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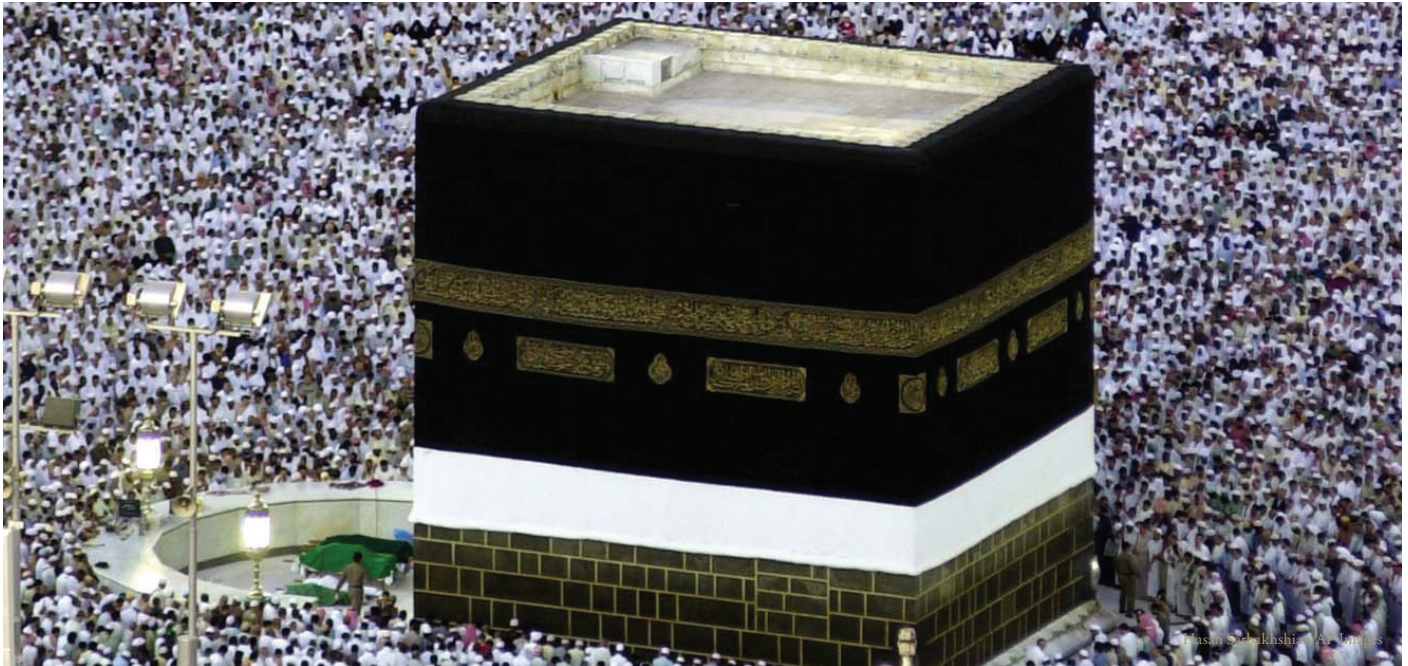


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INTERFAITH  
DIALOGUE

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*2011*



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“O MANKIND! WE HAVE CREATED YOU FROM  
A SINGLE (PAIR) OF A MALE AND FEMALE,  
AND MADE YOU INTO NATIONS AND TRIBES,  
SO THAT YE MAY KNOW EACH OTHER.  
VERILY, THE MOST HONORED OF YOU IN THE  
SIGHT OF GOD IS (HE WHO IS) THE MOST  
RIGHTEOUS OF YOU.”

*~ The Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 13*

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## BUDDHISM

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“Hatreds do not ever cease in this world by hating, but by not hating; this is an eternal truth.”

*~The Dhammapada [Bantam], p.8*

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## CHRISTIANITY

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“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”

*~The New Testament, Luke 6:31*

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## CONFUCIANISM

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“Virtue is not left to stand alone. He who practices it will have neighbors.”

*~Analects, Book 4: Verse 30*

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## HINDUISM

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“One should always treat others as they themselves wish to be treated.”

*~Hitopadesa*

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## JUDAISM

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“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

*~The Torah, Leviticus 19:18*

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## SHINTOISM

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“The heart of the person before you is a mirror. See there your own form.”

*~Shinto saying*

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## INTRODUCTION

This publication is a tribute to the Interfaith Dialogue Initiative launched by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, who recognized that dialogue among religions and cultures is the only way to overcome the challenges facing all nations and people. King Abdullah first discussed the idea with Pope Benedict XVI during a visit to the Vatican in November 2007. As King Abdullah described the exchange:

*“I presented the idea to him, suggesting that we all submit to the will of God as commanded in the Torah, the Bible and the Qur’an. I pray to God to ensure that we come to a word that is just between us and that we pray to Him to save humanity.”*

To initiate this endeavor, King Abdullah convened a meeting of more than 500 Muslim scholars from around the world for the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue, which was organized by the Muslim World League and took place in Makkah on June 4, 2008. The conference highlighted the importance of dialogue and emphasized the need for the faiths and cultures of the world to combat extremism and intolerance. Instead of allowing these threats to divide people, King Abdullah’s vision was to bring people together.

The Makkah Conference was followed by the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid, Spain on July 16, 2008. The three-day conference, hosted by King Abdullah and King Juan Carlos I of Spain, and organized by the Muslim World League, brought together 300 delegates from around the world, representing Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism and Shintoism. In Madrid, the participants focused on the common denominators that unite mankind, namely, deep faith in God, noble principles, and the lofty moral values which constitute the essence of faith. King Abdullah stated in his opening remarks:

*“Man could be the cause of the destruction of this planet and everything in it. He is also capable of turning it into an oasis of peace and tranquility in which adherents of religions, creeds and philosophies could co-exist, and in which people could cooperate with each other in a respectful manner, and address problems through dialogue rather than violence.”*

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In the final statement of the Madrid Conference, the participants urged the United Nations to convene a Special Session of the General Assembly on interfaith dialogue as a means to highlight the importance of interfaith dialogue among world leaders.

In what became both a culmination and continuation of growing unity, world leaders gathered at the United Nations to take the next step in building a constructive dialogue among the followers of the world's religions. King Abdullah was joined by more than 25 world leaders — including UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari, Philippino President Gloria Arroyo, Israeli President Shimon Peres and Jordan's King Abdullah II.

In his opening remarks, King Abdullah emphasized the importance of dialogue and understanding when he said:

*“Human beings were created as equals and partners on this planet; either they live together in peace and harmony, or they will inevitably be consumed by the flames of misunderstanding, malice and hatred.”*

On September 30, 2009, an international conference was organized in Geneva by the Muslim World League (MWL), within the framework of King Abdullah's initiative. The two-day event, held under the patronage of Swiss President Hans-Rudolf Merz, brought together representatives from religions and cultures around the world. Addressing the gathering, the head of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, Dr. Bandar Al-Eiban, stressed King Abdullah's commitment to the dialogue process.

This serves to highlight the need for interfaith dialogue called for by the Makkah Conference, the Madrid Conference, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly, the international conference in Geneva and the events that continue throughout the world today.







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## INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC CONFERENCE FOR DIALOGUE

JUNE 4-6, 2008 | *Makkah, Saudi Arabia*

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## OPENING ADDRESS BY CUSTODIAN OF THE TWO HOLY MOSQUES KING ABDULLAH BIN ABDULAZIZ AT THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC CONFERENCE FOR DIALOGUE

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*June 4, 2008*

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Thanks to Allah the Almighty, and peace and blessings upon the seal of the Prophets, prayer and peace be upon his family and companions.

Brothers, Muslim scholars and thinkers, may Allah's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you all.

From the land of Revelation and land of Message, I welcome you with warmest greetings, beseeching Almighty Allah to give us the unrelenting

determination, a power not afflicted by weakness and makes us from those whom Allah said about them:

“Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!” (41:34)

Dear Brothers:

You gathered today to say to the world around

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us, with confidence which Allah bestowed upon us. We are the voice of justice and human moral values, and we are the voice of rational and just coexistence and dialogue, the voice of wisdom and admonition, and argumentation with the best way possible. As Allah says:

“Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.” (16:125)

God willing we will do so.

Dear Brothers:

How great this nation is, how difficult the challenges it faces in a time where its enemies – extremists from its sons and others – join forces to change its fair approach. They are gathered with blatant aggressiveness to target the tolerance, justice and noble purposes of Islam.

For this reason, this invitation from your brother is to counter challenges of rigidity, ignorance and narrow-mindedness, and to make the world accommodate the concepts and the prospects of the kind message of Islam without enmity and antagonism.

“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).” (49:13)

Dear Brothers:

Islam will remain fortified by the will of Allah Almighty and then with the conscience of Muslim scholars, thinkers and his followers.

Islam’s greatness founded the concepts of dialogue, and sets its milestones which are reflected in Allah saying: “Wert thou severe or

harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee.” (3:159)

Our hearts are full – praise to Allah – by faith, tolerance and love, which Allah, the Creator, ordered us to obtain.

