



General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

40th plenary meeting

Thursday, 8 November 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 25 (continued)

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/523)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.3)

The President: I should like to inform members that, in letters dated 8 and 22 October 2001 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October, requests that the General Assembly hear, in plenary meeting, statements by the observer for the Holy See and the observer of Switzerland in the debate on agenda item 25, "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations".

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly take a decision on those requests.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the observer for the Holy See and the observer of Switzerland in the debate on agenda item 25?

It was so decided.

Mr. Belkhadem (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. This well-deserved honour attests to your diplomatic skills and to your personal commitment to the strengthening of the United Nations. It also represents a recognition of the positive role played by your country, whose well-known economic dynamism is complemented by ongoing efforts towards peace and international cooperation.

I should like also to recall the importance that my country, Algeria, attaches to the peaceful reunification of Korea and to welcome the promising efforts deployed in this regard by the Government of the Republic of Korea and by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. President, you are guiding our work at a time when the United Nations is taking up once again its natural role as a key player in order to meet the various challenges confronting humanity. The fact that this year's Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to our Organization is testimony of the invaluable contribution they have made to the quest for peace and understanding among peoples, and it also strengthens our conviction that the United Nations has an irreplaceable role to play as a framework for collective action for peace, security and development. The fact that a new mandate has been given to Mr. Kofi Annan assures us that the necessary work of renewal will continue — work he has, in fact, been doing since he took the helm of the Organization.

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The proclamation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is without a doubt a milestone in the history of humankind. By duly recognizing the contributions made by all civilizations to the humanization of societies, it demonstrates the common will to work together to develop and consolidate the foundations of a world of understanding, amity and interaction.

President Khatami set out, in a very succinct and lucid manner, guidelines for the dialogue among civilizations — a dialogue that today has top priority. The rise of extremism and terrorism has emphasized the topical nature of this concept, and has prompted us to reflect once again on prospects for the future — a future that will make sense only if we face it in a spirit of interdependence and of solidarity.

There is no yellow peril. There is no green peril. The only peril we are facing is that of intolerance, which is certainly not inherent to any particular religion or civilization. The greatest peril is that of hatred and rejection of the other.

The dialogue among civilizations was the subject, a year ago, of a round table organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. That event took place at United Nations Headquarters, here in this building, which symbolizes the many common battles we have had to wage as well as the common aspirations of humanity as a whole. The participation of President Bouteflika in that round table also was testimony of Algeria's contribution, throughout history, to efforts to bring people together and of its commitment to pursue this noble endeavour in future.

Algeria has always been a meeting place for cultural interaction in the Mediterranean region, even back when the lake of peace that we are trying to create today was a confluent for the entire world.

From St. Augustine to Emir Abdelkader, Algeria's contributions over the years to the development of universal spirituality, tolerance and culture have made us more attuned to contemporary problems and more desirous to work towards their resolution and to promote a new kind of humanism — one that is based on the diversity of civilizations and cultures and on the unity of humankind.

Algeria has always been, and today more than ever wishes to be, a place of openness, interaction and

understanding. It is working to harmonize its own individual characteristics with universal values.

The history of humanity, which is peppered not only with major accomplishments and great works but also with mistakes, upheavals and tragedies, has helped human beings, in all their diversity, to evolve so as to coexist peacefully and harmoniously with others in a pluralistic, open and tolerant atmosphere.

The present generation, which is the result of various historical upheavals, is more aware than ever before of the importance of this diversity, which also helps us to become closer to, and learn from, one another. This is reflected very eloquently in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations, which proclaimed the determination of the international community to eliminate the scourge of war, which has brought untold sorrow and has left indelible marks on humanity as a whole.

The era of confrontation existed only because extremist forces were able to prevail against the backdrop of suspicion and exclusion. The collective reaction of human beings is reconciliation if they are given the opportunity to promote dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding. To know others is to move towards them, to understand and better know them — in short, to appreciate and respect one another so as to grow closer.

To this end, we must talk to each other more in order better to understand each other and to learn mutual respect. We must be able to live together without clashing in order simply to coexist peacefully within the increasingly narrow confines of our planet.

We do not believe that there are good and bad civilizations, that some civilizations are superior to others or that others have congenital flaws, whereas others can be predominant and held up as the single model to follow. Rather, we are of the view that civilizations are complementary, that they nourish each other and that they converge towards universal values that are shared by the whole of humanity. Islam, a religion of peace and tolerance, like all other revealed religions, gave rise to a brilliant civilization that covers a vast geographic area within which people of all races live united by a common faith while respecting the faith and way of life of others.

No one can have any doubts that today we are witnessing the growing spread of a universal

civilization that is but the result of the numerous contributions and experiences made by various human civilizations since the dawn of time. If the words globalization and Internet are on everyone's lips, it is because they have been translated into every language. But, propelled primarily by economic dynamics, one language in particular has dominated this universal civilization. While it is also true that major works, and even much lesser ones, are frequently translated into numerous languages from such languages as Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew and Persian, it must not be forgotten that dozens of languages are dying as a result of having lost the battle against the universal.

The irresistible momentum towards the universal has therefore produced victims similar to those left behind by globalization. But the cultural and spiritual wealth of humankind stems from its diversity. While we can all subscribe to the idea that, as far as economic development is concerned, the superiority of the law of markets has been proved in history, the standardization of thought and cultural and religious exclusion cannot but lead to an impoverishment of the mind and the soul. In that context, while the "end of history" may have seemed an academic controversy in a Western world sated with its material comfort, for the excluded and marginalized in many regions of our world it is a concrete, tragic reality and must be dealt with strongly. That is what was rightly asserted by the former Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Mr. Federico Mayor, when he said that no country is so large that it can do without others, and no country is so small that it has nothing to contribute to others.

Having classified them as the common patrimony of mankind, UNESCO has under its protection historical sites threatened by natural phenomena and human plundering; but what are we to do for those cultures threatened by indifference and exclusion? Of course, not all cultures and civilizations different from the dominant culture are condemned to disappear. Some, as if emerging from a stupor, are awakening. That awakening should not be perceived as a threat to the dominant culture, but rather as a new boon that strengthens the universal civilization, benefiting all people and spreading beyond man-made borders, which the march of history has a tendency to blur.

In order for that kind of development to be understood and encouraged, it is necessary to establish and pursue a true dialogue among civilizations. As

Roger Garaudy said about 25 years ago, there will be true dialogue only when everyone is convinced at the outset that we all have something to learn from one another. There will be true dialogue among civilizations only if everyone is imbued with the conviction that the other is what he is missing in order to be a complete human being.

The inevitable references in our proceedings to the painful and tragic attacks of 11 September remind us that the dialogue among civilizations to which we aspire is not without impact on the daily lives of millions of human beings. If we want that dialogue to draw upon the values and noble achievements of the human heart and spirit that have been most cherished since mankind began the historical journey that jolted it from its natural state, that dialogue must not remain confined to colloquiums, symposiums and seminars devoted to specialists, philosophers and scientists, even though such people certainly contribute a great deal to such dialogue.

For that dialogue to truly permeate all areas of teaching, learning, culture and active life, and for it to be an essential component of human relations, Governments must assume their responsibilities, which complement, naturally, those of civil society, international institutions, the media and religious authorities. In this regard, it is a welcome development that many meetings that heretofore have been devoted entirely to political and economic issues — such as those of the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Euro-Mediterranean Forum — have decided to include the dialogue among civilizations in their future agendas. As the ideal framework for dialogue and the settlement of conflict, the United Nations has an essential role to play in promoting, improving and deepening this dialogue, to which everyone can, and should, make his contribution.

By being a sponsor of the draft resolution entitled "Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations", which has been introduced in the General Assembly, Algeria is demonstrating its faith in its cultural heritage and its belief in the universal cultural mission of that heritage. Algeria is also prepared to make its contribution, and reiterates its willingness to organize meetings to promote the very noble ideals that have brought us together here. Ensuring the future of those ideals requires the participation and contributions of all.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This year is the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. At the outset, I would like to thank the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative to discuss this issue at the United Nations. For its contribution, which is very useful to the deliberations on this item, my thanks also go to the Group of Eminent Persons on the Dialogue among Civilizations selected by the Secretary-General.

In the long process of its development, mankind has created diversified civilizations that have, in no small way, served to enhance the progress of human society. Due to differences in historical background, geographical conditions and cultural traditions, human civilizations have demonstrated much diversity and dissimilarity through their development. The exchange and blending of that diversity and dissimilarity have, in turn, become an inexorable historical trend, as well as a necessity for the improvement and continued development of civilizations. It is through that process that human society has achieved continuous progress and development.

In the history of mankind, there have been circumstances in which one civilization has rejected other civilizations and has attempted to force one set of values upon others. However, such attempts have all ended in failure because they went against the historical trend of human development. History has demonstrated that there is no need to be worried about the differences and disputes among civilizations. Rather, we should adopt an appropriate attitude towards them. There are no superior or inferior civilizations in this world. On the contrary, they are equal. The peaceful coexistence and the common development of different civilizations can be achieved only through their learning and benefiting from each other on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

Profound changes are taking place in the current international situation. With the further multipolarization of the world situation, economic globalization and the rapid development of technology, mankind faces unprecedented opportunities for development, as well as a series of global issues, such as environmental deterioration, terrorism, refugees, poverty and the widening gap between the North and the South.

Under these circumstances, countries should demonstrate a more open mind and broader vision in

conducting the dialogue among civilizations and resolve disputes and differences by peaceful means. We should demonstrate the willingness to respect and live with different civilizations, promote the development of the cream of human civilizations and together face the challenges of economic globalization, so as to establish relations based on equality, mutual benefit, mutual trust and cooperation among countries and to achieve lasting peace, stability and prosperity in all countries.

The terrorist attack of 11 September on the United States was a barbaric act that destroyed human lives and is a serious threat to international peace and security. It has nothing in common with human civilization. The fight launched against terrorism by the international community is not a clash among races, religions or cultures, but a struggle between justice and evil, between civilization and barbarism. All countries must shoulder their responsibility to fight all manifestations of terrorism.

