



JULY 22, 2008

## FOREIGN POLICY

### **King Abdullah opens World Conference on Dialogue**

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz this week called on people of different faiths to focus on their shared values and reject extremism.

The King made the remarks in an opening address at the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid, Spain June 16. Some 300 delegates from around the world – representing Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism – attended the three-day conference.

“If we wish this historic meeting to succeed, we must focus on the common denominators that unite us, namely, deep faith in God, noble principles, and lofty moral values, which constitute the essence of religion,” King Abdullah said.

The King also urged people of the world to reject extremism and embrace reconciliation.

“It is therefore incumbent upon us to declare to the world that difference must not lead to conflict and confrontation, and to state that the tragedies that have occurred in human history were not attributable to religion, but were the result of extremism with which some adherents of every divinely revealed religion, and of every political ideology, have been afflicted.”

“Let our dialogue be a triumph of belief over disbelief, of virtue over vice, of justice over iniquity, of peace over conflicts and wars, and of human brotherhood over racism,” he concluded.

The conference is focusing on four major themes: The importance of dialogue in human society; the foundations of religious and civilizational dialogue; the common human aspects in dialogue; and the evaluation and promotion of dialogue. The Madrid conference follows a dialogue among Islamic scholars that took place in Makkah, Saudi Arabia in June.

### **Madrid conference concludes with call for UN session on dialogue**

The World Conference on Dialogue concluded its deliberations in Madrid June 18. In a final statement known as the Madrid Declaration, participants highlighted the importance of dialogue in achieving mutual understanding and cooperation

among religions and cultures. They called on the United Nations to convene a special session on dialogue as a follow-up to the conference.

In a July 16 statement, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid as a symbol of unity among different faiths and expressed the hope that it would lead to commitment and action.

In its weekly meeting June 21, the Cabinet lauded King Abdullah's initiative to convene the conference. It welcomed his opening remarks at the event, in which the King highlighted the importance of constructive dialogue among religions and characterized Islam as a religion of moderation and tolerance.

### **King Abdullah meets with Spanish leaders**

During his visit to Spain to open the World Conference on Dialogue, King Abdullah met with King Juan Carlos at his guest residence June 17.

The Spanish monarch also accompanied King Abdullah to the airport in Madrid. Saudi officials at the airport for the King's departure included Saudi Ambassador to Spain Prince Saud bin Nayef, Undersecretary at the Foreign Ministry Prince Khalid bin Saud, Minister of Culture and Information Iyad Madani and Saudi Ambassador to the US Adel A. Al-Jubeir.

June 16, King Abdullah met with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Zapatero to discuss regional and international issues. They also addressed enhancing bilateral cooperation in all areas.

Other meetings were also held during the King's visit to Spain. Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal, who was part of the royal delegation, met with Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos June 16 to discuss the importance of the World Conference on Dialogue as well as other international and regional issues.

Prince Saud held a separate meeting June 16 with the Quartet's special envoy on the Middle East Tony Blair to review developments in the peace process.

