

9 November 2009

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki,
President of the 64th Session of the General Assembly,
On Agenda Item: Culture of Peace [49]**

Excellencies,

Today the General Assembly will consider an agenda item of signal importance to the United Nations: “Culture of Peace”. Fostering a culture of peace is at the heart of the United Nations, by rejecting violence and preventing conflicts through dialogue and negotiations. The United Nations Charter states the determination of Member States “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours”. Culture of Peace is based on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral element in preventing violence and conflicts. Sadly the many quiet ways in which the United Nations advances a culture of peace is often drummed out by violent conflicts that demand our immediate attention.

At the outset of the General Debate, I suggested that we reflect on dialogue among civilizations and multilateralism as ways of strengthening international peace, security and development. After years of deepening distrust between civilizations, I am encouraged by renewed calls for dialogue and mutual respect. It is my deeply held belief that civilizations are enriched and have evolved through dialogue with other civilizations. Respect for the diversity of cultures and religions is necessary in order to prevent conflicts and foster peace. I commend the many initiatives here at the United Nations and among Member States on inter-religious dialogue and dialogue among civilizations

The observance of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World is nearing its completion. You have before you the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the progress achieved so far and with further recommendations. The global financial and economic crisis is taking its toll on investments in education, culture and development everywhere. We cannot let these developments weaken our efforts to strengthen a culture of peace. We owe it especially to the children of the world to educate them about other cultures and religions so they can see the common humanity that underlie all differences.

Fostering a culture of peace and promoting tolerance should not be limited to today’s debate, but should guide all our debates here at the General Assembly. I therefore propose to organize an informal thematic debate on the Dialogue among Civilizations at the beginning of next year. I look forward to working with Member States to stimulate a lively discussion and bring fresh perspectives to this important issue.