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**THE TWENTY SIXTH MEETING OF
CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

REPORT*

ON

**“DIALOGUE AMONG THE CULTURES AS A MEAN TO BUILD TRUST
AMONG THE NATIONS”**

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I. INTRODUCTION

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1. The Black Sea geo-cultural region, bridging Europe and Asia, at the cross-roads of many civilisations and cultures, is an example of a culturally diversified area, characterised by a variety of historical roots, traditions and religions. The ancient and very rich cultural heritage of the Black Sea region refers to monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value. Culture is an inherent and inseparable force for socio-economic development. As cultural activity is a source and the same time the result of human progress, it is directly connected with development itself. Especially traditional cultures with their richness and diversity can make an important contribution to the development of economic, social and communal factors in the Black Sea region.

2. However, culture is also closely linked with dialogue since it constitutes an important aspect of human life and a significant category of social activities. Abstractly speaking, it is a form of interaction among social forces; a mean either for communication or avoiding conflicts and moderating confrontations.

3. 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, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the year 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Cultures.

4. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was, among others, invited “to plan and implement appropriate cultural, educational and social programs to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations, including through organizing conferences and seminars and disseminating information and scholarly material on the subject”. The General Conference of UNESCO held in Paris from 3 to 21 October 2005, during its 33rd session has adopted the Convention on the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions

5. On the 5th October 2005 the European Commission proposed 2008 to be “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue”, stating that intercultural dialogue is an instrument which could facilitate the implementation of a series of strategic priorities for the Union and also a European Year devoted to intercultural dialogue constitutes a unique awareness-raising tool for affirming this priority and involving citizens.

6. Within this framework PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee decided to take up the subject of “Dialogue among the cultures as a mean to build trust among the nations” as the main item on the Agenda of its 26th meeting.

7. Taking into consideration the last events that occurred concerning the recent cartoons crisis, as well as the violent attacks in France that continued in other western European countries in autumn 2005, underlined the increased importance of cognitive dialogue among cultures considered to be more acute than ever.

8. Contributions for the Report and Recommendation has been received from the national delegations of Armenia, Greece, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey and Ukraine. Reference material used for the preparation of the Report was obtained by the International Secretariat.

II. Promoting dialogue among cultures

9. Based on the understanding that cultural diversity is a source of strength, not a cause for division and confrontation, dialogue aims at better mutual understanding of the values, norms, historical experience and cultural reality underlying the words and actions of others. Once knowledge takes the place of pre-conceived opinions, stereotypes and prejudices about others, they are perceived less as a threat than as enrichment in the sense of offering different outlooks on the world around.

10. In order to enter into such dialogue, one has to be prepared to exercise tolerance towards other ways of thinking, towards people who base their daily lives on values and experiences other than their own. But tolerance alone is not enough: equally important is the notion of respect-for others as well as for oneself. While tolerance means to let others do as they please, respect actually attaches a positive value to what one is or does; respect, thus, goes beyond tolerance.

11. Culture refers to the cultural characteristics of a particular time or place, to the act of listening to the beliefs, judgments, worries of people not only with a different cultural, ethnic, or religious background, but also with different political convictions, social positions and economic power.

12. Intercultural dialogue should be understood as an ongoing process in which the participants show not only a willingness to exchange information by sharing their own thoughts and listening to others, but also the openness to transform their own worldviews by integrating other perspectives into their own ways of thinking. The recognition of differences alone does not yet lead to mutual understanding. It is only through a genuine receptivity to other viewpoints that mutual appreciation occurs.

13. Intercultural dialogue has great potential to help prevent conflicts- on the international, national and local levels- by reducing misunderstandings and mistrust, and by laying the basis for a non-violent resolution of controversies. It also has enormous potential to solve current and future economic, social and political problems by sharing experiences and through joint implementation of remedies.

14. At its best, intercultural dialogue can result in a collective sense of shared goals, enabling member states to join forces to effectively prepare the ground for a dialogue among cultures characterized by a strive for increased knowledge about different cultures, respect for other cultural value systems and tradition, the recognition that cultures and civilizations are dynamic and a readiness to transform on part of all partners to the dialogue. Arenas that most obviously lend themselves to such efforts are politics, the legal system, education, science, culture and information.