The United Nations, as the sole universal international Organization, represents the diversity of the world's civilizations and is a forum for all civilizations. It plays a unique role in promoting the dialogue among civilizations. In this context, I wish to make the following points.

First, the United Nations should conduct the dialogue among civilizations at the political level, in order to remove the negative impact of the cold-war mentality from international relations, promote the principle of democracy and equality in international affairs and advance the establishment of a just and equitable new international political order.

Secondly, the United Nations should conduct the dialogue among civilizations at the economic level in order to become fully aware of the difficulties and the problems countries face, particularly the developing countries, in the economic globalization process; formulate an effective strategy of global economic cooperation, in accordance with the historical conditions and the socio-economic realities of the various countries and regions; and enable people from different civilizations to benefit from globalization, thereby creating a win-win situation.

Thirdly, in the social and cultural domains, the United Nations should raise awareness within the international community on the need to respect and promote the diversity of civilizations; enhance the

protection of cultural treasures; use modern means to spread and further develop the advanced and progressive aspects of human civilizations; and encourage people of all countries, particularly the youth, to carry out cultural exchanges of all kinds, so as to create greater prospects for the development of diversified civilizations in the world.

China has always attached importance to strengthening exchange and dialogue among countries and civilizations. Last February, the Chinese delegation attended the Conference on Dialogue among Asian Civilizations, held in Iran, at which it stated the views and positions of the Chinese Government on this issue. Last September, Mr. Song Yian, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the Chinese member of the United Nations Group of Eminent Persons on Dialogue among Civilizations, presided over the Twenty-first Century Forum — Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations, held in Beijing.

The Symposium carried out comprehensive and in-depth discussions, focusing on three topics: the role of exchange among civilizations in promoting human historical development, the effect of dialogue among civilizations on the development of international relations and the role of the United Nations in promoting dialogue among civilizations. The summary of the Symposium has already been distributed as an official document (A/56/471) of this session of the General Assembly.

The Chinese Government and people stand ready to continue to make even greater contributions to strengthening dialogue and exchange among civilizations, as well as to the peace, progress and prosperity of the world.

Mr. Rangachari (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/56/523) on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, a welcome initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We would like to express our appreciation to the eminent persons who collaborated in producing the book *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*. We would also like to convey our appreciation to the Member States that have arranged events to give content and meaning to this United Nations Year.

As the year designated by the General Assembly as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations draws to a close, it seems appropriate that

we reflect on the concepts and ideas that have emerged in this process.

Dialogue among civilizations is not new. It has existed since the earliest known civilizations. This dialogue, which spans many millennia, has blurred the boundaries of different civilizations. The world today cannot claim a finite number of distinct civilizations; it is, in fact, a multitude of overlapping cultures. Cultural intercourse, while blurring civilizational boundaries, has not, however, undermined the richness of cultural diversity.

Culture and civilization are not static. They change, in adaptation to changes in their environment. The process of seeking new solutions to emerging problems is a continuing one. The absorption of ideas from other cultures assists in this process.

While societies adopt the best practices of others, they also retain their own uniqueness. They do so because they instinctively feel a sense of belonging and of inheritance. They also do so because their own circumstances are never identical to those of others.

It has been stated, in some of the documentation of the Secretariat, that there are two groups of civilizations — one which perceives diversity as a threat and the other which sees it as an opportunity. Such a differentiation is simplistic and dangerous. The dialogue among civilizations that has taken place over the years has eroded the ignorance caused by ethnocentrism and has led to the understanding that all human societies possess their respective civilization and culture.

It is but natural that each society would seek to protect and preserve its civilizational and cultural values. The dialogue process creates apprehension, even as it generates expectations. Apprehension is based on perceived attempts of one civilization, one culture — derived from theories of superiority, and its obverse, inferiority — to overwhelm another. The underlying assumption is that the superior will be stronger and will therefore prevail. Dialogue, however, leads us to the understanding that there is neither an inferior nor a superior civilization or culture. Civilizations are not the same. Each is unique in its evolution. Yet no one civilization will prevail over the other. There will be no end of history.

Civilizations are different from one another, but there is commonality in their values and achievements.

Even in times when there was little communication between them, great civilizations of the past, in Asia, the Middle East and America, managed to create quite similar irrigation systems. Beyond the shared genetic material and evolution of technology, there is, and has always been, a similarity in approach that different civilizations have taken to issues of ethics. This is not surprising. Value systems have relevance to human situations, and there is the common strand of humanity which threads itself through all these situations. The right to life, for instance, enjoys primacy in all civilizations. There are others. Our dialogue, over the past half a century, has allowed these to be codified into internationally accepted instruments which serve to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. There is, at the same time, a difference in emphasis arising from civilizational and cultural ethos. It manifests itself in tension generated by the recognition of the universality of fundamental human rights juxtaposed with duties of individuals towards society and societal rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights speaks of rights as well as duties. There is, and there will always be, in every civilization, an attempt to find a balance between the individual and the larger common good.

Dialogue among civilizations has enlarged the common denominator of values and principles that we should be governed by. These include the values of liberal and participatory democracy, rule of law and tolerance. They should not be construed as an imposition, nor should one civilization or another claim proprietary rights over them. It can be argued, for instance, that the village republics of ancient India were the enlightened predecessors for modern-day concepts of decentralized and participatory political institutions.

It is this universality of human values that terrorism denies. The terrorist belongs to no civilization. He rejects tolerance and diversity, values central to all civilizations. The perpetrators of the acts of 11 September — and those who perpetrate acts of terrorism elsewhere — are the rejects of their own civilizations. Their identification can be only with the States that harbour, aid, abet and support them, and even glorify them. To allow terrorists and the States that nurture them to hijack our discourse would be to give them a legitimacy which belongs only to the civilized.

Over the centuries, India has been the meeting place of different cultures. The Indic civilization is the result of several cultural fusions. It encompasses the philosophical tenets of idealism and materialism, religion and secularism, an affirmation of its own identity and a willingness for integrative globalization. We cherish our tolerance; we celebrate our diversity. We do so because of our belief in, and acceptance of, the fundamental unity of all humanity. As Mahatma Gandhi said:

“I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them.”

The dialogue among civilizations should continue. It will, we hope, contribute to greater harmony among civilizations.

Mr. Al-Awadi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are debating today one of the most important items on the agenda of the General Assembly, concerning dialogue among civilizations. My delegation has studied the report on this item. In Kuwait the activities provided for in the report have given us an understanding of the importance attached to this dialogue at the governmental level, and at the level of the United Nations. This leads us to be optimistic about the dialogue, which will touch on every aspect of our lives.

In this connection, we in Kuwait are pleased with the activities organized by the United Nations to strengthen the concept of dialogue among civilizations, specifically the decision by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to establish this dialogue as a strategic objective of its medium-term plan for 2002-2007. We are also pleased that the personal representative of the Secretary-General for the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations has proceeded, in cooperation with important international personalities, to work out an agenda for the dialogue. This has encouraged a number of States and non-governmental organizations to deploy great efforts to support the dialogue among civilizations and to develop an international culture of peace, to which we all aspire. In this connection, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab League and other organizations have also participated.

Kuwait has always supported the dialogue among civilizations through practical activities, and our

Government has decided to support all General Assembly resolutions pertaining to it. We have also continued to carry out important activities and educational and cultural programmes, in cooperation with the rest of the international community, in celebrating 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

It is important to underscore a number of other activities. Kuwait has signed several international treaties in connection with the national and governmental heritages of peoples. It has entered into bilateral agreements with friendly States to promote cooperation and exchange of educational and cultural programmes. For many years, Kuwait has been implementing programmes and plans at the national level to reinforce directly the dialogue among civilizations and to create continuous communication between Kuwait and other nations. This has also been accomplished through cultural programmes, annual arts festivals and the participation of Kuwaiti people in the strengthening of the dialogue among civilizations. Kuwait, for example, is organizing the al-Qareen cultural festival, an annual festival for children and an international book fair. It has also cooperated with international organizations and relevant non-governmental organizations in the area of human rights to strengthen international peace and the dialogue among civilizations. Furthermore, there has been cooperation with friendly countries in the area of culture, education and science to develop positive dialogue among peoples. As the Arab cultural capital for 2001, Kuwait has sponsored a number of cultural and artistic activities and supported the programmes developed by UNESCO in this connection.

Kuwait has hosted 16 cultural programmes and exhibits, with the participation of the Republic of Korea, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Switzerland. Many Arab countries have also participated. My country has also given exhibits abroad, in France, Algeria, Iran and Yemen. We are currently working with Japan to prepare a dialogue between the Gulf States and Japan. We have also played an important role, along with the rest of the international community, in supporting this United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and my delegation has reported on it in writing to the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that, through this Organization, we, like other States, want to help guarantee peace, security and stability for all

the peoples of the world. We also want to reiterate our support for the principles of the Charter in this area. These are principles that my country has underscored in the draft resolution to be examined by the General Assembly in the course of the debate on this agenda item. We are fully aware of the positive aspects this dialogue has at both levels, national and international, and in the foreign policy of our own Government. Also, following the events of 11 September, we wish to cooperate in the strengthening of this dialogue as a peaceful one and not as a clash among civilizations, as some people would like to portray it these days. It is indeed imperative to promote true understanding of all old civilizations, especially Islamic civilization, renounce terrorism and create in us, Arabs and Muslims, an understanding of all cultures and at all levels.

Lastly, I would like to refer to paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's report on this item, which is applicable, especially following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001:

“This is all the more true in the aftermath of the 11 September terrorist attacks, which represented the worst of humanity, whereas the dialogue seeks to enable and promote the best in humanity. A dialogue among civilizations is not only a necessary answer to terrorism — it is in many ways its nemesis. Where terrorism seeks to divide humanity, the dialogue aims to unite us.”

I would also like to commend the efforts of the Iranian Government regarding this dialogue and the draft resolution on this item.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): When the United Nations decided in General Assembly resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998 to proclaim the year 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, it wanted to underscore the urgent need to find ways and means to establish an exchange among the currents of thought, ways of life, cultures and traditions that constitute the wealth of our peoples.

