



**Address by Mr. Sergei A. Ordzhonikidze
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**OIC Inter-institutional Forum on Universal Shared Values:
Challenges and New Paradigms**

**Palais des Nations, Geneva
Friday, 19 December 2008**

Mr. Chairman
Mr. President of the Human Rights Council
Mr. Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference
Madam High Commissioner for Human Rights
Distinguished panellists
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a distinct pleasure to welcome you all to the Palais des Nations. Allow me, at the outset, to thank the Organization of the Islamic Conference for this initiative to mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The anniversary is an important opportunity for us all to promote the ideals and principles of this landmark document, and we appreciate the OIC's contribution.

The Universal Declaration embodies the international community's commitment to human dignity. Together with the United Nations Charter, the Declaration represents one of the most powerful expressions of our universally shared values. As we celebrate its first sixty years, we must recognize that the promise of the Declaration remains unfulfilled for too many across the world. We must redouble our efforts to turn these commitments into reality for all. Furthering the cause of human rights is an integral part of the United Nations' broader efforts to bring peace, stability and prosperity to all the world's peoples.

This is indeed a challenge for the whole human family, where the experience and expertise of all stakeholders must be integrated, and I welcome the focus today on bringing together different institutional actors to draw on their individual knowledge and strengths. The objectives of our respective Organizations are mutually reinforcing – and so must be our activities. As part of the ongoing effort to enhance cooperation, I chaired in July of this year, together with Ambassador Salehi of the OIC, the second general meeting of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and OIC. At the meeting, it was agreed to improve coordination and follow-up mechanisms by building institutional linkages between the two organizations. Today, we will touch on many of the issues discussed at the coordination meeting in July.

Part of the discussion today is devoted to human rights and cultural diversity. Human rights are indeed the indispensable foundation and framework for an inter-cultural dialogue that prioritizes shared values and aspirations. Human rights are universal and indivisible. They apply to all, regardless of cultural, social and economic contexts,

because the rights and obligations contained in our human rights instruments have been adopted, signed and ratified by the overwhelming majority of States.

Yet, sadly, we experience almost daily the polarizing effects of prejudice and mistrust among the peoples of the world. We must therefore place renewed emphasis on such an inter-cultural dialogue, firmly grounded in respect for universal human rights so that we can rebuild bridges and promote tolerance.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations provides a valuable platform for this necessary dialogue to bridge divides and help to counter the forces that fuel extremism. The United Nations values highly the OIC's efforts to advance appreciation of the value of cultural diversity through its active participation in the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Our universally shared values remain vital to our collective action to meet the challenges of our time. We have a strong common interest in addressing pressing issues of peace and security, in confronting poverty and advancing the Millennium Development Goals – the MDGs.

I am therefore encouraged by today's focus on development and humanitarian assistance. At a time when deep economic and financial uncertainty threatens to undo hard-won development gains and undermines efforts to meet the deadline for the MDGs, we must bolster our international collaboration to improve the lives of our most vulnerable fellow human beings. That is why it was important that high-level representatives of more than 160 countries came together in Doha at the end of November for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, affirming their continued commitment to the development agenda, despite the financial crisis. We must sustain this momentum.

Together, we face daunting challenges. And, together, we can take on these challenges to advance security, development and respect for human rights, inspired and guided by our universally shared values. I have no doubt that today's discussions will help to reinforce our cooperation towards these objectives.

Thank you very much.