



*Sous le haut patronage de Son Excellence Zine El Abidine Ben Ali,  
Président de la République Tunisienne*

Conférence internationale sur  
**LE DIALOGUE DES CIVILISATIONS ET LA DIVERSITÉ CULTURELLE**  
Kairouan - République Tunisienne, 2 - 4 juin 2009



تحت الرعاية السامية لسيادة الرئيس زين العابدين بن علي،  
رئيس الجمهورية التونسية

**المؤتمر الدولي حول  
حوار الحضارات والتنوع الثقافي**  
القيروان - الجمهورية التونسية : 2 - 4 يونيو 2009

## Declaration of Kairouan

For dialogue among civilizations  
and respect for cultural diversity

We, the participants in the International Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations and Cultural Diversity, held over the period from 2 to 4 June 2009 in Kairouan, the capital of Islamic culture for 2009, on the initiative of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF), with the support of the Tunisian government, under the high patronage of His Excellency Mr Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Tunisian Republic, with the participation of an elite of senior official personalities, intellectuals, media professionals and representatives of various international and regional organizations and bodies and civil society institutions, and in the presence of His Excellency Mr Abdou Diouf, the Secretary General of the OIF and His Excellency Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, the Director General of ISESCO;

1. **Welcoming** the choice of Kairouan to play host to the International Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations and Cultural Diversity, within the framework of the celebration of this city as Capital of Islamic Culture for 2009, in recognition of its leading role in establishing bridges of communication, dialogue, tolerance and peace between the East and the West, and as a tribute paid to the Tunisian Republic which has hosted several conferences and symposia on dialogue of civilizations and religions, in cooperation with specialized regional and international organizations, and welcoming also the designation of the Tunisian Republic as Islamic capital of dialogue of civilizations by the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC);
2. **Expressing** our concern about the crisis situation bearing on the international scene today, and **Considering**, in light of the past century's tragic events and today's world tensions, that dialogue among civilizations is more than ever a vital component in relations among nations and communities; that it **should have as a guiding principle** the recognition of the need of all human beings to live in dignity and freedom, regardless of race, gender, religion or language, as well as the recognition of the universality of the human principles and the equality of cultures despite their diversity; and that it cannot take real shape without a strong will to find viable solutions to the core problems of peoples, particularly of disadvantaged categories, and without a shared commitment to protecting the environment and our planet earth;
3. **In line with** the guiding principles of the **Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions** adopted by UNESCO member states (Paris, October 2005), and the **Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity** adopted by the 4th Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers (Algiers, December 2004), both of which call on governments, the UN system and the relevant NGOs to devise relevant cultural, educational and social programmes based on the **Convention** and the **Declaration**;
4. **Believing in** the need to recognize the importance of culture as a vital element in developing the lives of individuals, communities and the entire humanity, a living receptacle of identities, a main component of social cohesion and an interface between past and present generations; and realizing that all states and governments should have forward-looking national cultural policies where culture, as daily a reality, is regarded as a priority in public policies, while ensuring greater openness to other nations' cultures that are part of the human heritage, hence the need to view the assertiveness and decompartmentalization of cultures as being fundamentally inseparable;

5. **In line with** the recommendations, declarations, appeals and communiqués issued by the conferences organized by UNESCO, ISESCO and the OIF, which call for promoting cooperation among these institutions, in such a way as to foster dialogue among civilizations and respect for cultural diversity, increase awareness of the values shared by all peoples and provide conditions favouring a better understanding among them;
6. **Being aware** of the serious political, economic, civilizational, cultural and social challenges facing the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which require concerted efforts in order to combat poverty, ignorance, exclusion, marginalization, fanaticism, zealotry, extremism and terrorism, within an international context marked by a financial crisis with multifaceted consequences;
7. **Emphasizing** the international dimension of dialogue among civilizations which should be carried out with due respect for the values of moderation, tolerance, mutual understanding, democracy, social justice, mutual respect and equality between nations and peoples, in a way that helps highlight the importance of cultural diversity and its role in maintaining social cohesion and establishing world peace and security;
8. **Stressing** the importance of cultural diversity and the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other universally recognized instruments,
9. **Being fully aware** of the importance of culture for social justice in general, and in particular its potential for the psychological health of individuals and enhancement of the status and role of women in society,
10. **Being aware** of our responsibilities and obligations towards humanity which faces serious dangers due to the desertion of such vital values as dialogue, mutual understanding, and coexistence among nations and peoples, within due respect for their cultural specificities and their cultural diversity;
11. **Affirming** that no constructive cooperation and genuine intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue is possible in an ever-changing world without the principle of cultural diversity being confirmed as a prerequisite for ensuring coexistence and building a future where peace and solidarity prevail;
12. **Reiterating** our commitment to contributing to the international efforts aimed at spreading the values of dialogue, peace and respect for cultural diversity, while rejecting all forms of zealotry, extremism, terrorism and usurpation of peoples rights;
13. **Commending** the fructuous cooperation between the Tunisian Republic, ISESCO and the OIF in holding a series of international conferences and symposia aiming to contribute to the promotion of universal values, as well as to lay the foundations of a genuine dialogue among civilizations, on the basis of a fair balanced partnership favouring mutual respect and recognition of cultural diversity as an enriching element of the human civilization;