Yes, dear brother, the way to the others is through shared values advocated by the divine messages, which were revealed by Allah the Almighty for the benefit of humanity to preserve their dignity and promote the ethical values and dealings which certainly are not in conformity with deception.

These values reject treason, alienate crime, combat terrorism and despise lying. They lay the basis for good morals, honesty, truthfulness and justice, and enhance the concepts of family values and its cohesion and ethics, which are slowly diminishing at present and disintegrating ties, and where human beings are distancing themselves from their Lord and the teachings of their religion.

Dear Brothers:

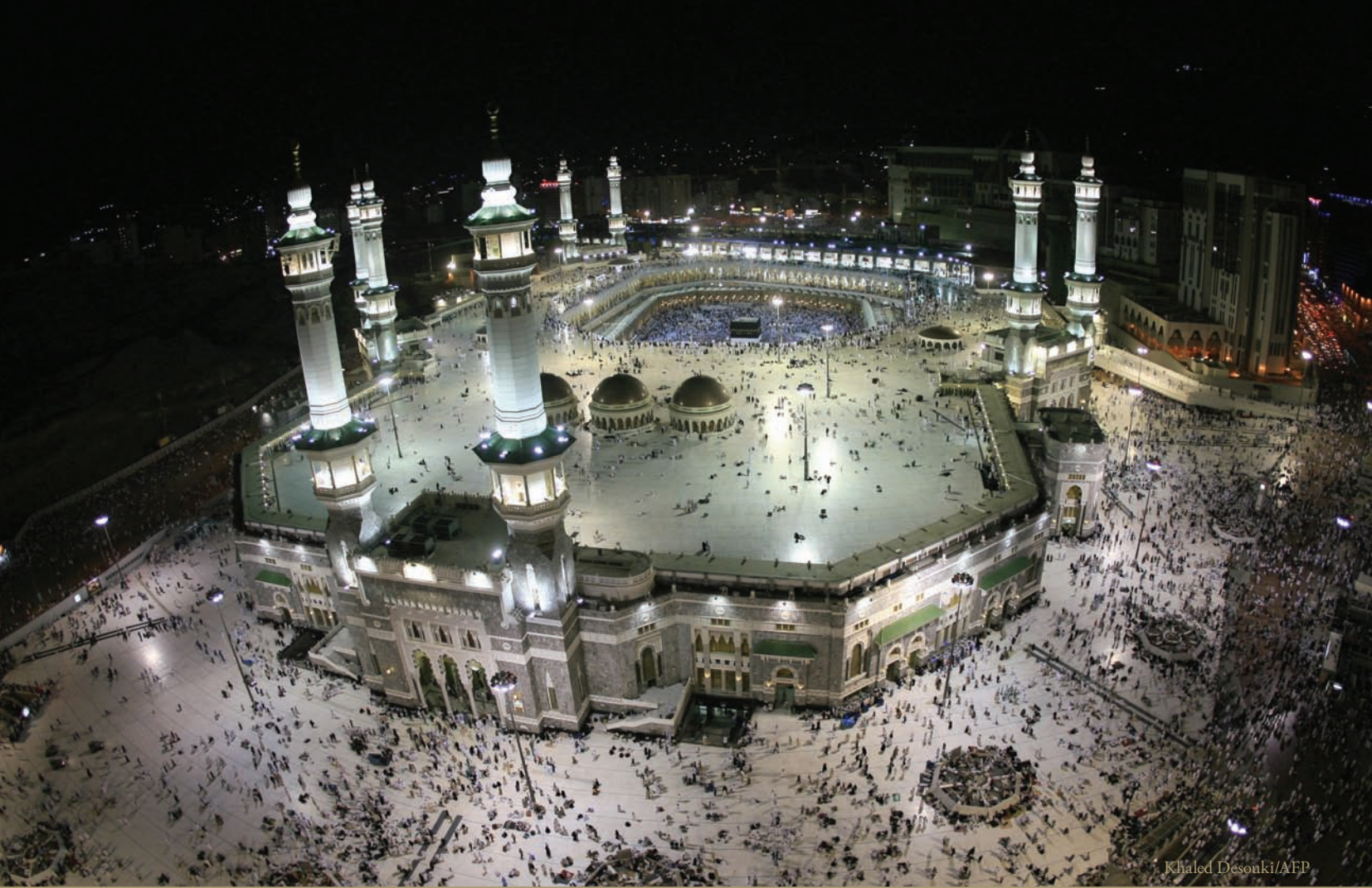
From the vicinity of the Holy Mosque of Makkah, we begin with the will of Allah. From there, we will move in our dialogue with the others in confidence derived from our faith in Allah and then from knowledge sought from our tolerant religion. We will argue in ways that are best, what we agree upon we accept it in our hearts and what we disagree about we refer to the sublime saying: “To you be your way, and to me mine.” (109:6)

Before I conclude my speech, I’m pleased to extend my thanks to the Muslim World League and its personnel and to everyone who contributed to the success of this conference.

In the name of Allah, we start, and in Allah is our trust.

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.





Khaled Desonki/AFP

## THE MAKKAH APPEAL FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE ISSUED BY THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC CONFERENCE FOR DIALOGUE

*June 6, 2008*

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and the peace and blessings of God be on our master Mohammad, the seal of the Prophets and Messengers, who was sent as a Mercy to all creatures.

By the grace of God, the International Islamic Conference for Dialogue organized by the Muslim World League has concluded its deliberations under the patronage of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

May God protect him and sustain through him the munificence of the people and of the country. The International Islamic Conference for Dialogue was held in Makkah between 30 Jumada 1 and 2nd Jumada 2, 1429 A.H., corresponding to June 4 through 6, 2008.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques inaugurated the conference with a comprehensive speech in which he thanked the scholars and leaders of the Ummah participating in this conference

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and confirmed that they are meeting to say to the whole world that we are a voice of justice and ethical human values, coexistence, just and wise dialogue and of exhortation and argument with what is best, in compliance with the verse: "Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious." (The Holy Qur'an, 16:125)

King Abdullah also stressed the challenges that face the Muslim Ummah at a time when some Muslims and people of other faiths have adopted extremism and militancy at the expense of just methodology by using flagrant aggression that targets the tolerance, justice and sublime ends of Islam.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques emphasized the importance of dialogue in Islam and reminded the participants that the revealed messages have all called to the good of humankind, preserving human dignity and enhancing the values of ethics and truthfulness.

"We are commencing our dialogue with the confidence we derive from our belief in God and with knowledge taken from the tolerance of religion, and that we debate in the best and most gracious way. What we agree on, we hold fast to and place in our hearts, and what we disagree on, we refer it to God saying, 'To you be your way and to me mine'," the monarch said.

At the inaugural session, His Excellency former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Council for Diagnosing the Interest of the Regime and Head of the Council of Experts of the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed his profound gratitude to both Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (May God protect him) and to the Muslim World League for organizing this conference in which numerous sublime Islamic meanings were embodied.

H.E. President Rafsanjani said the significance of the conference was increased by the fact that it is

being held only meters from the Safa Mountain from which the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) declared his call. He also said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has launched with this initiative a new call and rendered to mankind a great message. At the end of his talk, H.E. President Rafsanjani said he hoped that the conference is a preparatory step and an introduction to hold dialogue with the followers of religions, cultures and schools of thought.

In his speech at the inaugural session, His Eminence Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Shaikh, Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and chairman of the Constituent Council of the Muslim World League, indicated that dialogue among mankind is one of the necessities of life and that it is a means for coexistence, acquaintance and exchange of interests among members of the Ummah and humankind. He said that disagreement is always present in the very nature and ethics of people who differ in their languages, races, temperaments and levels of knowledge. His Eminence also added that disagreement is a universal way, that the divergence of people in their opinions and beliefs is an issue that was mentioned repeatedly in the Holy Qur'an. He confirmed the origin of all Prophetic messages is the same, as they have been revealed by God and that the religion of God is one.

In his address at the inaugural session, His Eminence Dr. Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, Grand Shaikh of Al-Azhar, expressed his appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. Shaikh Tantawi said the conference is a new means for enhancing cooperative relations among the members of the Ummah. He also added man cannot live isolated from others in this life, particularly in this era when the whole world has become a global village. He added that when we base dialogue on tolerant speech, good intentions and honored objectives, its result will be beneficial and that it will be a means for reaching the truth as well as lessening disputes among people. Shaikh Tantawi noted that

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those who read the Qur'an will find it replete with different types of dialogues the prophets had with their respective people.

In his speech at the inaugural session, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulmohsin Al-Turki, Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, indicated that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has appreciated the crisis that mankind is currently confronting as well as the disintegration and chaos of the family unit due to the ignorance of man to the guidance of the creator. H.E. Al-Turki stressed the importance of cooperation on what the followers of divine messages, civilizations and cultures agree, which includes ethical principles that help diffuse world conflicts and restore the social status of the family and enhance the values of justice, cooperation, tolerance and moderation.

