponsored numerous events, conferences and colloquia on the dialogue among civilisations - at national, regional and international levels. The terrorist acts of 11 September 2001 instilled a new momentum and a sense of urgency. Under the impact of these events, UNESCO's 31st General Conference adopted unanimously a resolution⁸, in which it considered that "all acts of terrorism are a denial of the principles and values of the United Nations Charter, the UNESCO Constitution and the UNESCO Declaration on the Principles of Tolerance (1995) and represent an attack against humanity as a whole". The resolution affirmed, among others, that the dialogue among civilisations "constitutes a fundamental challenge based on the unity of mankind and commonly shared values, the recognition of its cultural diversity and the equal dignity of each civilization and each culture".

Two years later, the 2003 New Delhi International Ministerial Conference on "The Dialogue among Civilisations - Quest for New Perspectives" identified new avenues for UNESCO's future activities and orientations, especially within the domains of education and science and technology and within the realm of common values.

Against this background, UNESCO's General Conference in October 2003 not only endorsed the New Delhi Declaration, but requested that the Organisation should move beyond the stage of general agreement and statements of intent, to seek new responses using the vectors of education,

science and technology, cultural diversity and the media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) with a view to constructing a framework for dialogue particularly at the regional and sub-regional level.⁹

4. The role of dialogue in the Arab region

The quest for common values

The Arab world is characterised by its diversity. Various ethnic, linguistic and religious groups inhabit the 21 countries while traditions rooted in Islam and in the Arabic language form a strong focal and rallying point for Arab societies. Throughout the Islamic expansion, Muslims have lived together with Christians and Jews, later with Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus. Values such as peace and tolerance, equality of men and women, and freedom of religion are also observed and applied in the region.

Arab cultures have also always exhibited openness and growth and favored interaction and interchange. In the region, other civilisations have not only been accepted, but their customs and cultural practices were often also embraced and integrated. The exchange with the Greek civilisation, from the 9th to 10th century AD and the opening of the Arab world to Western sciences, arts, knowledge and technology in the 19th century are two well-known examples of mutual inspiration and exchanges.

The current trend of focussing on antagonistic relationships between cultures and civilizations neglects the historic fact that exchanges between civilisations have been a major force of development. In the past, the then lesser developed European civilisation profited significantly from a peaceful exchange of goods and ideas with Arab cultures and Islamic empires. These relations took the form of trade, religious conversion and academic, societal and technological interactions. They have now reached a new dimension with modern information and communication as well transportation technologies.

As is the case with other regions and cultures, Arab culture today is challenged by globalisation and its consequences in terms of economic, social, geopolitical and global transformations as well as regional and societal cleavages and disparities. The transformations encompass moves towards more democracy and democratic practises, observance of fundamental freedoms and human rights, including women's rights, as well as the respect for common universal values. They also are addressing

mindsets, stereotypes, new ignorances and fundamentalist tendencies. The region is equally challenged by the power of instantaneous mass communication, and by the power of global financial networks. This gives rise to concerns about the preservation of language and identity. Clearly, the search for an authentic and shared global community must make use of the modality of dialogue between different faiths, cultures and civilisations.

Certain values and principles are universally shared and cut across all civilizations, establishing a sense of community among them. Dialogue nurtures a common base for human existence rooted in history, heritage and tradition. Any dialogue must focus on the importance of shared values, which give meaning to life and provide form and substance to identities. Tolerance is such a core principle that transcends civilisational differences. Dialogue must foster tolerance and respect for the other and acknowledge and uphold diversity. Above all, values are essential for preserving a peaceful and just society.

In future, it will be important to promote a constantly renewed awareness of these universal values, ethical principles and attitudes that lie at the very heart of a true dialogue. Respect for human rights, inclusiveness, and the search for unity in diversity need to be constantly reaffirmed and reasserted in the light of major social and economic transformations, such as those induced by globalisation.

Education an indispensable element for sustained dialogue

Education is a unique instrumentality and process to help forge unity in the midst of differences and to ensure sustained and continuous dialogue between cultures and civilisations. Indeed, education at all levels – through formal, non-formal and informal approaches – has an inherent ability to release the potential of dialogue, provided it is accessible to all.

