

DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ASPA

Buenos Aires, 20-21 February 2008

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South American and Arab countries gathered in Buenos Aires on 20 and 21 February 2008, according to what was stipulated in the Brasilia Declaration, after overviewing the progress achieved in various fields of cooperation between the two regions since the convening of the Brasilia Summit in May 2005, agree as follows:

Introduction

1. They welcome the intensification of the dialogue between both regions, which not only allowed the two regions to meet the agenda stipulated in the Declaration, but also to increase the potential for bi-regional cooperation.

2. They are pleased to note that, since the 2005 Summit, twelve meetings have been held: five Ministerial Meetings on economy, culture, environment and social affairs, five Meetings of High Officials and two Technical Meetings. Furthermore, they welcome the agreements reached in the various areas contained in the Declaration and the progress made to implement them.

3. They are convinced that it is essential to establish dynamic and intense relations in order to turn both regions into privileged partners for each other.

4. They undertake to promote their convergence on international affairs and to develop their affinities resulting from a dialogue that is the best foundation to establish a closer, strengthened and diversified relation.

5. They recognize the importance of social inclusion and the efforts to achieve cohesion for sustainable development and the strengthening of the government institutions of the countries and improvement of the quality of life of their inhabitants and the respect for diversity of peoples.

Political Coordination and Multilateral Relations

6. They affirm their commitment to achieve, preserve and enhance international peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and they consider it necessary to build a common space based upon equality, justice, equity and respect for the principles and rules governing coexistence between nations.

7. They reaffirm the importance of coordination within the multilateral disarmament fora in order to advance common positions regarding the progress of the international community towards achieving full nuclear disarmament.

8. They condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reject any linkage between terrorism and a specific people or religion, ethnicity or culture.

9. They decide to strengthen cooperation between the two regions in the prevention and fight against terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, through the exchange of information between the competent authorities and agencies of each country.

10. They express their strong support to multilateralism and the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, emphasizing the observance of International Law as a means to ensure international peace and security, as well as the social and economic development of their countries.

11. They highlight the importance of a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, in order to make them more efficient, democratic, representative and transparent. In this respect, they voice their support to a prompt negotiating process in the United Nations with respect to the Security Council reform.

12. They recognize the importance of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", the sixtieth anniversary of which will take place in 2008, and within this context, they recognize the need to undertake actions in order to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental liberties. Convinced that the universal system for the promotion and protection of human rights requires the support of the international community, they deem that international cooperation will be fundamental for securing the observance of human rights, the maintenance of democracy and the promotion of sustainable development, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations and the related resolutions.

13. They commend the ongoing institutionalization process of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) which will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening the integration process between the two regions.

14. They call on the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to resume negotiations in order to find, as soon as possible, a fair, peaceful and lasting solution to the sovereignty dispute referred to as "Question of the Malvinas Islands", in accordance with the many relevant UN Resolutions. They further state that the inclusion of the Malvinas, South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands as territories associated to Europe in Annex II to Title IV, "Association of Overseas Countries and Territories", of Part III of the Treaty amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community is not in accordance with the fact that a sovereignty dispute over such islands exists.

15. They call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran for a positive response to the United Arab Emirates initiative to reach a peaceful settlement in the issue involving the three UAE islands (Tunb Al-Kubra, Tunb Alsughra and Abou Moussa) through dialogue and direct negotiations, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and International Law.

16. They reaffirm their refusal of illegal foreign occupation and recognize the right of states and the peoples to resist it in accordance with the principles of international legitimacy and in compliance with international humanitarian law.

17. They reaffirm the need to intensify existing efforts to resume the peace process in order to reach fair, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict on all tracks on the basis of relevant resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly of the United Nations, as well as the Madrid Framework, in particular the "Land for Peace Principle", the Road Map, and the "Arab Peace Initiative" adopted at the Beirut Summit (2002), and reactivated at the Riyadh Summit (2007) and the Annapolis Conference (2007), leading to the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories up to the lines of 4 June 1967, including the occupied Syrian Golan, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State peacefully coexisting side by side with the State of Israel; and the dismantling of the separation Wall and all settlements including those in East Jerusalem; and they call upon the international community to resume their assistance to the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people and to lift all kinds of sanctions. They call for an immediate cessation of all acts of violence.

18. They express deep concern about the situation in Gaza and call for the immediate reopening of the crossings between Gaza and Israel so that essential goods and services, including fuel, can be supplied on a continuous basis, so as to avoid and prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories. They also reaffirm their support for the full implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied territories, including Gaza.

