

## FINAL DECLARATION

The peoples and societies of the Mediterranean share a long history.

The Mediterranean area, where cultures and beliefs meet, should be a privileged place for solidarity and harmony.

Harmony, however, does not reign among the Mediterranean peoples. Fractures have grown wider, rejection of the other has spread, and violence has intensified. Indeed, the accumulation of non-resolved conflicts, frustrated hopes, and fears may develop into more dangerous confrontations.

Several initiatives have been proposed by states and international institutions: the European Union has developed the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Neighborhood Policy, the Mediterranean Union Project has been launched by France, Italy, and Spain, and the UN has initiated the Alliance of Civilizations. These initiatives, however, must be fostered and completed by non-governmental organizations, foundations and other representatives of civil society.

In this context, and at the initiative of the President of the French Republic, it has been decided to develop the “Cultural Workshop on the Dialogue among Peoples and Cultures in the Euro- Mediterranean and Gulf Areas”.

The Alexandria cultural workshop (January 2008) follows two meetings held in Paris (September 2006) and Seville (May-June 2007).

The specificity of this cultural workshop is derived from the fact that it provides a forum for reflection as well as a framework of action that brings together representatives of governments and civil societies from Europe, the Mediterranean and Gulf areas to pursue dialogue among peoples and cultures.

In all three meetings, the participants discussed prerequisites for developing a culture of dialogue and recognition of the “other” so that cultural values in each society do not become a means for hostility.

The solution that everyone might offer for that issue depends on the stance taken towards the idea of the progress of humanity per se.

In fact, we are up against two totally opposite attitudes. The first of which believes that conflicts between peoples, cultures and civilizations are a pre-ordained fatality, and considers that their confrontation and conflict are a historical reality from which people have to protect themselves through diplomatic and military strategies. The second attitude

does not only believe in the existence of common values that must be promoted, but also that humanity, throughout its historical development , progresses towards more justice, liberty, and harmony.

The second point of view the Cultural Workshop intends to work towards is promoting the universality of values, relations of peace, and recognition among nations.

Efforts should be geared towards developing educational strategies that enhance thinking: an education based on rejecting stereotypes and the idleness of the intellect, oversimplification and intellectual extremism through the respect of the Other's differences; and through civility and hospitality.

Two major principles govern these actions; the first is to promote the diversity and pluralism of cultures, which should represent a set of common values of our societies, especially that dialogue among cultures relies greatly on the recognition of cultural diversity. The second principle is represented in the necessity of adopting a political philosophy that embraces the concept of dialogue. The only political philosophy maintaining that all decisions should be based on exchange of beliefs and opinions is democracy; a philosophy that neither belongs to the East nor the West; nor North nor South. Its main objectives are the promotion of individual freedom, equality between men and women, freedom of conscience, coexistence of opinions, and cohabitation of groups that do not necessarily share the same convictions. It cannot be reduced only to the electoral procedures.

Since the beginning of the workshop, participants have focused on the differences that divide our views of life and the world, especially our perspectives of international conflicts, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the situations in Iraq and Lebanon.

Dialogue between cultures and civilizations cannot develop unless states adopt a more just and balanced international policy. The international community should not represent a society that has neither laws nor the spirit of justice or that has a unilateral vision when it comes to interests and equality. If the international community is not based on mutual trust and the concept of rights, and if it rests exclusively on uncontrolled expressions of sovereignty, then it is bound to usher in spates of violence that security systems would not be able to deter. It is confidence in the International Law that must constitute one of the common and basic values of dialogue between the peoples and cultures of Europe, the Mediterranean and the Gulf.

In the three meetings, the participants have agreed on certain actions that would allow advance in this direction. Parallel to cultural dialogue, there should be systematic actions for collaboration on the scholastic, academic, judicial, scientific, media, and artistic levels. This program should include educational policies that are open to different cultures and

religions. It should also stress the common values shared by the three monotheistic religions, the teachings and philosophy of human rights, and awareness of cultural heritage. It is obvious that the dialogue between cultures refines policies that would favor circulation of ideas, artistic productions and persons.

The participants are well aware of the obstacles that lie ahead, yet they are determined not to allow these to disrupt their path. Moreover, all participants have expressed their desire to work together in order to design and build a common future.