

Fez – His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist Him, addressed, on Tuesday November 22, 2022, a message to participants in the 9th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), which is held on November 22 and 23 in Fez.

Here follows the full text of the Royal Message, which was read by Mr. André Azoulay, Advisor to HM the King.

“Praise be to God,

May peace and blessings be upon the Prophet, His Kith and Kin

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,

The Honorable High Representative of the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilizations,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is holding its 9th Global Forum on African soil. It is thereby giving a strong signal of continuity and universality, uniting everyone around a shared purpose, which is to foster ‘an alliance of peace’, and a common objective, which is to respond to the imperative need of ‘living together’, in the name of ‘one humanity’.

That the Alliance of Civilizations should meet in Fez is perfectly natural. Did Morocco not have the privilege and honor of being one of the founding members of the Alliance? Is Fez not the spiritual capital of a Kingdom steeped in history? Is the Al-Quarawiyin University in Fez not the oldest university in the world – the place where Muslim and Jewish scholars, and even a pontiff, completed their instruction? Today, is its Euro-Mediterranean University not shaping a space for academic and intercultural dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean? Clearly, Fez is the very incarnation of a fruitful alliance of civilizations.

That the Alliance of Civilizations should meet in Fez is also a fitting privilege. After New York, Baku, Bali, Vienna, Doha, Rio, Istanbul and Madrid, it was only natural that the Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations should convene on African soil. Is Africa not the cradle of humanity, the melting pot of civilizations, the pool of

youth and the promise of the future?

For all these reasons – and many more – I wanted the venue of this Global Forum to symbolize the dual meaning of your gathering in its essence – as embodied by Fez – as well as in its scope, as reflected by Africa. It is my cherished hope that this Forum will lead to concrete results. I do not think it could be otherwise, given the importance of the subject and our awareness of its urgency.

That is the meaning of the message I am sending to this 9th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. It reflects my confidence that this meeting will bring the added value expected by me and the Secretary General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Antonio GUTERRES. It also attests to our common determination to continue giving concrete substance to the excellent cooperation between the Kingdom of Morocco and the United Nations Organization.

Today, we are walking down the path opened by those who have worked to make sure the Alliance of Civilizations is both relevant and influential. I want to commend the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Miguel Angel MORATINOS, for his resolve and his commitment.

The fearless minds which conceived the Alliance of Civilizations have built a platform for the future. Today, we are thinking of all those – especially in Spain and Türkiye – who have contributed to ensuring the sustainability and institutionalization of this organization as a model tribune for the promotion of understanding, trust and dialogue between cultures, religions and civilizations. The ideals of peace which inspired us in 2004 are the same as those guiding us in this Forum.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current context is marked by the resurgence of the very causes which led to the creation of the Alliance of Civilizations:

- Never before has our civilization been so exposed; never before has ‘living together’ come under such a threat, on a daily basis;
- Rarely has the Other been perceived with such a level of suspicion, or used to stir up fear and foment hatred;

- Radical positions are permeating the debate and cancelling out moderate voices; religions are too often manipulated, when they are not simply stigmatized;
- Populism is rocking societies and inventing questions without answering them, except to brandish migration as a scarecrow or an electoral weapon, and to turn migrants into scapegoats;
- Continents that had turned away from war are going back to arms and violence – all forms of violence;
- Covid-19 signaled the resurgence of withdrawal into oneself, at a time when the crisis could have given rise to a firm belief in a common destiny;
- At a time when the planet is producing enough food to feed all humans, food insecurity is looming large over the world;
- Terrorism feeds on separatism; it lurks in places where political instability slows down socio-economic development;

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always a suitable time to talk about peace: peace not just as the absence of conflict; peace as a vision of the world; peace as a relationship with the Other. Seen from this perspective, the Alliance is a powerful vehicle for peace.

Unlike wars – the beginning of which we know, but never the end – dialogue is a success, in and of itself. When there is a resurgence of conflicts, dialogue always holds a positive promise: when it does not settle disputes, at least it enhances mutual understanding.

