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Dialogue and Mutual Understanding among the Civilizations of the Mediterranean Basin via Technology: Obstacles and Remedies.

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Dialogue is an important aspect of human life. It is regarded as being the chief gateway through which a nation can prevent conflicts and struggles not only at local and national levels, but at international levels too. As a matter of fact, dialogue among civilizations can reduce misunderstandings and mistrust. Furthermore, intercultural understanding also lays the foundation for non violent resolution of controversies. It is a key element in uniting the people, and helps spreading awareness of their differences and particularities. Equally important, dialogue among civilizations has an enormous potential of solving current and future economic, social, cultural, and political problems by sharing experiences and also through joint implementation of remedies.

Throughout history, the peoples of the Mediterranean basin have played a paramount role for the promotion of dialogue, mutual understanding, and the enrichment of cultures and civilizations. Indeed, the Mediterranean basin is considered as being the birth place of several great civilizations that are worldly known. The Mediterranean basin is also the cradle and crossroad of civilizations. Actually, however, the accelerating pace of political, economic, and technological devices that the world is undergoing has added new challenges such as fundamentalism and racism, thus, increasing difficulties in bringing cultural differences and hence, dividing the shores of

the Mediterranean. These challenges need to be addressed by promoting mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue among the Mediterranean various civilizations and cultures. So what can be done for the promotion of dialogue among the Mediterranean civilizations? How can mutual understanding, reconciliation, and tolerance be promoted within the Mediterranean basin? What new and technological devices can be used for better achieving dialogue? And in which way could they promote dialogue among the Mediterranean regions?

1- Dialogue using technological devices:

With the accelerating pace of technology nowadays, dialogue and communication should be provided with new innovative techniques through the application of new technologies of information and communication and also the new type of media. The new digital technologies are indeed bringing about fundamental shifts in patterns of dialogue and human relationships. They have an extraordinary potential in helping the promotion of human understanding and unity among the people. At this level, however, we have to make sure that these technologies are positively exploited for connecting people. More important, these technologies have to allow transitional debates, relations, and cooperation, and above all promote transitional civil society.

Various technologies of communication and information are opening up the way for dialogue between peoples from different countries, cultures, and religions. Among these:

1- **Media:** the media and telecommunications play an important role of interconnection between peoples, nations and civilizations. Indeed, they are regarded as being a key factor in the process of the globalization of culture and the

spread of multiculturalism. Also, the media is promoting connection among peoples and societies and is simultaneously facilitating their attempts to reach each in a fast way and without having the need to travel. In doing so, the media breaks up stereotypes and prejudices and brings about openness and mutual understanding about peoples of different origins, ethnicities, and religions. It has the potential of creating a peaceful world free from violence and persecution. For this to happen, the media should give the right image about peoples' experiences, habits, and opinions. It has to cover the aspects of society and culture like literature, poetry... and the like that are positive and constructive. It has also to appeal to conscious and wise writers, artists, religious men and others who will be of great prominence in promoting and facilitating dialogue among peoples.

2-Computers and telephones:

The accessibility to computers combined with internet connection opened up a range of means of communication. It has shortened the long distances and allowed people worldwide, to share knowledge and information in a more rapid and effective manner. It also opened up the way for dialogue between people from different countries, cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Indeed, the new so called "cyber space" is actually facilitating forms of cooperation between people from different geographical and cultural contexts that enable them to deepen their common humanity and their sense of shared responsibility for the good of all. When effectively exploited, these technologies will help overcome the prejudices and cultural barriers which in their turn impede the objectives of achieving a common area of peace, stability, and welfare.

II- obstacles behind dialogue promotion:

Many difficulties lay behind communication and mutual understanding of the different civilizations of the Mediterranean basin, these include:

-Lack of use of high and sophisticated information technologies that would facilitate dialogue. Indeed, information technologies in our country are still in their embryonic phase and a lot has to be made in terms of these new technological devices-hence, planning for a dialogue via technology eventually very complicated when most people have little or no technical experience.

-Reluctance on both sides (Islamic and non-Islamic) to open dialogue. On the one hand, some Westerners regard the Muslims as being terrorists and backward unable to communicate with others. In the same way, the Muslims look upon the Westerners as peoples whose views are against Islam and the Islamic values. They further state that these people give a wrong image about Islam and the Muslims. They stipulate that such dialogue would lead to Western colonization and expansion in all its forms political, intellectual, economic, social, and cultural.

-Another problem which is similar to the preceding one and which is of equal importance concerns those Muslims who show great resistance towards openness and dialogue with non Muslim societies just for the sake of keeping religion pure and far from any "threat" with regard to their principles, values, and traditions. Indeed, these people fear European influence. They prefer to keep the Islamic society and culture pure and "clean" and even work to rid the Islamic civilization of the existing Western influences. However, this is not true

and as an example we have previous positive impact of outside cultures and ways of thought which have played an important role for the development and the elaboration of Islamic thought, particularly the Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle which had major positive contributions to Islamic theology. Besides, the Muslims have also benefited from St. Augustine, from Nicholas de Cusa, from the theological, political, and metaphysical writings of Leibniz, from the political philosophy embodied in the plays of Shakespeare, or Friedrich Schiller, from the writings of Reformist thinkers such as Sir Thomas More and Erasmus, or the political and economic writings of American founding fathers in the Federalist Papers.

III- The remedies for a better understanding among the cultures of the Mediterranean basin:

For a good understanding of the Mediterranean civilizations of we have to:

-Recognize the important role of the media especially the cultural organizations in promoting cultural diversity and dialogue amongst civilizations of the Mediterranean basin.

-To promote exchanges and foster the circulation in the areas of performances, exhibitions, literary works and audio-visual programs in the Mediterranean basin.

-The organization of festivals and major events presenting the culture of the Moslem or non-Moslem countries and vice versa, and to elaborate calendar events.

-Encouragement of awards for best multimedia documents on cultural dialogue and bridges within the Mediterranean basin.

-Promotion of e-journalism by setting up a multimedia cyber-platform enabling journalists, cultural operators, artists, and public opinion to dialogue on culture related themes and events.

-funds are required for the organization of intercultural exchanges, research, advocacy, seminars, and conferences.

-Promotion of video-conferencing, particularly with universities.

-The provision of qualified trainers and training opportunities.

-The provision of networking systems for exchange of information and news to facilitate the development of national and international part memberships and joint projects.

-Access to internet, video-conferencing, as well as other information and communication technologies.

-Simple publicity materials for a culture of peace such as pamphlets, posters, stickers, and tee-shirts.

-Publicity for opportunities and offers like for instance the publicity about scholarships and travel grants in education.

To conclude, I'd like to address the Muslims, especially the younger ones, to transmit their Islamic values to the digital world. Dear brothers and sisters diffuse your beliefs and your knowledge about Islam and the Muslims throughout the new environment of communication and information technologies. These new devices have, indeed, the extraordinary potential of promoting human understanding and solidarity. These technologies are truly a gift to humanity and must be effectively exploited to ensure the benefits they do offer by avoiding to share words and images that are degrading to human beings and which promote hatred and intolerance.

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