

Dialogue of Civilizations

Introduction

In the year 2000, President Mohammad Khatami of Iran called for a global Dialogue of Civilizations.

“Believing in dialogue paves the way for vivacious hope; the hope to live in a world permeated by virtue, humility and love, and not merely by the reign of economic indices and destructive weapons.”

Mohammad Khatami, President, Islamic Republic of Iran

That call was taken up by Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations and the year 2001 was proclaimed the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

“The United Nations itself was created in the belief that dialogue can triumph over discord, that diversity is a universal value and that the peoples of the world are far more united by their common fate than they are divided by their separate identities. Alongside an infinite diversity of cultures, there does exist one global civilization in which humanity's ideas and beliefs meet and develop peacefully and productively.”

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General

Former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami introduced the idea of “Dialogue among Civilizations” as a response to “Clash of Civilizations” famously voiced by Samuel P. Huntington in 1993. The term was initially used by Austrian philosopher Hans Köchler who in 1972, in a letter to UNESCO, had suggested the holding of an international conference on the "dialogue between different civilizations" (*dialogue entre les différentes civilisations*) and had organized in 1974, a first international conference on the role of intercultural dialogue ("The Cultural Self-comprehension of Nations") with the support and under the auspices of Senegalese President Léopold Sédar Senghor.

Huntington's prediction of a clash between civilizations and the fear of confrontation had prompted the current dialogue of civilizations. The conflicts that Huntington mentioned do not stem from religious or cultural reasons but have economic or social reasons. According to Huntington's thesis of civilizational clash, the trends of

global conflict are increasingly appearing at the civilizational divisions. The phenomenon can be explained by common humanitarian factors like greed, underground economies and commerce.

While Huntington put emphasis on the ongoing violence and struggle among civilizations throughout the history, dialogues either among civilizations, cultures or states all have a long history as well. Last century portrayed what Huntington emphasized but it was eventually replaced by dialogue of two confronting powers. A turning point came about in 1980s. A strategic balance was established between America and the former Soviet Union a decade later. There began a normalization of diplomatic relations between America and China; the West and the East Europe.

Whereupon Huntington saw the clash of civilizations scenario as mainly a social-scientific prediction grounded in a primordialist worldview of politics, the political discourse of dialogue of civilizations considers it as a dangerous possibility (or political construction) resulting from wrong policies that need to be opposed. From a normative perspective, it is self-evident that the proposal for a dialogue of civilizations is formulated as a reaction to the clash of civilizations thesis.

With the demise of the Cold War era, dialogue among civilizations has gained a clearer purpose, a better organization, broader scope and a greater continuity. Great examples of increasing dialogue among civilizations is the UNU Project on the Dialogue of Civilizations by the United Nations and international conferences and workshops held by UNESCO in Tokyo and Kyoto to pursue the meaningful inter-civilizations dialogue further.

The scope of dialogue of civilizations spread from political, military, security fields to more social and economic arenas and also into the areas of culture and psyche. Dialogues over economic, political, security, strategic, human rights and other global issues gradually deepened. The military confrontation and international competition have turned into an international cooperation in economics, technology and science.

All these developments prove that, unlike Huntington's thesis, there is a great amount of effort by the international community to promote dialogue among civilizations and it cannot be denied that dialogue has been a major milestone throughout the history of human culture and international relations. Dialogue of civilizations stresses the global resurgence of cultural and religious pluralism in world politics and identifies the quest for cultural authenticity as the main contemporary political issue effecting the relationships between the Western and non-Western world.

On November 4, 1998, the United Nations, whose main goal is to guarantee security and peace all over the world, designated at the beginning of the new millennium year of 2001 as the "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations" and it had won

universal approval. In the same year, on September 11, the shadow of a future clash of civilizations came looming down with incredible velocity, leaving in its wake an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and war. At the dawn of the third millennium, this coincidence increasingly appears as a sign of the times, a symbolic indication of the historical epoch we are entering.

