

Sarajevo Declaration
on Intercultural Dialogue and Internal Security

Preamble

On the occasion of the conference held in Sarajevo on 28 and 29 April 2010, the participating Ministers of the Western Balkan countries and the Salzburg Forum countries (hereinafter called the “Ministers”), in the presence of high-ranking representatives of different organisations as well as experts from various fields of relevance to intercultural dialogue have adopted the following conclusions:

Conscious of the cultural, religious and humanistic heritage of Europe as the source from which the inviolable and inalienable human rights as well as the universal values of freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law have developed,

Aware of their role in ensuring that all people can live together in harmony and security in their countries,

Determined to implement a proactive, preventive security policy for this purpose, to strengthen cohesion and to contribute to social peace in their societies,

Convinced that intercultural dialogue, including the intercultural dialogue between generations, is of special importance in this context,

Wishing that the asset of cultural diversity of Europe, which we owe, not least, to migration, is used to the benefit of all,

Determined to contribute to guaranteeing generally accepted values and rules as the indispensable unifying element of life in a community,

With the intention to cooperate with other Ministers and stakeholders relevant to a functioning intercultural dialogue, such as Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Education and Culture.

Following the Conclusions of the Western Balkans Security Conference 2008 which took place in Vienna on 17 and 18 July 2008.

I. Common European Values and Intercultural Dialogue in Everyday Life

Since 2004 and based on the Hague Programme, the need for intercultural dialogue has been emphasised to a growing extent at the European level. A basic knowledge of the language, history and governmental institutions, as well as an understanding of the culture of the host country, is of particular importance in this context. Another essential element is the equal treatment of men and women who must be granted the same rights and opportunities in all areas of life, especially in the fields of education, training and employment.

Cultural diversity is a source of enrichment and opportunities, but also a challenge to ensure a unifying fabric of generally accepted values and rules for living together. Basic values, fundamental freedoms and human rights can only be broadly accepted and serve as a basis for people to live together in harmony and security, if their concrete meaning in daily life is well understood. In this respect, the Ministers will promote a better understanding in their countries and launch a joint project to strengthen awareness of fundamental freedoms and human rights.

The Vienna-based European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights could play a supporting role in this process.

Importantly, intercultural dialogue must not be cultivated as a dialogue of the elites only, but should be maintained on a broadest possible basis, the aim being to strengthen mutual contacts and generate added value for all stakeholders and countries concerned. Together with representatives of institutions, associations, the media, cultural institutions or religious communities, it also needs to involve civil society.

II. Intercultural Dialogue from the Security Policy Point of View

Ministers reiterated that a special emphasis must be put on promoting broad-based intercultural dialogue at all levels and on enabling people to live together in harmony within and beyond their countries, which ultimately has a positive impact on internal security.

If intercultural dialogue and the living together of people with different cultural backgrounds works, if cultural diversity is used for the benefit of all and on the basis of shared fundamental values, security problems, such as those due to crime, extremism and radicalisation, will decrease.

The Internal Security Strategy endorsed by the European Council on 25 and 26 March 2010 highlights the importance of dialogue as the means of resolving differences in accordance with the principle of tolerance, respect and freedom of expression. The Strategy specifies integration, social inclusion and the fight against discrimination as key elements for internal security. Overall, the Strategy defines a European Security Model designed to tackle the causes of insecurity

rather than merely counteract its effects, stressing, in particular, the role of prevention and anticipation. The Ministers therefore declare that they will actively contribute to the development of such a proactive security policy with regard to intercultural dialogue.

Accordingly, the Western Balkan countries will, together with their partners from the Salzburg Forum, include the topic of Intercultural Dialogue in their further cooperation, building on the debates and outcomes of the Sarajevo Conference on Intercultural Dialogue and internal security.

The European Union funding should be jointly used and the opportunities arising from the creation of the Standing Committee on Internal Security (COSI), which is to contribute to strengthening operational cooperation between the European Union and third countries, should be harnessed.

III. Intercultural Dialogue as an Instrument against Radicalisation and Recruitment

The prevention of radicalisation and recruitment plays a crucial role in the fight against international terrorism. Intercultural dialogue is an essential means to this end.

The Western Balkan countries and their partners of the Salzburg Forum have the potential to play a special role in this area. They have all gained both positive and negative experience with multicultural communities and can draw relevant conclusions from their own past. Today, they are living together peacefully within relatively narrow geographical confines, aspiring towards a common future within the European Union.

For the European Union intercultural dialogue is an important instrument to prevent terrorism by countering the propaganda of extremists which distorts conflicts around the world. Intercultural dialogue can help that voices of moderation prevail over those of extremists and to eliminate structural factors supporting radicalisation.

The Ministers will ask their experts to work out joint contributions against radicalisation and recruitment. Their aim is to identify best practices in the region and the European Union on the use of intercultural dialogue as an instrument against radicalisation and recruitment. A continuous regional process of combating radicalisation and recruitment should be launched and the item should be put on the agenda of subsequent meetings, e.g. the scheduled SEE Workshop on Cooperation and Co-ordination in Counter-Terrorism Matters in the second half of October 2010 in Sarajevo.

