



SAMITI I EUROPËS JUG-LINDORE
SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN SUMMIT



THE TIRANA SUMMIT DECLARATION ON INTER-RELIGIOUS AND INTER-ETHNIC DIALOGUE IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

Tirana, Albania – 10 December 2004

We, Heads of State and Government and other distinguished participants, hailing from all countries of South-East Europe, in the Regional Summit on «The Development of Interreligious and Inter-ethnic Dialogue – a Significant Factor for the Stability and Progress in South-East Europe», held in Tirana, Albania, on 9 and 10 December 2004, at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Albania, H.E. Mr. Alfred Moisiu, and the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, hereby adopt the following «Tirana Summit Declaration»:

1. We are united by the desire for a peaceful future based on shared values. To this end, we are committed to releasing ourselves from the disputes of the past and to overcoming them by practicing a culture of dialogue within and among our countries. Peace is indivisible from dialogue. The challenge we face every single day is to replace fear with acceptance, harassment with tolerance, and hatred with respect.

2. We are committed to building and sustaining good mutual relations. We hold that dialogue must be conducted on a platform of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and dignity of the individual. Any form of totalitarianism is incompatible with dialogue.

3. Following the High-level Conference on Strengthening Cooperation in South-East Europe, convened by UNESCO in Paris in April 2002, the Regional Forum on Dialogue among Civilizations, held at Presidential level in Ohrid on 29 and 30 August 2003, was a significant event. It set the stage for concrete dialogue actions in education, science and culture, designed to deepen mutual understanding and trust in the region.

4. The Tirana Summit is a further step in that process highlighting the intrinsic value of the religious and ethnic dimensions of the dialogue in South-East Europe. Both dimensions are interlinked and help create a spirit favoring social cohesion beyond the sphere of verbal declarations into everyday living. Without an open dialogue there can be no true reconciliation. Celebrating, protecting and safeguarding the cultural heritage and exercising the freedom of religion, of speaking one's own language and of respecting traditions are among the basic rights of every human being.

5. South-East Europe has suffered from the ravages of the last wars of the 20th century in Europe, also as a consequence of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tension, hatred and violence. Today, the region is rebounding, leaving the wounds of the past behind and responding to the desire of its peoples for reconciliation, exchange and cooperation, especially among the youth. Ensuring freedom of movement in the region will be an important practical step. In the present post-conflict period, there is an undeniable need to face up to the truth of the past as the region is not yet free from the seeds of divisions and confrontations of a religious or ethnic nature.

6. The experience of the region has demonstrated that the matrix of values and the underlying ethical, cultural and spiritual foundations are a major determining factor for the resilience of the social fabric and the vibrancy of each society.

7. We salute the accomplishments of our host country, Albania, which has succeeded in establishing a multiparty democracy. The country also offers a valuable experience in terms of successful inter-religious co-existence, which manifests itself in harmony among people adhering to different religious groups under one societal roof.

8. Our commitment to dialogue among cultures and civilizations is also a commitment against terrorism, reinforcing our determination to cope with new vulnerabilities in an era of globalisation. We realise that no religion preaches terror, nor are there national interests or reasons that would justify terror. Terror rests always and everywhere upon prejudices, intolerance, exclusion and, above all, on the rejection of any dialogue.

9. We reaffirm that mutual respect, rooted in open dialogue and nourished by multi-ethnicity, multi-culturality and multi-religiosity is indispensable for the preservation of peace, stability and the resolution of conflicts.

10. In a world, where no country is entirely homogenous, demands for recognition and accommodation of different ethnicities, religions, languages and values are increasingly arising. There is an urgency of developing a sense of respect for the Other that will provide a basis for mutual reference, friendship and learning. Minorities can constitute bridges of connection and understanding between peoples and countries. If left unattended, struggles over cultural identity may quickly deteriorate into a source of instability both within states and between them.

11. Cultural diversity and heritage are vectors of identity and tools for reconciliation. Cultural heritage – in both its tangible and intangible forms – is indivisible and embodies the symbolic values of cultural identities. The protection of heritage, and its preservation, presentation and transmission to future generations, are not only ethical, but equally legal imperatives. States need to find ways of forging national unity amid ethnic and religious diversity, while individuals must be prepared to shed rigid identities if they are to become part of diverse societies. We therefore welcome the *Regional Forum*

on *Cultural Corridors* which President Georgi Parvanov will convene together with the Director-General of UNESCO at summit level in Varna in May 2005.

12. Relations among religious communities in the region have often been strained causing grievances and tensions. Religion must not be part of the problem, but part of the solution. Preserving space for diverse religious faiths is one of the preconditions for enjoying cultural diversity.

13. We recognize the need to protect the right to freedom of religion for all citizens. Religion is of profound importance to people's identities, but religious differences should never be seen as insurmountable. There exists an underlying thread of unity connecting the great religious traditions. They each propound basic spiritual truths and standards of behaviour that constitute the very basis of social cohesion and collective purpose. The religions should, therefore, be able to dialogue and contribute to societal dialogue in an effort that honours their deepest truths and holds promise for humanity. Indeed, dialogue must be at the core of continued inter-religious cooperation and collaboration in the region.