19. They express deep concern with regard to unilateral sanctions imposed on Syria by the government of the United States of America and consider that the so-called Syria Accountability Act violates principles of International Law and constitutes a violation of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter thereby setting a serious precedent as regards dealing with independent states.

20. They call upon all Lebanese political parties to unite and resume dialogue and ensure peace and stability in Lebanon through national dialogue and the implementation of international legitimacy and democracy with a view to preserving the unity, sovereignty and independent identity of Lebanon, and their commitment to the Arab Initiative; they support the efforts made by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to implement this initiative.

They call for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006) and reaffirm the need to provide political and economic support for the Lebanese government and people with a view to preserving its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity as well as security and national unity in all its territories. They also condemn the terrorist attacks against UNIFIL and Lebanese targets and they express their firm denunciation of all attempts to undermine security, stability and national unity in Lebanon.

21. They reaffirm the need for the unity, freedom, sovereignty and independence of Iraq and the right of non-interference in its internal affairs; they respect the will of the Iraqi people to freely decide their future, and strongly condemn all acts of terrorism and violence perpetrated against the Iraqi people. They also reaffirm the need to achieve national reconciliation in Iraq. They support the efforts of the Iraqi government to achieve security and stability; they also support the efforts of the various national Iraqi political factions in this respect. They also express their support for the efforts made by the League of Arab States for that purpose, and they call upon the international community to cancel Iraq's debts and to offer the assistance needed to undergo the process of reconstructing its institutions and infrastructure.

22. They welcome the efforts made by the League of Arab States in cooperation with the African Union and the United Nations to solve the Darfur crisis, and the resumption of their efforts to establish peace and stability in Darfur and the region, and the support for political mediation to achieve a comprehensive political settlement as soon as possible. Within this context, they welcome Sudan government's acceptance of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1769, and its effort in cooperating with the UN/AU Hybrid operation. They welcome the measures taken to implement the comprehensive peace treaty between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) signed in Nairobi, and they urge both parties to continue their efforts to implement this agreement.

23. They stress the need to urgently launch a comprehensive national reconciliation dialogue among all the Somali parties and reaffirm that peace emerging from such a dialogue is the only way to avoid further internal strife and to help the transitional Somali government to fulfill its mandate effectively and, furthermore, they affirm the importance of assisting the African Union forces in Somalia so as to enable them to undertake their mission in achieving peace and security.

24. They reaffirm that regional security and stability in the Middle East require that the whole region be free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Within this context, they call upon all parties concerned as well as the international community to take practical and urgent measures for the establishment of a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East. They reaffirm the importance of the accession of all countries of the region without exception to the NPT and the placement of all their nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East. They also express their support to the Arab Initiative calling for the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East.

25. They welcome the strengthening of cooperation between the Arab Parliaments such as the Arab Parliamentary Union and the Provisional Arab Parliament, and the Parliaments and Parliamentary Unions of South American countries, and encourage them to hold joint meetings which would lead to expanding non-governmental participation in promoting the various aspects of cooperation and contributing to the economic, social and political development, as well as the respect for the rule of law and the advancement of human rights, with a view to achieving the interests of the two regions.

26. They emphasize their willingness to join efforts and exchange information on the necessary tools for humanitarian assistance, both in situations of hunger and poverty and to relieve the effects of natural disasters.

Economic Cooperation

27. They reaffirm the importance of trade and investment in the development of the respective regions, and they highlight the various initiatives proposed at the Quito and Rabat Ministerial Meetings, for the purpose of facilitating trade flows, strengthening economic and commercial relations, and consolidating an institutional framework for the promotion of the latter.

28. They welcome the resolution adopted by the Arab Summit in Riyadh, which aims at strengthening cooperation between Arab countries and other regional groups including South America; they also take note of the convening of an Arab economic and social development Summit, which would lead to the increase of cooperation between both regions.

29. They invite the countries of the two regions to study the possibility of reducing their trade barriers in order to promote and increase trade and achieve greater integration, reflective of their regional and multilateral components.

30. They note with satisfaction the substantial growth in overall trade between both regions.

31. They voice their decision to continue identifying and developing all possibilities for their growth and diversification, and they take into consideration the adoption of preferential treatment trade measures, in view of the differences in economic development or other specific conditions of the parties.

32. They urge WTO members to intensify negotiations in order to conclude the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, in accordance with a balanced and ambitious set of results, considering the development goals as a point of reference.

