



**PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**  
**MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Zhang Yesui, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, at the Plenary Meeting of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly under Agenda Item "Culture of Peace"**

*13 November 2008, New York*

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Chinese delegation supports the initiative of President of the General Assembly to hold a high-level plenary discussion under the agenda item "Culture of Peace" in response to the suggestion by His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia. We are convinced that this debate will help further the interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation and enhance the mutual understanding among member states as well as their harmonious coexistence.

Mr. President,

Religious and cultural diversity is an asset of the human society and an important driving force for social development, cultural exchange and world peace. In today's world, more global problems emerge and the challenges such as terrorism, climate change and food, energy and finance crisis pose grave threat to human development. The fates of all countries are more closely interlinked than ever before. At the same time, racial and religious discrimination has led to unprecedented collisions and shocks among cultures and civilizations. The international community is faced with not only the shared responsibility to enhance cooperation in coping with challenges, but also daunting task to minimize differences and seek common grounds. Against this backdrop, it has become all the more important to strengthen interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. President,

China believes that it is necessary to promote equality among different religions and cultures on the basis of mutual respect. While different religions and cultures

originated and developed at different times in history, there is no difference as far as their status is concerned. All religions and cultures are the crystallization of human wisdom and have contributed to the progress and development of human society and as such, they deserve equal respect. Different religions and cultures can in the spirit of openness and sincerity learn from each other's strength and live in peaceful coexistence.

China believes that it is necessary to respect differences in order to peacefully address conflicts. Conflicts are often originated from the alienation, discrimination, fear, even hatred caused by differences. The Chinese government has always opposed extremism and all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance based on religion, race or any other grounds, as well as the attempt to link terrorism to a specific nation, ethnic or religion. We are concerned with the resurgence of extremism, such as Islam phobia, new fascism. We believes that the international community should work towards the long term resolution of regional conflicts, eliminate the estrangement, misunderstanding and dispute among religions and cultures based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, and seek win-win outcome and joint development.

China believes that education is a useful mean to help young people adopt a correct perception of civilization and the world. Young people are the future of the mankind. National government shall take the primary responsibility and introduce long term and effective measures to spread the philosophy of culture of peace, such as tolerance, understanding and respect.

China believes that the media shall voluntarily take the social responsibility to be the messenger of culture of peace and to promote the tolerance, understanding and harmony of the society. Media, as the carrier of information, while seeking speedy and quick dissemination of information to the public, should also pay attention to the quality of information. It is desirable for the media to transmit healthy and truthful information which uphold the moral standard and justice of the society and refrain from disseminating provocative and insulting comment that trigger confrontation among religions and cultures.

Mr. President,

The history of five thousand years of the Chinese civilization shows that religion and culture can be positive factors in a society's harmonious development. China is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. In China, 56 ethnic groups treat each other on equal basis; main religions like Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Christianity and Catholicism coexist harmoniously and grow continuously. The Chinese culture advocates "harmony and accord". From ancient sages like Confucius and Mencius to pioneers of democracy in modern history, the ideas of "harmony", "harmonious but different" and "working together with one accord in time of difficulties" have been among the main elements of their thinking. Throughout the history of its development, the Chinese civilization has been imbued with the spirit of "harmony", which has as its essence mutual recognition,



mutual respect, seeking commonalities while putting aside differences, coexistence and common growth.

Mr. President,

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China has established the principles of freedom of religious belief, equality of all religions and separation of church and state. China respects the freedom of religion, pursues the policy of autonomy in handling religious affairs and has promulgated the "*Regulations on Religious Affairs*", the purpose of which is to maintain religious and social harmony. China's religious community takes an active part in international cooperation and has hosted a number of international forum, such as the "World Buddhist Forum", the "International Forum on Taoism". This year, China Buddhist Association, Taoist Association and Islamic Association took an active part in the "World Conference on Dialogue" co-hosted by the king of Saudi Arabia and the king of Spain. We expect and support this initiative to continue to evolve in a healthy and in-depth way and make greater contributions to the facilitation of interfaith and intercultural understanding.

Mr. President,

China firmly supports and actively participates in the efforts of the international community to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation. In 2007, the Third ASEM Interfaith Dialogue was held in China and adopted the *Nanjing Statement on Interfaith Dialogue*. The Chinese government also participates in a constructive manner in multiple initiatives and mechanisms of the United Nations related to dialogue among civilizations, including the "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations", "Alliance of Civilizations" and the "Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace".

The British philosopher Bertrand Russell said "*Contacts between different civilizations have often in the past proved to be landmark in human progress*". We hope that the relevant initiatives and mechanisms can create synergy by complementing each other so as to form a bridge of communication and cooperation with a view to promoting the common development of human society and helping to build a better, more harmonious world.

Thank you, Mr. President.