Through the mutual understanding of cultures and the essence of religions, the principles of respect for the value of human life and the freedom of choice for both individuals and communities are to be strengthened, without violating the rights of other individuals and communities. The state has the obligation to protect its citizens and its communities from becoming targets of attempts to disseminate radical ideas, and to suppress any attempt of recruitment for terrorist or extremist activities.

IV. Religion as a Bridge-Builder in Intercultural Dialogue

Cultural diversity, comprising a variety of religious beliefs, is a source of enrichment and an opportunity, but, at the same time, challenges us to safeguard

generally accepted values and rules that enable all people to live together in harmony and security.

According to Article 10 (1) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion includes the “freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.” Hence, the freedom of religion is an individual right to be respected both within and between the various religious communities as long as it is exercised under the rule of law. Nobody must be put under pressure to practice, or not to practice, a religion in one or another form. It is for the state to protect this individual right of all its citizens with different cultural and religious backgrounds.

The “Common Basic Principles” adopted in the wake of the first Conference on Integration in Groningen from 9 to 11 November 2004 underline the importance of safeguarding the practise of diverse cultures and the right to free practice of religion as a means of preventing discrimination on the basis of religious and cultural manifestations, on the one hand, and counteracting problems resulting from unacceptable cultural and religious traditions, on the other hand.

The Ministers therefore agree that promoting moderate and open-minded representatives within the various religious communities and their active involvement facilitates a functioning intercultural dialogue and thus supports internal security.

Annex

Politically and legally binding commitments

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen by the French National Assembly in 1789 marked a turning point in the development of European societies. The statement that “*Men are born and remain free and equal in rights*” initiated a new school of thought according to which all human beings, regardless of social origin, race and sex, are to enjoy the same rights.

The European Convention on Human Rights provides an essential foundation for the European democracies, which have a common heritage of intellectual values, political traditions, ideals, freedom and the rule of law;

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union reaffirms the determination to share a peaceful future based on common values;

The “Western Balkans Security Conference 2008”, which took place in Vienna on 17 and 18 July 2008, decided to launch a project on “Intercultural Dialogue and Internal Security” with the following objectives:

- promoting intercultural dialogue in participating countries as well as in Central and South-Eastern Europe as a whole;
- exchanging national experience and developing best-practice models;
- making joint contributions to the debate at the European level.

In this context it has to be recalled that people-to-people contacts, which are facilitated by visa-free travel, are an essential basis for intercultural dialogue.

With five Western Balkan countries — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia — Visa Facilitation Agreements entered into force on 1 January 2008, as a first concrete step along the path set out by the Thessaloniki agenda towards a visa-free travel regime for the citizens of Western Balkan countries.

With each of these countries, a visa liberalisation dialogue was opened in 2008 and roadmaps for visa liberalisation have been established.

In its two assessments of the implementation of the roadmaps of May 2009 and November 2009, the Commission considered that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, followed by Montenegro and Serbia, had met all the benchmarks set out in their roadmaps.

The Council Regulation (EC) No 1244/2009 of 30 November 2009 amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement, transferred the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia to Annex II of Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 among the third countries whose nationals are exempted from visa requirements.

In this context we should acknowledge the Joint statement by the European Parliament and the Council, annexed to the Council regulation (EC) No 1244/2009, which urges those two countries to make all efforts to comply with all the benchmarks set out in the Commission's roadmaps and invites the Commission to present a legislative proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No

539/2001 as soon as it has assessed that each country meets the benchmarks set out in the Commission's roadmaps, with a view to achieving visa liberalization for citizens of those countries as soon as possible. The European Parliament and the Council will examine a proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 concerning Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina as a matter of urgency.

Since 2004 the European Union has devoted increasing attention to issues of intercultural dialogue and integration:

The Hague Programme, adopted by the European Council on 4 and 5 November 2004, highlights the need for increased coordination of national integration policies and European Union initiatives in this field.

Against this background, the first conference on integration issues was organised on 9 and 11 November 2004 in Groningen under the Dutch Presidency. Subsequently, the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted the “Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union” on 19 November 2004. The 7th of the “Common Basic Principles” underlines the necessity of promoting intercultural dialogue to the benefit of both immigrants and the host society.

The Potsdam Ministerial Conference, organised under the German Presidency on 10 and 11 May 2007, and the Council Conclusions on the “strengthening of integration policies in the European Union by promoting unity in diversity” subsequently adopted fuelled the discussion on intercultural dialogue.

The Vichy Ministerial Conference held on 3 and 4 November 2008 under the French Presidency continued these efforts and, in particular, stated in part 5 of the Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Conference that a regular procedure for exchanges of experience and best practices in intercultural dialogue was to be set up.

The Ministerial Conference in Zaragoza on 15 and 16 April 2010 organised by Spain as the present EU Presidency deepened this discussion by exploring the key aspects of integration as a driver for development and social cohesion.

Finally, the Stockholm Programme adopted by the European Council on 10 and 11 December 2009 stresses efforts to be made by the Member States to strengthen democratic values and promote intercultural dialogue as one of the essential tasks.