**“GOD’S MESSAGES AND MAN-MADE PHILOSOPHIES HAVE COMMONALITIES THAT ADVOCATE COMMITMENT TO MORAL VIRTUES AND REJECT WRONGDOING, AGGRESSION, MORAL DEGENERATION, FAMILY DISINTEGRATION AND DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT.”**

H.E. Al-Turki added that dialogue is a true Qur'anic method and prophetic practice and culture established in the memory of the Ummah with which relations with people of other faiths were affected since the advent of Islam as based on the tolerance of Islam and the essence of Islamic Shari'ah from which Muslims take their message.

The participants applauded the concern of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for dialogue and called on all nations to pay attention to it and to reject violence. The participants also confirmed the necessity to

concern ourselves with what heavenly messages and books revealed to God's prophets, including sublime ethics and humane values, as well as concentrated efforts in what benefits man, preserves the family, which is considered the basic rectifier for society, and protects humankind from calls of vice.

The participants considered the speech of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques an important document of the conference and a basis for dialogue because it contained significant visions that are expected to achieve peace and positive coexistence.

Needless to say, the conference is being held at a time when the world is facing numerous challenges that pose threat to humankind's future, and warns of further universal moral, social and environmental catastrophes as an expected result of humankind's disregard of the guidance of its Lord.

The conference emphasized the fact that Islam offers successful solutions to these crises, and that the Ummah, with its indispensable cultural reservoir, is required to join hands with the others in order to counter challenges. God the Most Exalted says: “O people of the Scripture! Now hath Our messenger come unto you, expounding unto you much of that which ye used to hide in the Scripture, and forgiving much. Now hath come unto you light from God and a plain Scripture.” (The Holy Qur'an, 4:15-16)

Of course, other civilizations have their own vision toward these challenges that are wreaking havoc within humanity. They share with Muslims in the search for solutions to these crises and seek ways to surmount the challenges we all face.

God's messages and man-made philosophies have commonalities that advocate commitment to moral virtues and reject wrongdoing, aggression, moral degeneration, family disintegration and damage to the environment.



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A profound dialogue aimed at exploring human commonalities is essential for cooperation in programs of joint action that could help solve contemporary problems and protect humanity.

A large number of scholars and researchers, preachers, heads of Islamic centers and societies from various parts of the Islamic world and Islamic minorities communities around the globe, representatives of dialogue agencies and other institutions concerned with dialogue with human cultures and civilizations participated in the conference.

The participants discussed the following four pivotal points:

1. The Islamic Legitimacy for Dialogue
2. Methodology, Rules, Regulations and Means of Dialogue
3. With Whom Will We Engage in Dialogue?
4. The Basis and Themes of Dialogue

## 1. THE ISLAMIC LEGITIMACY FOR DIALOGUE

### ISLAM ADVOCATES DIALOGUE

The conference discussed the legitimacy of dialogue, Islam's promotion of dialogue and the numerous texts that promote dialogue and set forth its rules and manners:

**First** - The cause of the differences between nations and people, as well as their religious and cultural distinction is the will of God, the Most Exalted and His profound wisdom. This requires that they know one another and cooperate in order to serve their interests, solve their problems and cause them to live under good manners and vie with one another in constructing the earth and performing good deeds. (The Holy Qur'an, 5:48)



Ho New/Reuters

**Second** - Dialogue represents an authentic Qur'anic methodology and a Prophetic tradition through which the Prophets communicated with their people. The biography of the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) presents a clear methodology in this regard through the dialogue of the Prophet and the Christians of Najran and his correspondence with great emperors and monarchs. Therefore, dialogue is one of the most important mediums of spreading Islam throughout the world.

**Third** - The Madinah society that was established by the Prophet (pbuh) is the optimal model of positive coexistence of the followers of divine messages. The Madinah document is seen as a source of pride that may be emulated for civilized coexistence. It defined the spheres of cooperation to achieve common interests and to establish such noble human values as justice, charity and virtue.

### OBJECTIVES OF DIALOGUE:

Dialogue is one of the most significant ways in which Muslims can address the world; and through which Muslims can achieve a number of objectives, the most important of which are the following:

**First** - Introduce Islam, its principles and humane tenets and the great civilization heritage it possesses that enable it to effectively contribute to guiding the march of human civilization.

**Second** - Refute allegations leveled against Islam and rectify the distorted images of Islam, its states and organizations in religious, academic and media circles.

**Third** - Contribute to confronting challenges and offering solutions to problems that face humankind as a result of their abandoning religion and departing from its principles and values, an act that led to the suffering of mankind from injustice, vice, terrorism, violations of human rights and pollution of the environment that God Almighty has bestowed on them.

**Fourth** - Support and defend just causes pertaining to human rights violations and form an international public opinion that supports such causes and helps achieve their legitimate demands.

**Fifth** - Expose those promoting the clash of civilization and end of history theories. Reject their claims that Islam is an enemy of contemporary civilization thereby inculcating Islamophobia in the minds of people, imposing dominance of the world and disseminating a single culture.

**Sixth** - Acquaint ourselves with people of other faiths and their cultures and establish with them common principles that achieve peaceful coexistence and security of human society. Cooperate with each other in spreading ethical values, truth, benevolence and peace, and challenging hegemony, exploitation, injustice, moral deviation, family breakdown and other evils that threaten societies.

**Seventh** - Solve problems and disputes that may occur between Muslims and others in countries and communities, whether as majorities or minorities. Secure an atmosphere suitable for national and social coexistence.

**Eighth** - Achieve understanding with humane



cultures and civilizations as well as urge Muslims to join multi-civilization arrangements of mankind and use this understanding for achieving and protecting world peace.

**Ninth** - Interact and communicate with the followers of Islamic schools of thought in order to achieve the unity of the Muslim Ummah and lessen fanaticism and antagonism.

## 2. METHODOLOGY, RULES, REGULATIONS AND MEANS OF DIALOGUE

The conference has discussed the methodology and rules of dialogue using Qur'anic verses that include dialogue lessons between Prophets and their people that outline the features of the legitimate dialogue and explain its rules and prohibited aspects. The conference also tackled practical application of this methodology in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions and scholars following strictly his guidance. (The Holy Qur'an, 12:108)



## THE CONFERENCE REAFFIRMS:

**First** - To abide by the rules and ethics of dialogue that stress the fact that dialogue should be objective and must be carried out with wisdom and proof, and argument should be with wisdom and beautiful exhortation, without ridiculing the beliefs of other people, an act that is not accepted by Islam nor required by objectivity of dialogue. (The Holy Qur'an, 29:46)

**Second** - Objective dialogue, peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the followers of divine messages do not mean compromising the fundamental principles of religion, negligence in religion or merging religions. It means cooperation for the good of humankind and preservation of its identity and rights, lifting injustice, repelling aggression, solving human problems and securing decent life. These are common principles that are embodied in the heavenly messages and ratified by earthly constitutions and human rights declarations. Thus dialogue is conducted based on the Qur'anic verse 109:6, "To you your religion and to me mine."

## MEANS AND MECHANISMS OF DIALOGUE

The participants recommended the Muslim world give added attention to dialogue, its constitution, means and programs. In fact, they urged the Muslim World League to do the following:

**First** - Form an International Dialogue Commission, which will comprise the major parties concerned with dialogue and develop a united strategy for dialogue, with coordination and cooperation in connection with the concerned parties. The conference also adopted the establishment of a specialized team to be selected by the Muslim World League from the participants of this conference in order to follow up resolutions of the conference and to study the required steps for setting up an International Dialogue Commission and to chart a project for it to be presented to a later meeting to be held by concerned authorities in the Muslim World.

**Second** - Establish the "King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Civilizational Interaction" with a view to disseminating the culture of dialogue, training people and developing their skills according to specific academic foundations.

**Third** - Create the "King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Award for Civilizational Dialogue" to be granted to international personalities and organizations that contribute effectively in promoting dialogue in a manner that helps achieve its desired objectives.

**Fourth** - Conduct conferences, symposia and meetings of research groups on dialogue among followers of revealed messages, civilizations and cultures as well as philosophies to which academic, media personnel and religious leaders representing various international cultures are invited.

The conference expresses its profound gratitude to the numerous Islamic organizations for the efforts they rendered for promotion of dialogue,





and encourages them to further coordinate and cooperate in the promotion of dialogue and its investment in achieving the interests of the Muslim Ummah by adopting the following steps:

- ✿ Practice dialogue within its rules and legitimate objectives in a manner that achieves the higher interests of the Ummah, study all relevant matters of dialogue, abide by the ethics of Islam in dialogue, keep away from ridiculing others, take a position of equal dialogue, partner together with taking pride in the cultural uniqueness of the Muslim Ummah and represent it in dialogue sessions in a manner that suits its civilizational status.
- ✿ Coordinate among various Islamic delegations and unify the Islamic position via the international organization for dialogue in the Muslim World League. Consider it a comprehensive forum for dialogue associations and committees and abide by its strategic vision.
- ✿ Encourage concerned bodies to focus dialogue on common interests and attempt to promote peaceful coexistence, justice, social security and face contemporary challenges.
- ✿ Spread the culture of dialogue in Muslim societies, give attention to the dissemination of the Holy

Qur'an and its translation, warn people against calls for the clash of civilizations and their serious repercussions on world peace and cooperate in this respect with ministries of culture, information and education in Muslim countries.