The Arab world is a region in transition, developing and modernising itself while being dedicated to preserving its traditions and values. Its young population is in need of educational institutions and educational materials that are able to serve as a vehicle for peace, dialogue and intercultural understanding. Otherwise, the risk exists that youth can be instrumentalized and used as vehicles for spreading misunderstanding, intolerance, and hate.

But the quest for education alone is not enough. The ambition must be to introduce and be guided by “quality education” to develop an understanding of universally shared values and to encourage the

development of key competencies for peace and the prevention and resolution of conflict and which can serve as a conveyor to knowledge in general and knowledge about other cultures, civilizations, religions and traditions in particular. The need to bring about quality education, in the context of the Education for All (EFA) movement, will be paramount for the Arab region.

The universal – political – commitment to the six goals of EFA adopted in Dakar in April 2000 has created a particularly powerful base for a range of initiatives and approaches, among others to attain gender parity in schooling by 2005, which has been enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by all Heads of Government at the United Nations Millennium Summit. The quest for gender parity will however not only be essential for the attainment of the MDGs, but equally for the social and economic dynamic development of all societies in the region.

National EFA plans in the Arab region have started to raise awareness among parents in collaboration with civil society, the media and government bodies of the social, economic and developmental cost of neglecting the education of girls. The establishment of sound indicators to monitor and evaluate the situation is another important strategy towards EFA and thus a valuable impact on the promotion of peace, dialogue and understanding.

A systematic incorporation of dialogue into curricula necessitates substantial educational reforms. Purposes and goals of national education policies may need to be revised, curricula, textbooks, school and teaching learning materials reviewed and revised, the precepts of sustainable development promoted, appreciation for and the practice of democratic values, human rights, pluralism and non-violence taught, all complemented and enriched through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Strategies to educate new generations of teachers and a reorientation and education of serving teachers must complement this agenda. The inevitably long-term processes of human rights education and conflict resolution point to the necessity to extend these actions to lifelong education, which encourages learning beyond formal education, in informal and non-formal settings.

Cultural diversity and cultural heritage the route to identity and reconciliation

Today, Arab countries are encouraged to rediscover their common heritage and their shared values – beyond the diversity of languages, cultures and religions. The creation of a common cultural space, based on the full participation by civil society, would facilitate such an endeavour. This new space will need to be built around the precepts of dialogue and universal values.

Cultural heritage in the Arab world is anchored in rich and complex civilizations, such as ancient Egypt, Sumer, Assyria, Babylonia and Phoenicia. Yet, Islam and the Arabic languages constitute the two predominant features of a common heritage of the region, which comprises language, literature, religion, culture, science, art and traditions. The region's heritage is an important and often overlooked dimension of the notion of modernity for Arab culture and civilisation. The region attests that cultural diversity does act as a catalyst for dialogue and offers a source of richness for all civilisations and cultures. It is undeniable that a dialogue among civilisations is inseparably linked with cultural diversity, as defined in the Universal UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by the 31st session of UNESCO's General Conference on 2 November 2001.

Preserving and using the Arab world's rich cultural heritage as a source for the creation of a modern identity supposes the abandonment of intercultural antagonisms and the rise of a common culture based on the acceptance of diversity. The ability to manage cultural pluralism determines the maturing of society and allows the latter to evolve to a situation where rational choices can be exercised in building a democratic society capable of integrating differences. In this sense, cultural pluralism is an opportunity for the future and a motor for the present. It is this potential, which makes it a constructive force.

Like in other regions, cultural heritage can also serve as a vector for reconciliation. In building on knowledge about history, cultural accomplishments and cultural exchanges, a foundation is laid that can provide, if properly utilised, an enhancement of mutual understanding, respect and pride, and a locus of convergence of different experiences.

Dialogue and terrorism

Terrorism and the notion of a clash of civilizations have had a strong resonance in the Arab region and among its inhabitants. The

“fertile ground” and “mindsets”, adduced by Samuel Huntington, which are seen to allow for terrorism must be placed in the context of the effects of globalisation and an emerging sense of relative deprivation and isolation. Education is one, if not a key long-term means to address roots and problems of terrorism. A holistic rights- and values-based approach is necessary to buttress human security through the application of the rule of law and the pursuit of social justice and democratic practises.