Promoted by the General Assembly resolutions, the persistent progress of dialogues among civilizations is believed to enable the healthy development of human cultures and a new evolution of international relations. Hence, there is a new tendency toward settling the international conflicts through dialogue and peace.

Defining the “Dialogue of Civilizations”

To understand the concept of “the dialogue of civilizations”, an analysis for meanings of “dialogue” and “civilization” is required. What sets a dialogue or how it differs from a debate and a negotiation is that it does not aim to make one's opinion or viewpoints get control over another, or even to always reach a general consensus. Rather, its goal is "better mutual understanding of the values, norms, historical experience, and cultural reality underlying the words and actions of others" (International Conference on the Dialogue of Civilizations by UNU and UNESCO, 2001).

A *civilization* is considered to be a group of peoples, which through an extended period of time have developed a common *culture*. This means a distinctive system of values and practices, a common language and way of looking at the world and acting in sum, a distinctive way of being.

Dialogue is not *negotiation* or *polemics*. In *negotiation*, the parties involved are concerned with the satisfaction of their personal interests. *Negotiation* usually ends in some form of accommodation of interests that all parties accept. In *polemics*, the parties are not, like in *dialogue*, involved in the work of reciprocal elucidation of the subject under discussion. In *dialogue*, on the contrary, there is a cooperative search for truth. *Dialogue* means shedding light (*dia*) into things through the spoken word (*logos*), bringing forth that which is hidden, namely, the ground or foundation of what is present and which nevertheless pertain to the essence of things. The purpose of *dialogue* is to shed light on things, to clarify them, to bring them forth to full presence.

Once people overcome the lack of knowledge and prejudices about others, biased opinions and stereotypes will disappear and “othernesses” will no longer be a threat but an opportunity that offers different outlooks on the world. To attain such a dialogue, one has to be ready to tolerate other ways of thinking, people who live according to their own values and experiences other than their own alongside with mutual respect.

In the framework of the dialogue of civilizations, the concept civilization cannot be used to describe a dominant power at a certain period of time in history because this is an implication of there never exists more than one civilization at that time and therefore a dialogue cannot be attained. In the practice of the dialogue of civilizations, civilization does not constitute the entities defined merely by religion, state frontiers or economic and political dominance. Civilization refers to cultural features of a particular time or place and culture is not only the origin of an individual's identity, but also the essence of global mankind. Civilization means groups of people who share certain ways of organizing their societies as their traditions and values that underlie the social, political and economic institutions.

Finally, dialogue of civilizations refers to the act of listening to the beliefs, judgments, and anxieties of people both with a different cultural background, ethnic society or religion and with different political opinions, social status and economic leverage. Civilizations are intangible entities. The actors of a dialogue are always individuals who come from different civilizational backgrounds with different point of views and values, and who have an interaction with others from other identities with different socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. That kind of broad view is a necessity not to reinforce but to reduce the barriers in front of dialogue.

Dialogue of Civilizations

In the world, there are two groups of civilizations – one which perceives diversity as a threat and the other which sees it as an opportunity and an integral component for growth. We live in a world consisting of cultural varieties based on shared values of tolerance and respect, a world celebrating cultural diversity, a world insisting on fundamental human rights, freedom and self-determination.

Inter-civilizational dialogue, at its best, may lead to common goals about the future world we want to live in and a cooperative work to solve the problems facing mankind today. This does not necessarily mean a common, shared approach to every case. As human beings and civilization are drawn together, their differences could potentially breed conflicts. But without such a constructive dialogue, the future will less likely to become one that we want to live in. A dialogue between those who perceive diversity as a threat and those who see it as a tool of betterment and growth as intrinsically necessary is an important aspect of inter-civilizational relations.