- ✿ Take advantage of dialogue experiments, seek to promote dialogue programs by fostering further cooperation with respective governments and organizations of Muslim states in their dialogue programs in order to upgrade dialogue of the Muslim Ummah and invest in achieving its objectives.
- ✿ Select a number of specialized scholars with international experience in the various fields and themes of dialogue and adequately train them to positively participate in international dialogue forums.

### 3. WITH WHOM WILL WE ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE?

The conference has thoroughly discussed the past experiments in dialogue among Muslims during the past five decades and looks forward to future dialogue with various followers of divine messages, sects and cultures, and adopted the following:

**First** - To observe openness in dialogue on all attitudes influential in contemporary life, whether political, academic or related to media, and not to confine such matters to religious leaders.

**Second** - To arrange for dialogue to discuss all parties that adopt anti-Islamic attitudes, so as to explain the realities of Islam and to clarify erroneous concepts that cause insults to Islam.

The conference reaffirmed the need for further dialogue in order to achieve understanding and agreement on a formula that prevents the clash of civilizations.

Furthermore, the conference recommends

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the Muslim World League and other Islamic organizations do the following:

**First** - Produce and publish multilingual media materials that refute theories of the clash of civilization and shed light on the future of humankind. Convene an international conference on the “Dangers of the Theories of Clash of Civilization on World Peace and Security” and encourage influential religious, cultural, political and academic personalities to participate.

**Second** - Request countries and international organizations, the first of which is the United Nations, to confront both the culture of hatred among people and the sectarian calls that instigate hatred against others. Such calls will destroy world peace and security, as well as contradict heavenly messages and international conventions, and should therefore be considered a threat to peaceful coexistence.

**Third** - Call on Muslims residing in Muslim minority countries to conduct dialogue that may solve the conflicts arising from time to time.

**Fourth** - Call on Muslims residing in Muslim minority countries to continue dialogue with the citizens of their respective countries and confirm to them their sincere commitment to citizenship, without neglecting their Islamic duties.

**Fifth** - Foster cooperation with governments of Muslim states and the leadership of Islamic organizations to request the United Nations and other international entities to condemn and repudiate insults to Islam, to the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh), to the Holy Qur'an, and to all the prophets and their messages.

## 4. THE BASIS AND THEMES OF DIALOGUE

The conference studied the basis on which serious dialogue is established in reference to common

principles and underlined the importance of the general Islamic principles pertaining to dialogue and coexistence that lead to human contentment. These include the following:

**First** - Believe in the unity of humankind's origin and that people are equal in humanity and dignity. (The Holy Qur'an, 4:1)

**Second** - Reject sectarianism and fanaticism and denounce calls of hegemony based on the Hadith, “O people your Lord is one and your father is one and piety is the only criterion for preference of an Arab over non-Arab or a non-Arab over an Arab or red over black or black over red.”

**Third** - Consider that God has created humans with the natural instinct to love peace, hate evil, accept justice and reject injustice, and that the suffering of humankind is due to its rejection of the guidance of God and the Prophet. (The Holy Qur'an, 20:123-124)

Since Islam recognizes revealed messages, this encourages Muslims to carry out dialogue with the followers of such messages. Muslims believe that the source of heavenly messages revealed by God to his prophets is one.

Muslims are encouraged to hold dialogue with followers of the previous divine messages based on the fact that Islam recognizes the previous divine messages, and because the Muslims believe that the basis of the divine messages that God sent down onto His prophets is one; i.e. invitation to worship Him alone. Muslims do not differentiate between the messengers of God. (The Holy Qur'an, 4:152)

Another encouraging factor of dialogue with the followers of other divine messages is the universality of Islam and its humanitarian laws, which are replete with implications for charity, justice and compassion for all of humanity. God says: “We have not sent thee [Mohammed], but as a Mercy unto all creatures.” (The Holy Qur'an, 22:107)

## TOPICS OF DIALOGUE

The conference reviewed the issue of dialogue and called on Islamic and international institutions engaged in dialogue to give priority to the following topics:

**First** - Protecting values and morality against the promotion of moral degeneration under the guise of unrestrained individual liberty.

**Second** - Studying the phenomena and causes of terrorism, violence, excessiveness and describing others as rejecters of faith, and the means of eradicating them. Establishing international cooperation to encounter these phenomena and refuting the false allegations that label Islam and Muslims as terroristic by nature.

**Third** - Challenging manifestations of injustice, oppression, tyranny and exploitation of the resources of poor nations under the pretext of liberation and guarding human rights.

**Fourth** - Countering manifestations of aggression against the environment so as to avoid the dangers and catastrophes that could affect all of humanity. (The Holy Qur'an, 6:56)

**Fifth** - Addressing the problems of the family and the collapse of the established family system of legal marriage and reproduction.

**Sixth** - Examining media in contemporary life and its tendency to corrupt moral values, instigate dissension and conflict and promote deviation, crime and addiction. Fostering international cooperation to direct media to perform effectively in promoting moral values and ethics.

**Seventh** - Addressing human rights and their violations and developing mechanisms that secure honorable life for humankind.

**Eighth** - Developing solutions for the various challenges that face humankind on the cultural, social, ethical and educational levels.



## THE DECLARATION OF THE CONFERENCE TO PEOPLE, GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

After having reviewed the challenges that face humanity, the conference issued a declaration to all governments, organizations and people irrespective of their religions and cultures, and calls on them to undertake the following:

**First** - Foster understanding between them and us that we believe in God as the creator, worship Him alone and seek the guidance He revealed to His prophets and messengers.

**Second** - Challenge injustice, tyranny, despotism and hegemony, and help each other in ending wars, conflicts and international problems. Work together for promotion of a culture of tolerance and dialogue, and support institutions promoting dialogue. Use dialogue as a means to achieve understanding, cooperation and world peace. Desist from wasting human resources and exploitation of the talents of individuals in the production of weapons of mass destruction that threaten the future of the earth.





**Third** - Cooperate with each other for the promotion of moral values and the building of international ethical arrangements that resist the attack of moral deviation, combat extra-marital relationships and provide solutions for the dangers surrounding the family in a manner that secures the right of all to live within a happy family.

**Fourth** - Work together as inhabitants of earth according to the wish of God who authorized our father Adam and his progeny to reform earth and halt aggression on the right of the coming generation to live in an environment devoid of all types of pollution. Minimize the dangers of environmental damage with common actions that seek to lessen its consequences and guide industrial technological advancement.

**Fifth** - Cooperate with the world community in eliminating corruption and unhappiness, which need to be remedied through the mercy of God, which is the essence of the message sent to the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh). “We sent thee not but as a mercy for all creatures.” (The Holy Qur’an, 21:107)

At the conclusion of the conference, the participants

expressed their profound gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for his patronage of this grand conference and hope that he supports its resolutions and recommendations.

They also appealed to him to extend his kind invitation to those specialized in dialogue from the Muslims and from the followers of revealed messages and man-made philosophies, and to submit to them as soon as possible the Islamic vision of dialogue adopted by this conference. They also agreed on a practical formula for fruitful international dialogue that contributes to a solution to the problems from which mankind is suffering. The monarch was also asked to use his international good offices via the United Nations, its states and organizations according to what he deems appropriate.

The scholars participating in the conference confirmed their stand with him in his efforts for the service of Islam, Muslims and all humankind in a manner that secures cooperation, stability and peace among all world communities, with their different creeds and cultures. The participants also expressed their deep appreciation for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its promotion of dialogue and for its patronage of the conference.

The participants also applauded the sincere efforts exerted by the Muslim World League and its affiliate organizations in introducing and defending Islam and its messenger Mohammed (pbuh).

Finally, the participants reaffirmed the importance of continuing positive participation in the symposiums and meetings that had clear positive impact in promoting the culture of dialogue and in the correction of many erroneous ideas about Islam and Muslims.

May God’s benediction and peace be upon our Prophet Mohammed, his kinsfolk and all his companions.

*Issued in Makkah on 2/6/1429H - 6/6/2008*





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## WORLD CONFERENCE ON DIALOGUE

JUNE 16-18, 2008 | *Madrid, Spain*

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## OPENING REMARKS OF CUSTODIAN OF THE TWO HOLY MOSQUES KING ABDULLAH BIN ABDULAZIZ

*July 16, 2008*

In the Name of God, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate.

Praise be to God Almighty, who revealed in his Holy Book: “O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.”

And peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Mohammed and on all the Prophets and Messengers.

Your Majesty, my friend, Juan Carlos, King of Spain:

Distinguished Friends:

I greet you, and I thank you for responding to our invitation to this dialogue. I appreciate the efforts you are making in the service of humanity. I extend my deep appreciation to my friend, His Majesty King Juan Carlos, and the Kingdom of Spain and its friendly people for welcoming the convening of this conference on their land, a land that has a historic and civilized heritage among the followers of religions, and which has witnessed coexistence between people of differing ethnicities and religions and cultures, and contributed, with other civilizations, to the advancement of humanity.