33. They express their support to the efforts by the countries of the regions aiming at accession to WTO.

34. They highlight the importance of both the public and private sector's active participation in increasing trade and investment between the two regions. In this regard, they express appreciation for the progress achieved in trade and

investment areas since the first Summit of Arab and South American countries, and support the continuation of such actions.

35. They highlight the importance of encouraging joint investments in areas such as infrastructure, mining and energy, among others.

36. They agree on the need for further advancement in those areas where the potential for cooperation and trade existing between both regions can be materialized. Thus, they urge all the parties involved in the ASPA Summit follow-up process to intensify their efforts for the purpose of encouraging closer bi-regional relations.

37. They highlight the importance of tourism in the countries of both regions and call upon pertinent agencies to work together to this end. In this sense, they appreciate the initiative of Brazil to organize seminars in UAE, Qatar and Kuwait, in December 2007.

38. They consider it is necessary for the promotion of trade between the two regions to carry out initiatives in order to incorporate added value and technological components into their relationship, for the benefit of their respective populations.

39. They recall that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of International Law, States have the sovereign right to exploit their resources, pursuant to their own laws and development policies. Within this context, they condemn any intimidatory actions against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela or any other country, which may affect its economic and social development and its cooperation with the countries of the South.

40. They ratify their commitment to achieve the ultimate objective of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, guided by their principles, particularly, that developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and their respective capabilities, the specific needs and special circumstances of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, and that would have to bear a disproportionate or abnormal burden under the Convention; and that measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not turn into a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.

41. They highlight the importance of promoting measures and policies on energy efficiency that may contribute to the preservation and rational and sustainable use of energy sources.

42. They recognize the importance and the potential of environmentally- sustainable renewable energy, including biofuel, for the economic, social and environmental development of their nations, as well as its contribution to the diversification of their countries' energy matrixes.

43. They ratify the importance of energy for sustainable development. Within this context, they welcome the proposal to establish a bi-regional dialogue mechanism on energy, for the exchange of experiences and the promotion of new cooperation options that may benefit our societies. They also take note of the importance of the International Forum on Energy, whose Permanent Secretariat is based in Riyadh, as a mechanism of dialogue and cooperation.

44. They appreciate the initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, announced during the third OPEC Summit held in Riyadh in November 2007, to set up a special research fund on energy, to which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait have made contributions, and welcome its offer to all member countries to make use of its resources and participate therein.

45. They note with great satisfaction the initiatives aiming at the conclusion of trade agreements between South American and Arab countries. In this regard, they take note of progress achieved in MERCOSUR-GCC negotiations on an FTA between both blocs. They also take note of ongoing contacts between MERCOSUR and Morocco with a view to launching trade negotiations in forthcoming months, building on the Framework Agreement signed in 2004, as well as on the MERCOSUR-Egypt Framework Agreement signed in 2004. These initiatives contribute to significantly enhancing South American-Arab country relations.

Social Cooperation

46. They welcome progress resulting from the First Meeting of Ministers of Development and Social Affairs, held in Cairo on 2-3 May 2007, as recorded in their Final Statement, and urge the competent sectors to implement the cooperation mechanisms therein established.

47. They express the need to incorporate issues on indigenous and Afro descendants, gender policies and programmes on disability, into the ASPA dialogue.

48. They recognize the global problem of drugs and their related crimes, and they highlight the essential role of international cooperation to fight this scourge. They voice their strong determination to face this problem in a balanced, comprehensive and multilateral fashion, based upon the principle of shared responsibility and respect for national legislations.

49. They support the role of civil society to contribute to comprehensive development.

Cultural Cooperation and Dialogue between Civilizations

50. They reaffirm that the important contribution of Arab immigration to South American countries is an invaluable input to fostering cultural relations between the two regions in all aspects.

51. They express their willingness to continue debating cultural policies and actions to promote mutual knowledge of the Arab and South American cultures. Furthermore, they recognize that this forum provides a unique opportunity to build bridges between the peoples of both regions and create a common space for dialogue, exchange and interaction.

52. They take note of the decision to adopt the institutional, financial and administrative structure of the Arab-South American Library; they commend the Algerian provision of a five-hectare plot of land for this purpose, and its full commitment to undertake all establishment costs and the authors' lodgings annexed to the Library. They call for an urgent meeting in Algiers of the Committee on Cultural Cooperation no later than 30 April 2008, for the adoption of its institutional structure. In case of non-attendance at the meeting called by Algeria, the countries must take note that the Draft Bylaws will be approved ad referendum and will be submitted to the Summit in Qatar.