One of the most serious threats to international peace and stability is the persistence or even creation in certain cases, of enemy stereotypes along civilizational lines. Partly due to the absence of a global balance of powers, the peoples, social and ethnic communities of many regions of the world are threatened by being divided along cultural or civilizational lines.

Over the centuries, the demonization or vilification of another civilization (particularly in regard to religious identity) has often been a prelude to armed conflict and has served to create a pretext for or to legitimize the violent pursuit of mainly economic interests. The ever growing problem of terrorist violence is intrinsically linked to the conflictual paradigm. The alienation between social and cultural groups within and between regions is further reinforced by the uncontrolled dynamic of conflicts of interests, disputes over sovereignty issues, economic rights etcetera, on the domestic, regional and international levels.

A dynamic relationship exists between the diversity of social, cultural, and religious value systems in an ever more globalized world on one hand and the consensus on a common system of values that result from the necessity to co-exist on the other hand. The exclusiveness a civilization may eventually attribute to its particular value system cannot be justified with the argument of diversity. Such an attitude will inevitably lead to conflicts with other civilizations.

If civilizations are allowed to become a divisive factor in the global interplay of forces, the reality of international relations will be that of prolonged conflict, at times even open war; whereas, if and when civilizations define themselves on the level of global interaction among each other, they may be the driving force behind the peaceful settlement of otherwise politically intractable disputes or conflicts. In this sense, the issue of civilizations is not merely of abstract philosophical interest, but of utmost political importance.

In the course of history, the “defense” of civilizations, especially in the form of religious identities, has often served as a pretext for waging war without moral or legal restrictions, without respect even for the basic humanitarian norms. If a *civilizational dimension* is brought into a specific conflict, the adversary is becoming the enemy in an *absolute* sense. In light of the recent sequence of events in regional and world politics, there may even be a “nuclear dimension” to the present confrontational scheme along civilizational lines.

In view of the destructive capabilities amassed not only by the traditional powers for global power, the states, but also by non-state actors, it has rapidly become an issue of collective survival. Under the changing circumstances of international security which are evidenced by the looming “global war on terror,” a kind of permanent conflict which may see no winner.

The history of the recent decades offers glaring examples of not only harsh, but also brutal clashes in different parts of the world. In 2012, we witnessed an armed conflict in Syria; disturbances in the Islamic world that were triggered by the emergence of the film “Innocence of Muslims”; the suppression of Christians in a number of Islamic countries; the ongoing pressure that several western countries are putting on Iran; the tension between Sudan and South Sudan; the conflict in the Sea of Japan, to

name a few. These clashes have been going on and are going on because in the life of human community there is considerably more natural consecutiveness than we actually thought there was.

Culture or civilization is often not the primary cause of confrontations, but is being used as vehicle of such conflicts. At the same time, somewhat juxtaposed to this conflictual context in which civilization is being instrumentalized, culture or civilization is being cherished as tools or measures of last resort, to counter what many people describe as loss of social identity resulting from globalization and the related political unipolarity.

Civilizational dialogue embodies the very norms governing the relations between nations that, in a previous era and in a different context of ideological rivalry, are represented by the doctrine of peaceful co-existence among nations. If practice in a consistent, credible and sustainable manner, the dialogue may expose the political agenda behind supposed cultural and civilizational conflicts and prevent a hitherto unseen perpetual confrontation between peoples, nations, and groups of nations in the name of civilization.

The Call for Dialogue of Civilizations

The fundamental challenge faced by the international community today is preventing the paradigm of the clash of civilizations from becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. The gap between the idea of peace and the reality of tension and conflict has proven to be a major challenge to the world and that challenge is not only due to conflicting political and economic interests.

Situations of conflict often arise in a complex setting of historical, social, cultural and political interaction between communities. Ignorance of each other's ways and lives and suspicion and mistrust through their differences have been a common cause throughout the history of mankind to too often break into war.