In view of the events of 11 September, the choice of the year 2001 to highlight the virtues of dialogue among civilizations could not be more significant. Outrages such as those we have witnessed, in which religion and terrorism were blended into a dangerous brew, must be forever banned. The present debate on agenda item 25 gives us that opportunity. This debate, or this exchange of views, affords us the opportunity to

reiterate to the world that only understanding among people can promote peace and human progress.

We are grateful to the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative, which has allowed us to approach this reality in all its breadth. In fact, the dialogue among civilizations is, in the final analysis, the only weapon capable of creating a climate of peace, security and trust among peoples and nations, because it makes it possible for people to know each other better and therefore promotes better understanding among people. The objective of international peace and security could not be attained exclusively on the basis of disarmament or peacekeeping, peace-building conflict management operations, however useful and praiseworthy they may be. We must add another decisive element and that takes into account the sociological, spiritual, cultural and behavioural dimensions of human beings.

The dialogue among civilizations indisputably helps to prevent conflict by serving as a means of re-establishing communication among human beings, communities, peoples and nations, which are, of course, the potential bearers of violence and insecurity. As such, it makes a great contribution to the pacification of inter-community and international relations.

At a time when communications technology has reduced the world to a global village, at a time when the globalized economy obliges people to become more close and more integrated, thus creating new interdependencies, the United Nations must play a federative role for all Member States and provide leadership in the dialogue among civilizations.

Humanity is at a crossroads, and all of us together, moved and concerned by the same ideals of the United Nations, must mobilize ourselves to strengthen our determination to win the fight for peace, security and stability, as well as the fight against poverty, exclusion, intolerance and hatred.

Allow me to take this occasion to share the experience of my country, Burkina Faso, which has a cultural tradition called *parenté à plaisanterie* that is a factor of peaceful social regulation of relations among our cultural communities. As such, it is a good example of fraternal dialogue. Burkina Faso has about 60 ethnic groups and many religious communities that coexist in harmony.

Parenté à plaisanterie is a means of communication between two, three or more ethnic groups, or within an ethnic group. This tradition allows all sorts of jokes to be played, on happy or unhappy occasions, no matter the age or the social, political or administrative rank of the persons involved. For example, a 10-year-old child can make fun of a person of 70 years of age or more, or even with a group of persons, and no fighting will result. Even better, this form of dialogue creates a fine ambience, as one joke follows another. Confrontations are often avoided among people when they discover that they are related through *parenté à plaisanterie*, because the family name alone is enough to immediately identify an “antagonist”.

With regard to religion, various communities, including Islamic, animist and Christian, live in perfect understanding and often cooperate to contribute to the preservation of peace, harmony and stability in our country. On the holidays of one of the communities, the others offer their best wishes, and it is not unusual to see Muslims celebrating Christmas or Christians celebrating Mawlid.

This rapprochement of cultures and religions through dialogue is a factor for peace and friendship, and we must all support it.

The dialogue among civilizations, as a transcendental value, requires, quite obviously, tolerance, acceptance and respect for others, for their way of thinking, of living and of behaving. All this must take root in our societies, in our customs and in our day-to-day existence. In other words, the promotion of a true dialogue among civilizations must first pass through the culture of dialogue, which each one of us should consider a cardinal rule. This is the condition sine qua non for arriving at the universal civilization that we long for.

As a co-sponsor of draft resolution A/56/L.3, entitled “Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations”, Burkina Faso wants to align itself with that goal. It reaffirms its wholehearted support for the process of dialogue and also for implementing the programme that is to be adopted.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore.

Ms. Tan Yee Woan (Singapore): We meet at a time when the dialogue among civilizations is being

threatened by extremists more eager to kill than to talk. Public statements have been made in support of violence and murder. Worse, they joyfully assert a state of war between civilizations.

These statements are false. They are a deliberate, irresponsible provocation. As representatives of the international community, it is our duty to clearly and decisively rebut them with our words, and refute them by our actions.

Perhaps we should re-examine the phrase “dialogue among civilizations”. A dialogue, by definition, is a discussion between two parties only. We are engaged in a global conversation with many participants. Consequently, dialogue must be carried out at many levels — not all, or even mostly, at the level of Governments. In fact, the political level may be the least important of all. States have always understood the need to keep in contact with each other in their own strategic interests. They can be relied upon to carry on doing so.

Civilizations are not monolithic entities with determined borders. Civilizations are more than religion. A civilization is a dynamic mixture of history, geography, ethnicity, ethics, philosophy, religion, politics, economics, custom, tradition, cuisine, aesthetics, habits and fashion. Because of this, the more important dialogue is the one among ordinary individuals. This is embodied in the millions of intergovernmental, commercial, educational, scholarly and purely social interactions that go on all over the world. This dialogue takes place at every moment of every hour of every day. It has become deeper, richer and far more extensive in the last 10 years with the spread of communications technology and globalization. In these uncertain times, it is vitally important that we do not allow fear to weaken this global network of contacts.

Trade and commerce may well be the most important of the many possible levels of contact among civilizations. Historically, the principal peaceful contact among civilizations was through trade. Since antiquity, the famous Silk Road linked the Chinese Empire at its eastern end with the Roman Empire at its western terminus, with dozens of different societies in between. Even now, for many of us, commercial and professional dealings are still our main avenues of contact with people different from ourselves. Over the last 10 years, global economic integration through

liberalized trade and foreign direct investment has increased substantially. This has in turn deepened our opportunities to interact peacefully with people outside our own societies and cultures.

It is important not only to avoid reducing such interactions, but also to extend and deepen them. It is still the case that developed countries tend to trade and invest among themselves. From 1998-2000, 76.3 per cent of foreign direct investment flows went to developed countries, and only 21.4 per cent to developing countries. Now that the world economy is in a shaky state, it is likely that this discrepancy will widen. Both developed and developing countries must do their utmost to reverse this phenomenon by liberalizing trade, reducing barriers to imports and assisting developing countries to create the necessary social, legal and physical infrastructure to encourage foreign investment. Developing countries want and need more integration, not less. They want to be able to participate fully in the global conversation.

The movement of people is a major, albeit involuntary, force in the dialogue among civilizations. The International Labour Organization estimates that, as of 1999, there were up to 97 million people living and working in countries other than those of their birth. This does not include the approximately 11.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons estimated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the end of 1998.

Every society has foreigners living and working in it. This is a vital source of both economic prosperity and cultural interchange. The anxiety caused by the threat of terrorism has already led to increased xenophobia and calls for restrictions upon immigration in many countries. Both developed and developing countries will suffer if the flow of people and skills is further limited.

There is no State or civilization in the world that can honestly claim to be ethnically, culturally, religiously or socially homogeneous. The civilizations of the world are no longer separate entities, but are inextricably intertwined with each other, both culturally and geographically. In the last 100 years, there have been many misguided attempts to create societies that were ethnically, religiously or politically “pure”. These resulted in nothing but bloodshed, suffering and death for millions of people — an

outcome that should logically persuade us of the futility and evil consequences of such endeavours.

We must not fall into the trap of thinking of a civilization as something static, fixed and unchangeable. As the Secretary-General recently said:

“... these terms — civilizations, cultures — are not constant or immutable facts of history, but rather organisms in constant flux — always changing, growing, developing and adapting themselves to new times and new realities through interaction with each other”. (*Adapted from a speech at Seton Hall University’s School of Diplomacy and International Relations, 5 February 2001*)

Modern Singapore has flourished throughout its 200-year history as a consequence of the fruitful and profitable interchange among the many different ethnic groups that live and work there. Each group, while retaining a strong sense of its own history and identity, has nonetheless adapted and evolved in response to contact with all the others. In this sense, Singapore is a microcosm of South-East Asia as a whole. Our region is one of the world’s great crossroads of East and West, North and South. Over the centuries, influences from China, India, the Arabian peninsula and Europe have all met and mingled there. The situation is the same today, except that the influences are now from all over the world.

Both now and in the past, the strongest and most resilient societies have been those that can accommodate different strands of thought, opinion and behaviour. Culturally homogeneous societies, like fields of homogeneous crops, are vulnerable to sudden changes in their external environment. If a field is planted with just one species of crop, an insect infestation may kill every plant in it. In a field of mixed species, many plants will be unaffected by the pest, and the crop as a whole will survive.

Like any living species, societies and civilizations are in a state of continuous evolutionary change. To stop evolution does not mean that a species has reached perfection; to stop evolution means extinction. A culture that shuns diversity and closes itself off into its own airtight cocoon of ideas and beliefs will not grow and change into a butterfly; it will suffocate and die. Any contribution that it might have made to human development will die with it. A society that feeds its

members on fear and hatred of what is different is sowing the seeds of its own destruction.

The average length of time for a living species to exist is a million years. However, there are two ways in which a species can disappear. One is by complete extinction, without leaving any genetic inheritance behind. The other is by changing into something else, as some dinosaurs may have evolved into birds. Human societies also have these two possibilities before them at all times. No society still in existence today is the same as it was 100, or 1,000, years ago. Through interaction with other civilizations, each civilization changes, grows and lives. In maintaining and strengthening the dialogue among civilizations, we are choosing the road to survival, not extinction.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The dialogue among civilizations has never been as important as it is today. That dialogue began a number of years ago with the proposal of a philosophical idea aimed at bringing civilizations closer together in order to counteract what was then referred to as the inevitable differences and clashes between civilizations. We have now witnessed astonishing events that have compelled us to change our approach to the issue. Today, we view the dialogue among civilizations as a practical necessity because of our common fate, and not as a philosophical debate, which belongs to the domain of research and books. Today, more than ever before, we need a serious dialogue that brings us together and aims to achieve and promote coexistence, rather than one that seeks to pull us apart. We need a dialogue that establishes a framework for our unification and counters calls for divergence and isolation.

