

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPOKESMAN'S NOON BRIEFING

BY STEPHANE DUJARRIC  
SPOKESMAN FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

Thursday, July 14, 2005

## ANNAN ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF “ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS”

- Secretary-General Kofi Annan is [pleased](#) to announce the launch of an initiative for an “Alliance of Civilizations”. The initiative is intended to respond to the need for a committed effort by the international community -- both at the institutional and civil society levels -- to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions, and polarization which potentially threaten world peace.
- The Alliance will aim to address emerging threats emanating from hostile perceptions that foment violence, and to bring about cooperation among various efforts to heal such divisions.
- Events of recent years have heightened the sense of a widening gap and lack of mutual understanding between Islamic and Western societies -- an environment that has been exploited and exacerbated by extremists in all societies. The Alliance of Civilizations is intended as a coalition against such forces, as a movement to advance mutual respect for religious beliefs and traditions, and as a reaffirmation of humankind's increasing interdependence in all areas -- from the environment to health, from economic and social development to peace and security.
- The call for an alliance was initiated by Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of Spain, and co-sponsored by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. Both Governments will continue, as co-sponsors, to provide support. Several other Governments and organizations have expressed interest in joining them, and the Secretary-General hopes that more will do so. The co-sponsors have already pledged substantial initial contributions to a Trust Fund set up to finance the initiative, and the Secretary-General will be inviting other Governments and entities to contribute.
- The Secretary-General is also bringing together a high-level group of eminent persons to guide the initiative. The group is expected to present a report with recommendations and a practical plan of action in late 2006.
- Asked whether this initiative was distinct from the Dialogue among Civilizations that had come before the General Assembly previously, the Spokesman said the two initiatives were different ones, but participants in them

were working closely together.

- He said, in response to a question, that today's announcement was not linked to the terror attacks last week in London, noting that Prime Ministers Zapatero and Erdogan had been working on this for some time. But, he added, any initiative that can build understanding between the Western and Islamic worlds is a welcome one