III. Multicultural society and cultural heritage

15. People have lived in multicultural settings from the beginning of recorded history, in rural as well as urban communities. Ruling elites of one cultural, religious and linguistic background largely tolerated the existence of minority groups of other cultures and religions, and often with their own languages, within the boundaries of their territories,

while trying to integrate these minorities into the mainstream culture. Changes in the ruling elites tended to affect the distribution of power within these multicultural societies, but did not change the basic pattern of multicultural coexistence coupled with the strive of the dominant culture to impose its values and norms on the minority groups.

16. During the 20th century, however, the ever accelerating speed of globalization, facilitated by the spread of modern transport and communication technologies, has profoundly changed the framework of multicultural societies. The special pattern of distribution of people from very different backgrounds has become very complex as a consequence of accelerated migration. With the globalization of markets and information networks, consumption patterns and mass culture are becoming more and more uniform the world over. By the same mechanisms, however, has it become easier for migrants to preserve elements of their native culture while adjusting to life in their new living environment.

17. It is above dichotomy of an increasing standardization of every-day culture on the one hand and the strive to retain elements of individual cultures on the other hand that the paradigm of the past: tolerance with the underlying aim of integrating minority cultures into the mainstream culture, has given place to the new ideology of “multiculturalism”, which tries to find ways to equally accommodate the values of norms of all cultural groups within the framework of a given society.

18. To put the ideology of multiculturalism to practice, it is essential to create the necessary preconditions for people from different backgrounds to live together peacefully and in a way satisfactory for all. Such preconditions include a political system characterized by proportional representations, party coalitions politics, and decentralized government structures; competent, neutral, responsive and accountable law enforcement agencies; and independent bodies to monitor racial and other discrimination.

19. It is equally important to give every member of the multicultural society truly equal access to these institutions, including the ability to read the laws and to assert their rights in a language they are comfortable in here, education has a vital role to play.

20. It is also crucial that the multicultural structures of a society adjust to cultural change, including the changed values, norms and aspirations of the younger generations, just as cultures are flexible entities changing with time. Experiences with immigration in some European countries show that multiculturalism in the sense of creating societies within society for every social, political, religious, ethnic group without the translation of the basic principles of the society at large, in particular the liberalism that is at the very centre of the new multiculturalism, will be unsustainable in the long term.

21. Today, the BSEC member states 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 endeavor. This new space will need to be built around the precepts of dialogue and universal values.

22. Since the very beginning of its activities the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has drawn particular attention to

cultural issues related to this region. Specifically its Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee addressed the following issues: “The Joint Research Programme on the History of the Black Sea Basin”, “Protection of the Cultural Heritage of the PABSEC Member Countries”, “Guidelines for the Program of the Protection of the Cultural Heritage in the Black Sea Region”, “Preservation and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage in the BSEC Member States” and “The Role of Culture in the Development of the BSEC Region” and the Assembly adopted corresponding Recommendations 4/1994, 6/1994, 18/1996, 70/2003 and 80/2004.

23. Additionally, given the rich cultural and historic heritage of the Black Sea region, the development of tourism became to be one of the most promising fields of cooperation among the BSEC countries. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has already stressed in its Report and Recommendation 32/1999 on “Development of Tourism in the Black Sea Region” and also in the Report and Recommendation 83/2005 on “Cooperation in the sphere of cultural tourism in the Black Sea region” that the BSEC region has a vast potential to become one of the main tourist destination of the 21st century.

24. Cultural heritage in the BSEC region is anchored in complex civilizations. The region’s heritage is an important and often overlooked dimension of the notion of modernity for BSEC culture and civilization. BSEC region attests that cultural diversity offers a source of richness for all cultures and in that sense it is undeniable that a dialogue among cultures is inseparably linked with cultural diversity.

25. Preserving and using the BSEC region’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, while this potential makes it a constructive force.

26. In building on knowledge about history, cultural accomplishments and cultural exchanges, a foundation is laid that can provide, if properly utilized, an enhancement of mutual understanding, respect and pride, and a locus of convergence of different experiences, can also serve as a factor for reconciliation.

27. To be more efficient and useful, dialogue among civilizations requires the multiplication of international for a in such a way as to cover different areas and regions at the initiative of institutions and organizations having a common interest as well as universities and cultural and academic circles. However, their efforts must be focused on spreading far and wide the values of dialogue and co-existence with a view to paving the way for rapprochement and understanding, and consolidating the human bonds linking different peoples and nations. Intercultural dialogue needs to be fostered through the realisation of specific programmes within the joint preservation of national wealth and cultural heritage in the wider international scene. Unified research results and the data referring to the cultural heritage of the whole region could be obtained through this process.