We must still define the meaning of civilization, as well as the ideas and concepts that link it to other concepts, such as culture, nationalism, religion and other elements. True, it is difficult to agree on a clear definition for a notion such as civilization. But, in fact, civilization has several definitions and interpretations, most of which are based on a combination of historical and geographical elements and the interplay between them — which includes language, culture events and tastes. The resulting intellectual mixture has brought together people of various faiths and nationalities that have coexisted and clashed for a long time across vast geographical regions. We understand that civilization is something that results from a meeting of wills that

represent a true vision of all these elements and their interaction.

The dialogue among civilization begins, first and foremost, with the idea of the equality of all civilizations and an appreciation of the contribution every civilization can make to the destiny of mankind through its unique knowledge and history, without pretending to be racist or superior to any other civilization. Dialogue begins with an understanding of the special characteristics and diversity of each civilization in the light of its own experience and sources of nourishment and the distinct traditions and customs it has developed throughout the years. The human legacy of all civilizations is certainly rich in elements that can bring us together and in values common to all cultures. This can help us to counter the conflict between civilizations. We can base ourselves on this heritage to highlight the salient points of our common destiny and the fundamental points upon which to build the dialogue. Allow me to list some of those.

First, all civilizations, despite their diversity, are part and parcel of a unique system, namely, human civilization. Development and progress in a given region or civilization will ultimately result in nourishing other civilizations.

Secondly, humankind has not made the progress it has through the efforts of a single civilization. All civilizations have together built an intricate structure through a long cumulative process to create such a human fabric.

Thirdly, the best place to begin the dialogue among civilizations is within a dialogue that takes place among individual civilizations. In fact, within any given civilization there are numerous nationalities, religions, languages, dialects and so on. One cannot possibly conceive of coexistence among civilizations without their first coexisting within the same civilization.

Fourthly, each civilization must go through a process of purification by eliminating all negative aspects and feelings of superiority and by shunning concepts that resist sound logic and thinking.

Fifthly, we must understand the importance of accepting the other, and not rejecting it because of different beliefs, lifestyles, and ways of life.

The best expression of Egypt's vision of the dialogue among civilizations was enunciated by President Mubarak during the Euro-Mediterranean Forum, which took place in Spain just a few days ago. He stated that we must understand that religion cannot be used as a pretext for conflict among civilizations or confrontation among peoples. Every religion should serve as the driving force for dialogue and coexistence among people. As President Mubarak has also stressed — which we Muslims are very proud of — Muslims were not the only ones to spearhead progress in the Arab-Islamic civilization; the Christians and Jews living in the fold of that civilization were also very instrumental. They made a very important contribution, which reaffirms the noble foundation of the Arab-Islamic civilization and highlights its spirit of tolerance and acceptance of others, away from the claims of conflict and supremacy.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus welcomes the discussion on the item of the dialogue among civilizations on the eve of the general debate of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Such a schedule enables us not only to discuss this important agenda item at the current session, but also to establish very logical links between the work of Assembly meetings and the forthcoming exchange of opinions at the level of heads of State or Government and Foreign Ministers on the most pressing issues today.

It is very symbolic that the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations has coincided with the beginning of the new century and millennium. Now is just the time for humankind to give particular attention to reviewing the entire spectrum of diversity among civilizations, their common characteristics and differences, which are, in the aggregate, a great legacy of world society. Under current circumstances, in marking the beginning of a new era in international relations — the era of globalization — it is important to realize that dialogue, exchange and interaction between the histories, cultures and social traditions of different States, united into a single family of the nations of the world, are the real — not an abstract — driving force of the progress of human society and that this has been an irreversible trend in historical development in all preceding centuries and millennia. Exchange among civilizations will contribute to the world's future prosperity.

It is not coincidental that following the tragic events of 11 September 2001 in major United States cities, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his address to delegates at the 1st plenary meeting of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, made a specific reference to dialogue among civilizations. Belarus is convinced that the unprecedented acts of terrorism were possible only because the terrorists ignored the fundamental preconditions for the civilized coexistence of States in today's world: continual exchange and interaction. Different incentives, based on the superiority of some and the inferiority of others, on racial, religious or national differences, could lead to unforeseeable consequences. We should enrich one another, learn from one another, exchange expertise and cooperate on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Only thus will we be able to settle all existing differences, by peaceful means, on the basis of mutual trust, harmony and understanding. Certainly this will be difficult to achieve, but it is possible.

Unfortunately, the high level of mankind's development at present does not yet ensure full harmony and perfection in the contemporary world. Our world is full of conflicts, environmental problems and social upheaval. There is concern about the increasing acceleration of military spending against the background of a growing gap between the developed and developing world, an increasing number of refugees, civilian casualties, increasing involvement of children in armed conflict, the expansion of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other challenges and shocks.

Against that background, it should be noted that many modern conflicts are precisely at the crossroads of indigenous civilizations. The situations in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the critical conditions in the Middle East and Afghanistan are just some examples where dialogue and reconciliation among religions, cultures, nations and traditions become crucial in the search for a peaceful settlement, and, consequently, in ensuring the sustainable and predictable development of world society today and in the future.

As the trend towards globalization intensifies, it becomes extremely important to broaden true democracy and equality in international relations, to achieve understanding of the equal rights of all countries — large and small, rich and poor — in order to attain our common goals. In our view, it is precisely in this context that the issue of combating international

terrorism should be considered. The efforts of the Security Council Counter-terrorism Committee, established pursuant to Council resolution 1373 (2001), which focuses on achieving broad support among Member States, should be continued and enhanced. The opinions of all countries must be taken into account as much as possible at all stages of the work of that important organ. For us, this is the precondition for the Committee's success and therefore the real prospect for establishing a reliable shield against international terrorists.

Belarus shares the concept of the key role of the United Nations in the process of encouraging dialogue among civilizations. We support the Secretary-General's point that

“The United Nations itself was created in the belief that dialogue can triumph over discord, that diversity is a universal virtue and that the peoples of the world are far more united by their common fate than they are divided by their separate identities.”

Proceeding from this position, we have joined the sponsors of the General Assembly draft resolution that contains the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. With its adoption, it will be easier for the United Nations to take further action in this field and to exclude the possibility of inconsistent and sporadic measures.

Belarus is convinced that only practical steps taken by all Member States can facilitate achievement of the goals we are setting for ourselves today. In this regard, the people of Belarus and the President and Government prefer to follow the ancient wisdom that one should start with oneself. Today's Belarus is a dialogue among civilizations in miniature. We have representatives of more than 140 ethnic minorities in the country, and all of them enjoy the right to develop freely and promote their culture, history and language. Twenty-six major religious confessions are registered in Belarus. The relationship among different confessions and nationalities in the country can be defined as stable and predictable.

The results of scientific and sociological research clearly indicate that there are no objective grounds in Belarus for social or psychological tensions or conflicts in the area of ethnic relations. They also show that, against the background of well-established traditions, we have sustainable interaction between the

predominant national group and the other groups — Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Tatars and others.

The practice of organizing round tables with the participation of representatives of ethnic minorities and encouraging national cultural festivals and inter-ethnic scientific contacts has been a longstanding tradition in Belarus. With the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Belarus has been actively participating in all integration initiatives from the former Soviet Union, considering them a necessary prerequisite for the stable economic and political development of the newly independent nations that formerly constituted a single State. We are interested in developing this strategy in the future.

It is an honour for me to extend, on behalf of my Government, sincere gratitude to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, personally to the President of this tradition-rich country, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Khatami, Mr. Kofi Annan and his Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, for their valuable contribution in promoting the noble idea of the dialogue among civilizations. Belarus will contribute to further the development and success of this initiative.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Government of Japan, our sincere appreciation to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Seyed Mohammad Khatami, for proposing this dialogue among civilizations.

I would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Giandomenico Picco, the personal representative of the Secretary-General, and to the group of eminent persons appointed by the Secretary-General for publishing the book entitled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*. This book is one of the concrete achievements of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

The United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is an epoch-making undertaking with historic significance. It has urged countries and peoples around the world to seek peace and coexistence through dialogue based upon a spirit of mutual understanding and tolerance. It is most ironic, therefore, that the heinous terrorist attacks of 11 September made it known to us in the cruellest manner the magnitude of yet another threat to civilization: terrorism.

The international community must cooperate to eradicate such terrorist attacks. In this context, it was very encouraging that at the plenary meeting of the General Assembly, 171 representatives united in condemning terrorism and in emphasizing the need to prevent and eradicate terrorism. At the same time, it cannot be overemphasized that it is terrorists whom we confront, not Muslims, or Islamic or Arab countries.

In January of this United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the Government of Japan, under the leadership of the then Foreign Minister, Mr. Yohei Kono, launched a new initiative that seeks to further enhance mutual understanding between Japan and Islamic countries as part of the effort to promote dialogue among civilizations. Under this initiative, the Government of Japan has been undertaking a series of new efforts aimed at deepening the understanding of Islam and has created a network of intellectuals among people in Japan and the Islamic countries. As a result of these efforts, a network seminar is to be convened in Bahrain in March 2002. The Government of Japan also hosted a seminar in Tokyo last March entitled “Dialogue among Civilizations — From a Century of Conflict to a Century of Coexistence”, where many young people from various countries were invited to discuss global issues. The seminar produced a report, which was submitted to the Secretary-General.

Today, in the light of these efforts by Japan, I would like to present the views of my Government on the dialogue among civilizations. It may be said that, viewed historically, the world of today is the result of interaction among civilizations around the globe. Although conflicts have sometimes occurred as a consequence of this interaction, there is no doubt that every civilization has been stimulated and enriched through its interaction with others. Located at the eastern edge of Asia, Japan has assimilated into its own culture aspects of various civilizations in the course of its long history; accordingly, we can readily understand the significance of such interaction. From our own historical experience, we clearly recognize that an understanding of different religions, cultures, customs and so on, and a tolerance that accepts them, are essential in order to reap the benefits of interaction between civilizations.

Today it is again becoming important that different civilizations not compete for ascendancy, but, rather, that they recognize the differences among

themselves and demonstrate mutual respect through dialogue and exchanges.