53. They welcome the construction of an internet website on cultural bi-regional cooperation, www.bibliaspa.com.br, and they also welcome the initiative by Algeria to enrich the Virtual Library website with ten book titles; furthermore, they urge the participating countries in the meeting to effectively contribute to these websites and the construction of additional ones

with a view to create a special virtual network in cooperation between both regions which would contribute, together with the Library, to implement the Arab-South American common efforts.

54. They emphasize that the translation of books, and the knowledge and dissemination of languages and the promotion of historical-cultural research are key points both of the aforesaid project and of the future creation of the South America Research Institute in Morocco, insofar as they will contribute to encouraging access to literary and academic works by researchers and the public at large.

55. They welcome the approval of the "Statutes of the South American Research Institute" submitted by the Kingdom of Morocco (annexed to this Declaration), which have been evaluated, analyzed and approved by the Cultural Cooperation Committee.

They affirm that the establishment of the South American Research Institute in Tangiers, Morocco, will foster research in all humanitarian and social science fields and will play a vital role in building bridges between the academics from both regions. This Institute will represent a source of high-level scientific research that will contribute to the enrichment of the national and international cultural heritage and become a reference centre for all scholars and researchers.

56. They are especially satisfied with the publication of the first book of the ASPA Library, a trilingual co-edition, published by the national libraries of Algeria, Brazil and the Ayacucho de Venezuela Library of "El deleite del extranjero en todo lo que es asombroso y maravilloso", by Imam Al Baghdadi. They encourage further publications of books of interest for both regions.

57. They point out the importance of debate on cultural diversity. For the purpose of encouraging intercultural dialogue, they deem it positive to share cultural experiences and policies aimed at renewing and discussing ideas, theories and concepts on the matter.

58. In this respect, they consider that this path contributes to incorporating content and action into the "Alliance of Civilizations", established by the 60th United Nations General Assembly in 2005. Furthermore, they emphasise the progress made in their commitment to bring the West and the Arab World closer together, strengthening a link whose cultural components have a special preponderance, and express their satisfaction with the appointment of the former President of Portugal, Mr. Jorge Sampaio, as the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.

59. They welcome the outcome of the first Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations held in Madrid on 15-16 January 2008 which witnessed a high level Arab and South American participation in the political, cultural and non-governmental fields; they also welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the League of Arab States and the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. Furthermore, they welcome Argentina's proposal to be the venue of a Regional Seminar in April 2008 for the purpose of analyzing the issue of gender.

60. They express the need to respect the diversity of cultures, religions and civilizations, which is a part of common human heritage. They stress that freedom of worship is one of the basic rights that should be respected and should not be the object of segregation, discrimination or racism.

61. They call for an enhancement of scientific and technical cooperation between both regions; and express their willingness to establish bi-regional cooperation programmes in priority areas that could serve as examples for future joint actions in South-South cooperation.

62. They welcome the web portals on bi-regional cooperation in the areas of Science and Technology and encourage the countries participating in the Summit to actively contribute to enriching them and to create additional sites capable of setting up a good quality virtual network for cooperation between both regions.

63. They welcome the Joint Communiqué on Environmental Cooperation adopted at the First Meeting of Environment Ministers of Arab and South American countries, in Nairobi, on 6 February 2007, taking into account that cooperation between both regions for sustainable development is mutually beneficial and will consolidate their friendly relations.

64. They undertake to ensure the follow-up and implementation of the Joint Communiqué, promoting the use of the instruments therein provided for, in particular, the development of a Biennial Executive Programme during the year 2008, as well as the promotion of ministerial or technical meetings.

65. They welcome the initiative by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to convene the Arab and South American Ministerial meeting on Water Resources and the Combating of Desertification on 16-17 November 2008 in Riyadh, as part of the efforts by both regions to achieve their development goals within a sustainable environmental framework.

Cooperation and Follow-up Mechanisms

66. They appreciate the initiative by the State of Qatar for hosting the Second ASPA Summit in Doha on the last quarter 2008, which will be preceded by a preparatory meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

67. They express their appreciation and lend their support to the decision of the State of Qatar to host, in parallel with the Second ASPA Summit, the second bi-regional conference of South American and Arab businesspersons, in line with the Rabat action plan.

68. They decide to set up an open-ended working group composed of the Troika countries, the two Secretariats and other interested countries, to prepare a plan of action to be submitted to the Summit in Qatar.

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