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Dear Friends:

I came to you from the place dearest to the hearts of all Muslims, the land of the Two Holy Mosques, bearing with me a message from the Islamic world (Ummah), representing its scholars and thinkers who recently met in the confines of the House of God. This message declares that Islam is a religion of moderation and tolerance; a message that calls for constructive dialogue among followers of religions; a message that promises to open a new page for humanity in which – God willing – concord will replace conflict.

Dear Friends:

We all believe in one God, who sent messengers for the good of humanity in this world and the hereafter. His will, praise be to Him, was that people should differ in their faiths. If the Almighty had so desired, all mankind would have shared the same religion. We are meeting today to affirm that the religions that God Almighty desired for the happiness of man should be a means to ensure that happiness.

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.

Mankind is suffering today from a loss of values and conceptual confusion, and is passing through a critical phase which, in spite of all the scientific progress, is witnessing a proliferation of crime, an increase in terrorism, the disintegration of the family, subversion of the minds of the young by drug abuse, and exploitation of the poor by the strong and odious racist tendencies. This is all a consequence of the spiritual void from which people suffer when they forget God, and God causes them to forget themselves. There is no solution for us other than

to agree on a united approach, through dialogue among religions and civilizations.

Dear Friends:

Most of the past dialogues have failed because they have deteriorated into mutual recrimination focusing on and exaggerating differences in a sterile endeavor that exacerbated rather than mitigated tensions, or because they attempted to fuse religions and creeds on the pretext of bringing them closer together. This is likewise a fruitless effort, since the adherents of every religion are deeply convinced in their faith, and will not accept any alternative thereto. 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.

Dear Friends:

Man could be the cause of the destruction of this planet and everything in it. He is also capable of turning it into an oasis of peace and tranquility in which adherents of religions, creeds and philosophies could coexist, and in which people could cooperate with each other in a respectful manner, and address problems through dialogue rather than violence.

Man is also capable – by the grace of God – of vanquishing hatred through love, and bigotry through tolerance, thereby enabling all mankind to enjoy the dignity that the Almighty has bestowed upon all of them.

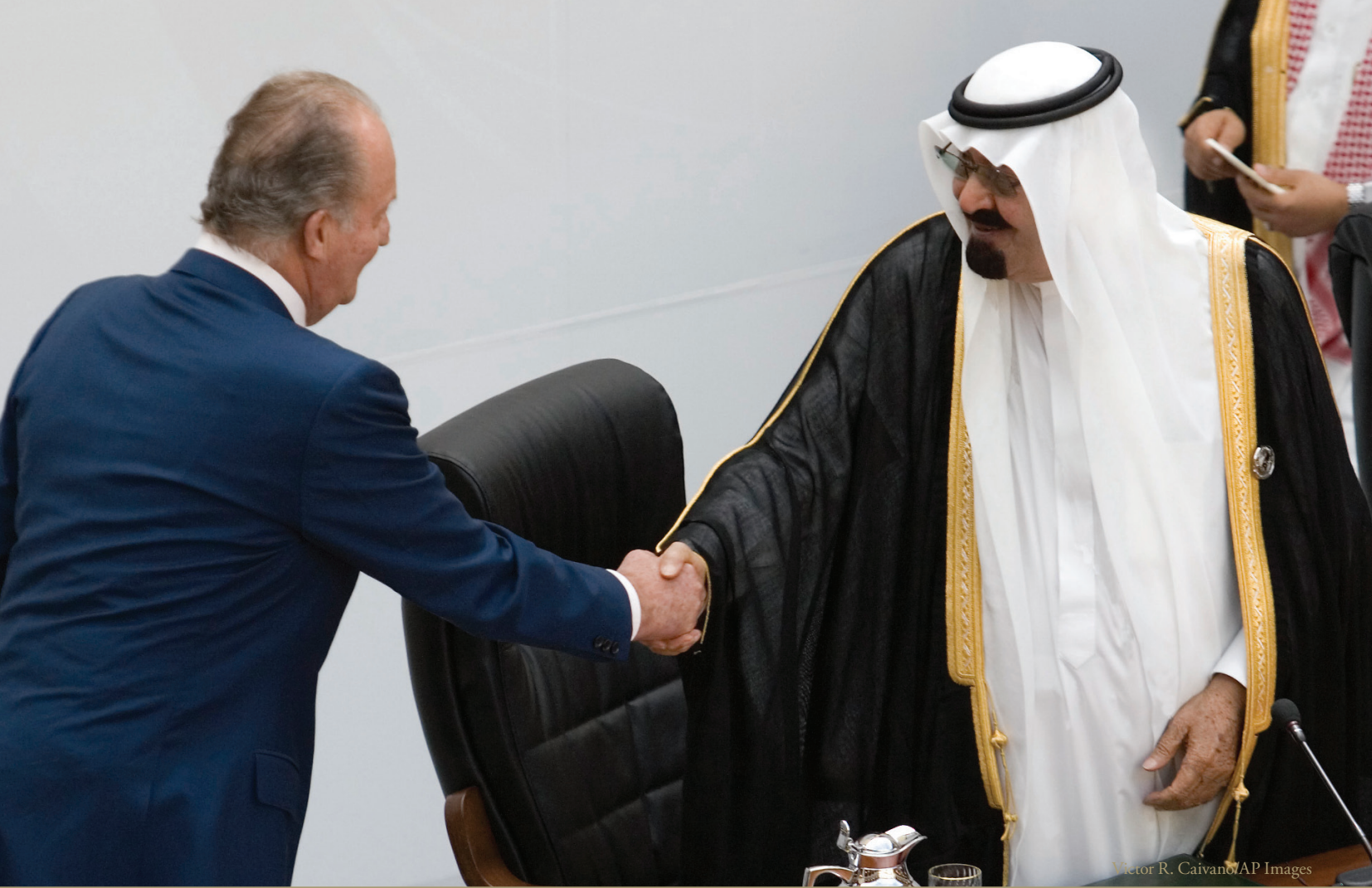
Dear Friends:

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.

Thus, with God we began, and through Him we seek assistance. I offer you my sincere greetings and appreciation.

Thank you and peace be upon you.





## ADDRESS OF HIS MAJESTY KING JUAN CARLOS I THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN

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*July 16, 2008*

Your Majesty,

Just over one year ago I had the great honor and pleasure of welcoming you in your first state visit to Spain.

A visit that we remember as particularly fruitful, in deepening the close and fraternal Spanish-Saudi friendship.

Today I have the pleasure of addressing you in this inaugural ceremony of the World Conference on Dialogue. A conference that, under your patronage

as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and organized by the Muslim World League, will be celebrated during these days in Madrid.

Welcome, Your Majesty, once again to Spain. I extend to Your Majesty my best wishes for a pleasant stay in Madrid, and extend the warmest welcome to all the important people who have arrived from many friendly countries, who have been invited by the organizers to participate here.

We know, Your Majesty, the importance attributed



by you to this conference in Madrid, and we wish all success to those participating in this work.

Spain has a well-known history and tradition as a land enriched by a crossroads of cultures and religions – a country that has built its democracy around tolerance, coexistence and mutual respect.

Our active and permanent support of the peace process in the Middle East, our resolute support of the European-Mediterranean process and multiple bilateral and multilateral initiatives developed by Spain are inscribed in that ancient tradition and renewed vocation.

We have always been in favor of deepening peace, dialogue and cooperation on an international scale. This World Conference on Dialogue has awakened an evident interest.

**“ DIALOGUE...MUST BE DIRECTED TOWARDS FACILITATING A BETTER MUTUAL AWARENESS, UNDERLINING THOSE VALUES THAT WE SHARE, AND PROMOTING COLLABORATION AND RECIPROCAL UNDERSTANDING. ”**

Dialogue, from mutual respect for our respective identities and beliefs, must be directed towards facilitating a better mutual awareness, underlining those values that we share, and promoting collaboration and reciprocal understanding.

Within this framework, interfaith and intercultural dialogue play an important role that gains importance in this era of globalization.



We wish for a better world, a world at peace, a world that is more just, more prosperous and in harmony, a world that allows people, the present generations and those to come, to develop in dignity, harmony and plenitude. A world that puts a definitive end to the unacceptable barbarism of terrorism, that fights hunger, disease and poverty, that respects the rights of man and promotes defense of the environment.

I am confident that the distinguished people and experts attending this conference will know how to provide the best of their reflections in that direction.

I repeat my warmest welcome to Your Majesty, my dear brother, and to all the participants, with my best wishes for the success of this World Conference on Dialogue inaugurated today.

Thank you.



Victor R. Caivano/AP Images

## ADDRESS OF DR. ABDULLAH BIN ABDULMOHSIN AL-TURKI SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE

*July 16, 2008*

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Praise be to Almighty Allah. Blessings and peace be on all Messengers and Prophets of God.