28. The aspired dialogue should tackle the questions preoccupying humanity and weighing on its conscience, and search for solutions from the essence of civilizations and cultures. Dialogue should seek, in the first place, to seek the ways for combating injustice as well as the violation of human rights and denial of the right of peoples to self-determination, in addition to countering hegemony and the attempt to impose a unipolar intellectual and cultural system on the international community. Dialogue among cultures should also aim at preventing all kinds of aggression against the peoples aspiring for freedom and liberty, and should serve, at all levels, as a means for standing against the deprivation of peoples of their rights, which are confirmed by international laws and guaranteed by the human principles.

29. Dialogue among cultures should be based on mutual respect among all peoples belonging to these cultures and should protect the principles of justice and equity. It should also contribute to giving impetus to the efforts exerted by the international community with a view to reinforcing tolerance and establishing peace and security as well as cultural co-existence among human beings.

IV. Potentials of enhancement of the dialogue among cultures

a) The role of politics

30. The role of politics in realizing the aims of the dialogue among cultures is pivotal: while it is a fact that actual dialogue will be carried out by individuals- including, but by no means limited to politicians and government officials- it is largely in the hands of political actors on all levels, from the local and national to the regional and international arenas, to create an environment conducive to intercultural encounters that lead to meaningful dialogue.

31. First and foremost, there has to be political will on all levels of politics, to take action to foster intercultural dialogue on a continuous basis. This political will is expressed in the determination to preserve cultural diversity, and the resolve to counter ignorance, intolerance and discrimination on racial, political or social grounds at all times.

32. Guiding principles of such political action should be mutual respect, an adherence to the rules of democratic process, the rule of law, and a commitment to pluralism by ensuring the participation of all groups of society in the dialogue. Particular emphasis should be placed on the involvement of those often underrepresented in political decision making, among them specifically women and the young generations.

33. The role of the international community is, above all, to set an example in intercultural dialogue by jointly taking up the challenge and showing the necessary determination and patience, to provide globalization with a human face: by firmly asserting, not only in words but also through their actions, that it is precisely the diversity of cultures which forms the foundation for human well-being and affluence, and that this diversity can only prevail in an atmosphere of equality, which includes, as a prerequisite a balanced form of development.

34. Regional organizations have a vital role to play in a dialogue among cultures, as they not only foster exchange and cooperation within their regions, but provide important stepping stones for a dialogue between regions. Regional, together with international organizations, should also step up their efforts to provide increased opportunities for direct intercultural experiences: through exchange programs in the fields of culture, education and other professions.

35. National governments should show a firm commitment to the preservation of all cultural heritage- popular or traditional, mainstream or minority- within their jurisdictions. They should be aided in this effort by the international community and by the international organizations that have been created for such purposes. One important means to do so is to reform the way history is studied and taught: each culture or cultural group within a society should have the means to assert its right to write its own history, thereby enriching the pool of historical knowledge with a diversity of viewpoints reflecting the diverse reality of our world. Taking into consideration the abovementioned, the historical background should be based on the real facts.

36. There is no multiculturalism without understanding and embracing differences. The broad Black Sea Region is abundant with a variety of ethnic groups, cultural and ethnic traditions, religious confessions and values. Understanding and accepting the diversities among peoples from this area needs to be preceded by acquainting with the characteristics and achievements of the cultures of the Black Sea region. One of the primary means for attaining these goals is the cooperation of the competent authorities in the field of preserving national cultural identity (setting-up the unified data bases and their public presentation), transparency of their work through media (Internet, education system and mass media) and the close contact of artists and cultural-educational institutions (theatres, archives, monuments' protection institutes...). It is also necessary to have in mind the directions of cultural development and to take part in the European projects. It will include the project results of PABSEC members into the wider European context.

37. The dialogue among cultures not only concerns the intellectual and cultural sphere but also has a profoundly political dimension, in the noblest sense of the term- that is to say, it promotes living together, not only within communities and States but also at the sub-regional, regional and world levels. The dialogue among cultures, indeed, calls for strong political will, at the highest level, in all regions and cultural areas of the world. This will, which in certain parts of the world can involve a measure of courage, is essential to the success of this dialogue. Dialogue can and should be established within societies themselves, which are increasingly composite and diversified. It therefore, calls for the participation of all, and of all the active forces of civil society.