14. **Lauding** His Excellency the Tunisian President's inaugural speech adopted as a groundwork document by our **Conference**, given its analysis of the current world situation and the issues it has addressed, as well as the ideas it has put forward which originate in an awareness of the need to join efforts towards establishing a global partnership based on dialogue, cooperation, peace and development, that promotes communication between all nations and consolidates the unity of all human beings.
15. **Being appreciative** of the ideas and constructive suggestions contained in the respective addresses of the Secretary General of the OIF and the Director General of ISESCO, in which they call for dialogue among civilizations and respect for cultural diversity; and commending the special cooperation ties between the two organizations, which lay the ground for a promising global partnership for dialogue among civilizations and cultural diversity.
16. **Lauding** the exhaustive, constructive discussions having marked the Conference and the valuable studies, papers and working documents presented during its working sessions,

#### **Declare what follows :**

1. Today, **the world's religions and cultures** are more than ever required to sustain dialogue and enhance coexistence in such a way as to benefit one another; while casting away the causes of contention and disdain, on the basis of the universal values and principles that should be promoted and instilled in peoples' minds and acts as a common heritage of humanity. This dialogue's contribution to the path of human civilization is indispensable, given its role in consolidating cooperation, coexistence, peace, love, tolerance and cross-cultural bonds among peoples and nations.
2. **Dialogue among civilizations** should build on the points of convergence not divergence, within the framework of fair judgement and respect for the Other, without any distortion of the image of others, or disrespect for them and their religions, beliefs, religious symbols, or transgression on their cultural and civilizational specificities. This postulates the need to abandon stereotypes, generalizations and preconceptions, and refrain from associating crimes committed by individuals or small groups with an entire people or an entire religion.
3. **Dialogue of Civilizations**, as we perceive it and work towards anchoring its principles in reality, should rest on the universal values, abide by the rule of law, justice and respect for the standards of human rights, as well as on tolerance, citizenship and democracy and encourage understanding between peoples and communities in a way that favours rapprochement and cross-fertilization of civilizations.
4. **The philosophy and values of cultural diversity** shall be favoured and materialized, given the different spots of tension, human rights violations, forms of discrimination and extremism which cast blight on our modern times. To the thesis of clash of civilizations should supersede that of harmonious coexistence and cross-pollination of cultures; as much as the logic of altruism and integration should substitute the logic of violence and exclusion.

5. **Cultural diversity can be protected** and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms are guaranteed and the sovereign right of States to adopt policies and measures they deem appropriate for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions on their territory is ensured. Besides, the protection and promotion of cultural diversity presuppose the recognition of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures, implies international cooperation and solidarity between all developing and rich countries, requires complementarity of economic and cultural aspects of development and hinges upon equitable access to the different forms of cultural expression within the framework of openness to other cultures of the world.
6. **All revealed religions** advocate human brotherliness, dialogue, tolerance and moderation and proscribe all forms of violence, extremism and zealotry. Their values have contributed to the human civilization, particularly in relation to enhancing cooperation, coexistence, peace, brotherly love and cultural interaction.
7. **There is need** to provide an environment favouring comprehensive, sustainable development in the developing countries, through good governance, social justice, fair international relations, respect for international law and human dignity, while utterly rejecting the double-standard policy vis-à-vis regional and international conflicts and ensuring optimal use of riches and equitable world trade. In this regard, it is equally important to prepare young talents to rise to present challenges, increase their awareness about the Millennium Developmental Goals and equip them with the skills necessary for attaining them, as well as encourage them to engage in voluntary work, and sensitize them to the importance of cultural action in the process of development, reform and change.
8. **Globalization** constitutes a real challenge to the world's cultures and civilizations. This makes it indispensable to consolidate solidarity among peoples and promote their cultural diversity, through an approach based on dialogue as a means of raising awareness about the values shared by all peoples. This approach should seek, likewise, mobilization of all stakeholders, including governments and community-based organizations and bodies, while translating into action the principles and objectives such regional and international organizations as UNESCO, ISESCO and the OIF are endeavouring for.
9. **Ensuring peoples' right** to a decent free life and to comprehensive sustainable development through combating poverty, exclusion, injustice, violence, extremism, terrorism, double-standard policy and hegemonic theories is a moral responsibility incumbent on the entire humanity. It is a joint moral duty that requires the adoption of fair measures and the devising of appropriate strategies likely to help provide an environment favouring balanced human relations. In this respect, the Tunisian initiative to establish a world solidarity fund for addressing poverty and promoting human development provides an excellent model for the promotion of dialogue among civilizations within a context of solidarity that rejects all forms of violence, extremism and exclusion.