I am glad to extend profound gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for patronizing this conference and for his keen and constant desire to foster meaningful dialogue, due to his astute view of the problems faced by humanity as well as his full conviction about the enormous opportunities

mankind, in spite of its religious and cultural differences, can utilize to improve the lot of human beings at all times and in all places.

I am also glad to extend thanks and appreciation to King Juan Carlos I of Spain and the Spanish government as well as Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero for providing an opportunity to organize this conference in Spain, a country which has witnessed coexistence and cooperation between the followers of different religions and

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civilizations and which has contributed towards human civilization.

I am also glad to welcome this congregation of various religious, intellectual and media figures with the hope of success for this conference.

Mere holding of this gathering can be regarded as a success for the voice of moderation and peace in the world and a positive step on the way to cooperation that serves the entire human community. Whatever the religious, intellectual and cultural differences people have, the noble values of justice, charity and virtue, which are deeply rooted in their natural disposition and are confirmed by the divine messages, shall remain common basis and a comprehensive framework that can produce enlightened ideas and constructive proposals for addressing the common problems of human society.

Dialogue is one of the best means of conveying those values and broadening the range of mutual understanding, as it is based on addressing the natural and intellectual entity that wins hearts and minds.

This conference is being held within the framework of the call made by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for dialogue between various religions, cultural groups and leaders of human thought.

It is an expression of the keen desire of the Saudi leadership for a better coexistence and cooperation among nations, peoples and civilizations of the world, and also a demonstration of its internal and external policies. It is also proof of the fact that the background of its culture and civilization is characterized by openness, flexibility and desire for well-being of all mankind.

The International Islamic Conference for Dialogue, which was held recently in the Holy City of Makkah, is considered a comprehensive Islamic step in response to the call of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. A large number of Islamic

personalities who attended this international conference agreed on fundamentals and mechanisms of a successful dialogue.

The Makkah Conference focused its deliberations on the essential aspects of dialogue, projected its authenticity and laid down the terms and conditions conducive to its success. All these were incorporated in the Makkah Declaration that was issued by the conference, crystallizing the Islamic vision of dialogue.

**“ DIALOGUE IS ONE OF THE BEST MEANS OF CONVEYING THOSE VALUES [JUSTICE, CHARITY AND VIRTUE] AND BROADENING THE RANGE OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, AS IT IS BASED ON ADDRESSING THE NATURAL AND INTELLECTUAL ENTITY THAT WINS HEARTS AND MINDS.”**

The Muslim World League, an international non-governmental organization with an observer status in the UN and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, has always shown a keen interest in the issues of dialogue and the ways and means of backing them up. The Muslim World League has placed these issues within its cultural and media priorities in order to counter the concept of an inevitable clash of civilizations.

One of the most significant goals of dialogue is to discuss the ways and means of confronting the promotion of anarchy, moral degeneration and family disintegration to the extent of countering the natural disposition and ignoring the differences of genders.

The direct meetings between the world's religious, intellectual and philosophical figures provide a good opportunity to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding, correct wrong information and minimize the causes of tension and extreme judgments, attitudes or views.



Islam views the members of the human race as equal, belonging to one and the same origin. Ethnic, color or language differences do not warrant any discrepancy between them as much as dignity and human values are concerned.

Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) said: “O mankind! Your Lord is but one, your father is but one. Let there be no preference of the Arab over the non-Arab or of the non-Arab over the Arab, or of the red over the black, or the black over the red except by piety.”

**“ISLAM VIEWS THE MEMBERS OF THE  
HUMAN RACE AS EQUAL, BELONGING TO  
ONE AND THE SAME ORIGIN.”**

Openness towards others and integration with them are the elements of Islamic civilization. The presence of religious and ethnic minorities in the Muslim world throughout history goes a long way to substantiate this fact. The rights, characteristics, religious heritage and culture of these minorities have always been protected due to the principle of tolerance in Islam and the essence of Islamic Shari’ah, which serves as the basic source of Islamic lifestyle, culture and civilization.

Dialogue is one of the most important mechanisms of interaction with the entire existence on the basis of ‘give and take’. It does not tolerate compulsion or oppression, but guarantees diversity and interaction for the sake of global balance.

In order to transform dialogue from a mere occasion of meetings and discussions to a positive interaction that produces remarkable results ensuring a better reality of life, it is necessary to concentrate on the following:

- ✿ The Circle of Religious Values: Affirmation of faith in one God, most exalted, inspiring charity towards other people and refraining from harming others.
- ✿ The Circle of Human Values: Developing moral values that strengthen the tendency of goodness and curb evil motives.
- ✿ The Circle of Mutual Interests: Concerning matters of interest to people with regard to improving their lives on earth and protecting them against the evil aspects of modern civilization caused by imbalance in some of its aspects.

Lack of mutual understanding between the dialogue parties, poor opinion of each other, and digging into the graves of history, which is replete with painful conflicts, are real obstacles to a meaningful dialogue.

Therefore, dialogue parties must demonstrate impartiality, fairness towards oneself and the other, overlook the distasteful side of history, and demonstrate the sincere intention to reach a common ground that can be beneficial to people and based on solid ground.

We must review the track of dialogue that began decades ago; earmark, develop and augment its positive aspects; set aside and correct its negative sides; and adopt those aspects which are more rightly guided. The setbacks that we encounter now and then as a result of convulsions that contradict the aims and objectives of dialogue and the breach of



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interaction, as well as a low voice of dialogue that we sometimes experience due to one incident or another, also increase its importance.

We welcome the religious, cultural figures and others who share our passion for the well-being of the human family to a fruitful dialogue. A dialogue must have all elements of success – such as earnestness and a sincere desire for cooperation to establish joint programs and projects that could contribute to mankind’s happiness – to solve its most difficult problems. Programs and projects that may reduce the causes of tension between mankind’s various segments and eliminate oppression, aggression and denying peoples the right to free and decent living.

Finally, I hope that this World Conference on Dialogue will not meet the same fate as the other conferences, whose sole and major achievements were confined to presentation of academic research and theoretical studies, but transform this endeavor to working projects that can be useful in practical dialogue and employed for the benefit of mankind. These projects would be adopted and implemented by the conference organizers, especially when it enjoys the special attention and keen interest of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud in mankind’s well-being and happiness.

Therefore, we shall act, God willing, to crystallize these efforts into an ambitious institutional endeavor.

The Muslim World League expresses its thanks to



H.R.H. Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Foreign Minister, for his care and follow-up as well as the cooperation of officials in his Ministry, and also to H.R.H. Prince Saud bin Nayef, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Madrid, for his cooperation and care.

The Muslim World League also expresses thanks to H.E. Minister of Information, Head of the Royal Court, Head of the Royal Protocol, Head of the Special Affairs, Director-General of Saudi Arabian Airlines as well as their officials for their cooperation.

We also express thanks to officials in the government of Spain and to the Director of the Islamic Center in Madrid, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Zaid, as well as the media who followed this august and significant conference.



## THE MADRID DECLARATION WORLD CONFERENCE ON DIALOGUE

*July 18, 2008*

In response to the kind invitation of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Muslim World League organized the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid, Spain, from 16 to 18 July 2008 (13 to 15 Rajab 1429 A. H).

The participants in the conference, which included followers of the world religions coming from different cultures, in addition to researches and intellectuals, expressed their profound gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for his patronage, his presence at the inauguration of the conference and his speech, considered a major document of the conference.

Furthermore, the participants expressed their gratefulness and appreciation to His Majesty Juan Carlos I of Spain for his comprehensive welcoming speech, and to H.E. Mr. Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the Prime Minister of Spain, for his participation in the opening session and for his efforts towards dialogue among cultures and civilizations. The participants also thanked the Spanish government for hosting the conference in Spain, a country rich in historical heritage common to the followers of different religions and which has contributed substantially to the development of human civilization.



The participants also:

- Recalled the objectives of the UN Charter, which calls for making collective efforts aimed at the enhancement of international relations, the creation of a harmonious human community and the promotion of dialogue as an educated way of cooperation;
- Evoked the Document of the UN General Assembly in 1994, which called for tolerance and the spread of the culture of peace, as well as the declarations of 1995 as the Year of Tolerance and of 2001 as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations;
- Acknowledged the Appeal of Makkah issued by the World Islamic Conference on Dialogue, convened by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and organized by the Muslim World League earlier in 2008;
- Built on the agreement among the followers of religious and leading cultures regarding the value of dialogue as the best way to achieve mutual understanding and cooperation in human relations as well as peaceful coexistence among nations.

In light of the above, the participants affirm the following principles:

1. The unity of humankind has existed from the origin of creation; there is equality among human beings, irrespective of their color, ethnicity, race, religion or culture.
2. Human beings suffer from an interior dichotomy between evil inclinations and a love for good and justice. With divine help and the active participation of each person, they can dominate what is evil in them and progress on the path of good.
3. Diversity and differences among peoples is a reality permitted by God and should serve human advancement and prosperity.
4. Religions strive to call forth the obedience of persons



to their Creator as well as to promote happiness, justice, security and peace for humankind. These religions seek to enhance ways of understanding, coexistence and cooperation among people despite their differences. They also call for spreading human moral values, wisdom and respect, and rejecting all forms of extremism and terrorism.