As globalization continues to advance, goods, money, information and people move from place to place at greater speeds and over longer distances than ever before. As a result, different civilizations come into contact with each other in a very short span of time and in such a way as to involve entire societies. Furthermore, globalization, while bringing many benefits to a society, gives rise to various differences within it, which complicates the way people react to incoming new ways of thinking, cultures and customs. This sometimes engenders intolerance among people towards civilizations different from their own, and it can even result in conflict.

Globalization, however, is a reality that cannot be stopped. The Government of Japan considers it important that people acknowledge this fact and understand and respect the religions that others believe in and the cultures and customs that others hold dear. With this recognition, we believe that it is of utmost importance to promote exchange, especially among young people who will shoulder responsibility for the future of the world.

It is important to disseminate knowledge about various civilizations. But more fundamentally, it is important for people all around the world to recognize that those who live in different parts of the world and are of different races, religions, cultures and customs, are human beings no different from themselves. Personal exchanges are essential in order to deepen such recognition.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration states that tolerance is essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. In other words, human beings must respect one another in all their diversity of belief, culture and language, and a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations should be actively promoted.

It is our responsibility to achieve this goal to which all the leaders of all Member States have subscribed. Indeed, the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations has provided us with an opportunity for this purpose. In the coming years, we will have to continue to make further efforts in close cooperation with each other in order to expand dialogues and exchanges among civilizations on the

basis of their achievements during this United Nations Year.

I would therefore like to conclude my remarks by stating that it is with this recognition that the Government of Japan, for its part, will continue to make every possible effort in that respect.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Humankind had hoped that the end of the twentieth century would create an appropriate opportunity for the world to recall events of the past century, evaluate its great victories and outstanding achievements, look at and draw lessons from its deadly disasters and bloody tragedies. Humankind aspires to make this century one of tolerance, cooperation and solidarity that will strengthen the human edifice and extend security, peace, progress and prosperity to all.

Yet, the international community was horrified by the disaster that befell the United States and shocked by that murderous and terrorist act, which was condemned by all peace-loving peoples and responsible Governments. Chief among those were the Arab and Muslim Governments that have been stung by terrorism and have suffered from extremism and violence.

It is regrettable that there are latent forces in the West that lie in wait for Islam and the Arabs, see in Muslims and Arabs the real antagonists to the spirit of the times and link them to terrorism. They have substituted the so-called green peril — Islam — for the red menace. Some of these tendentious forces claim that the catastrophe in New York and Washington, D.C., is sufficient proof that the theory that the values of conformity, harmony and relative advantage can be globalized does not apply to the Muslim and Arab worlds, which are propelled by hatred of Western values to the extent that some individuals from those worlds are prepared to face death, to inflict great suffering on the innocent and to threaten to destroy Western societies.

Such tendentious individuals ignore the fact that terrorism is an international phenomenon that is not limited to any one nation, race or religion and that it has been present in every culture and nation throughout history. They ignore the fact that the region that they accuse of hatred is the cradle of the divine religions, which taught the world love and tolerance, and whose peoples have made great contributions to human civilization. Terrorism cannot be an Islamic or Arab phenomenon, as some claim to justify their political

ends. The liberal and socialist West and the East with its diverse nations and countries have numerous extremist and terrorist movements. Every culture is subject to those who misrepresent it in a biased manner and whose interpretation of it is at great odds with reality, history and truth.

The latest terrorist acts and their attendant results, which have negatively affected human communications and revived the concept of a so-called conflict among civilizations, underscore the need to pursue the dialogue among civilizations and interaction among cultures to bridge the gaps of ideas and values that biased people seek to widen.

Those who theorize about the concept of conflict among civilizations and claim that history is a product of violence start from the premise that conflict is the basis for relations between individuals, peoples and States, reflects the nature of human instinct and that it characterizes the state of interaction and competition among human societies.

The truth confirms, however, that conflicts are motivated by the quest for self-interest, benefits and objectives, and that violence, coupled with hatred and cruelty, arises when a domineering and tyrannical Power unilaterally prioritizes its own economic interests and political objectives. Violence also arises wherever justice and fairness are lacking and whenever the practice of double standards is the norm in international relations. Extremism, which spurs individuals to violence, is the result of shortcomings that govern human and international relations at the expense of great human values and the natural rights of peoples. Extremism, violence and terrorism are the result of excessive oppression and the lack of freedom and justice.

The international community, represented by its Governments, institutions and regional and international organizations — the United Nations first and foremost among them — should work as one to trace the roots of terrorism, understand its causes and pursue efforts to find just solutions to various conflicts. Uprooting terrorism, draining its resources and eliminating its centres requires international political action based on justice and equality among peoples.

Resentment of double standards is one of the reasons for random and organized violence under the umbrella of terrorism. Only justice will generate peace and make all peoples realize that they are living in an

international order that respects everyone and discriminates against none. Civilizations are instruments that have been built on interaction among cultures and on the amalgamation of human knowledge since God created and populated this planet, and will remain so until God reclaims it and everything on it.

Dialogue among the judicious and the wise has become an urgent necessity if we are to avoid a downfall. The events of 11 September have shown that certain historical sensitivities still linger in the subconscious of the nations of the East and the West. We have been surprised by the numerous rifts that have opened and by how certain holdovers from the past, with its attendant hatred, have begun to emerge. We have also begun to read and hear about idiotic classifications of religions, civilizations and cultures.

While we cannot change the past, we have to work together for the future. We have to endeavour to find an enlightened cultural vision that emphasizes the positive aspects of international relations and the contribution of the United Nations to building the present and preparing for the future. The world has also changed. States are no longer a pure expression of a specific culture or religion, because interaction among peoples does not recognize religious differences and the unity of the human race transcends racial divisions.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for continuing the dialogue among civilizations and for opening cultural communications, understanding and international cooperation because of its belief in God's words:

“O mankind! We created
You from a single (pair)
Of a male and a female,
And made you into
Nations and tribes, that
Ye may know each other.
Verily,
The most honoured of you
In the sight of Allah
Is (he who is) the most
Righteous of you.” (*The Holy Koran, IL:13*)

Walls of isolation, preconceptions of others, racist epithets, derision of other people's values, religions, sects and beliefs, feelings of superiority and hateful selfishness are not the teachings of the Koran. The nature of humanity is exploration, interaction and cooperation among human beings in the interests of all,

which requires acknowledging the rights, beliefs and values of others.

Believing in the significance of dialogue among civilizations and cultures, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia established the first dialogue between Muslims and the Vatican more than 25 years ago. It also established numerous cultural centres and scientific institutes around the world to function as a bridge between Islamic and other cultures. The objective is to deepen understanding and to establish a common foundation of values and objectives to enhance human calls for peace and cooperation.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for a dialogue based on mutual respect among different cultures and that is not bound by history so to ensure that the dialogue is not confined to issues that have no relation to the present. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for a dialogue that cultivates and enlightens the mind and addresses humanitarian issues and awareness. It calls for solutions and compromises inspired by the spirit of civilization, based on equality and justice, and founded on values, ideals and principles. Saudi Arabia is calling for a dialogue that helps to bring nations together and to eliminate the barriers of misunderstanding, mistrust, misconceptions and prejudice that have accumulated over time. We are calling for a wise dialogue to rationalize and control globalization and to ensure that it is not transformed from a mechanism that fosters interaction between civilizations and cultures and that promotes knowledge into a single, monolithic culture founded on the ruins of others. It should not result in the imposition of certain values on others without due consideration for their beliefs and cultural heritage.

We live in a world of interdependent relations, interests and benefits. That is why humankind should cooperate creatively and develop plans and programmes at the international level to respond to the threats that we all face. No nation can separate itself from the problems of the world. We must work together to create a world free from war, conflict, extremism and terrorism, as well as from disease, ignorance and poverty — one in which justice and equality prevail to ensure a better and more stable, humanistic and prosperous future for coming generations.

Mr. Arrouchi (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like, on behalf of the kingdom of Morocco, to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan; his

Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco; the Group of Eminent Persons; and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for their tireless efforts to promote and strengthen the idea of a dialogue among civilizations.

We would also like to thank the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has, with great effectiveness and success, led the work of the group of experts, whose task was to elaborate the draft Programme of Action for the dialogue among civilizations, which Morocco supports.

The principle of dialogue is one of the fundamental tenets of Islamic society, which has always favoured understanding and openness among peoples. As the Almighty said,

“O Mankind! We created
You from a single (pair)
Of a male and a female,
And made you into
Nations and tribes, that
Ye may know each other”. (*Holy Koran, IL:13*)

Our Organization came about as the result of a constructive dialogue undertaken 56 years ago between many nations, representing different civilizations. These nations declared that they were determined to preserve future generations from the scourge of war, to practise tolerance and to coexist peacefully with each other in a spirit of good-neighbourliness. These noble objectives can be achieved only through the promotion of a culture of dialogue among civilizations — a dialogue that is more necessary than ever, because of globalization, which is increasingly revealing the depth and complexity of human diversity in all its aspects.

The Kingdom of Morocco’s unshakeable conviction in the beneficial nature of dialogue is based on its history of international relations. In fact, as His Majesty King Mohammed VI stressed in his message to participants in the International Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations in a Changing World, organized by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Morocco has always been, and remains, a crossroads of tolerance and coexistence, a safe haven of understanding and a starting point for the establishment of channels of communication at the civilizational and cultural levels among different societies, regardless of the diversity of their religions and beliefs and their many different origins.

The particular geographical location of Morocco, which makes it a point of contact between Europe, the Arab world and sub-Saharan Africa, has to a great extent determined the identity of the country. The epic Andalusian period in our history is part of our spirit. Morocco played an important part in the historic period from the twelfth century to the fifteenth century during which divine religions communicated as never before and science and the arts flourished in a way that was unprecedented in the Mediterranean region. The Andalusian legacy can be seen in the manuscripts and architecture of Marrakesh and Fez, as well as of those of Seville, Cordoba and Granada.

The Arabs also served as a link to Western civilization because they were able to preserve and develop the Greco-Roman tradition, enriching and transforming it, as they transmitted it to Europe, where it contributed to the great Renaissance period.

