

Intervention by Mr. Arindam Bagchi, Counsellor at the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations 26 September 2009, UN Building, New York

Mr. President,

Allow me to express our sincere appreciation for your efforts in leading the Alliance of Civilization.

Much of the conflict in today's world is driven by the absence of tolerance. Forces that would like the language of violence to replace the language of dialogue and peace, fuel and stoke this conflict.

We need to respond by creating an environment conducive for dialogue between diverse cultures, faiths and religions, which inculcates the values that promote transition from force to reason, from conflict and violence to dialogue and peace.

But this can only be built on trust, dialogue and collaboration. As Albert Einstein said, "Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding."

It is precisely in the absence of understanding and dialogue between cultures and religions that intolerance, bigotry and violence flourish. This is one reason why extremist ideologies, violence and terrorism, have grown.

There can be no disputing that terrorism, which is a manifestation of extremism, intolerance and violence, is the antithesis of all religions.

All acts of extremism and intolerance run counter to the central teachings of any religion. No religion condones violence or the killing of human beings.

However, we are troubled by the increase in resources, financial and otherwise, that are being made available to violent and intolerant groups that misuse religion to justify and propagate their extremist agendas. We must come together to tackle such evils.

If we abet, knowingly or unknowingly, the spread of fundamentalism and terrorism, we should know that we are feeding a monster that will turn around and consume us.

Mr. President,

The history of India is a story of conversations between different civilizations. As a nation of unparalleled diversity, India understands the importance of building alliances among religions, cultures and ethnic groups.

India welcomes and supports all efforts to build bridges of understanding between nations, peoples, religions, and cultures across the many fault-lines that exist. Initiatives which further and expand on these objectives are timely and valuable.

We hope the Alliance of Civilizations will send a strong message about the responsibility of nations to do all they can in their power to promote tolerance and respect.

The Alliance should also focus on issues that unite us rather than on those that divide us. We must refrain from making the Alliance a platform for divisive political rhetoric.

Thank You.

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