5. Respect for religions, their places of worship, and their symbols should be promoted thereby preventing the derision of what people consider sacred.
6. Respecting human dignity, promoting human rights, fostering peace, honoring agreements and respecting the traditions of peoples as well as their right to security, freedom and self-determination, are the basis for building good relations among all peoples. Achieving this is a major objective of all religions and prominent cultures.
7. Religions, while they call for obedience to the Creator, are aware of their capacity to offer a valid contribution in promoting moral values; fighting against crime, terrorism, corruption and drug addiction; preserving the institution of the family as well as protecting societies from deviant behaviors.
8. Family is considered the basic unit of society and its nucleus, and therefore it must be protected against



any threat of disintegration as it is the cornerstone for a secure and stable society.

9. Dialogue is one of the essentials of life. It is also one of the most important means for people to become acquainted with each other, to foster cooperation and mutual benefit, and to search for truth, contributing, therefore, to the happiness of humankind.
10. The preservation of the environment and its protection from pollution and other dangers are considered among the major objectives for all religions and cultures.

Mindful of the necessity of implementing the abovementioned principles through dialogue, the conference reviewed the process of dialogue and its impediments, indicating the tragedies that afflicted humanity in the 20th century. The conference also noted that terrorism is one of the most serious obstacles to dialogue and peaceful coexistence, and that it is a global phenomenon which must be confronted in a serious, responsible and just way, requiring unified international efforts. This calls for international agreement on defining terrorism, addressing its root causes, and promoting justice, security and stability in the world.

Based on the above, the conference recommends the following:

1. To reject theories that call for the clash of civilizations and cultures and to be aware of the danger of campaigns seeking to create and deepen conflicts, so destabilizing peace and security.
2. To enhance common human moral values, to cooperate in their promotion within societies, and to address the problems that hinder their achievement.
3. To disseminate the culture of mutual respect and understanding through dialogue among peoples by holding conferences and symposia, as well as by developing relevant cultural, educational and media programs.
4. To agree on international guidelines for dialogue among the followers of religions in different cultures through which moral values and ethical principles, which are common elements of religions, are confirmed and supported so as to strengthen stability and achieve prosperity for all humans.

**“...TERRORISM IS ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS OBSTACLES TO DIALOGUE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE... IT IS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON WHICH MUST BE CONFRONTED IN A SERIOUS, RESPONSIBLE AND JUST WAY, REQUIRING UNIFIED INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS.”**

5. To work on a document related to the promotion or respect of religions and their symbols.

To fulfill the abovementioned objectives formulated by this conference, the participants have agreed on adopting the following:

1. Forming a working group to study the problems which hinder dialogue and prevent it from

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realizing its desired objectives. The group would also prepare a study that provides a vision for the solutions to these problems.

2. Promoting cooperation among religious, cultural, educational, and media institutions to deepen and consolidate ethical values, to encourage constructive social practices and to confront immoral behavior, family disintegration and other such degeneration.
3. Organizing interreligious and intercultural meetings, conducting research, executing media programs and using the Internet and other media for the dissemination of the culture of peace, understanding and harmonious coexistence.
4. Promoting the practice of dialogue among religions, civilizations and cultures through educational, cultural and media activities, in particular taking into consideration younger generations.
5. Informing the United Nations General Assembly of the results reached by this conference.

In abiding by the above agreed principles and concepts, the participants emphasized that it is important for this World Conference on Dialogue to continue; consequently, sessions should be held periodically.



The participants extended their profound gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for his initiative and invitation to this World Conference on Dialogue. They also expressed their appreciation to the Muslim World League and other organizations that cooperated in organizing this conference. They encouraged the Muslim World League to continue its efforts in the fields of dialogue and cooperation among nations and peoples, hoping that their common aspirations can be fulfilled.







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**UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL MEETING  
ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE**

NOVEMBER 12-13, 2008 | *New York, New York*

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## OPENING ADDRESS BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH- LEVEL MEETING ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

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*November 12, 2008*

Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level meeting on interfaith dialogue.

Your Majesty, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,

Asalamu alaykum [Peace be upon you].

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Distinguished Heads of State and Government.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you all for coming together for this high-level meeting. Your presence testifies to the importance and urgency of dialogue in today's world.

Saudi Arabia has taken a truly inspiring initiative for global harmony and mutual understanding. I thank the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, for his dynamic role in making this gathering possible.

Excellencies,

We live in a wonderfully diverse global village.

Globalization can be a great force for progress. But as economies merge, as cultural boundaries disappear, as new media bring our societies closer together than ever before, new fault lines can emerge.

And indeed, we are seeing some troubling phenomena.

Communal strife is intensifying. Extremist ideologies are on the rise. Societies are more polarized.

Anti-Semitism remains a scourge. Islamophobia has emerged as a new term for an old and terrible form of prejudice.

And other kinds of faith-based discrimination and racism show a dismaying persistence. Sometimes it seems as if none of history's awful lessons have been learned.

One of the great challenges of our time must now surely be to ensure that our rich cultural diversity makes us more secure – not less.

**“ ONE OF THE GREAT CHALLENGES OF OUR  
TIME MUST NOW SURELY BE TO ENSURE  
THAT OUR RICH CULTURAL DIVERSITY  
MAKES US MORE SECURE – NOT LESS. ”**

Traditionally, peace involves balancing the interests of different States. But we have learned that lasting peace requires more than a competitive equilibrium. For peace to endure, individuals, groups and nations must come to respect and understand each other.

Interfaith initiatives are addressing this need with ever greater frequency and force.

One of the most respected of these initiatives was the World Conference on Dialogue, held in Madrid this past July at the invitation of King Abdullah.

That landmark meeting brought together followers of



the world's religions, eminent scholars, intellectuals and others. The participants affirmed their belief in the fundamental equality of human beings, "irrespective of their colour, ethnicity, race, religion or culture." And they pledged to act within their spheres of influence to foster dialogue and cooperation.

We at the United Nations welcomed the Madrid Conference as a major contribution to our own longstanding efforts to promote tolerance and mutual respect. That work derives from our founding Charter, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the 60th anniversary of which we will mark next month – and from other groundbreaking human rights instruments.

It takes concrete form in the work of initiatives such as the UN Alliance of Civilizations, which was established at the initiative of the Governments of Spain and Turkey.

Over the past two years, the Alliance has been supporting grassroots civil society projects that seek to bridge cultural divides by addressing entrenched stereotypes and polarization among communities. These projects have involved exposing young people to other cultures, and having experts provide opinions and advice on issues that threaten to inflame identity-based conflicts.



The Alliance has also established a group of friends and intends to advance this work further still at the next forum to be hosted by Turkey in April next year.

Many other Member States have put forward initiatives. Iran. Kazakhstan. Pakistan. The Philippines. Russia. And others.

UNESCO has been striving to promote inter-cultural understanding since its very founding.

The Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace is helping governments, civil society and UN agencies to share ideas.

These efforts complement each other and advance the cause. They are showing that there is no corner of the world that cannot benefit from an active, targeted approach to promoting cross-cultural contacts and education. The call to dialogue is striking a chord.

But we cannot be satisfied with declarations of intent and commonality, important as those are. What we need is dialogue that delivers. We need new partnerships that will continue after the last delegate has gone home.

For this to work, we need to involve everyone. Government officials, grassroots groups, CEOs, philanthropists, academics and the media.

And we especially need the world's young people. By virtue of their youth, prejudice may not be as ingrained; in a sense, they may have less to unlearn. They are well placed to approach the unfamiliar – people, customs, ideas – with open minds.

Living together in peace has proved tragically difficult. We must try harder to bring shared values to life.

With knowledge and leadership, we can live up to the best of all our traditions, and ensure human dignity for all.

As we move ahead, let us be guided by the words of the great international civil servant, Ralph Bunche. It was 1949. He was in the midst of the peace efforts for which he won the Nobel Prize for Peace. At a particularly trying moment, he said the following:

**“ WITH KNOWLEDGE AND LEADERSHIP, WE  
CAN LIVE UP TO THE BEST OF ALL OUR  
TRADITIONS, AND ENSURE HUMAN DIGNITY  
FOR ALL. ”**

“I have a deep-seated bias against hate and intolerance. I have a bias against racial and religious bigotry. I have a bias against war and a bias for peace. I have a bias that leads me to believe in the essential goodness of my fellow men; which leads me to believe that no problem of human relations is ever insoluble.”

That is the only bias we can tolerate.

Thank you very much.







## ADDRESS BY CUSTODIAN OF THE TWO HOLY MOSQUES KING ABDULLAH BIN ABDULAZIZ AT THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

*November 12, 2008*

In the name of God, the Merciful, the  
Compassionate,

Your Majesties, Highnesses, Excellencies,

His Excellency the President of the General  
Assembly of the United Nations,

Your Excellency the Secretary-General of the United  
Nations,

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be with you.