Quality education is not only relevant within the broader, above-mentioned field of education; it is also a key element in any dissuasion strategy against terrorism. The notion of quality education in this context not merely encompasses aspects of educational attainment, but especially the aspects of curricula and their content focusing on peace, shared values, human rights, democracy, tolerance and mutual understanding. High levels of educational attainment alone do not prevent a person from committing violent and unlawful acts. UNESCO has therefore deliberately placed programmes related to education for peace and human rights within the area of quality of education, emphasizing the importance of addressing these issues within a long-term overall strategy.

In this context, mass media and ICTs can serve as effective learning vehicles and tools of engagement. The growing influence of the mass media on the perceptions of increasing numbers of individuals, especially among the growing – and often unemployed – young generation in the region, and the concomitant importance of free and independent media in that regard must be increasingly recognised and supported. The primordial challenge will be to induce and channel the contribution of the media and other forms of ICTs towards a message of peace, tolerance and dialogue as well as gender equality rather than to the propagation of messages of intolerance, hate, ignorance and false idols.

Beyond, the fight against terrorism can also be aided by a free and broad access to knowledge and information. Linked with efforts to secure pluralism and cultural diversity, this combination will not only be critical in the fight against poverty and for human development, but equally for the fight against terrorism. For it is in promoting economic and social welfare and creating strong democratic societies that terrorism is most effectively defeated.

5. Conclusion

Dialogue among cultures and civilisations challenges old and new forms of ignorance and prejudice. It promotes mutual understanding and exchange, tolerance and peace. If the objective is to instill a culture of peace in the region, then the principal focus must be on a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.

Dialogue among civilisations and cultures is needed in order to challenge and prove invalid Samuel Huntington's thesis that the call for tolerance, equality and justice will inevitably clash with Arab religious and social traditions.

Dialogue among cultures and civilisations bridges the development of a country's citizens and underpins their political, economic, social and cultural integration in the global community of nations.

The concept of human development places people at the centre of all development efforts by focusing on an enlargement of people's choices. Our host country, Yemen, as many other countries in the Arab world, faces today the task of enabling its population to make essential choices: to lead a long and healthy life; to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living; to live in political, economic and social freedom; to enjoy guaranteed human rights and self-respect as well as opportunities for being creative and productive. This has been highlighted through the last two Arab Human Development Reports, produced by UNDP in 2002 and 2003 and represents a formidable agenda for political action and change. Particular mention should be made in that context of the Reports' message that women in the region suffer – more than in other regions - from inequality of opportunity, evident in employment status, wages and gender-based occupational segregation.

Ultimately, a dialogue among civilisations is not only a process between, but also within civilizations. The Sana'a Symposium bringing together decision-makers and leaders, intellectuals, scholars, researchers and actors of civil society from the Arab world and from other cultural areas, complemented by experts from the United Nations family, will be a unique occasion to uncover and examine assumptions, to shed light on the meaning of shared values and to integrate multiple perspectives through dialogue. The ultimate reward of such an exercise

will be to let peoples and countries from many different cultures and backgrounds come together – and not apart.

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1. UN Resolution “Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace” - A/RES/53/243; UN Resolution: Culture of Peace A/RES/52/13
 2. United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/6 of 21 November 2001: Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations.
 3. adopted by the “International Ministerial Conference on the Dialogue among Civilizations: Quest for New Perspectives” in New Delhi, India, 9 and 10 July 2003 – for full text see <http://www.unesco.org/dialogue2001/delhi/index.html>
 4. adopted by the Regional Forum on the Dialogue among Civilisations in Ohrid, 29 and 30 August 2003 – for full text see <http://www.unesco.org/dialogue2001/ohrid/message.htm>
 5. “New Perspectives in UNESCO’s Activities pertaining to the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures, including in particular follow-up to the New Delhi Ministerial Conference” – General Conference resolution 32 C/47 of October 2003
 6. see <http://whc.unesco.org/nwhc/pages/sites/main.htm>
 7. General Assembly resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998
 8. “Call for international cooperation to prevent and eradicate acts of terrorism” – UNESCO General Conference resolution 31 C/39
 9. “New Perspectives in UNESCO’s Activities pertaining to the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures, including in particular follow-up to the New Delhi Ministerial Conference” – UNESCO General Conference resolution and background document 32 C/INF15

Part III

Annexes



Programme

Tuesday, 10 February 2004

9.00-10.15 Opening of the Symposium

Abdul-Aziz AL-MAQALEH, Advisor to the President, Director of the
Yemen Center for Studies and Research

Hans d'ORVILLE, Director of the Bureau of Strategic Planning
of UNESCO

Ahmed JALALI, Permanent Delegate of Iran to UNESCO,
former President of the General Conference
of UNESCO reads a message of H.E.

Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

H.E. Yuichi ISHII, Ambassador of Japan to Yemen

Ahmed SAYYAD, Assistant Director-General of the Sector for
External Relations and Cooperation of
UNESCO, Representative of the Director-
General

H.E. Khalid AL-ROWISHAN: Minister of Culture and Tourism, Yemen

H.E. Abd al-Qadir BA JAMAL Prime Minister of the Republic of Yemen

10.45-13.00 Globalization and the Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations

Co-Chair:

- Abdul-Salam AL-MAJALI, former Prime Minister of Jordan, President of the Islamic Academy of Sciences
- Eric ROULEAU, Journalist and former French Ambassador to Turkey and Tunisia
- Abdul-Aziz AL-TOUAJIRI, Director-General of ISESCO
- James W. RAWLEY, UN Resident Co-ordinator in Yemen
- Martin WOOLLACOTT, Columnist on international affairs for The Guardian, London
- Vittorio IANARI, Representative of Communita di sant'Egidio, Rome
- Qaderi Ahmad HAIDAR, Researcher at the Yemeni Center for Studies and Research, Sana'a

Discussion

15.00-17.00 The Contribution of Education, at all Levels and Stages, to the Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations

Co-Chair:

- Abdul-Aziz AL-TOUAJIRI, Director-General of ISESCO
- Ahmed JALALI, Permanent Delegate of Iran to UNESCO, former President of the General Conference of UNESCO
- Michael OMOLEWA, President of the 32nd General Conference of UNESCO and Permanent Delegate of Nigeria to UNESCO
- Saleh BA SOWRRA, President of the University of Sana'a
- Michael HUDSON, Professor at the Georgetown University, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Washington
- Abdalla BUBTANA, former Director and UNESCO Representative in the Arab States of the Gulf, Doha

Discussion

17.20-19.00 The Impact of Arabic Culture and its Accomplishments on other Cultures

Co-Chair:

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| Gunter MULACK, | Ambassador and Commissioner for the Dialogue with the Islamic World, German Foreign Office |
| Khair El-Din HASEEB, | Director-General of the Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut |

Keynote speakers:

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| Peter CLARK, | Chief Executive Officer, The Amar International Charity Foundation, London |
| Ahmad AL-ASBAHI, | Deputy Secretary-General of the General Popular Congress of Yemen |
| Michel BARBOT, | Professor at the University of Strasbourg |

Discussion

19.30 Dinner & Cultural Event with traditional music – hosted by the Minister of Education

WEDNESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2004

9.00-11.00 The Role of the Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations in Curbing Terrorism in all its Forms and Establishing Lasting, Universal Peace

Co-Chair:

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| Abdul Karim AL-ERIANI, | Secretary General of the General Popular Congress, former Prime Minister of Yemen |
| Michael Hudson, | Professor at the George Washington University, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Washington |

Keynote speakers:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Adib F. FARHA, | Advisor to the Lebanese Minister of Finance and Member of Lebanon's National Audio-Visual Media Council |
| Caroline FOUREST: | Journalist, Co-founder and Chief Editor of "Pro-Choix", Co-author of the book "Crossfire" |

Wahebah FARIE',

President of the Queen Arwa University,
Sana'a

Discussion

11.30 -13.00 The Dialogue between East and West – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Co-Chair:

Peter CLARK,

Chief Executive Officer, The Amar
International Charity Foundation, London

Mongi BOUSNINA,

Director-General of ALECSO, Tunis

Keynote speakers:

Gunter MULACK,

Ambassador and Commissioner for the
Dialogue with the Islamic World, German
Foreign Office

