

**A MESSAGE FROM HIS HOLINESS ARAM I
TO THE FOURTH ANNUAL SESSION OF THE WORLD PUBLIC FORUM
"DIALOGUE OF CIVILIZATIONS"
(September 27-October 1, 2006, Rhodes, Greece)**

I warmly welcome the Fourth Annual Meeting of the World Public Forum "Dialogue of Civilizations". You are meeting once again to address issues and challenges of common concern. Civilizations have lived side by side for centuries. The new challenges arising from social, political and economic configurations of modern societies, particularly the tension between globalization and the need for identity, are impacting the foundations of all civilizations. Therefore, the future of the world depends on the dialogue of civilizations.

Within the limited scope of this message, I would like to share with you briefly a few perspectives.

1.- Dialogue of civilizations is essentially dialogue of *religions*. Religion is at the heart of civilizations. It touches almost all aspects and spheres of a society. It articulates the beliefs, traditions and values of a community. The growing public role of religion gives a new dimension to dialogue of civilizations, a spiritual dimension and a new language: the language of love, compassion and humility.

2.- Dialogue of civilizations is fundamentally dialogue of *values*. Spiritual, intellectual, economic, political and social values are genuine expressions of a community's self-understanding. Through values people become community. Through values a community affirms its identity, safeguards its integrity and ensures its strength, based on respect for the other.

3.- Dialogue of civilizations is basically dialogue of *people*. In fact, civilizations, religions and their values are both gifts of God and human achievements. Their purpose is to create relationships between humanity, creation and Transcendent. The human being has a particular place and vocation in the created order. According to Christianity, he or she is the steward of creation and accountable to God.

Therefore, dialogue of civilizations should be understood in its comprehensive meaning and the issues on the agenda of the conference should be treated in their interconnectedness. The forces of globalization have brought about both integration and fragmentation, interaction and collision of peoples, ideas, traditions and values./ This forum, with its divers agenda and participants, is uniquely placed to dialogue on the critical issues that impact all civilizations.

Because of a prior commitment, it is not possible for me to be with you during these three days. I would be glad to address the forum in person on a convenient future occasion. I am sure that my representatives, His Grace Archbishop Sebouh Sarkissian, the Primate of Tehran, and Mrs. Teny Pirri-Simonian, a senior staff of the World Council of Churches will bring their active participation to the deliberations of the Forum.

May God bless your good work.

**ARAM I
CATHOLICOS OF CILICIA**