38. Promoting the dialogue of cultures seems in these circumstances very relevant to the promotion of peace, not only globally but also regionally and subregionally. It is an indispensable condition for the genuine resolution of conflicts and the establishment of lasting peace between peoples and communities divided by misunderstandings, animosities or even deep hatreds. Based on a willingness to listen to others' views, on understanding and mutual respect, such a dialogue becomes a profoundly political act.

b) The role of education

39. 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 civilizations. 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 Parliamentary Assembly has dealt many times in the past with the crucial issue of education among the BSEC Member States and has taken concrete measures and initiatives concerning the important role of education: “Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries of the Improvement of Education”, “Cooperation of the Academic Communities of the BSEC Member States and its Legal Framework”, “Mutual recognition of Higher Education Diplomas by the PABSEC Member Countries”, “Black Sea Universities Network: contribution to the BSEC Academic Cooperation”. The Assembly adopted corresponded Recommendations 10/1995, 27/1998, 31/1998, 56/2001.

40. Moreover, the Assembly recalls the Report and Recommendation 24/1997 on “Youth Cooperation in the Black Sea Region” where it was underlined the encouragement of closer professional contacts among young people, such as joint activities of the associations of young entrepreneurs, young political leaders, and national students’ unions. etc, as well as the exchange of students, art contests and festivals and other activities within the framework of the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Educations, Science and Information. It was also placed particular emphasis on supporting the efforts of national youth associations with a view to establishing, under the auspices of PABSEC, a Black Sea Youth Assembly/

41. National and local governments also, and most importantly, have the responsibility to ensure that all groups within their societies enjoy equal access to education, information and political decision making. A basic prerequisite for this is the eradication of illiteracy, the major obstacle to an active assertion of human rights, including the rights to political participation. It is also the responsibility of national and local governments to encourage and facilitate the acquisition of what has come to be termed cultural and ethical literacy: the ability to communicate in foreign languages, and the capacity to appreciate cultural diversity while firmly retaining the roots of one’s own identity. Long-lasting education is the key to the attainment of these crucial skills, laying the basis for meaningful dialogue leading to mutual understanding among people from very different geographical, ethnic, religious, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds

42. 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 cultures, civilizations, religions and traditions in particular.

43. 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. 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.

44. Education in accordance with the unified methods and the harmonised programmes, as well as the dialogue among the future specialised experts in cultural sciences will lead to the establishment of the network of the professionals that will enable better mutual understanding and facilitate policy harmonisation as well as the creation of the common programmes.

c) The role of Mass Media

45. The mass media are vital for the creation and development of a democratic culture in any country. They provide people with information, influencing on the processes of shaping of public opinion, attitudes and of making political choices.

46. Development of cooperation in the field of mass media, and first of all among the national televisions of the BSEC Member States, can facilitate peace and international understanding, mutual respect and tolerance among the peoples inhabiting the region. Exchange of cultural programmes on the television contributes to the better knowledge of one's neighbours and for the discovery of common cultural roots and similarities. Such cooperation creates the necessary background for further political and economic cooperation and prevention of conflicts.

47. The Parliamentary Assembly realises that the television broadcasting is the most powerful and influential medium of mass communication and the most important source of information for the majority of the population of the Black Sea region. The national television institutions, financed from the state budget, have a special responsibility of informing the population on a wide range of events, including the major developments in political, economic, social and cultural life of the BSEC Member States.

48. Taking into consideration the valuable effect that intercultural dialogue can have on the BSEC Member States exercised by the catalytic role of the Mass Media, the Assembly recalls the Report and Recommendation 47/2000 on "The Role of Mass Media in Promoting Cooperation in the Black Sea region". At the same time it recalls the four meetings of the Public Broadcasters from the BSEC Member States, held in Bucharest 2001, in Greece 2002, in Sofia 2003 and in Odessa 2004 as a result of the PABSEC initiative.

V. The promotion of dialogue within BSEC countries

49. Taking into consideration the importance of cultural cooperation for better understanding among the peoples inhabiting the BSEC region, acknowledging the necessity of cultivation of mutual respect, understanding and tolerance, wishing to

strengthen their cultural ties and to continue their efforts aimed at developing cooperation, the ministers of culture of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine signed in 1993 *the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information*.

50. The Convention constitutes a long-term legal framework for cooperation and is a solid foundation for the conclusion of other bilateral and multilateral cultural agreements in future recommending the governments to support the projects carried out within the framework of the Convention and to create conditions for the involvement of non-governmental organisations, artists' and writers' associations, sports, youth and children's organisations, private foundations, etc. into the Black Sea cultural cooperation process in order to broaden and diversify the cultural contacts among the peoples living in the Black Sea region.