14. All faiths convey a message of peace, justice and human solidarity. All religious leaders, like other civil society and community leaders, have the potential to exercise a moral and positive influence on how people in society understand each other and interact. Reconciliation of religious views is an increasingly significant challenge of our age. This also entails the need to create more awareness among peoples and government authorities about the need to respect the traditions of the use of religious symbols, images and expressions.

15. We recognize that religious beliefs and practices as well as ethnic values and traditions have a fundamental influence and impact on education systems and their quality. Thus, we commit ourselves to the education of a new European generation in the spirit of inclusiveness, instilling a feeling of forgiveness instead of hatred, promoting tolerance, understanding and coexistence rather than conflict and violence, reinforcing civic education and observing human rights. We are committed that our schools foster respect, understanding and consideration for Others. We are committed to ensure that our schools foster a sense of community and solidarity. We are committed to teach our children to cross ethnic and religious barriers.

16. Learning to live together again requires that we undertake a renewal of curricula, improve and revise educational materials, organise youth fora as well as re-orient the training of our teachers – in short, we are committed to promoting quality education.

17. Advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) have an unprecedented ability to bring together diverse communities, cultures, civilizations and different faiths. We must capitalize on ICTs and their innate potential to advance freedom of expression, which is the cornerstone of any democratic society and has its corollary in the freedom of the press.

18. The overarching goal of all countries in the region is to secure integration into Euro-Atlantic structures in a unified Europe, which for 60 million people holds the promise of stability and prosperity free of interreligious and inter-ethnic conflicts.

19. Regional co-operation is becoming the natural way to tackle shared problems and to move towards progress. International and regional organisations, including the organisations of the United Nations system, the European Union and the Stability Pact, should consider it their responsibility to continue assisting the countries in the region.

20. We express our sincere appreciation to President Alfred Moisiu and to the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, for having convened this important Summit. We thank the Government and the people of Albania for their generous hospitality and contribution. We also are grateful for the valuable support extended by the Governments of Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway and the United Kingdom, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

21. We all are committed to making use of dialogue as the only way to achieve full stability and overall progress in South-East Europe, leading to a successful completion of the European integration process in the entire region.



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SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN SUMMIT



Regional Summit on “The Development of Inter-ethnic and Inter-religious Dialogue – Important Factor for the Stability and Progress of South-East Europe”

(Tirana, Albania, 9 - 10 December 2004)

List of Participants

Co – Convenors

Alfred Moisiu, President of Albania

Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO

Heads of State or Government

Borislav Paravac, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Georgi Parvanov, President of Bulgaria

Stjepan Mesić, President of Croatia

Branko Crvenkovski, President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Svetozar Marovic, President of Serbia and Montenegro

Fatos Nano (Albania), Prime Minister of Albania

Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of Norway

Representatives of Heads of State and Ministers

Kostas Karamanlis (Greece), Minister of Culture

Blagoj Stevanovski (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Minister of Culture

Murat Başesgioğlu (Turkey), Minister of Labour and Social Security, Representative of the Republic of Turkey

Thomas Mayer-Harting (Austria), Director General, Foreign Ministry of Austria, Representative of the Federal President of Austria

Viktor Opaschi (Romania), Special Adviser to the President of Romania, Representative of the President of Romania

Delegations

Luan Hajdaragai (Albania), Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Edmond Dragoti (Albania), Vice Minister, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

Edlira Haxhiymeri (Albania), Vice Minister, Ministry of Education

Tatjana Gjonaj (Albania), Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Albania to UNESCO

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Rexhep Majdani (Albania), Former President of Albania

Sali Berisha (Albania), Former President of Albania

Filip Rrumbullaku, General Secretary, Office of the President

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Kristaq Birbo (Albania), Chief of Protocol, Office of the President

Muhamet Kapllani (Albania), Diplomatic Advisor to the President of Albania

Llesh Kola (Albania), Advisor to the President of Albania

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Dragan Covic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Croat Member of the Presidency

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Vasilj Zarkovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Advisor for Economic System and Finances, Delegation of the Serb Member of the Presidency
Mirsad Besic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Chief of the Department of Protocol, Secretariat of the Presidency
Ivana Saravanja (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Expert associate, Contact Person for Public Relations, Secretariat of the Presidency

Zorka Parvanova (Bulgaria), First Lady of Bulgaria
Andrey Karaslavov (Bulgaria), Head of the Office of the President
Atanas Pavlov (Bulgaria), Chief of Protocol, Office of the President
Boika Bashlieva (Bulgaria), Press Secretary, Office of the President
Hristo Georgiev (Bulgaria), Secretary General of the Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO
Nikola Karadimov (Bulgaria), National Coordinator of the Stability Pact

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Kire Petkov (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Protocol Councillor, Cabinet of the President
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