All cultures are nourished by other cultures and by their environment. They profit and flourish from such contacts and from openness. We also know that, as is the case with individuals, when countries close themselves off, it is as though they have died or disappeared. It is essential for society to accept and protect individual liberties, diversity of opinion and respect for differences. Any dialogue must be supported by an affirmation of tolerance, even if that creates apparent — albeit controlled — disorder.

It is true that the existence of different political and social systems mean that freedom and democracy may not be identical in every country. However, there is a core of fundamental human rights principles, monitored by the international community, which protect the physical integrity and dignity of individuals and which all countries must respect.

The dialogue among civilizations is based on respect for basic human rights. But it cannot develop unless it takes full account of both the relativity and diversity of human perceptions, and abandons any pretence, when determining cultural models, of instituting a hierarchy of the perceptions, memories and sentiments that history has forged over the centuries.

In trying to consolidate and protect their own culture, certain groups have created the idea of an external threat, attempting to replace the cold war with the concept of a clash of civilizations. The process of developing such a simplistic vision, which scorns

history and anthropology, has already begun. But we note that such a vision is defended today by only a very small groups of extremists.

There are others who would like to profit from extremist actions to pass judgement on a particular religion or civilization. Such attempts are unacceptable, because they are intended to awaken the old chauvinisms and discords that we had hoped we would never see again.

We must not forget that the universal values that unite us, and that are the foundation of the United Nations, have also outlawed the idea of collective guilt, collective responsibility and collective punishment. A social group as a whole may be swept up in aberrations, but it is the individual that is criminally responsible before the law.

I gave the example of Andalusia, but I could also mention the extraordinary role sub-Saharan Africa played in the renewal of modern art in the last century. That is why the accelerated pace of globalization in the last 10 years must not in any way come to mean the uniformity or the uniformization of the world. It is up to the international community to ensure that the opening of trade and economic borders is carried out with due respect for the cultural diversity present in the world, which constitutes and embodies all the world's wealth and beauty.

The dialogue of cultures therefore requires abandoning attitudes of hegemony, whether global or regional. The best measures of fecund dialogue among civilizations are cooperation between States and the possibility, within States, for local cultures to express themselves and to manage their own affairs. A people that crushes another people cannot be considered free of all constraints; it inevitably places itself in a master-slave dialectic, a relationship that ultimately enslaves master as well as slave.

In this year, 2001, marked by the tragedy of 11 September and the worsening of the situation in the Middle East — the escalation of the despair and distress of the Palestinians — we hope that the Year of the Dialogue among Civilizations will lead to concrete measures not only to eliminate terrorism but also to restore hope to Palestinian children crushed under the weight of violence, hardship and the daily denial of their culture.

Morocco is convinced that our Organization is the body where dialogue can prosper and bear fruit in all domains of human activity. Given that the dialogue among civilizations is a process for promoting inclusion, equity, justice, equality and tolerance between civilizations and within them, Morocco is determined to contribute, regionally and internationally, to the strengthening of trust and reconciliation in order to build, through our collective will, a new world in which all humanity can live in love and harmony, inspired by peaceful principles based on justice and equity and on the restitution to individuals of their inherent rights, in conformity with international law, which is the best guarantor of the peace and stability of nations.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express the pleasure of the delegation of Yemen at the noticeable increase in interest shown in the dialogue among civilizations. This reflects a collective awareness of the lessons learned from the last century, which was replete with wars and tensions. In the attempt to found international relations on justice, faith and mutual respect through dialogue and democracy in word and in deed, General Assembly resolution 53/22, declaring this year the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, was a necessary step in enabling us to benefit from positive trends after the cold war and from the momentum of globalization and its mechanisms in enhancing international cooperation in the collective search for answers to the economic and social problems we face at the start of the twenty-first century.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September have highlighted the urgent need to intensify a dialogue and exchange of ideas in order not only to put an end to terrorism but also to eradicate all sources of conflict and tension in the world. There is no doubt that the events of 11 September have made the eradication of terrorism a priority of collective efforts both within and outside the United Nations. Not only does terrorism in all its forms represent a danger to the security and stability of some countries but it also foments confrontation and division among individuals and peoples and hinders development and progress. That is why it is important to intensify efforts for moving ahead with the dialogue among civilizations. As the Secretary-General states in paragraph 19 of his report,

“dialogue among civilizations is not only a necessary answer to terrorism, it is in many ways

its nemesis ... where terrorism is based on an exclusionary, belligerent view of the world, the dialogue seeks to promote inclusion and acceptance of the notion that the possession of truth does not belong to any one group alone”.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the activities carried out so far. It is clear from the report of the Secretary-General that these activities have gone a long way in crystallizing basic principles for international cooperation and understanding through mutual respect and tolerance. Here, we would like to express our appreciation of the role of President Khatami, who drew attention to the importance of the dialogue among civilizations.

Throughout its history, Yemen has been a point of geographical, cultural and civilizational contacts between Asia and Africa and has always been a centre for trade in summer and winter. Yemen has worked for openness towards other cultures and civilizations through its media, special programmes and educational curricula. It has also held various symposiums in research centres in the last two years towards the same goal.

However, these common concepts and communications — especially considering that the Secretary-General has stated that we should make use of traditional means and education — and the help required to form public opinion among people as individuals, especially youth, call for a long-term strategy. What is important in our view is to urge the people working in the media to play a larger role because they are a great influence on public opinion and decision-making in foreign policy.

Regrettably, some journalists were quick, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist acts of 11 September, to link international terrorism to Arabs and to Islam. This flies in the face of logic and only fuels the distorted concept of a clash between cultures and civilizations in the age of globalization and universal democracy. This makes it incumbent upon us to redouble our efforts to open new channels for dialogue and to encourage openness and respect for pluralism and ethnic and cultural diversity. Humanity has suffered enough from intolerance and from ethnic and religious differences and feelings of superiority.

In conclusion, we should promote this dialogue among civilizations by supporting the draft resolution

before us. My country has the great honour of being among the sponsors of that draft.

Mr. Valdés (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): It may be more important today than ever before in the history of this Organization to speak of humankind in terms of civilizations, because today — as has been the case during other dark periods of history — attempts are being made to justify violence as necessary for the defence of culture, and horrendous crimes are being committed in the name of God.

That is what has led us today to take a look at our many collective beliefs and memories and to proclaim that diversity is our wealth — a wealth that consists also of the values of tolerance, freedom and respect for universal human rights, all of which unite us.

Chile welcomes this dialogue, as well as the efforts of President Khatami and of the Islamic Republic of Iran to promote this initiative. Like others, we are inspired by the hope that these meetings — which are becoming more frequent and are spreading to various continents — will help prevent millions of persons from losing touch with their humanity, forgetting that all culture is life and that there is but one God, the creator of all life on this earth.

We see this as a different kind of debate — one that is not devoted to the kinds of questions we usually deal with, such as power and prestige among nations. Those concerns are dealt with in other forums within this Organization. But we attach great importance to the fact that the United Nations is undertaking this type of reflection. As stated by the Secretary-General in his report, which we welcome, we consider the United Nations to be

“the natural home of dialogue among civilizations; the forum where such dialogue can flourish and bear fruit in every field of human endeavour”. (*A/56/523, para. 15*)

That is why we would like to share here what we consider to be the basic truths we live by. We want to take a critical look at our cultures and to reconsider the value of that which is ours, and of that which is not. We want to live in a way that allows us to admire the humanity of those who are foreign to us.

We would therefore like to reiterate that we value tolerance as the greatest wealth of humanity, the very essence of our human nature, and the quality that

enables us to acknowledge the value of the specific characteristics and ineffable nature of all cultures.

We Latin Americans, who are descended from that extraordinary mix of the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula — Goths, Arabs, Lusitanians, Catalans, Basques and Jews — blended with the indigenous races of our American land, cannot ignore the value of plurality or the pain of intolerance, in view of how deeply these phenomena have affected our history.

Today, in considering the dizzying speed of progress of globalization and the way in which — thanks to the incredible advances made possible by the technological revolution — it has brought together men and women from previously remote cultures and lands, we have to acknowledge that nothing of this magnitude has happened to humanity since the discovery of America and the immense and painful meeting of races and cultures that resulted.

Just as in 1550 — when Emperor Charles V convened a meeting that gave rise to the Valladolid controversy — we are continuing to deal with the discrepancy between the views of those who see the world as Ginés de Sepulveda did at the time — based on the principle of inequality, with ranks, levels and hierarchies — and the views of those of us who see it as Bartolomé de las Casas did. He protected the Indians of the Americas, saying that nowhere on earth are there human beings who may be called non-humans or who must be dominated for their own good.

Indeed, it was Bartolomé de las Casas who saw that an unprecedented relationship had been established between the truth of unity and the diversity of human beings. He said that diversity was not a mistake, but that, on the contrary, the multiplicity of religions and forms of cultural expression was a reflection of the universality of religion and the fundamental identity of the human race.

That is why those of us who are joining in the globalization process must have an open mind, like Bartolomé de las Casas did. We are aware of the benefits and risks of joining this vast network of communications, products and technologies, and trade and transnational financial flows. But we know that there is no alternative, because autarchy is neither possible nor better.

But in doing this, we must not become obsessed with the idea of imposing a single truth based on

science. Our fascination with technology must not lead us to trivialize our self-image or to deepen the spiritual impoverishment of human beings today. We cannot forget that, if human beings neglect the spiritual dimension, this rapid integration will become a reckless, headlong rush towards the systematic destruction of our roots — an experiment in deracination.

As Pope John Paul II said of this dialogue, it is a path that is

“inspired by an approach to life marked by secularism, practical atheism and by patterns of radical individualism ... sustained by powerful media campaigns and designed to propagate lifestyles, social and economic programmes and, in the last analysis, a comprehensive world view which erodes from within other estimable cultures and civilizations”.

Let us state it clearly: all too often our Western civilization, with all of its magnificence and wealth, has looked at the world around it as if it were transparent. It looks, but it does not see. It creates categories and believes them to be universal, and abides by them as if they had been divinely ordained, only to realize — when catastrophe strikes — that they are replete with uncertainty and precariousness.