51. A number of important events had been held in the framework of the Convention since it was signed: the Black Sea University opened in Romania in 1993 which led to the creation of the Black Sea Universities Network later on in 1997, the First Black Sea Arts Festival in Sochi in 1994, two Black Sea Film Festivals in Georgia, “Waves of the Black Sea” writers’ cruise, exchanges of artists, scientists and students, etc. A series of bilateral cultural, educational and scientific cooperation agreements have been concluded between the Signatory States.

52. The Assembly made a further contribution to promoting the Black Sea cultural cooperation by supporting the initiative by the PABSEC Russian delegation concerning the organisation of the Children and Youth Festival of the BSEC Member States. In the result of the support provided by the PABSEC, the first and the second **Children and Youth Festivals “Golden Ferry”** were organised in Sochi in 2001 and 2002, both upon the invitation of the PABSEC Russian Delegation. Based on the same concept, the first Black Sea Capitals Festival was held on 24-31 August 2002 in Ankara.

53. Taking into consideration the positive role that the Children and Youth Festival is playing, Recommendation 58/2001 on the Organisation of the Children and Youth Festival of the BSEC Member States adopted by the 18th General Assembly on 5 December 2001 in Sofia approves the proposal of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee to organise future festivals in the PABSEC Member Countries, upon the invitation. It calls upon the parliaments and governments of the BSEC member states, the BSEC Business Council, the BSTDB, the specialised BSEC Centres, NGOs and the business community to provide any possible financial assistance in the organisation of the future festivals.

54. The importance of the legal framework on cultural dialogue is very vital. As an example of that, between Greece and the BSEC member states (excluding Moldova) bilateral agreements on culture are enforced which include actions in the fields of theatre, dance, literature, issues of archeological interest and cooperation in the field of cultural heritage.

55. Countries with different level of economic development, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity represent the BSEC region bringing in a specific character in the development of multilateral cultural and humanitarian cooperation of the BSEC states. In

this respect, transition to a “dialogue between cultures” and recognition of such insufficiently domesticated value as “culture of peace” calling for respect of humanitarian ideals, commitment to a dialogue and mutual understanding between nations, people of different nationalities, regions, and cultures is the matter of high priority.

56. Cooperation in the domain of preservation of cultural identity of the nations by means of the old handicrafts, songs, dances, souvenirs and customs in the joint promotion of the successful examples the example of the city **Kovačica**, a municipality in the northern Serbian province(Vojvodina), predominantly inhabited by the population of Slovak nationality that successfully maintains its culture for 200 years so far, as well as its traditions and values. Its most successful representative is the school of naive painting famous all over the world.

57. Rooting in people’s mind the ideas of equality of all nations, the right of nations to their own diversity and identity can become a passport to a successful development of cultural and humanitarian cooperation among and between the BCES countries. Hereby, culture must contribute to promoting traditions of tolerance, civility and discretion among people.

58. In 1995 the Ministers of Culture of the European Community launched the Project on “European Capital of Culture” proposed in November 1983 by Melina Mercouri, Greek Minister of Culture at that time. To date status of the Capital of Culture granted to the European city each year offers opportunities for social inclusion and cohesion, business, education, tourism, heritage and urban regeneration at every level. These projects put culture at the heart of each city life and seek inspiration to drive it forward. There have been 31 Cities “European Capital of Culture”. This year, Patras, a city situated in the northern part of Greece is the Capital of Culture.

59. Through a decision made in 2000, the Project “European Capital of Culture” has been enlarged to non-EU Countries between the years 2005 and 2019. Under this respect, the Ministries of Culture from Luxembourg and Romania agreed in 2000 to cooperate in the cultural field and the cooperation engagement was renewed in 2002 and 2004 and enriched with the agreement of sharing the role of European Capital of Culture in 2007. So, during the year 2007 Sibiu (from Romania) and Luxembourg were selected by an independent jury to be the 2007 European Capital of Culture and the 2007 Associated Capital of Culture, respectively.

