

Secretary General Lamberto Zannier

Statement

**Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the UN Alliance of
Civilizations**

New York, 1 October 2015

**High Representative,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure to be in your midst again. I congratulate High Representative Al-Nasser and the Group of Friends on the 10th anniversary of the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

Over the years, the OSCE and the Alliance have forged a strong partnership rooted in shared values and common goals. With a robust mandate in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination, the OSCE makes a substantial contribution to countering intolerance, fostering understanding and promoting mutual respect.

As a regional organization operating under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, bringing together countries and regions with diverse cultures and identities, the OSCE has traditionally offered an inclusive regional platform for dialogue which our participating States use to decrease tensions, correct misperceptions, and promote co-operation throughout the OSCE area and beyond.

And I am very grateful to the High Representative Al-Nasser for his active participation in our Security Days event, organized in co-operation with the Anna Lindt Foundation, on promoting dialogue to prevent radicalization and

violent extremism, and for his much appreciated contribution to our debates and common reflection.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In fact, international security is at a critical juncture. Extremist movements are promoting radical and polarizing ideologies which threaten dialogue, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among nations. We have a joint responsibility to send a clear message emphasizing the importance of building diverse and pluralistic societies. To do this effectively, we need to foster new synergies and draw in other partners to turn our initiatives into larger efforts, creating international coalitions.

The development of a common, powerful counter-narrative will be crucial to the success of our joint efforts. We must reaffirm without ambiguity that there can be no religious or cultural justification for violence. To this end, we have launched an OSCE-wide campaign to send a unified message against violent extremism, by branding all relevant activities across the Organization with a common slogan: “OSCE United in Countering Violent Extremism.” Within a week of its launch, we had already reached more than half a million people on social media. By connecting like-minded individuals and groups who work to advance mutual understanding and dialogue, social media can be a very effective tool for promoting counter-narratives and sending messages of tolerance.

Another vector of joint action needs to center on women and youth, who are key stakeholders of enhanced security within and across our societies. The OSCE has traditionally looked to women as critical partners in conflict prevention. And we are engaging with young leaders who can stand up for tolerance and serve as

an alternative role model to that of the terrorist fighter aggressively promoted by terrorist propaganda. In this context, we should broaden and better link our initiatives to highlight the positive role that women and youth can play in fostering dialogue and combating radicalization, thus enhancing the resilience of our communities.

In light of the current mass movements of refugees and migrants, questions related to integration and the long-term viability of multicultural societies will increasingly come to the fore. This is another area where we should co-operate more closely to ensure that migration debates shift away from the defensive and alarmist tones that often predominate today, to frame them within a narrative promoting the values of acceptance and tolerance for diversity.

At the OSCE, the next opportunity for high-level discussion on migration issues will be during the 2015 OSCE Mediterranean Conference on 20-21 October in Jordan. We will also hold an OSCE Security Days event on migration in early 2016 to further stimulate discussion and the development of a coherent approach to addressing this phenomenon within the framework of the OSCE's comprehensive security concept.

Today we face a broad range of challenges that will define our co-operation agenda in the next decade. Tackling these issues in a co-ordinated and mutually reinforcing fashion calls for closer and stronger co-operation among all actors. In this spirit, I look forward to continuing our work together with the Alliance of Civilisations to build an ever-stronger partnership.

Thank you.