That is why the dialogue we are promoting today must be seen, above all, as an exercise in humility.

The modern western trinity of freedom, equality and fraternity lost its last component a long time ago. We must rediscover that notion of fraternity in this dialogue among civilizations. We are called to it by article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights when it asks us to act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

We are Members of the United Nations because we cannot tolerate the idea that the advance of modernity will have as a fatal outcome the construction of a planet of trenches and fortresses, in which a mechanized world of globalized elites protects itself from a world of the marginalized armed only with their beliefs. Our dialogue must therefore help create foundations of principles intended to avoid the self-fulfilling prophecies of a neo-Malthusian science that offers the impossible-to-imitate unattainable growth and spending models for one half of humanity, or decrees that owing to geographic location, level of

wealth, culture and education or the lack thereof, half of the planet is hopelessly destined to be excluded from progress.

However, today, above all, we must confront hatred. Our dialogue on what makes us diverse is based on the reaffirmation so often repeated in this Hall that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and that it is the duty of States, whatever their cultural, economic or political systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Nothing can make this commitment more difficult than the growth of a spiral of hatred transmitted over generations, taught to our children and accepted as absolute truth in infantile minds.

For this reason, and so that dialogue might advance in small but significant steps, we modestly suggest that all of us who have supported the value of these meetings agree progressively to eliminate from the texts our children study — be they about religion or history — all those concepts that portray the other as an enemy and that reduce the human dignity of those who are different, practice a different faith or are of a different nationality.

Nothing can be more important than to promote this path in the field of religious instruction. As was said a few weeks ago by Václav Havel, speaking in St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague to the representatives of the world's religions, it seems the time has come to create a great spiritual coalition that will widen cooperation among the religions of the world, and their joint efforts, in order to confront the forces of destruction in the name of respect for life and human dignity. In so doing, we would fulfil what the God of the Bible commanded when he declared to his people and through them to all mankind that they and foreigners were equal before God.

Chile is ready to promote within and beyond its region meetings of thinkers and intellectuals, religious and political leaders, that will spread tolerance and respect for all. It is our fervent wish that this year will not only mark the high point of pain and anger but will also be recalled in the future as the moment when we began a global reflection on the course of civilizations.

Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Islamic Republic of Iran for initiating this discussion at the General Assembly.

In its resolution 53/22 the General Assembly proclaimed the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, thereby recognizing mankind's diverse achievements in civilization. Crystallizing cultural pluralism and creative human diversity, it emphasized the significant role of dialogue as a means to reach understanding, remove threats to peace and strengthen interaction and exchange among civilizations.

Globalization, which is shaping the contours of the new world order, has promoted mutual enrichment of civilizations and created new opportunities for cultural exchange. Modern technology, having intensified rapidly over the past decade, has brought many parts of the world into closer contact.

In the rapidly developing world, we are confronted with challenges that represent a serious threat to the world's creative diversity: ethnic conflicts and xenophobia, racism and discrimination, prejudice and intolerance. It should be noted that many of the problems we are facing today have arisen as a consequence of differences within nations. We must learn to respect each nation with its cultural heritage, customs and traditions, and dispel hatred, ignorance and distrust.

The year 2001 is particularly important for the people of Kazakhstan. We are celebrating the tenth anniversary of our independence. The past 10 years has been a period of our State's consolidation and transformation into a democratic society. We proclaimed the creation of a humane society with equal rights for all the peoples and nationalities of Kazakhstan.

My delegation shares the view of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Director-General, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, that dialogue must begin at home. My country has a unique history, rich traditions and diverse cultures. Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. With a potentially explosive mix of 130 nationalities, we have learned to live together in peace, without domestic turmoil or conflict.

The President and the Government of Kazakhstan encourage intercultural dialogue in every possible way. The recommendations of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, a broad non-governmental body representing all the minorities of Kazakhstan, are taken into account at the decision-making level. This body

was established by decree of the President 10 years ago to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts and promote dialogue between all the peoples and nationalities of Kazakhstan. We safeguard freedom of religious worship for all people — Muslims, Russian Orthodox, Protestants and Catholics. A visit by the Pope to my country last September was an important event for all cultures in Kazakhstan. That visit, serving as a vivid example of a balanced approach to all religions, promoted intercultural dialogue and signified understanding, tolerance and mutual respect.

In today's strife-torn world, the domestic stability and tolerance we have built stand as our greatest achievement. We shall continue to do everything possible to preserve such values as inter-ethnic harmony and the multiplicity of cultures and customs of the various ethnic groups that constitute the people of Kazakhstan.

Dialogue among civilizations is an important tool for differing cultures to find their places in a complicated world. Each culture should cultivate within itself values of respect for other cultures. This is extremely important in light of recent events. On several occasions, my delegation has emphasized that we must not condemn all Muslims and Arabs for the terrorist attacks. The vast majority of people do not support religious extremism. We must oppose those who blame the religion of Islam, which is used by criminal elements to justify terrorist acts that take the lives of innocent people. Islam is a religion of peace that calls for coexistence, tolerance and respect among people and prohibits the killing of the innocent. As the Secretary-General has rightfully emphasized, no religion, people or region should be targeted because of the acts of individuals.

The United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations has great potential to help prevent conflict on the international, national and local levels by reducing misunderstanding and mistrust and by laying the foundation for the non-violent resolution of controversies. The dialogue of civilizations presents an excellent opportunity to the international community to make joint efforts in consolidating pluralism and democracy and in struggling against terrorism, violence, intolerance and other dangerous phenomena that threaten all civilizations. We believe that the United Nations will play an important role in this process. Let me reiterate that my country is ready to contribute to this endeavour.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In his address to the students of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Mohammad Khatami, recalled the saying that Alexander Pushkin is the soul of the Russian people. We will always love Pushkin in Russia. We will love him for praising freedom and calling for mercy for the fallen in difficult times. Those words comprise the essence of Russian spiritual culture. Freedom, mercy and compassion are the essence of all great civilizations. Should one remove them, civilization would simply turn into barbarism.

On 31 May 2001, within the framework of its agenda item entitled “United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations”, the General Assembly adopted a resolution in which it unanimously condemned the destruction of religious sites. The community of nations thereby denied such vandalism the right to call itself part of civilization. In September of this year, vandals were already destroying not just religious monuments and historic statues, but human lives and destinies. Vandalism has revealed itself to the world in the twenty-first century in the form of intolerance, extremism and terrorism. As was emphasized by the President of Russia, Mr. Vladimir Putin:

“Terrorists set for themselves one goal, and one goal only: to destroy the foundation and values of modern civilization. At the same time, they are not accustomed to respecting any kind of laws or morals, and in the most impudent and violent way destroy those standards.”

Terrorists often appeal to history, religion and other lofty subjects to justify their violence. But, as was noted by the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, “History does not kill. Religion does not rape women, the purity of blood does not destroy buildings”. That is done by those who reject history, who pervert religion and who seek to pit nations and cultures against each other. We must reply to that with moral courage.

The Tehran Declaration, which was adopted at the Islamic Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations, held from 3 to 5 May 1999, speaks of the need to be guided by the notions of “human dignity and equality, tolerance, peace and justice for humankind, and

promotion of virtues and proscription of vice and evil” (A/54/116, annex). For the sake of these principles, the leaders of Russian Muslims launched an initiative to convene in Moscow an international conference entitled “Islam against Terrorism”.

Russia has a unique experience regarding the coexistence of great cultures and religions. Their interaction and mutual enrichment is the basis of our national being. East and West, Europe and Asia, have come together on a vast space between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. That is why we are very much in accord with the principles of dialogue and tolerance, which must take precedence not only at the junction of civilizations, but also within them.

The Secretary-General’s words ring true:

“Without this dialogue taking place every day among all nations — within and between civilizations, cultures and groups — no peace can be lasting and no prosperity can be secure.” (A/56/523, para. 15)

We also agree that to speak of a Christian, Muslim or Buddhist civilization means only to create boundaries where none need exist. Our country has lately been paying particular attention to the establishment of a tolerant mindset within society. We have recently completed a large-scale project, “Culture of Peace in Russia — Year 2000”. In August of this year, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted a federal programme entitled “The Formation of the Basis for a Tolerant Mindset and the Prevention of Extremism in Russian Society”. Practically all the regions of Russia have contributed to the celebration of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It is heartening to note that the Group of Eminent Persons established by the Secretary-General includes our countryman, Professor Sergey Kapitza.

The Secretary-General’s report on the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations notes the special role played by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), particularly in implementing the Year. It is remarkable that several days ago, on 2 November, the thirty-first General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. It is important to note that the provisions of this Declaration, which were drafted with the active involvement of my country, are aimed at ensuring respect for cultural diversity,

tolerance and dialogue as necessary prerequisites for international peace and security.

The notion of a Russian world has always gone far beyond geographical boundaries, and even the boundaries of the Russian ethos. The Russian-speaking community today is the fifth largest in the world. Tens of millions of people who speak, think and — what is perhaps even more important — feel in Russian now live in countries other than the Russian Federation. Our principal task is to preserve the national culture, help our compatriots to defend their human rights and to protect them from discrimination. That was the focus of the Congress of Compatriots held recently in Moscow. The achievement of that goal is in harmony with the philosophy of dialogue among civilizations, namely, the promotion of tolerance and respect for diversity.

The concept “United Nations” implies united civilizations as well. We differ in geographical latitudes, time zones, languages, historical experiences and cultural traditions. But the peoples of the United Nations have a common aspiration: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

In the face of new challengers and threats, it is necessary to strengthen the role of the United Nations as an indispensable instrument for intensifying dialogue everywhere in order to maintain international peace and security and to establish a non-violent, democratic world order. A guarantee of success in this respect is the equality of all Member States with regard to the Charter and other basic principles and standards of international law.