Civilization is but a thin skin. Mankind should have learned the lessons from the history of the crusades. History has shown that great civilizations flourished by sharing their ideas and experiences with other civilizations. After so many regional conflicts and two world wars, the nations must not repeat the same mistake in the global setup of the third millennium. Burdening potential conflicts of interests between nations with the factor of civilizational (respectively religious) identity gives the respective dispute or conflict a kind of absolute, quasi-metaphysical dimension from which it is almost impossible to withdraw or to disengage in the sense of rational principles of conflict resolution.

In the context of globality, civilizational multipolarity has become part of everyday life – mainly due to the rapid development of communication technologies. As a result of the globalized information and communication structures, a large number of civilizational entities exist simultaneously and are increasingly becoming aware of one another.

One of the basic disparities of contemporary international relations seems to lie in the globalized economy's trend towards *uniformity* as opposed to the *diversity* and self-assertion of a variety of cultures and civilizations. Civilizational identity is being reasserted to compensate for what many perceive as a loss of, or threat to, their social identity resulting from the trend towards uniformity of lifestyles brought about by globalization. At the same time, civilizational identity is being exploited to serve as basis of justification for political disputes, conflicts of economic interests etcetera that are initially triggered by the international actors' desire not only for self-preservation, but a tendency to increase their power over that of the others.

The progress of globalization has set the basic context and major theme for a global dialogue of civilizations. Globalization is not only an economic, financial and technological process which offers great benefits but it also presents the challenge of preserving and celebrating the rich intellectual and cultural diversity of humankind and of civilization.

The progress of globalization without dialogue may increase the probability of hegemony. The forms of reaction to this trend towards uniformity, associated by many with a global hegemonial agenda, are determined by a desire for reasserting the importance of national cultures, traditions, forms of expression, value systems etcetera. This desire will often be accompanied by a profound distrust of, and at times even aggressive attitudes towards, "alien" cultures and lifestyles that may be propagated – or may "impose" themselves in the perception of others – in the process of globalization. No civilization should try to establish hegemony over the other. The claim to civilizational superiority has too often been a recipe for confrontation, even armed conflict.

As an important element of a durable order of peace among nations and peoples, cultural relations have rightly become a preoccupation of modern foreign policy. However, under the conditions of today's global village, with the simultaneity and constant interaction among distant and distinct traditions, social identities and value systems, cultural foreign policy in the conventional diplomatic sense is not enough anymore. With the geopolitical changes that unfolded after the end of the Cold War, and in particular since the fateful event of 11 September at the beginning of the new millennium, the promotion of intercultural understanding has become more than just an ingredient, as important as it may be, of "peaceful coexistence" among nations.

There also exists a danger that even the discussion of dialogue among civilizations can be conducted in such a way that it reinforces barriers to dialogue, instead of bringing them down. The global community must be able to take care to promote dialogue without creating new boundaries and advance cooperation without stifling integration. To disregard civilizational values deprives us of hope to create a favourable image of the future and to establish just governance in the world community. It is high time that the architects of accelerated global changes give up their “juvenile mediocrity” and penchant for simplicity if they hope that their objective fits in the goals of human society. The coherence of world civilization and the potential for integration, quite the contrary, presume that a variety of cultures and civilizations will be preserved.

The world cannot stay poised indefinitely in a state of strained equilibrium, fraught with the danger of tensions and conflicts. The world needs a future of greater certainty and predictability, as well as the foundations for long-term relations based not only on pragmatic interests, but also on profound spiritual aspirations. Today we are witnessing the conclusion of spontaneous globalization. The outcome of that epoch seems to place into question the conviction that there exist some kinds of absolutely universal forms of humanistic values. What is especially important today is to foster mutual understanding among peoples in the humanitarian and public spheres.

On a sustainable basis, the only antidote to a looming “clash of civilizations” on the global level will be the propagation of *enlightenment* in a genuine philosophical sense, contributing to the creation of mutual awareness for each other’s civilization through a systematic *policy of dialogue* to be supported by all members of the international community. Only a broad public movement will be capable of making practical progress toward the objective of broadening the domain of dialogue and transforming it into an effective international process.

