

## **STRATEGIC PROSPECTS**

While reviewing the experience of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization on the issue of dialogue of cultures, we infer that ALECSO has achieved three main objectives which make up the privileged background of its action in this vital field:

1- Setting up a theoretical and intellectual view as regards the culture of dialogue, since the dialogue of cultures requires obviously upgrading the contemporary Arab culture to the level of equality in interacting with other cultural systems.

Going back to past experience and historical background remains insufficient. We have to consider the current cultural reality, which requires big intellectual efforts to update the Arab thought, develop its mechanisms and enhance its approach. Accordingly, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization has contributed to reviving the contemporary Arab culture through the new concepts of human development and the assimilation of the new mechanisms and views regarding knowledge and communication.

2- Although the importance attached by ALECSO to dialogue with western cultures is worth considering, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization has strongly stressed openness on other cultural spaces, being a source of enrichment and human cultural diversity. Subsequently, ALECSO has attached a particular importance to cultures of the South sharing the similar views as well as the strategies and realities of development with the Arab-Islamic culture.

This strategy has included holding a dialogue with the African, Chinese, Latin American, Eastern European and Russian spaces, while similar dialogue will take place soon with other cultural spaces.

The cultural diversity worth considering should not be confined to a mere difference between the prevailing western culture and the other cultures. We should rather consider the human cultural features, as the western part, despite its diversity, is not but one of the sources of this rich and varied heritage.

3- To be effective, the dialogue of cultures, according to ALECSO's experience, should not be trapped into theoretical considerations and historical comparisons. It should rather be concerned with the vital current issues.

Conflicts between cultural spaces usually have strategic or political background. This requires political, realistic and practical treatment to set up a reliable dialogue. The international legitimate framework is a sound background to settle these issues, while emphasizing the peoples' rights to sovereignty, independence and development, as well as respecting human rights at different levels in accordance with international cooperation and human solidarity.

All these achievements are not but a positive experience in ALECSO's future work regarding the dialogue of cultures which relies on many strategic guidelines. These include three main priorities:

- Defending the Arab cultural identity within the universal system of values: that means the right to difference, being one of the legitimate rights of Arab people. Difference does not mean being uncommunicative, it is rather an effective contribution to setting up contemporary human universal values required by globalization.

- Setting up an effective Arab knowledge society to serve the continuous human development and help carry out cultural diversity: that means taking advantage from the capacities of the current communication revolution to enhance the Arab development based on the human capital and knowledge society aiming at supporting the Arab culture in preserving its identity among the varied human cultural fabric.

- Setting up partnership and alliance frameworks between important human civilizations and taking advantage from their common experience to serve international peace and solidarity: that means moving from the mere motto of the dialogue of cultures to effective relations of alliance and solidarity between the important cultural systems to avoid violence and fanaticism and lead to openness on each other. This implies changing the message of the dialogue of cultures from the mere historical and cultural background to interaction, cohabitation and practice.

These strategic prospects are a good opportunity for everybody working in the field of cultural dialogue with others. This includes government institutions, the civil society and external partners. Accordingly, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization has set up flexible and effective cooperation mechanisms to help all parties contribute to the cultural dialogue strategy. These include setting up a net for friends of the Arab culture mainly prominent foreign thinkers and cultural figures, signing cooperation and partnership agreements with a number of institutions and organizations belonging to the Arab and international civil society, and cooperating with regional and international organizations in joint programmes and projects relating to the dialogue of cultures.

The eventual main objective of this strategy remains defending the Arab cultural identity, ready for revival, creation, openness and communication with the other cultural spaces, denying being closed in upon oneself and adopting human universal values. These are the same objectives for which ALECSO was founded.