Speech of the Director of the Civilizations' Partnership Center, Ambassador Veniamin Popov at the Conference in Doha, Qatar, May 13-14, 2008

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen

The problem of the upbringing of younger generations in the spirit of traditional cultural and moral values is becoming more and more important nowadays, in our globalized world. The whole system of traditional values is in deep system-level crisis in many countries, mostly in the West. In this sense, the Western countries have eroded much more than any other region in the world. The level of morality and ethics is decreasing, the family institutions are in deep crisis. The religious and cultural differences are becoming more and more visible and tangible. Because of the internationalization and the universalization of economic life, as well as the rapid flow of tourists and migrants, only the thorough preservation of the peculiarities of all civilizations can become the only way to protect peoples, nations and ethnic groups, especially small national communities, and their culture. In this circumstances, we should pay special attention to common values, preached by all religions, like "Thou shalt not kill", "thou shalt not steel", respect the elders etc.

It is very important nowadays to distinguish and to underline the appeal to kindness and charity in each religion.

It is said in the Holy Qur'an: "Whoever works any act of righteousness and has faith, - His endeavour will not be rejected: We shall record it in his favour (The Prophets, 94).

Though the terrorism itself don't have any religious routs and has nothing to do with any religion, the Islamophobia is increasing in the world since 11.09.2001. There is hardly any other religion in the world, besides Islam, that attracts so much
attention and causes so many disputes and controversies. Islam can be freely called the most viable and healthy religion in the world nowadays.

In spite of that, lots of people in the West are looking at Islam with fear and misunderstanding, because lots of terrorist attacks in the world are carried on by those, who are calling themselves Muslims and are pretending to act for the sake of Islam.

There is hardly any other religion in the world, besides Islam, who has so many faithful devotees. Islam is considered as the basis and the main fundamental principle of life by them. The noble simplicity and clearness of the tenets of this religion, its ability to depict and interpret the integral picture of the world and the universe is making Islam very attractive for lots of devotees and new adherents. Because of the collapse of all the models, borrowed from the "infidels", Muslim activists have started thinking that the main reason and the main cause of all their troubles lays in the rejection of the principles of Islam. And the only way to solve all the problems is to return back to them under the slogan: "Islam - that is the answer".

One of the leading Western experts in Islam, John L. Esposito, used to underline in his book "The Islamic Threat" (1992, p. 165): "The Islamic political activists are considering Islam as perfect and integral way of life. This idea is fixed and propagated by the Qur'an, the Holy Revelation, confirmed and reinforced by the example of the Prophet Muhammad, implemented and actualized in the universal nature of the Shariah law. And if it is so, there is only one way to renew and restore Muslim ruling establishments and societies - to establish the Islamic law once again, to make it the main fundamental principle and base of the state and the society, which should be based on Islam and justice.

Weakness and dependency of Muslim states is the result of atheism and infidelity of Muslims who have gone wrong, stepped away from the way of God and
preferred secular, materialistic values - materialism, capitalism or Marxism". This is the logic of Islamic fundamentalism, which should not be mixed up with the political radicalism or terrorism, though this system of thinking can lead to both.

Most Muslims do not worry about the global problems in their everyday life. But still, most of them are approving and welcoming the radical ideas, that the Western imperialism is the main cause of all their troubles. And their common feeling of grief because of the humiliation of the Islamic civilization is deepening because of the fact that Jerusalem, Bait al-Muqaddas, one of the holiest cities of Islam besides Mecca and Medina, is under the rule of Israel, which is considered by the vast majority of Muslims as the main outpost of the West, mainly of the USA.

Almost all Muslims see the great tragedy of Islam in this situation and blame the USA and Israel.

Fear and misunderstanding of Islam by many of the Westerners give birth not only to Islamophobia, but to the reciprocal reaction. The right wing of the political powers, the "western extremists", are becoming more and more active. It makes the schism deeper.

This tendency was specified very clearly by the President of Tunisia Zine El Abidine Ben Ali at the UN-sponsored conference on terrorism in November 2007, when he said that the radicals in the Muslim world do not hesitate to kill innocent Muslims during their terrorist attacks. And the Western extremists are trying to push us to the conflict of civilizations.

The world is becoming more and more separated into the Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and the others.

These gaps may turn into the deep gulf.

And only the common values can unite this world. We can not afford any new split of the world on the religious and civilizational principles, as it was separated ideologically 20 years ago. If we can not overcome this split, the impact will be tragic and devastating.
But we should underline, that such kind of attempts are taking place already. And the State of Qatar became one of the pioneers in them. This is its great merit. We can not but mention that the appearance of Al-Jazeera TV-Channel in 1996 has changed not only the Middle East, but the whole Muslim world, because it has demolished the Western monopoly in mass media. The Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov while speaking at the 62-th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2007, proposed to create a special body under the aegis of the United Nations for the exchange of opinions of the representatives of all main world religions. And on the 25th of March 2008 HRH King Abdallah Ben Abdel Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia put forward an initiative to organize multilateral meetings of the representatives of three main monotheistic religions - Islam, Christianity and Judaism, as well as the other confessions. Russia supported this initiative actively.

The cooperation of the religious figures of the monotheistic confessions, as well as ordinary devotees - people of good will, is becoming the matter of vital necessity, not of free choice. Not only the peace on Earth, but the survival of humankind depends on our ability to unite our attempts to give the proper response to the global challengers.

The realities of the international situation nowadays requires decisions on the basis of consensus. The fence-mending of multilateral cooperation is the demand of time.

Any unilateral, sometimes irresponsible acts of certain members of the international community without the frameworks of the United Nations lead to the complication of the international situation and to the escalation on conflicts, which are very numerous nowadays.

We should look together for the common responses to the global challenges and threats.

If we pay attention to our differences only, ultimately it will lead to counterproductive results. We should strive for the coordination of our efforts.
We should do that not for the sake of any particular religion, but for the sake of the whole mankind, for the salvation of humanity. The religious figures can play an important and constructive role in it, urging the devotees to unite for the solving of global problems, which are common challenge for all the countries without exceptions: the changing of climate, pollution, struggle for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, for the rejection of poverty, disproportions in the economic development etc. The level of injustice on our planet is approaching to critical. It depends on us to prevent the explosion, which can be no less destructive, than nuclear.

For sure, it is much more easy to speak about the equal, positive dialogue, than to arrange it in reality. But is a must nowadays. We hardly can expect this dialogue to be easy and we’ll be able so solve all the problems immediately.

But the main thing is to start moving to this purpose with the complete understanding of our responsibility, with the clear vision of the tasks and the goals to be achieved.

The Dialogue of civilizations, proposed by the Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, was constructive from the very beginning and possessed a strong positive potential. Unfortunately, we can see now that his ideas are facing with serious difficulties.

The same situation is with the joint Spanish and Turkish project of the Alliance of Civilizations. That’s why we propose to organize the worldwide public and social movement for the partnership of civilizations, which should be based on the fundamentally different principles, which are as follows;

1. There are no inferior of superior civilizations
2. The dialogue should proceed on the basis of absolute equality
3. No conflict in the 21-th century could be solved by force.
4. All countries should have the guaranteed equal access to the modern scientific achievements, particularly as far as medical sciences is concerned.
5. We should proceed from the fact that we can find the appropriate answers to the current challengers of our globalized world only on the platform of the collective actions.

The search for the points in common remains one of the most important tasks nowadays. The only alternative to it is the clash. We should learn to live together because none of the contemporary conflict can be solved by force.

Thanks for Your kind attention.