

Address by
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Minister for Culture



Plenary meeting of the General Assembly under agenda item 45
“Culture of Peace”

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**Address of the Danish Minister for Culture Ms. Carina Christensen to
the Plenary meeting of the General Assembly under agenda item 45
“Culture of Peace” on 12-13 November, 2008**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for taking the initiative to this important event. Denmark highly appreciates efforts to foster interfaith dialogue. The attendance of an impressive number of highly distinguished participants at today's meeting demonstrates the commitment of many nations to the objectives of our meeting.

The Danish Government puts great emphasis on increasing intercultural dialogue and understanding in order to ensure a dynamic and peaceful development of international relations. Interreligious dialogue is an integral and indispensable part of this effort. The Danish Government therefore supports several interfaith dialogue initiatives, in Denmark as well as abroad. Denmark is actively taking part in the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue process and attended the Asia- Europe meeting in Amsterdam in June this year. The Danish government actively supports various interfaith dialogue initiatives led by the Danish church: This summer we had an interfaith dialogue visit to Denmark by a delegation from Afghanistan, and Danish churches helped organize an Iraqi Reconciliation conference in Denmark in February this year.

Denmark attaches particular importance to promoting dialogue between young people. In today's ever-changing world we need to consider carefully what we convey to future generations. Education is perhaps the single most efficient path to a peaceful handling of cultural and religious diversity.

Education should put a stronger emphasis on commonly shared values such as tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; protection and

promotion of universal human rights, including the rights of religious minorities, adherence to non-violence and the principles of peaceful co-existence.

For this reason Denmark was proud to host the "Copenhagen Conference: Education for dialogue and intercultural understanding" on October 21-22 this year. The Conference was organized and sponsored by an impressive group of international and national organizations committed to the objective of the Conference: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Council of Europe, the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures, the Danish Centre for Culture and Development, and the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

One of the three main themes of the Copenhagen conference was exactly how to combat stereotypes about religions and beliefs in our educational systems. We sincerely hope that the expert recommendations stemming from the conference will serve as an inspiration for practitioners throughout the world as we hope today's meeting will do.

It is important that we, as responsible leaders, promulgate exactly tolerance and mutual understanding to avoid conflict and hatred between peoples just because they have different cultures, different beliefs and look different. If not we, who else?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When it comes to building bridges across cultures and religions, Denmark attaches the highest importance to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as other international human rights conventions. The setting today reminds us that principles such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief should be the basis of all initiatives aimed at promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.