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**Statement by
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Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary General,
Majesties,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am really pleased to commend, today, from this forum, Saudi Arabia's present initiative on inter-religious dialogue, launched under the auspices of H.M. King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al- Saud. For Greece, it is very much a vindication of her own policies in this field, as she was among the very first countries in the West, to open concrete channels of communication and dialogue with the Muslim world, even before World War II.

Such dialogue is maintained at many levels. As a State, Greece keeps numerous and well-established bilateral contacts and is a party to many multilateral fora, within the United Nations system, in the European Union and OSCE, and also in specific activities, such as the Alliance of Civilizations.

However, it is at the level of institutions of faith that Greece and the Greek world enjoy a really privileged position, thanks to the crucial role, in both Ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, played by the ancient Churches of the Greek world. Indeed, although most of them are incorporated under the laws of the lands in which they are established, they are very much at the root of modern Greek culture and civilization.

Such a background was essential for the Greek world to establish a leading position in the dialogue with Islam and Judaism, thanks to the continuous interaction with both, for almost two thousand years, the lack of a colonial baggage in its history and a deep understanding and respect of the mentality of the peoples of the area.

At the same time, we are well aware of our position in the Western world. Democracy is very much Greece's own contribution to European and Western civilization and the later Greek world has been a major contributor to the fashioning of Roman law and Christian ethics. We thus cherish the community of our values, with other societies that have been formed in the same ethical and philosophical matrix.

We also know most these values to be largely common with those of our Muslim and Jewish partners and neighbours. Under this light, the Saudi Initiative on Interfaith Dialogue is most welcome. We look forward to a close and fruitful collaboration, in this context, one to which Greece and Europe will contribute what they have achieved over the years, especially in defining human rights and in incorporating them in their legal systems. And indeed, we hold freedom of religion and worship, together with freedom of thought and expression, to be at the very foundations of our philosophy on life and on the position of Man in the Universe.

Apart from dialogue, however, we need to embark on a large-scale campaign for religious education. We need to inform our peoples about the true message of our respective religions.

We live in a materialistic era, where some are attempting to uproot the eternal and universal values of our societies. This has given the opportunity to certain forces to violently alter the values of Faith and to substitute them with messages of hate and division.

There is, however, no religion, no religious figure, nor any sacred script that preaches hatred among people. On the contrary, the Divine commandment common to all our faiths, is a message of love, solidarity, peaceful coexistence and respect of all the people on Earth. This has to be the message of our dialogue, and it is with this message that our children should be brought up.

18 months ago, in an attempt to build bridges of peace and cooperation in our region, we launched an initiative called "Building the future". We organized, in Greece, a summer camp for children of age 12 to 14, from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel and Greece. 20 children from each of these countries participated.

Boys and girls. Muslims, Jews and Christians, lived together for three weeks. We did not allow anyone to poison them with false messages. We left them by themselves, armed with the religious beliefs they had from their parents, their pure souls and their passion to enjoy life. These children developed a dialogue of their own. Through their games, the traditional dances of their homelands, the artwork which they crafted together and the happiness that showed on their faces.

The outcome of their dialogue could be seen when the time came to bid farewell, and is reflected in the letters sent by their parents.

Our dialogue here is a more difficult one. We have to fight the forces of hatred and division. I am certain that if we all pull together and believe in this common cause, we shall emerge as victors. For world peace, solidarity and mutual understanding. So that we may be able to prove what our respective faiths teach us:

That we all are children of the same God.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.