In the presence of this gathering of international

leaders and representatives and members of the  
General Assembly – the conscience of the United  
Nations – and in front of the whole world, we  
state with a unified voice that religions through  
which Almighty God sought to bring happiness to  
mankind should not be turned into instruments to  
cause misery. Human beings were created as equals  
and partners on this planet; either they live together  
in peace and harmony, or they will inevitably be  
consumed by the flames of misunderstanding,  
malice and hatred.

Dear Friends:

Throughout history, preoccupation with differences between the followers of religions and cultures has engendered intolerance, causing devastating wars and considerable bloodshed without any sound logical or ideological justification. It is high time for us to learn from the harsh lessons of the past and concur on the ethics and ideals in which we all believe. Matters on which we differ will be decided by our Omniscient Creator on the Day of Judgment. Every tragedy suffered in today's world is ultimately a result of the abandonment of the paramount principle enunciated by all religions and cultures: The roots of all global crises can be found in human denial of the eternal principle of justice.

**“ WE WILL CONTINUE WHAT WE HAVE  
COMMENCED, EXTENDING OUR HAND TO  
ALL THOSE ADVOCATING PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND TOLERANCE. ”**

Terrorism and criminality are the enemies of every religion and every civilization. They would not have appeared except for the absence of the principle of tolerance. The alienation and the sense of loss, which affects the lives of many of our young, leading them to drugs and crime, became widespread due to the dissolution of family bonds that Almighty God intended to be firm and strong.

Our dialogue, conducted in a constructive manner, should, by the grace of God, revive and reinstate these lofty ideals among peoples and nations. No doubt, God willing, this will constitute a glorious

triumph of what is most noble over what is most evil in human beings and will grant mankind hope of a future in which justice, security and a decent life will prevail over injustice, fear and poverty.

Dear Friends:

I wish to thank His Excellency the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting. I am also grateful to my friends, the world's leaders from the East and the West, for attending. I take pride in their friendship and participation. On this occasion permit me to invite the participants in the Madrid Dialogue to elect a committee to represent them and undertake the task of conducting the dialogue in the coming days and years.

I can assure them and all the states of the world, their peoples, their leaders and their organizations, that our concern for the dialogue stems from our Islamic faith and values and our compassion for the human condition in order to overcome its miseries.

We will continue what we have commenced, extending our hand to all those advocating peace, justice and tolerance.

In conclusion, I would like to remind all of you, and myself, of the words of the Holy Qur'an:

“O Mankind! We have created you from a single pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that ye may know each other. Very, the most honored of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you.”

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be with you.





Brandan McDermid/Reuters

## THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ISSUED BY THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

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*November 14, 2008*

The General Assembly,

*Reaffirming* the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,

*Recalling* its resolutions 56/6 of 9 November 2001, on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, 57/6 of 4 November 2002, concerning the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, 57/337 of 3 July 2003, on the prevention of

armed conflict, 58/128 of 19 December 2003, on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation, 59/23 of 11 November 2004, on the promotion of interreligious dialogue, 59/143 of 15 December 2004, on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, 60/167 of 16 December 2005, on human rights and cultural diversity, and 62/157 of 18 December 2007, on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief,



*Recalling* also its resolution 62/90 of 17 December 2007 on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, and the declaration of 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

*Recognizing* that cultural diversity and the pursuit of cultural development by all peoples and nations are a source of mutual enrichment for the cultural life of humankind,

*Taking note* of the various initiatives at the national, regional and international levels to enhancing dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions, cultures and civilizations, which are mutually reinforcing and interrelated, inter alia, the fourth Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Harmony, held in Phnom Penh from 3 to 6 April 2008, the Third Global Inter-Media Dialogue held in Bali, Indonesia, on 7 and 8 May 2008, the Fourth Asia-Europe Meeting Interfaith Dialogue, held in Amsterdam from 3 to 5 June 2008, the World Conference on Dialogue, held in Madrid from 16 to 18 July 2008, the Sixth General Meeting of the World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilizations”, held in Rhodes, Greece, from 9 to 13 October 2008, the Second Alliance of Civilizations Forum, to be held in Istanbul in April 2009, the Special Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development, to be held in Manila from 26 to 28 May 2009, the Fifth Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue, to be held in Australia in 2009, the Parliament of the World’s Religions, to be held in Melbourne, Australia, in December 2009, and the Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, to be held in Astana in 2009, with the participation and technical assistance of the United Nations system,

*Affirming* the importance of sustaining the process of engaging all stakeholders in the interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue within the appropriate initiatives at the various levels,



Juston Lane/epa/Corbis

*Recognizing* the commitment of all religions to peace,

1. *Affirms* that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of the dialogue among civilizations and of the culture of peace;
2. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace;

**“...THAT MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND  
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE CONSTITUTE  
IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS OF THE  
DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS AND  
OF THE CULTURE OF PEACE...”**

3. *Also takes note* of the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on interreligious dialogue in the context of its efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, as well as activities related to a culture of peace, and welcomes its focus on concrete action at the global, regional and subregional levels and its flagship project on the promotion of interfaith dialogue;



4. *Reaffirms* the solemn commitment of all States to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments relating to human rights and international law, the universal nature of these rights and freedoms being beyond question;
5. *Encourages* the promotion of dialogue among the media from all cultures and civilizations, emphasizes that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, and reaffirms that the exercise of this right carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall be only such as are provided by law and necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals;
6. *Encourages* Member States to consider, as and where appropriate, initiatives that identify areas for practical action in all sectors and levels of society for the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, tolerance, understanding and cooperation, inter alia, the ideas suggested during the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace held on 4 and 5 October 2007, including the idea of an enhanced process of dialogue among world religions;
7. *Takes note* of the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the culture of peace, held on 12 and 13 November 2008, during the sixty-third session of the Assembly, in which the President of the Assembly had invited participation at the highest possible level;
8. *Requests* the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, which plays the focal point role on interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational matters, to coordinate with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in facilitating consideration of the possibility of proclaiming a United Nations decade for interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace;
9. *Takes note* of the Third Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace, held on 25 September 2008 in New York;
10. *Invites* the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in consultation with Member States, and through extrabudgetary resources, to play a leading role in the preparations for the celebration of the International Year for Rapprochement of Cultures, in 2010, taking into account General Assembly resolution 61/185 of 20 December 2006 and the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 62/90;
11. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution.



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## ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS OF THE INTERFAITH INITIATIVE

Since the beginning of the Interfaith Dialogue Initiative, there have been a number of events ranging from meetings with officials to student-run programs to gatherings of religious leaders. In addition to participating in and/or sponsoring these activities, Saudi Arabia also signed a memorandum of understanding with UNESCO to set up an international program for promoting a culture of dialogue and peace. Recent events include:

- In October 2009, a Saudi delegation travelled to the United States to participate in a seminar at the Dialogue Institute at Temple University in Philadelphia.
  - The Center for Islamic Contemporary Studies and Dialogue of Civilizations at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh initiated the seminar.
  - Professors and religious scholars in Christianity, Judaism and Islam participated.
  - The seminar showcased the importance of looking to what unites us: profound faith in God and adherence to the universal values enshrined in all faiths, which call for compassion, mercy, peace, honesty and coexistence
- In October 2009, an international conference was held in Geneva under the patronage of Swiss President Hans-Rudolf Merz within the framework of the “Initiative for Interfaith Dialogue.”
  - The two-day event was organized by the Muslim World League (MWL) and brought together representatives from religions and cultures around the world.
  - Saudi Human Rights Commission, Dr. Bandar Al-Eiban addressed the gathering.
  - Dr. Al-Eiban emphasized King Abdullah’s commitment to the dialogue process and stressed that finding common ground is the best way to realize tolerance and cooperation.
- In October 2010, Saudi Arabia’s Ambassador to the United States, Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir, hosted a reception entitled “Religions for Peace to Advance Multi-Religious Cooperation.”



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- The event was attended by religious leaders, including the Nunciature to the U.S. Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Mr. Rashad Hussain, U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ms. Mara Vanderslice, Deputy Director, White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General of Religions for Peace and other Saudi and U.S. government officials.
  - Ambassador Al-Jubeir emphasized that co-existence and understanding are central pillars in Islam and spoke to the misunderstanding of Islam resulting from deviants who pervert the true values of Islam.
- ✿ In October 2010, students from the Yale Divinity and Law Schools and members of the World Christianity Initiative at Yale University traveled to Saudi Arabia.
- The students met with members of the Institute of Diplomatic Studies, an organization that educates Saudis for the diplomatic corps. They discussed early Islam and Saudi-U.S. relations.
  - The students travelled to Saudi Arabia to forge relationships and friendships with Saudis in an effort to bridge any cultural divides.
- ✿ In November 2010, the first “Arab-European Young Leaders Forum” was held in Vienna. This event, involving young Arab and European leaders and professionals, was held to promote responsible leadership, mutual understanding and friendship.
- Before the event it was announced that an international center will be established in Vienna to promote King Abdullah’s interfaith dialogue initiative.
  - The Riyadh-based King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND) participated in the Vienna forum.







THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA  
Washington, DC