CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE
SEMINAR ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

(21 July 2019)

Introduction:

On 03-04 September 2007 a Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity. At that time, the Ministers of the Movement adopted the Tehran Declaration and Programme of Action, which has ever since guided the endeavors of Member States of the Movement on these important fields, and led to the establishment, in 2008, of the NAM Centre for Human Rights and Cultural Diversity, headquartered in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.

More recently, on 30 November 2017, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in its capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), convened in New York a High-Level Meeting on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity, under the theme “Solidarity, Dialogue and Tolerance in a Diverse World: Towards a Culture of Peace”, to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Tehran Declaration and Programme of Action. At that time, Member States of the Movement unanimously approved a revised Political Declaration and Programme of Action (Tehran+10), in which they reaffirmed their unwavering commitment with the protection and promotion of human rights and cultural diversity, and which led to the re-activation of the NAM Chapter at UNESCO, in Paris.

In light of the above, and taking into account the unique opportunity provided by the convening of the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) from 18-21 July 2019 in Caracas, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in its capacity as Chair of NAM, has decided to organize, together and with the support of the NAM Centre on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity, a seminar on this important subject, mindful of the fact that respect and tolerance for different cultures can boost understanding and international cooperation in various fields, including with relation to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and could ultimately be of great use in the joint efforts of the international community to combat hatred, radical, extremist and violent tendencies and to effectively move from a culture of war to a real culture of peace.
Background:

Seventy years have passed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of every person, and in which the members of the international community expressed their determination to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. In this context, it is worth highlighting the role of States in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including through the adoption of relevant measures, as appropriate, for creating conditions conducive to their full enjoyment and realization.

Moreover, the Charter of the United Nations also refers to the importance of achieving international cooperation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. More specifically, Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter makes reference to the cooperation between Member States and the Organization for the achievement of higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development, which have all been recognized as human rights, as per the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).

The spirit and letter of the elements highlighted above from the UN Charter – international cooperation – are an example of “principled multilateralism”; namely, the conduction of international relations between three or more States, on the basis of mutual respect, mindful of differences, and with the purpose of creating fair, just, and lasting solutions to common challenges in an ever-increasingly interconnected world. On the other hand, however, both history and academic researches show how, despite a boost following the end of the Cold War era, multilateralism lost its momentum in the late 1990s and underwent profound changes that have led it to the crisis it is currently facing, given rise to what is referred to as “diminished multilateralism”. Properties of the latter are the bypassing of multilateral organizations, shallow institutions and low-intensity cooperation, which as a result moves us backwards, all the way to the old era of unilateralism.

Nowadays, regrettably, the world is witnessing an increasing tendency and deepening by certain States, particularly those with an imperial and hegemonic background, to resort to and conduct their foreign policy on the basis of unilateralism. As a result, we see an increase in the illegal promulgation and implementation of unilateral and arbitrary measures, particularly against developing countries, aimed at coercing States and their sovereign will, and, in some instances, advance regime-change policies, under various pretexts, including alleged violations of human rights.

Objective:

The goal of the Seminar on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity is to shed light on some of the root causes of the current challenges being faced by multilateralism, and the negative impact of unilateral emerging practices on the full realization of human rights and cultural diversity.
In addition, Member States of the Movement will be provided with a space for a frank and interactive discussion on challenges and opportunities for the fulfillment of human rights and cultural diversity, as well as to share best practices and positive experiences of Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on this field. It will also be an ideal opportunity for reaffirming the principled positions of the Movement in this regard, including the commitment to uphold, among others, the principles of sovereignty and sovereign equality of States, as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of States and rejection to the use or threat of use of force.

Moreover, despite the fact that no outcome is expected from the Seminar, Member States of NAM may be interested in stressing the importance of achieving international cooperation in the field of human rights and cultural diversity on the basis of solidarity, while reaffirming that these must be addressed within the global context, through a constructive, non-confrontational, non-politicized and non-selective, dialogue-based approach, in a fair and equal manner, with objectivity, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, impartiality, non-selectivity and transparency as the guiding principles, taking into account the political, historical, social, religious and cultural particularities of each country.

**Logistic Details:**

- **Date:** 21 July 2019
- **Time:** 14:30 – 17:00 Hrs.
- **Venue:** Convention Center of the Venetur Alba Caracas Hotel
- **Format:** 1+1
- **Interpretation:** English and Spanish
PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE
SEMINAR ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

(21 July 2019)

1. Opening of the Session
   • Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. Jorge Arreaza Montserrat, Minister of the People’s Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

2. Briefings and Presentations
   • H.E. Mr. Ali Pourghassab Amiri, Director of the Centre of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for Human Rights and Cultural Diversity.
   • Representative from UNESCO (tbc)
   • Representative from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (tbc)
   • H.E. Mr. Ernesto Villegas, Minister of the Peoples’ Power for Culture of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

3. Open Interactive Discussion and Q&A

4. Closing of the Session
   • Closing Remarks by H.E. Mr. Ruben Darío Molina, Viceminister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for Asia, Middle East and Oceania