

Communiqué

Ministerial roundtable

Fostering dialogue and cultural diversity – Baku Process: New Challenge for Dialogue between Civilizations

We, the Heads of delegation of the OIC and the Council of Europe's Member States taking part in the roundtable held on the theme "Fostering dialogue and cultural diversity – Baku Process: New Challenge for Dialogue between Civilizations", under the high patronage of His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on 24 Shawal 1430 A.H. / 13 October 2009, on the occasion of the sixth Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, in Baku, capital of Islamic culture for 2009 and platform for dialogue between East and West and North and South,

- Recalling the Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which was issued by ISESCO in 2004, the UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), the OIC Ten-Year Action Plan (2005), Interfaith Dialogue Initiative launched by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in 2008, Declaration and Action Plan of the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states (2005) encouraging intercultural and inter-faith dialogue, based on universal human rights, as a means of promoting awareness, understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, as well as preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and the cohesion of society, the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (2008), Baku Declaration for the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue of the Conference of Ministers (2008);
- Being mindful of the shared human destiny, the importance of dialogue of cultures and civilizations and the respect for cultural diversity and cultural specificities, and the necessity of peaceful resolution of conflicts towards establishing peace, justice and prosperity for all peoples;
- Respecting the Islamic and European human values advocating dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation;
- Drawing on the international Alliance of Civilizations efforts aiming to promote human coexistence in freedom, prosperity and dignity, establish the rule of the law, and safeguard human rights;
- Welcoming the outcome of the joint meetings of Culture of Ministers of the OIC and Council of Europe's Member States, starting last year with the objective of promoting dialogue and cultural diversity within the Baku Process and in fulfilment of the Rabat Commitments on Fostering Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations through Concrete and Sustained Initiatives;
- Noting with appreciation the valuable ideas on the establishment of bridges between cultures and civilizations, as well as the strategic depth and constructive vision reflected in the message addressed to the Conference by His Excellency Mr Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
- Based on the core ideas of the opening addresses and franc deliberations during the Ministerial roundtable on Fostering Dialogue and Cultural Diversity-Baku Process: New Challenge for Dialogue between Civilizations;

Do hereby:

- Stress the need for exploring new approaches to achieve alliance of civilizations and dialogue among cultures, as well as new opportunities for cooperation between States, building on the means and possibilities offered by culture, arts, heritage, and all forms of cultural expressions of peoples and nations to find common global cultural patterns which help in overcoming the tight linguistic and ethnic barriers to form a source for interaction and communication and a cornerstone for the dissemination of the spirit of brotherhood and peace, and the prevention of all forms of fanaticism and extremism.
- Emphasize the necessity to promote bilateral, regional and international cooperation between official bodies; governmental organizations; and local community institutions through the encouragement of the free movement of ideas and persons, and the entrenching of the principles of mutual acquaintance and solidarity to transfer and share leading expertise and experience.
- Underline the need to promote respect for other cultures, while condemning the persisting aggressive campaigns against religious sanctities and the outspoken defamation of civilizational symbols of others, and all forms of discrimination and racism.
- Support all efforts at regional and international level aimed at the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage, in particular in the areas affected by the armed conflicts, in line with the UNESCO Convention for the protection of the cultural property in the event of armed conflict and its protocols (1954).
- Affirm that the best alternative to avert the adverse effects of these scourges lies in dialogue, understanding, coexistence, the respect for the rights of the other, and deference to specificities within shared human values, building on the treasures of wisdom offered by the multiplicity of religions and cultures to shape a tolerant human civilization.
- Stress the importance of holding more such joint meetings for further coordination, experience sharing and implementation of cultural, media and artistic programmes and projects, in such a way as to enhance rapprochement between nations and peoples and anchor the values of mutual understanding and tolerance. In this regard, acknowledge the significance of the “Artists for dialogue” initiative launched at the Baku Conference of Ministers of December 2008 within broader framework of cultural exchanges.
- Emphasize the role of media in promoting cultural values thereby enhancing the intercultural dialogue.
- Reaffirm the importance of education in promoting respect to cultural diversity.
- Praise the election of Baku for hosting this Ministerial round table, given its status as an Islamic culture capital and a historical crossroads between Asia and Europe, and its civilizational riches and cultural and ethnic diversity, and in view of the relentless efforts being made by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan towards fostering dialogue among cultures and civilizations and promoting world security and peace.
- Laud the outstanding efforts ISESCO and the Government of Azerbaijan, represented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, have put in preparing and holding this meeting at the highest level.