

**SYMPOSIUM
ON THE
DIALOGUE AMONG CULTURES AND CIVILIZATIONS**

**Sana'a – Republic of Yemen
10 and 11 February 2004**

**Organized by the Center for Yemeni Studies and Research
In cooperation with
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

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INTRODUCTION: THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Yemen is a country situated southwest of Asia, on the southwest coast of the Arabian Peninsula. The union between the Democratic People's Republic of Yemen (formerly South Yemen) and the Arab Republic of Yemen (formerly North Yemen) resulted in the formation of the Republic of Yemen on 22 May 1990.

The traditional and contemporary cultures of Yemen have enjoyed the influences of other civilizations. Its innumerable land and sea trade networks have led to valuable encounters between Yemen and other cultures and civilizations. In turn, Yemen's own cultural richness has presented marvelous treasures to other countries.

Sana'a is a rare pearl, which dates back thousands of years. The old city of Sana'a was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1986, due to its cultural, historic and architectural richness. It is one of the oldest urban centers in human history on the Arabian Peninsula.

THEMES OF THE COLLOQUIUM

The Colloquium on the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures will pursue and deepen the permanent efforts of UNESCO, which aim to promote dialogue and exchange between different cultures and civilizations. The Colloquium at Sana'a takes place in a region which constitutes, due to its historic and cultural heritage, the cradle of one of the most precious civilizations known – Arab-Muslim civilization.

Be it on the regional or the international stage, the Arab region is now undergoing a period of crucial and painful transformations brought about by the current economic and geopolitical situation.

Dialogue has become, more than ever, a necessity in order to overcome the difficulties arising from this painful transformation. Real progress, in this sense, can only be achieved by broadening and deepening dialogue. A dialogue based on tolerance aims to achieve greater degrees of democracy, freedom of expression, and the inclusion of women in decision-making processes, all inspired by common universal values.

Quality education is the most effective strategy for overcoming terrorism; a rich curriculum must underscore the themes of peace, human rights, democracy and tolerance. The colloquium will contribute to the continuation of dialogue on these themes, while at the same time taking into account the obstacles and difficulties faced in establishing equal partners in a community which strives for dignity, liberty and peace for all.

The colloquium will meanwhile accentuate the role of cultural diversity in stimulating a more profound dialogue, and in constituting a source of richness for thought and civilization. The symposium should lastly highlight the importance of the Arab-Muslim contribution to the reconstruction of human civilization.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COLLOQUIUM

The colloquium will contribute to the continuation of the dialogue on civilizations and cultures and it will aim to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To deepen the dialogue and direct it in a manner which reinforces universal human values and diminishes existing tensions between different cultures.

2. To establish the fact that cultural diversity can act as a catalyst to encourage dialogue and can constitute a source of richness for thought and civilization.
3. To demonstrate that education constitutes, in part, the basis upon which to establish the values of dialogue and of a culture of peace and tolerance
4. To underline the importance of the contribution of Arab-Muslim civilization to the development of human civilization and the historic relations between this civilization and other parts of the world.
5. To establish a series of practical measures inspired by previous colloquia in order to adopt a clearer vision which will permit the elaboration of a framework of dialogue among cultures, reflecting the views of intellectuals, among others.
6. To underline the necessity of confronting and overcoming the ignorances and prejudices which exist towards the ways of life and customs of different peoples.
7. To recognize that education rooted in the principles of democracy, justice and respect for human rights is indispensable to the development of communities and societies.
8. To reaffirm that all acts of terrorism, in all forms, represent an attack against humanity; the recourse to force and repression leading to the death of innocent civilians with the goal of spreading terror constituting an affront to the values of every civilization.
9. Underlining that international cooperation as a means of promoting dialogue among civilizations should contribute to the enrichment of social, economic and cultural life.
10. Recognizing the intensified urgency of promoting tolerance, respect for diversity and friendship among peoples and nations.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

The Colloquium on the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures will offer an opportunity to promote the creation of a regional space based on tolerance and dialogue, and it will solicit new recommendations on future pathways to dialogue and understanding at the regional and sub-regional levels. The colloquium will also provide an occasion to evaluate the coherence and complementarities between the regional and sub-regional methods of approach aimed at dialogue among communities, cultures, and civilizations.

PARTICIPANTS

A large number of specialists, intellectuals, scientists and politicians from across the globe will participate in this colloquium in Sana'a to exchange diverse opinions surrounding the themes of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, especially concerning education and the impact of Arab culture's accomplishments upon other cultures:

The organizing countries and organizations listed below will participate in the Colloquium at Sana'a on the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures.

Germany, China, Egypt, the United States of America, France, Great Britain, India, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, the Arab League, Senegal, Tunisia, Yemen, ALECSO, ISESCO and UNESCO.

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

The colloquium will be introduced by the Prime Minister of Yemen and the other high-level speakers during the plenary session on 10 February 2004 in Sana'a, the Republic of Yemen. The colloquium will then divide into five groups:

- I. Globalization and its effects on the dialogue among cultures and civilizations.
- II. The contribution of education to the dialogue among cultures and civilizations.
- III. The impact of the accomplishments of Arab culture on other cultures.
- IV. The role of dialogue in the struggle against all forms of terrorism.
- V. The dialogue between East and West, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

LOGISTIC INFORMATION

Simultaneous interpretation in French, English and Arabic will be provided during the colloquium.

*The proceedings of the colloquium will later be published.

For participants, a special visit to the old village of Sana'a and the monument of Wadi Dahr will take place on the day after the last day of the colloquium.

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