The dialogue fostered by the Alliance should hold its rightful place and bring about the conditions for success. It is from dialogue that salvation will come, provided:

- that this dialogue is inter-civilizational, that it is inclusive and has all segments of humanity at heart in order to understand the world in its plurality, acts through non-vertical multilateralism and embodies universal values, in their true meaning;
- that this dialogue is inter-generational, meaning that it should involve young

people and be concerned with the present as well as the future. Young people do not only represent the generations we must shield from the scourge of war and hate speech; they are the ones already making peace;

– that this dialogue is inter-continental: meaning it should not be ethnocentric. I can speak of Africa and for Africa; I can speak of the continent's rightful place in the concert of nations, not in some backyard; I can speak of the treatment it deserves: a continent neither assisted nor left behind; I can speak of the need for Africa to have the partners it deserves, and the partners that deserve our continent; one that is appreciated for what it is: namely the demographic lung of the world and the planet's economic reservoir, with its hopes and its assets.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A founding member of the Alliance of Civilizations, the Kingdom of Morocco has been involved in all of the organization's struggles:

– firstly, for reasons that are inseparable from its identity: Morocco is built around a model of openness, harmony and synergy that has seen the convergence of Arab-Islamic, Amazigh and Saharan-Hassanian confluents, and that has, at the same time, been enriched by African, Andalusian, Hebrew and Mediterranean tributaries;

– also for reasons inherent to the country's commitments: the Alliance's values, the ideals it stands for and the paradigm it promotes are the exact same values, ideals and paradigm championed by Morocco.

From the outset, Morocco has been committed to this basic policy; it has remained steadfastly attached to it:

Firstly, it has shown its commitment by promoting openness as a pillar of the culture of peace:

– My grandfather, His late Majesty King Mohammed V, protected our fellow Jewish countrymen in the face of Nazi barbarism and against the brutal, segregationist practices of the Vichy regime;

– During his reign, my father, His late Majesty King Hassan II, nurtured the spirit of brotherhood between Moroccan Jews and Moslems, all over the world;

- For more than two decades, I have personally been working to enhance and safeguard the Moroccan Jewish heritage, and to cultivate a spirit of sincere communion between Jews and Moslems in a land of Islam – this bond makes Morocco unique;

- and, with unquestionable consistency, we have shown, time and again, that the Kingdom of Morocco has made the choice to remain a land of tolerance, coexistence and openness.

Secondly, Morocco has also shown its commitment by living religion as a vehicle of peace:

- As Commander of the Faithful – all the Faithful – I guarantee the free exercise of worship throughout the Kingdom of Morocco;

- I believe religion should be a bulwark against extremism, not a pretext for it. This is a conviction I have been championing everywhere, through the Kingdom's religious diplomacy. The Mohammed VI Foundation of African Ulema and the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Murshidin and Murshidat are meant to thwart the radicalism that is rampant at the gates of Africa, and to promote a moderate, middle-of-the-road Islam;

- Conscious of that role, Morocco had the United Nations General Assembly adopt Resolution A/73/328 on "Combating hate speech: promoting interreligious, intercultural dialogue and tolerance". Co-sponsored by 90 countries, that resolution highlights the Fez Plan of Action on combating hate speech and promoting inter-faith dialogue.

- I received His Holiness Pope Francis, who came to Morocco on a historic visit, during which we stressed the importance of seeing the three Abrahamic religions "open up to each other", in the framework of respect for otherness and understanding of the Other;

- together with Pope Francis, I signed the Al-Quds Appeal, which calls for the preservation of the Holy City as a gathering place for the faithful from the three monotheistic religions, and as a symbol of peaceful coexistence, dialogue and mutual respect.

Thirdly, Morocco has demonstrated its commitment by working for development – in

the broadest sense of the term – as an ingredient of peace:

- Morocco is a key ally in the fight against terrorism, a reliable partner in the fight against climate change, and a responsible actor in the management of migration;
- My country has been involved in all areas of the Alliance's action – from the consolidation of multilateralism, to enhancing the status of young people and making them aware of their responsibilities, to empowering women and highlighting their role as actors in the promotion of peace and security.

Mr. Secretary-General,

Honorable High Representative of the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilizations,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Politics speaks to citizens, religion speaks to their souls, dialogue speaks to their civilizations. In all idioms, we must speak of, and embrace, peace. This injunction stems from the hopes of past and future generations.

At this very special moment in history, as we fight climate change and terrorism, as we seek to promote sustainable development and ensure water, energy and food security – in fact, development in general – we must go back to that which is paramount: namely 'living-together'.

There is really no point in carrying out major projects if we do not manage to go beyond this first link in the chain of 'living-together', in the name of a single humanity, which puts back human beings at the center of its concerns.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.”