60. In the case of Turkey, it should be mentioned based on the above, that Istanbul strives to be European Capital of Culture for 2010. A seven members jury panel recommended on Tuesday 11 April 2006 that the 2010 European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) be awarded to Istanbul along with the cities of Essen in Germany and Pecs in Hungary. After the European Parliament’s decision, culture ministers from the 25 member countries will have the final say in November. Another initiative, “Civilizations Alliance”, at first put forward by Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero in 2004 during United Nations General Assembly, and then co-sponsored by the Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayip Erdogan, officially went into effect following a statement issued by the United Nations on 14 July 2005. The basic aim of the initiative that has become a current issue as a response to the discrimination creating efforts between the West and the Islam world is to contribute to the creation of unity and cooperation and harmony by attaching priority to common universal values between

cultures. Having gained increasing appearance since then, the initiative has become today one of the priority projects attributed in the context of the dialog between cultures, religions and civilizations. Just as, the Civilizations Alliance Initiative has been the most outstanding initiative in view of eliminating the lack of dialog and understanding between the Islam and Western worlds during the recent cartoon crisis.

61. The Initiative for Democratic Development Through Culture launched by Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine is a Declaration of Intentions adopted at the 5th Ministerial Colloquium on the Council of Europe “Culture and Cultural Policy for Development” STAGE Project, on 15-16 September 2005, in Kyiv. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Ukraine initiated adoption of the Declaration with the aim of strengthening cultural interaction between and among the countries of the South Caucasus, and the Republic of Moldova.

62. The Kyiv Initiative is called upon to preserve and enhance achievements of the STAGE project and promote development of cultural policy, cultural identity, multiculturalism, and inter-religion dialogue aimed at strengthening European democratic values in the extended format. It is for the first time that cultural policy matters as well as the issues of cultural heritage and cultural projects’ financing will be united in the cultural project under the Council of Europe aegis. Countries that accessed the Initiative called upon the Council of Europe and other international organizations to support it. Other European countries were invited to join the Initiative.

VI. CONCLUSION

63. The paramount importance of dialogue among cultures has increased at the present stage of human history owing to the growing challenges facing humanity in all fields, and to the exacerbation of the crises threatening the life of individuals and communities and hindering the efforts exerted for comprehensive development, thus enlarging the gap between industrialized and developing countries, and triggering wars and tensions in various areas of the world.

64. Dialogue among cultures and civilizations 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 BSEC region, then the principal focus must be on a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior 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, based on the generally accepted standards and principles of international law, observance of sovereignty, territorial security and inviolability of borders

65. Dialogue among cultures is needed in order to challenge and prove that the call for tolerance, equality and justice will inevitably clash with BSEC regions’ religious and social traditions. It also bridges the development of a country’s citizens and underpins their political, economic, social and cultural integration in the global community of nations.

66. It is necessary to continue the bilateral cultural cooperation arrangements by exchanging art troupes, preserving and fostering cultural values, promoting intercultural dialogue through the concrete programmes and gatherings of talented artists, as well as by encouraging cultural differences within one society and by financing advanced studies of talented artists and by encouraging the work of cultural and educational institutions.

67. UNESCO is also convinced that the dialogue between cultures likewise requires the recognition and promotion of expressions of cultural diversity. In a world of growing interdependence, and in the era of globalization, it is essential to ensure that one culture does not tend to dominate the others. The promotion of cultural diversity especially on behalf of the least represented cultures and with particular regard to the exchange of cultural goods and services, constitutes a profoundly political act, at the national, regional and global levels. Globalization should allow the free expression of such diversity, which represents a precious component of the common human heritage.

68. Dialogue among civilizations is a must, indeed a moral and human duty. It is a prerequisite for initiating a positive and fruitful cooperation and establishing a peaceful coexistence among humans. It requires, in addition to coherent wills and good intentions, a commitment to the goals aimed to reinforce the human values and principles, which constitute the common denominator of all civilizations and cultures.

69. It should also be recognized that history is a key instrument for understanding, examining and promoting the interactions between peoples and cultures. Through the preparation of regional and general histories and through the launching of major projects of intercultural dialogue such as the Silk Roads, the Slave Route, the Routes of Faith, UNESCO has highlighted the historical and contemporary processes that foster a positive understanding between cultures, through the discovery of a common heritage and shared values. These projects have helped to increase the understanding of the sources of collective memory, which can fuel prejudice and incomprehension just as they can contribute to renewal of the dialogue among civilizations, cultures, religions and spiritual traditions.

70. Dialogue among cultures contributes largely to bringing people and nations together and removing the barriers arising from mutual misunderstanding and unfounded stereotypes inhabiting the minds of people from a specific culture about the culture of other nations. Continuation of dialogue and enlargement of its scope becomes, therefore, a mission devolved upon intellectuals and religious scholars, as it is part of the dialogue among religions, and also upon cultural and scientific segments of society.