The task of promoting an equitable dialogue among civilizations becomes even more urgent in the context of globalization. Globalization should not imply uniformity and adjustment to certain standards and patterns. We need diversity. In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General called for making globalization inclusive and equitable. An equitable process requires in particular the eradication of poverty. President Putin has stated that, without solving the problem of poverty, it will not be possible to solve the problem of tension in the world. We have a saying in Russia according to which a well-fed man finds it difficult to understand a starving one. For the sake of dialogue, understanding and stability on a

global scale, it is necessary to rid the world of hunger, disease, discrimination and hostilities. The eradication of these evils is essential to uniting peoples, civilizations, religions and cultures.

Russia was among the first at this session of the General Assembly to join in sponsoring the draft resolution entitled “Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations”. That agenda outlines the human dimension of the activities of the community of nations: mutual tolerance instead of hostility, cooperation instead of alienation and pluralism instead of ruling by diktat — these are the starting points for the United Nations as it enters a new era.

It is notable that the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations has coincided with the first year of the new century. We now have an obligation to strengthen and develop this dialogue in every possible way. Otherwise, should it be interrupted, we will inherit what was foreseen — once again, by Pushkin — as “a terrible age and terrible hearts”.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to join the preceding speakers in expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on this item. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for this important and timely initiative.

Indeed, it is timely that the General Assembly is considering this item today when the world is still in a state of shock from the terrorist attacks of 11 September, which represented the worst of humanity, while the dialogue seeks to enable and promote the best of humanity. My delegation fully agrees with the Secretary-General, who stated in his report, that

“A dialogue among civilizations is not only a necessary answer to terrorism — it is in many ways its nemesis. Where terrorism seeks to divide humanity, the dialogue aims to unite us; where terrorism is based on an exclusionary, belligerent view of the world, the dialogue seeks to promote inclusion and acceptance of the notion that the possession of truth does not belong to any one group alone. Where terrorism seeks to make our diversity the source of conflict, the dialogue can help make the same diversity the foundation for betterment and growth.” (*A/56/523, para. 19*)

The importance of our deliberations here today lies not only in the fact that the subject matter is an extremely important one, but also in the fact that its consideration in this body represents in itself a form of dialogue among different civilizations. These deliberations will show us that dialogue and the exchange of ideas can make a valuable contribution to an improved awareness and better understanding of our common heritage and shared values. The dialogue also reflects the determined will of Member States to come up with a new common approach based on our common understanding. Therefore, the international community should continue to work towards promoting a norm of interaction and relations between nations based on dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect. This dialogue is essential if we agree that we wish to be successful in achieving one of the main objectives of the United Nations: the prevention of future conflicts.

In November 1998 the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/22, by which it proclaimed the current year as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It is gratifying to note that the idea of a dialogue among civilizations has been well received and has stimulated wide participation across the world. As is indicated in the Secretary-General's report, governmental and academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and international organizations have been actively involved in the Year's activities and have conducted a series of important conferences, seminars and research works on this issue, bringing together a variety of civil society groups. We note with appreciation that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been particularly instrumental in fostering the interest of Member States during this Year and that the dialogue among civilizations has been selected as its strategic objective in its Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007.

We have learned with great interest that the result of collective work prepared by the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Year, together with the Director-General of UNESCO and the Group of Eminent Persons, entitled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*, was submitted recently to the Secretary-General. It is our earnest hope that this book will be available soon to all Member States, as we expect that it will contribute substantially to our renewed efforts at all levels to encourage and

foster dialogue among different civilizations in the years to come.

As in many countries, a series of events and activities has been launched in Mongolia to observe and support the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Among them I wish to single out the importance of the International Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations: Interaction between Nomadic and Other Cultures of Central Asia, which was organized by the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations, based in Mongolia. The Symposium was held in Ulaanbaatar last August. It was attended by over 120 scholars from different countries. It shed light on both historical and contemporary interaction between cultures and civilizations. As the Director of UNESCO's Division of Intercultural Dialogue pointed out in his message to the participants of the Symposium, "It is in this manner, through the discovery of a common heritage and shared values, that a positive convergence between cultures can be favoured".

We live in a world that is both unique and diverse. In this world, active and mutually enriching dialogues and exchanges between civilizations are of great importance, not only in exploring each other's rich legacies, but also in forecasting the future. Over the past years, my country, Mongolia, considered today to be the locus classicus of nomadic civilization, is making every effort to further deepen studies on various aspects of nomadic civilization and its influence and interaction among others. Thus, the ability of nomads to adapt to nature and live in full harmony with it, pastoral nomadism, their different techniques and ways of protecting and using land in a sustained manner could be of particular interest and use in developing further action to protect and preserve our common nature and the environment.

We are living in an age known as "accelerating globalization". Therefore, this should be one of the main topics of the ongoing dialogue among civilizations and cultures. While globalization increasingly affects all spheres of contemporary life, further efforts should be made to ensure more equal distribution of its benefits among different countries, as well as among various groups within societies. Furthermore, as the Secretary-General stated in his report,

“It is also critical that globalization not reflect the triumph or victory of one ideology or culture or economic system over another. Indeed, it is important that cultural diversity be preserved in the dynamic interaction among cultures in the process of globalization.” (A/56/523, para. 16)

Globalization and increasing interdependence among nations compel us to search for and mold a new vision of international relations that is based on the spirit of peace, mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation.

With this in mind, my delegation joined the sponsorship of the draft resolution contained in document A/56/L.3, submitted under this agenda item, which proclaims a global agenda for dialogue among civilizations. We are confident that its unanimous adoption by the General Assembly at this session will further enhance mutual understanding and solidarity among nations, and thus it will become yet another occasion for Member States to underline their unity in the fight against intolerance, prejudice and violence.

Mr. Datsenko (Ukraine): The current year, proclaimed by the General Assembly as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and marked by horrible acts of terrorism, has taken on much symbolic importance, bringing the peoples and nations of the world to a better understanding of the urgent need for concerted international efforts at strengthening peace and security on our planet — the prerequisites for achieving sustainable development on a global scale. It is on the basis of such an understanding that dialogue between various civilizations is to be galvanized and turned into a systematic process of coordinating and consolidating the activities of peace-loving forces around the world.

The tragic events of 11 September have clearly shown how fragile and vulnerable our present-day world is. In these new circumstances, the international community has to demonstrate its ability to adapt, urgently and efficiently, to the new problems and realities of the changing world. It will be especially important to take a balanced approach to solving the international problems and challenges that have arisen in the new millennium. Such an approach should be based on the necessity to solve existing global problems effectively and to guarantee the preservation and free development of the historical traditions of every nation. In this way, it will be possible to ensure

peaceful and harmonious coexistence and jointly advance the development of different nations and cultures of the world.

That is why, today, more than ever before, the Dialogue among Civilizations has to be not only an important form of general communication, but also a global motivating force and way of life, promoting common understanding and seeking mutually acceptable decisions for the sake of greater sustainable development for humankind. It will enable the international community to cope with the global problems of underdevelopment, poverty and disease, and also such ugly phenomena as xenophobia, racism, extremism and terrorism.

In our view, the Dialogue among Civilizations should favour a deeper analysis and understanding of global processes. This would enable us to work out effective mechanisms of cooperation among nations and facilitate the formation of a new world order and a new type of human civilization, promoting a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity of religions, cultures and traditions.

The diversity of cultures and traditions is of special value to humanity. It is a source of strength and a catalyst for the social development of the international community. The principles of respect for others, tolerance and constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation among civilizations should form the basis of international relations, since, essentially, we are guided by the common goals and values laid out in the Charter of the United Nations.

The need for dialogue is especially pressing in the context of the ongoing and rapidly developing globalization process, which has to be used for advancing the economic, spiritual and cultural development of all countries of the world.

A decisive role in the development of the global dialogue is to be played by international mechanisms and, above all, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, especially the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), considering its specific competencies in the area of education and culture.

We believe that the United Nations has every means at its disposal to unite the efforts of the international community in order to stimulate and

consolidate the world movement for Dialogue among Civilizations to meet modern challenges.

Other international bodies and regional organizations, as well as national associations, political parties, public and religious organizations, parliaments, Governments, political and public figures, scientists, intellectuals and youth organizations should also be actively involved in this movement.

It will facilitate the formation of a global climate of mutual trust and tolerance, the abandonment of outmoded stereotypes and the promotion of essentially new models of coexistence based on common human ethical values and principles. It will encourage foreign-policy makers to reject outdated conceptions and ideological models. As a result, it will strengthen global stability, peace and security, as well as help to build a world without divisions.

Today the notion of international stability and security goes far beyond the limits of the military sphere. To a large degree, it is influenced by a variety of economic, political, educational, scientific, technical and cultural factors. Therefore, it demands new approaches to the definition of global stability and security, taking into consideration all these factors.

The experience of the last decades has convincingly proved that true dialogue is impossible without taking into account the cultural and religious traditions of each society. At the same time, the Dialogue among Civilizations is today impossible without a dialogue within civilizations, individual States and social groups.

Since gaining its independence in 1991, Ukraine has successfully met the difficult challenge of establishing the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of numerous national minorities within a single unitary State. The Government of Ukraine has succeeded in repatriating previously deported peoples, in particular Crimean Tatars, more than 250,000 of whom have returned to Ukraine since its independence. We have always believed that the restoration of historical justice could bring about important social changes, which would help to overcome racial, religious, cultural and other kinds of inter-ethnic tensions.

The emphasis has also been made on active interfaith dialogue, which in our view is an important part of the dialogue among civilizations. There are more than 100 different religious groups in Ukraine. The dialogue between them is held within the framework of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations with the purpose of solving the existing and emerging problems by the joint efforts of the State and religious associations.

In this interfaith dialogue, we also rely on contributions from international religious organizations and their leaders. The visit of the Head of the Holy See, Pope John Paul II, to Ukraine last June was a vivid example of this.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Ukraine has been an enthusiastic supporter of the General Assembly resolution "Global agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations", whose idea is to advance an integrated and system-wide treatment of this subject and to bring about concrete proposals for action, in particular by Governments and intergovernmental bodies. And we are hopeful that the forthcoming general debate will give additional impetus to future coordinated efforts of the international community to make the Dialogue an effective instrument for solving the existing and new challenges facing humankind.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.