



LETTER

BY

H.E. DR. DIMITRIJ RUPEL

**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
ON BEHALF OF THE HUMAN SECURITY NETWORK**

**AS A CONTRIBUTION OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE HSN TO THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL OF THE INITIATIVE OF
THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**

Ljubljana, 16 october 2006

Dear members of the High-level Panel, Excellencies,

Allow me to address you on behalf of the Human Security Network, an informal group of like-minded countries of different regions in the world, namely Austria, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Canada, Costa Rica, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Thailand, South Africa, and Slovenia as the Chair.

The group convenes twice a year: once at the ministerial level during General Assembly sessions and when marking the inauguration of a new presidency of the HSN. Its activities and projects are aimed at deepening the reflection and contributing to activities in the field of human security, such as the promotion of the universality of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines, the promotion of and respect for human rights with an emphasis on the right to education, the protection of children in armed conflicts, the control of small arms and light weapons, the role of women in peace process and in peace operations, the fight against HIV/AIDS, trafficking in human beings, poverty and people-centered development.

HSN members support the work of the “Alliance of Civilizations” and look forward to the Final Report being introduced by the High-level Panel of eminent persons in December 2006. The Network would like to participate to the best of its abilities in the implementation of the recommendations of the Panel’s report.

On 21 September 2006, foreign ministers of the HSN members met in New York. The discussion focused on identifying how the Network could contribute to the work of the Alliance. The ministers identified some areas of particular interest that the Panel could consider as a possible contribution by the Network in the future.

It was stressed that both dialogue and freedom of expression are crucial to maintain and strengthen the consensus among nations, cultures and religions. We must tackle misunderstandings and the lack of knowledge by learning about differences and by promoting tolerance and understanding. Good examples for instance in the realm of the promotion of values aimed at youth, the 'Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures' could be discussed in the framework of the alliance.

The strengthening and reactivation of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC) based on Art 90 of the First Protocol Additional to the Geneva

Conventions of 1977 was suggested. In this regard, the HSN could call for wider acceptance of the competence of the IHFFC. The Network might also further study the possibilities to revitalize it.

The ministers agreed that human rights education is of special importance as a sound and long-term investment in mutual understanding and respect for diversity. Members of the Network may be in a position to support the efforts of the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly to address the issue of human rights education. States of the Network were invited to support the efforts during the 61st UN General Assembly Session for the human rights education and learning, including a possible draft resolution on the issue.

Experience already gained from projects could further assist the implementation of the Panel's findings and especially the implementation of the Action Plan. One such example could be the OSCE Pilot Project on Human Rights Education from 2005, involving over 10.000 children.

Violence against children is an issue of concern for every society and every social group; the formulation of preventive and monitoring strategies is thus of vital importance. We commend the process developing the UN Study on Violence against Children, in particular the contribution of children, and we support action to ensure that this important issue remains at the forefront of our agenda. The Network devotes special attention to the plight of children affected by armed conflicts. The Canadian organization *Right to play* that uses sport as a means of education and as a mechanism for connecting the youth and children is a case in point.

The manual *Understanding Human Rights* and the *Child Rights Training Curriculum* (presented by Austria in May 2003 and translated into more than ten languages) was endorsed by HSN members and other countries. It already proved to be a helpful human rights training tool and it might also play a useful role in the learning about religious differences and for promoting understanding and tolerance.

The media significantly contribute to education and public awareness raising and the enhancement of human security. They should thus be free and encouraged to connect people and help them learn about differences, tolerance and understanding. The media provide free flow of news and information within and across national borders. We should be aware of the fact that the right to freedom of expression is one of the foundations of a democratic society and mutual understanding. As a case in point for

an interesting project was a Global Inter-Media Dialogue aimed at contributing to the bridging of gaps between different religions, cultures and peoples.

The ministers also stressed that women should be engaged in the process of stabilization and education as well as in the establishment of friendly relations and dialogue among communities. Because of their important role in all societies, women are particularly suited for such endeavors.

Let me conclude by reiterating that the Network is willing to examine a contribution to the work of the Final Report of the High-level Panel in line with its priorities as well as to the implementation of the Action Plan once the recommendations have been presented to the Secretary-General and the public. Together with other UN member States we are willing to consider carrying on the work of the Alliance even after the High-level Panel has completed its work.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Dimitrij Rupel