



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

**The Sixth Global Forum of the
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations**

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Please check against delivery

H.E. Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia,
H.E. Mr. Beşir Atalay, Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey,
H.E. Mr. Marty M. Natalegawa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of
Indonesia,
H.E. Sr. Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain,
Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative of United Nations for the
Alliance of Civilizations,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. I am very pleased to join you for this Sixth Global Forum of the
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

Let me begin by thanking and acknowledging our hosts. We meet in a country that
truly embodies the theme of this meeting - *Unity in Diversity: Celebrating Diversity
for Common and Shared Values*. With more than 17,000 islands making up the
archipelago of Indonesia and 240 million citizens, we see diversity in the people, their
culture, ethnicities, religions and language, and in the country's geography and
biodiversity. This sense of respect and celebration of diversity is captured in the
country's national motto, "Unity in Diversity." This theme, within the context of this
meeting reminds us that being different does not mean being divisive.

With increasing movement of people across our planet, the diminution of physical
borders which modern technology allows, and the intermixing of cultures, human
civilization is becoming less monolithic and more diverse. These differences enrich us
but they also challenge us to find new levels of empathy, understanding and respect
for our inherent differences. We are challenged to find and celebrate the elements that
unite us as a common human family, living on a planet which we must protect, facing
common threats and ensuring that as global citizens, we have peace, security, and the
opportunity for a reasonable quality of life for ourselves and our children.

Excellencies,

In the six years since its founding, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which began as an initiative of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and two co-sponsors Spain and Turkey, has now become a major global initiative.

The Alliance not only focuses on building peace and transforming the roots of conflict, but it also highlights and promotes what is best in the human spirit, as well as the positive ways in which we communicate and share. It is a platform for teaching, understanding and exchange.

Here in this hall, the presence of so many participants including political leaders, representatives of private sector, civil society and academia, is testament to the high regard we have for the Alliance and our trust in its ability to make a positive impact on our world.

Many of the issues you will touch upon during the course of this meeting serve to highlight the core work of the Alliance. For example, you will be discussing the power of sports, art, music, entertainment, social media and cross-cultural dialogue. These areas all speak to the potential and influence of culture, which can both contribute to human and economic development, as well as build bridges of understanding among different peoples.

We, as a global community, have acknowledged culture as both an enabler and a driver of sustainable development. Culture also binds together the social fabric of our societies, defining our sense of identity and belonging. When we open our eyes to the gifts of other cultures - when we experience their music, art, sports or entertainment - we open our hearts to embrace the cultural diversity and riches of humanity. Cultural exchange allows us to welcome and appreciate those who are different and to build on those differences to create more inclusive, open and peaceful societies. It is a powerful vehicle to strengthen social cohesion, and can play a role in conflict-prevention and reconciliation.

Many of the great creators and consumers of culture are our world's youth, and one of your sessions will be dedicated to this vibrant group, specifically looking at how

youth can contribute to peacekeeping. With their boundless energy, enthusiasm and ideas, the world's 1.8 billion adolescents and youth are a natural ally in the quest to build more peaceful and sustainable societies. However, in order to fully maximize their contributions, they need to be empowered. They are well aware of what they want and need: quality education and healthcare; job opportunities; protection from all forms of abuse; removal of barriers that hinder inclusion and participation; and full participation in open and transparent governance systems. Whether due to lack of decent employment and education opportunities, disease burdens or child marriages, many young people have both their youth and their dreams stolen from them. If we want youth to work with us on building a better world, let us work on investing in their talent, skills, well-being and futures.

Let me touch on a third issue that will be an important part of the discussions at your conference, that of migration. I commend you for discussing this controversial and politically sensitive issue. The history of civilization is the history of the movement of the world's people in search of trade, adventure, exploration and a better place to live. Migrants are often the target of pejorative comments, the subject of discrimination, forced to live in sometimes appalling conditions. They are the subject of unsympathetic reporting by the media and are a frequent and all too easy source of blame for crime, job losses and social problems.

It is no accident that some of the strongest global economies, centers of innovation, gastronomy, and rich cultural tableaux, are also some of the most diverse cities in the world. When properly managed, migration can benefit everyone, both destinations and countries of origin. But the story of migration needs to be cast in a new light. Within journeys of the majority of migrants are stories that have the potential to inspire and should be celebrated for their tales of courage, human ingenuity, initiative, perseverance and the capacity of the human spirit to triumph over adversity. And many migrants have contributed substantially to the countries in which they have settled.

The Alliance can contribute to greater global understanding of migration, its social, cultural and economic value, as well as to the crafting of progressive policies, which protect the rights and living conditions of all migrants. You are also in a position to

foster dialogue on how we can tell the stories of migration in a way that captures its many gifts and benefits, share these stories with the global media and encourage the telling of the stories in all their aspects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the General Assembly, I have seen the potential of Unity in Diversity as well. We are a body of 193 Member States – it is our differences that make us unique and bring different perspectives to the table, and yet it is our similarities as members of the larger human family that unite us on common issues.

Such similarities will be the bedrock of building an inclusive and forward-looking post-2015 development agenda, the great task before us in the months to come. Without a focus on our commonalities, there would be no agreement, and yet we are all aware that differences are inevitable. Not all goals will apply to all countries and not all countries have the same capacities or priorities. This is why we must remain united in our work, keep our eyes on the larger picture, and expand our notion of what we call home. Our home is not just where we grew up or, for that matter, where we currently reside. Rather, it is the planet we all share and for which we are called on to take care of collectively and share peacefully.

It is when we rid the world of the scourge of poverty and guarantee peace, justice, acceptance and opportunity to the diverse peoples of our planet, that we will be able to truly regard civilization as having reached its apex.

I wish you a very successful sixth session.

Thank you.