In this context, the Kairouan Conference recommends the following to the international organizations and to the civil society.

- A- **It is suggested to establish a think-tank** dedicated to reviewing the intellectual and political conception of international cooperation, and considering new ways to benefit from the available human and financial means and to develop more effective programmes jointly between States, as well as public and private organs at the national, regional and international levels. The objective is to meet the requirements of dialogue among civilizations and cultural diversity. ISESCO, UNESCO and the OIF may establish this think-tank and make relevant proposals in this connection.
- B- **Efforts should be made towards implementing and benefiting from bilateral and multilateral agreements**, as well as available educational materials and university chairs; encouraging the enactment of national legislations and the institution of international standards and mechanisms in order to put an end to the negative portrayal of the Other in the media, particularly in educational programmes and school curricula; and establishing observatories to monitor stereotypical images and misconceptions about the world's cultures, civilizations and religions, and take the necessary measures to redress them. To this end, it is advisable to capitalize on the best practices to develop an educational and pedagogic model grounded on the principles of recognition and respect for cultural diversity. This will entail the establishment of multidisciplinary groups representing the world's difference cultures.
- C- **There is need to coordinate** the efforts of governments as well as of international, regional and non-governmental organizations, particularly of ISESCO, UNESCO, the OIF, ALECSO and the Council of Europe, in a bid to consolidate the mechanisms of communication, interaction and alliance of civilizations and disseminate the culture of amity, peace, dialogue and tolerance, since dialogue is the only alternative to the culture of confrontation and clash, through concrete partnerships, initiatives and projects. The said efforts should also seek to extend the scope of dialogue beyond the official channels in such a way as to involve civil society and the large public.
- D- It is important **to incorporate** the concept of cultural diversity in the key documents of cultural organizations, regional and international, as a “main groundwork and fundamental principle of international policy, and an effective means for enduring world peace and security.” as put by the Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity.
- E- There is need within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation relations **to give greater importance to culture**, with a particular emphasis on reinforcing developing countries' capacities in terms of heritage preservation and cultural production and fostering the role international institutions and governmental and non-governmental organizations in enhancing respect for the historical landmarks and the cultural heritage of every country, and protect it against all forms of obliteration, misrepresentation and denigration. This includes also putting an end to the recurrent forms of prejudice affecting cultural and historical heritage in various parts of the world today.

- F- **Strengthening** the role of civil society, including associations dedicated to the issues of minorities and migrants, is essential for ensuring complementarity between the approach to common cultures and cultural diversity management, on the one hand, and the integration policy, on the other hand. Equally important is the need to ensure that the evaluation of cultural diversity is based on a sound understanding of religions and beliefs and their role in society.
- G- **There is need** for establishing partnerships between international and regional organizations and institutions of the public and private sectors, in such a way as to promote cooperation with developing countries and develop their capacities to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions, further develop their infrastructure, human resources and policies and promote exchange of activities, products and educational services.
- H- There is need to join efforts in order to address the issues of development in the world, in a comprehensive, fair and balanced manner, as it has now become impossible and unacceptable morally to shut our eyes to the problems of poverty, diseases, isolation and illiteracy, which constitute an obstacle to developing countries, preventing them from strengthening their capacities and achieving prosperity and invulnerability, as much as human solidarity has become a vital necessity in this regard and a prerequisite for dialogue, mutual understanding and alliance for maintaining peace and security in the world.
- I- It is important **to network** the world's youth through projects wherein they can work together for common objectives. It is equally interesting to set up youth groups by such organizations as the OIF, ISESCO, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth, the Organization of Ibero-American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with the support of the United Nations and UNESCO, to be entrusted with the task of contributing to the advancement of such vital issues as education, peace culture, mutual understanding, health, culture, urban health, environmental protection. The objective is to transform such groups into a global network devoted to fostering dialogue among civilizations and cultural diversity.
- J- There is also need for a commitment to implementing the **UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions** and the **Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity**. These two documents are likely to help preserve cultural heritage and provide a platform for countering the cultural uniformization that globalization tends to impose.
- K- **Lauding** His Excellency Mr Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's initiative to proclaim 2010 a World Youth Year, and to hold a world youth conference under the auspices of the United Nations, in cooperation with specialized international organizations, in the same year.

Kairouan, on 4 June 2009.