This calls for an integrative approach whereby the dialogue need to address issues of social justice: promote commitment to peace; no wars with civilizational undertones; civilizations cannot be allied if the exponents of one civilization wage war against exponents of another civilization; civilizations cannot erode the very foundations of multicultural societies and threatening the long-term stability of states. Consistency in the implementation of a policy of dialogue is absolutely essential for the integrative approach.

The main goal of the dialogue is to nurture a dialogue which is both preventive of conflicts and inclusive in nature. The dialogue is a useful concept to help improve and redefine diversity, enhance understanding among peoples and relations across cultures, combat prejudice, prevent conflict, and build lasting peace. Its core initiative is to initiate a new paradigm in international relations and those among human beings in our contemporary world.

The idea of dialogue of civilizations envisages “bridges” not “walls”. The dialogue is an inevitable aspect of human life and an important feature of social activities beginning from the smallest group of human beings to the biggest forms of communities. It is a way of interaction among social beings, a means of communication, mutual consent and sharing ideas thereby avoiding conflicts and moderating confrontations. The emphasis here is not on the geographical-territorial dimension of civilizations but rather on the normative one, that is, on civilizations as the great cultural and religious social traditions of the world.

The dialogue of civilizations is an appropriate and necessary answer to the notion of an inevitable clash of civilizations. As such, it provides a useful context for advancing cooperation over conflict. The dialogue draws on the deeper, ancient roots of cultures and civilizations to find what unites the peoples across all boundaries and how the past can provide signposts to unity just as easily as to enmity. Most importantly, the dialogue helps to discern the role of culture and civilization in contemporary conflicts, and distinguishes propaganda and false history from the real causes of war, easing the path to peace.

The dialogue of civilizations has become one of the keywords in the global discourse on issues of world order and peace. The nature of dialogue consists in the ability to see oneself from the perspective of the other. It entails that full understanding and development of any given civilization can only be achieved if the respective civilizational community not only takes note of, but positively interacts with other civilizations on the basis of normative equality. World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it.

The dialogue among civilizations is not an easy and quick process to be achieved and does not mean there are no conflicts any more, but rather it is a long and imperative process of mutual understanding and interpretation of diversity in the contemporary world. We cannot invite peoples and governments to the paradigm of dialogue of cultures and civilizations without learning lessons from history, without thoroughly investigating the reasons behind major world disasters, and without passing judgment on the existing dominant paradigm which is based on a dialogue of power and glorification of might. Diversity forms the basis for the dialogue of civilizations and the reality that makes the dialogue of civilizations necessary.

Recommendations

The world has experienced much destruction and human misery in the last 100 years, marked more by confrontations than cooperation. Common sense dictated that the calamities we brought upon ourselves in the past should be avoided and that peace and cooperation should replace confrontations and wars.

It is imperative to deliver the society of nations from the cataclysm of conflict. After the end of the bipolar world order which has divided the world along ideological lines and in the present volatile situation of international relations, the promotion of fair and balanced relations among civilizations – on the basis of equality and mutual respect and the preservation of peace and stability – has indeed become an existential issue for the international community.

As important as the proclamation of the year 2001 as the Year of the Dialogue of Civilizations may have been, the reality of international relations is still predominantly shaped by state actors. It will have to be restructured in such a way as to create adequate conditions for the global expression of civilizational values and identities – in the sense of a free and fair competition of ideas and world views. In this regard, responsible leadership is required on the part of the major representatives and opinion leaders in their distinct civilizational environments.

