



# BANGLADESH

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Statement

By

**H.E. Ms. Ismat Jahan**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative  
of Bangladesh to the United Nations

at the

Plenary of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session  
of the UN General Assembly

on

Agenda item 45: Culture of Peace

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Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,

Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this high-level meeting on culture of peace. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our deep appreciation to The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud for his instrumental role and personal interest in holding this event.

Mr. President,

We are witnessing a growing misunderstanding between faiths, religions and cultures around the world that threatens the prospects of peaceful coexistence. This meeting, therefore, provides a timely and excellent opportunity to share our thoughts and further consolidate the outcome of the Madrid World Conference on Dialogue. We are confident that this initiative will complement the purposes and activities of the UN in the related fields.

Mr. President,

We are living in difficult times. Proliferation of extremism and racism has assumed a disquieting dimension. Mistrust and prejudice of the 'other' continue to persist. Newer manifestations of intolerance towards vulnerable groups, ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, refugees and migrant workers are on the rise. The world is witnessing an ominous trend of derision of religious symbols and beliefs, as well as the misuse of religion in acts of terrorism, violence and coercion. Defamation of religions, religious stereotyping and incitement to religious hatred are disrupting social harmony and triggering violations of human rights.

The challenge today before us is to transform the wealth and diversity of civilizations, cultures, religions, traditions and customs into a unifying force rather than a cause for division. We ought to take lessons from the setbacks of previous inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogues which focused on the differences among the faiths, religions and cultures. They erroneously attempted to fuse them together by touching upon the deeply entrenched values sparking commotion.

Mr. President,

We believe that all faiths and religions convey the same message of peace, justice and human solidarity. Our approach should be to work on these common denominators that unite us and build upon this premise of commonality. Followers of different faiths and religions will have to sit together in fellowship, since in such frank encounters superficial and nominal differences quickly fade away. We believe that dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions holds the best potential to promote mutual understanding and creation of a peaceful world order.

In this context, my delegation associates itself with the Madrid Declaration of the World Conference on Dialogue. This would lend a fresh impetus to the global campaign for inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogues. We deeply value and recognize the contribution of the Madrid World Conference to the international community's series of initiatives seeking to inculcate a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and respect for human rights among various faiths, cultures and civilizations through dialogue.

Therefore, we strongly support and encourage the Muslim World League in its endeavour to realize these lofty and urgent objectives. In fact, the People's Republic of Bangladesh welcomes all international and regional initiatives aimed at promoting cross-cultural and interfaith harmony which are mutually reinforcing. Given the multiplicity of such initiatives, we would like the UN to take a comprehensive approach to streamline them which will find resonance in strength and oneness in objective.

Mr. President,

Culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that rejects violence and prevents conflicts through dialogue among individuals, groups and nations. We believe that a world order that is informed by a culture of peace is conducive to the attainment of our development goals, including the MDGs. We see great value in the principles of tolerance, respect for diversity, democracy, and understanding. These ideals were endorsed by the membership in the Declaration and the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace in 1999. Bangladesh was privileged to steer that process.

As we enter the eighth year of the international decade for a culture of peace and non-violence, it is perhaps the time for reflection and new thinking, and making an assessment of where we stand in terms of our commitment. We have to set targets to ascertain progress towards creating peaceful societies and strive towards that end.

We wish to express our gratitude to all stakeholders who are contributing to the promotion of a culture of peace. We highly appreciate the ongoing works of the UNESCO in the relevant fields as well as that of other involved organizations, both within and outside the UN system. We are particularly thankful to the NGOs and civil society. In this pursuit, the academics and the media also have an important role to play.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh enjoys a commendable track record of religious freedom, harmony and tolerance. Our commitment and contribution to UN peacekeeping remain unrelenting. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, we are actively engaged with peacebuilding responsibilities in strife-torn parts of the world. We believe a culture of peace holds the key to sustainable peace in the post-conflict societies.

Mr. President,

I would like to seize this opportunity to introduce, on behalf of a large number of delegations, the draft resolution on the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001–2010” contained in the document A/63/L.23. So far 111 member states have joined us in cosponsoring this draft resolution. We earnestly hope, as in the past, the draft, this year, would also enjoy consensus of the UN membership.

This year, the draft resolution contains some technical updates vis-à-vis the resolution of the previous year. In addition, we have included two new preambular paragraphs PP 15 and PP 16.

Language, Mr. President, is one of the most powerful instruments for preserving and developing our heritage and identity. We believe that promotion of mother tongues serves not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to develop better awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world. This in turn inspires understanding, tolerance and cross-cultural dialogue, and contributes to fostering a culture of peace. Out of this conviction, we have incorporated the new preambular paragraph PP15 which recalls the proclamation by UNESCO of 21 February as the International Mother Language Day.

We have been co-sponsoring the Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace resolution from its very inception, and have remained associated with all the Declarations so far adopted. We are also a member of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations. We acknowledge their valuable efforts towards the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue at all levels. This has found recognition in the other new preambular paragraph PP16 where we have appreciated the ongoing efforts of the Alliance of Civilizations and the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace in promoting a culture of peace.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, please allow me to repeat our strong support for the abovementioned, much needed initiatives that aim at promoting tolerance, peaceful coexistence and exchange between the world’s nations and civilizations. Even if the challenges ahead are considerable, we believe that Interfaith Dialogue can be a most effective method for bridging gaps and solving problems arising from miscommunication, misrepresentation and defamation. What we need is dialogue that delivers, as the Secretary General has mentioned in this very same chamber, yesterday. If we all join such projects and seriously commit ourselves to our shared responsibilities, we will hopefully be able to ascertain a more harmonious world for future generations.

I thank you, Mr. President.