Helmi SHARAWI,

Director, Arab and African Research Centre in
Cairo

Albert SASSON,

Morocco, International Consultant and
former Assistant Director-General of
UNESCO

Hassan AL-LAWZI,

Member of the Consultative Council,
President of the Culture and Youth
Commission of the Council

Discussion

List of Participants

ABDULQADIR, Abdulghani (Yemen)

Head of the political department of the Socialist party

AL-AMRI, Hussein (Yemen)

Member of the Consultative Council and Representative of Yemen to the Executive Board of UNESCO

AL-ASBAHI, Ahmad (Yemen)

Deputy Secretary-General of the General Popular Congress

ALAWADHI, Hamid (Yemen)

Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Yemen to UNESCO

AL-ERIANI, Abdul-Karim (Yemen)

Secretary General of the General Popular Congress, former Prime Minister of Yemen

AL-HADHRANI, Bilqees (Yemen)

Member of the Bath Party, Yemen

AL-JABIRI, Mohammed Saleh (Tunisia)

Manager of the Arab Encyclopaedia of Arab Scientifics, ALECSO, Tunis

AL-KADASI, Mohammed Abdel Bari (Yemen)

Secretary-General of the Yemeni National Commission to UNESCO

AL-LAWZI, Hassan (Yemen)

Member of the Consultative Council, President of the Culture and Youth Commission of the Council

AL-MAJALI, Abdul-Salam (Jordan)

former Prime Minister of Jordan, President of the Islamic Academy of Sciences, Amman

AL-MAQALEH, Abdul-Aziz (Yemen)

Advisor to the President, Director of the Center for Yemeni Studies and Research

AL-MIKHLAFI, Abdul-Malik (Yemen)

Secretary General of the Nassery Party, Yemen

AL-ROWISHAN, Khalid, (Yemen)

Minister of Culture and Tourism of Yemen

AL-TOUAJIRI, Abdul-Aziz (Saudi-Arabia)

Director-General of ISESCO, Morocco

ARUBAI, Momhamed (Yemen)

Member of the Union of Popular Forces Party

BA JAMAL, Abd al-Qadir (Yemen)

Prime Minister of Yemen

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Excerpts from The Sana'a Call for Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations

New approaches will be required for education, cultural diversity, the media and information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly at regional and sub-regional levels.

The global Education for All (EFA) movement is an inseparable part of the agenda... Education at all levels - through formal, non-formal and informal approaches - has an inherent ability to nurture and sustain dialogue. We need both an education for dialogue and dialogue for education.

The question of dialogue between cultures and the interaction and merging of civilizations is a major issue for intellectuals and advocates of a harmonious human approach. The purpose should be to serve the goals of the inhabitants of this earth, to bring about the coexistence and peace that emanate from a spirit of tolerance, from human accord, from ties of love and conciliation, from the exchange of material and moral benefits, and from the enhancement of knowledge and economic integration among peoples.

Sana'a is truly the place to assert common principles, aspirations and goals as well as our hope for a bright future in which democratic dialogue, development, peace and close human cooperation prevail.

Abd Al-Qadir Ba Jamal
Prime Minister of Yemen

The ability to manage cultural pluralism as a constructive force determines the maturing of society... Beyond the diversity of traditions and cultures, Islam and the Arabic language constitute two predominant features of a common heritage of the region, which comprises culture, religion, science, literature, art, and architecture.

Free, independent and pluralistic media, both regional and international, can aid understanding and must be cherished... The media should be more aware of its influence, for good or ill, in that its performance can enhance or diminish dialogue. More discussion of such issues between representatives of regional and local media should be encouraged.

At a time when there is renewed focus on the Arab and Islamic civilizations in political and academic circles as well as in civil society at large, the International Symposium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations, held in Sana'a, Yemen, on 10-11 February 2004, was both a timely and significant event. Today, the dialogue among cultures and civilizations is no longer a mere catchword with which everybody agrees and sympathizes. Instead, it is being transformed into a solid tool and working mechanism for setting global agendas and yielding concrete results. The task now is for its instrumentality to be demonstrated through the full commitment of and resolute action by all parties concerned.

Ko chiro Matsuura
Director-General of UNESCO

For further information about UNESCO's activities related to the Dialogue among Civilizations, please see:
<http://www.unesco.org/dialogue>