The new orientation suggest for a systemic approach that takes into account the interdependence between the realms of culture, politics and the economy, and makes intercultural relations a defining element of foreign policy. In our era of global interconnectedness, the assertion of cultural identity can only be envisioned on the basis of mutual respect and the acceptance of diversity. The conventional, often patronizing and propaganda-like approach in the domain of cultural cooperation, a legacy of the colonial era with its unilateral mindset, has essentially failed in the increasingly multi-polar framework of globalization.

Cultures and more generally, civilizations mutually depend upon each other in order to fully develop their identity and to reach a status of maturity and relevance on a global scale. Tolerance is a basic precondition for the development and advancement of a civilization. The fundamental ethical principle of mutuality (mutual recognition) comes into play. In order to be consistent in one's claiming the right of being accepted or tolerated by the other on an equal level, one has to accord or concede that very right to the other. This normative principle has the status of a metanorm. It is at the roots of the philosophy of "peaceful co-existence among civilizations".

A culture can only realize itself and reach a state of maturity if it is able to relate to other cultures and life-worlds in a comprehensive and interactive sense, a process one might also characterize by referring to the term of the "dialectics of cultural self-comprehension". The strength of a people or nation indeed depends on the ability to interact with other communities in a complex, multidimensional manner, something that also includes the capacity to see oneself through the eyes of the other. Without such interaction, a community will lack the skills it needs to compete and be successful in today's fast-changing global environment.

Humankind's bonds of common destiny need to be further strengthened. More and more governments across the world sought understanding rather than confrontation. More and more young people around the world are becoming followers of a generalized culture, a new system of values and behaviour patterns. The world is now characterized by globalization, not only in the economic and political fields, but culturally as well.

In order to "practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours", communities first have to understand each other, or appreciate each other's way of life and socio-cultural identity. This is only possible if we are knowledgeable about our distinct cultures, traditions and value systems.

Dealing with differences in a realistic manner neither repulsing "the other" nor denying his being different, is in a nation's well understood self-interest. Along these lines, intercultural dialogue must be more than a mere corollary of a state's compartmentalized cultural policy. In order to be credible and sustainable, dialogue must be redefined in a comprehensive and integrative sense. It should cover the entire spectrum of the life of a community, and not only aspects of high culture. If dialogue is to be relevant, it cannot be conducted in an abstract manner that isolates issues of cultural and civilizational identity from the realms of politics and the economy.

Each civilization must accept the basic fact of other civilizations existing simultaneously with all their different value systems, beliefs, social habits etcetera. Each civilization must preserve its identity in the furiously changing contemporary world and make its contribution to the common treasure house. Preserving any identity means creating a certain civilizational infrastructure for interaction and dialogue, which exerts an organizing and ordering influence on the civilizations which are interacting.

Accepting the need for co-existence as basic norm for the very preservation of peace in the context of globalization and recognizing this norm as a value that is to be shared by all civilizational groups irrespective of their own specific value systems will only be a first but essential step towards the development of a comprehensive philosophical framework and of a positive social attitude towards a genuine dialogue among civilizations. This philosophical awareness may be the first step towards a comprehensive and lasting sustainable process of civilizational dialogue.

In today's globalized environment, the dialogue among civilizations has to be the most important *desideratum* of world peace. Global threat of aggressive intolerance can only be overcome through a "new culture of tolerance" as essential part of a dialogue of cultures. This is even more relevant today when regional conflicts, systemic contradictions and disparities of the global order have become more acute.

The implementation of an agenda of dialogue is quintessential not only for the self-realization of each and every civilization, but for the survival of all nations. It alone will help avoid endless confrontation that might finally defeat all civilizations' and nations' interest in self-preservation. It is necessary to develop a new culture of tolerance through the perception of a newly interrelated world in which the security of everyone is based on mutual understanding, confidence and co-operation.

There is no blueprint for the construction of a multicultural and peaceful world order in contemporary international relations. For such a global structure to emerge, we need a theory inspired by the idea of dialogue of civilizations. The link between the growing multipolar configuration of the international system and regionalism as political process could represent a critical issue for the future of global peace.

Accordingly, the issue of diversity must be dealt with in a multifaceted and integrative manner. The rationale behind measures to promote dialogue of civilizations is that a sustainable order of peace requires a holistic approach that integrates all areas of global interaction due to its universal and inclusive character, is ideally suited. In this era of ever increasing interdependence among people, and peoples of distinct cultural and religious identities, dealing with differences has itself become a cultural technique and, more than that, a skill that is indispensable for the prosperity and success of each and every community.

It is not the clash of civilizations that threatens world relations, but precisely the weakening of civilizational principles, encouraged by the West, which asserts that its system takes priority. Diversity should be interiorized by each civilization and should not be seen as a threat, but as a chance for further developing and enriching the identity and awareness of one's own civilization:

1. Diversity is a universal virtue and the peoples of the world are far more united by their common fate than they are divided by their separate identities. The dialogue of civilizations, within and between civilizations, cultures and groups can triumph over discord and help achieve sustainable peace and prosperity.
2. The diversity of human cultures should be celebrated. Cultural dialogue helps sow the seeds of peace based on universal acceptance and observance of basic human rights. The dialogue provides an opportunity to explore past legacies of different cultures and reflect on getting to know the cultures of others in the future.
3. The dialogue of civilizations must enable governments to pursue the higher goals of peace and tolerance between nations and within nations. The idea of tolerance and celebrating diversity has to be brought home for future generations and for the benefit of all of us.

4. The dialogue is a useful concept to inform people of different cultures and civilizations of the benefits of cultural pluralism and exchange. It is necessary to promote the dialogue as the accepted mode of behaviour for settling disputes and differences.
5. There exists one global civilization based on shared values of tolerance and freedom defined by its tolerance of dissent, its celebration of cultural diversity, its insistence on fundamental universal human rights, and its belief in the right of people everywhere to have a say in how they are governed and how they want to govern themselves.
6. Civilizations and cultures, are forever changing, growing, developing, and adapting themselves in tandem with the changing of times. Integration, migration and globalization are bringing different races, cultures and ethnicities into ever closer contact with each other. Globalization does not promote uniformity but the global community should benefit from globalization to promote dialogue across cultures, societies and beliefs in order to address the root causes of conflicts. The rich diversity of the world's civilizations could and should be utilized for global harmony and peace, rather than for clash and conflict. It is important for governments to highlight the benefits of cultural pluralism and the enrichment of civilizations via the dialogue of civilizations.
7. The increasing interaction among people is the consequence of the increased movements across borders, as well as the incredible transmission of ideas. But, societies and cultures are not and should not be isolated entities. Governments today must stand the test of modern times, when integration, migration and globalization are bringing different races, cultures and ethnicities into ever closer contact with each other. It is important to visualize a world even more interdependent and technologically advanced than the present where every aspect of human interchange politically, economically and socially is globalized. All governments must, therefore, promote converging values that are common to all humankind.
8. Many wars stem from people's fear of those who are different from themselves. There is therefore a self-evident need to learn how to better manage diversity. In this context, diversity should be used as an asset. The use of diversity as a threat is the seed of war. Only through dialogue on a wide range of issues – the impact of globalization and the internet; the concept of the clash of civilizations; the need for a dialogue within nations as well as between nations; the practical objectives of a dialogue – can such fears be overcome and end confrontation and violence.

A number of practical measures may be considered in the fields of education, politics, diplomacy, sports and tourism that follows from a comprehensive and

integrative approach and that will be required to make dialogue a meaningful and relevant factor of international relations. Such measures include but not limited to:

- i. Promote the organizational coordination of the education system (on all levels: primary, secondary, graduate) in such a way that all forms of vilification or demonization of other civilizations and cultural expressions, particularly in the form of religious beliefs, are eradicated from textbooks and curricula in general. Cultural stereotyping should be completely eliminated from national curricula and educational systems should, as far as possible, reflect the actual diversity in terms of cultures and religions;
- ii. In the field of arts and sports: Promote international cultural exchanges on all levels and in a non-discriminatory manner. The transnational dimension of modern mass spectator in sports should be properly reflected and made use of in terms of the potential for overcoming a narrow-minded perception of “the other” as adversary;
- iii. Encourage and support the utilization of the ever more important electronic media (including satellite TV and Internet) in the service of promoting better understanding among nations, peoples and civilizations;
- iv. Introduce credible and enforceable legislation banning hate propaganda, racial and religious incitement, and the cult of violence in general. The right of free speech, free expression of one’s beliefs, finds its limits when these freedoms are used to deny that very right to others, whether individuals or communities.
- v. In international tourism: the potential of today’s global travel industry, an essential factor of income for many countries especially in the developing world, should be fully used in terms of the opportunity it provides for intercultural encounters and knowledge. In that regard, the impact of certain practices of mass tourism should be carefully assessed such as exporting one’s local conditions to distant places without due consideration of the compatibility of lifestyles. Tourism should not create animosities and nurture mutual prejudices, but should help to overcome them.
- vi. In domestic politics: countries whose leaders have begun to question, or even reject outright, the rationale of multiculturalism may find it useful to study the actual experience with multicultural societies in other parts of the world, especially in post-colonial countries. Traditionally monocultural societies in the industrialized world that have

become multicultural due to migration and economic globalization can learn from societies in states that were originally established on a multicultural basis. Such an exchange of intercultural experiences can play a constructive role in today's increasingly interconnected world, especially in the reduction of tensions within countries. The phasing out of racial, religious or ethnic profiling by immigration authorities will be another important contribution from the domestic side to an integrative approach to intercultural dialogue.

- vii. In the field of international law: the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions should be implemented systematically and in all its aspects. Support for a global dialogue among civilizations cannot be separated from the commitment to interculturality in the sense of "existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect".
- viii. In the domain of the internet and new social media: the last decades' rapid development of information technology that has enabled entirely new forms of interactive communication has also transformed, or is about to transform, societies and state systems. The interconnectivity and interactivity within today's global information village will gradually contribute to the normalization of cultural diversity in the eyes of the global public, and foster a more mature and lasting acceptance of differences.

Conclusion

Today, dialogue of civilizations is at the very heart of such creative effort to secure the future of world peace. The foundation that a dialogue in itself is the basic principle fostering interaction among civilizations, as well as, a principle that paves the way to harmonization of international relations. One may state without exaggeration that *dialogue on the level of civilizations* has become indispensable for the preservation of peace on a global scale.

Thus, the dialogue of civilizations is the fundamental requirement for defining each civilization's identity and for reaching its maturity and universal relevance. The common values underlying all civilizations – making possible genuine civilizational progress – are those of *tolerance* and *mutual respect*. Acceptance and realization of those values is necessary, though not the only condition for the adequate self-comprehension and identity of a civilization.

The promotion of intercultural understanding in general will contribute to strengthening the ever more complex social and cultural network spanning the globe and uniting people everywhere in the pursuit of a common goal defined by the jointly agreed rules. A civilization will only reach maturity if it engages in *genuine* dialogue.

The nations that are publicly committed to partnership and dialogue among civilizations must live up to this challenge. They should make clear that no state or people, as influential or powerful as they may be, can use the paradigm of dialogue to justify a strategy or policy of cultural superiority.

The threat of culture wars and conflicts due to civilizational exceptionalism must be ended once and for all. The unity of mankind can only be preserved, and peace can only be maintained through the recognition of the diversity of the human race with all that this entails in terms of an integrated policy of economic, social and cultural cooperation.

To achieve this goal, Governments, the United Nations system and other relevant international and non-governmental organizations need to continuously plan and implement cultural, educational, and social programmes to promote the concept of the dialogue of civilizations.