

**THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
REMARKS BY
HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II
HIGH LEVEL MEETING OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE
NEW YORK
12 NOVEMBER 2008**

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

Prayers and peace be upon our Master Mohammed.

My brother, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz,
Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace, God's mercy and blessings be upon you,

The most appropriate way to begin my speech would be to cite the words of God Almighty:

Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! thy Lord is Best Aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright.
(An-Nahl 16:125)

I would like to convey my deep gratitude and appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz for convening this important international conference with the objective of strengthening dialogue among faiths, cultures and civilisations. This dialogue is conducted on a solid basis. It disavows extremism and isolation. It is pursued in a spirit of tolerance and acceptance of the Other. Its goal is to maximise the common ground among adherents of these religions and civilisations and to advance the mutual recognition of the role of each religion and culture in enriching human civilisation through the ages.

His Majesty King Abdullah began this process by breaking down barriers between religions, first with his landmark meeting with His Holiness the Pope and then by convening the Mecca and Madrid conferences.

The dialogue he launched continues today with the convening of this international conference that brings together the adherents of different faiths in order to forge understanding and tolerance among them.

The respect and appreciation Saudi Arabia enjoys, especially in the Muslim world, enables it to lead this dialogue, and will facilitate its success, at a time when Islam is being subjected to injustice and accusations arising from ignorance about our religion. Islam calls for moderation and tolerance, and eschews extremism, violence and bigotry.

Since many of the participants and observers in this meeting are non-Arabic speakers, please allow me to continue in English.

My friends,

In our time, we are urgently called to the way of peace. Throughout the world, understanding and trust among peoples of different faiths and cultures have been eroded. This is especially apparent among adherents of the three monotheistic faiths – more than half of the global population. Misinformation and stereotypes – created by a few – are increasingly shaping perceptions of the Other ... creating fears, suspicions, and even hatred.

To reverse the tide of resentment and fear, communication is vital. There must be a new and global dialogue among people of different faiths and civilizations. Such a dialogue is essential, to reveal the commonalities that unite humanity. But it does more. It teaches people to respect their differences. It opens eyes and hearts to the beauty of diversity. It helps disentangle fact from fiction. And it exposes the fraudulence of extremist teachings.

In Jordan, we have made inter-faith dialogue and understanding a priority. The Amman Message is an explanation of the true nature of Islam, and a call to peaceful coexistence among all human beings. It has been supported by more than 500 of the world's leading Muslim scholars from all eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence. It has been endorsed by the Organization of Islamic States, representing Muslim countries the world over.

Jordan is proud to continue this work, including support for other global initiatives. One such is "A Common Word", an overture from Muslim scholars to their Christian counterparts, declaring the common ground between Christianity and Islam.

In all this work, we seek to advance a global dialogue, one that can help redirect the course of our future, away from hostilities and towards peace. This Summit shows that support for such dialogue has become a priority at the highest levels. Now, together, we must make it our common task to move the discussion forward: out of the conference rooms; and into the world's homes, schools, offices, and lives.

Your Majesties, Your Excellencies,

It is impossible to talk about interfaith harmony, especially between East and West, without also discussing conflict resolution in the Middle East.

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is the core conflict in our region. It is a political conflict, and it demands a just, negotiated solution ... one that brings statehood and freedom for Palestinians and security and more regional acceptance for Israel. For with every day that justice is denied to Palestinians; with every day that the occupation prevents a positive future; the regional and global impact has grown. Resentment and frustration are felt throughout the region, and indeed, throughout the world. Millions of people, especially young people, question whether the West means

what it says about equality, respect and universal justice. Meanwhile, extremists – Muslim, Christian and Jewish – are thriving on the doubts and divisions.

My friends,

I can think of no more effective way to ease East-West and inter-faith tensions than to end this divisive conflict with a peace based on our deep, shared values: justice; respect for international law; and the right of all people to live in dignity.

As we move forward with tangible solutions to this and other regional conflicts, we must also make tangible strides in communication. That means a sustainable, institutional effort to spread tolerance and acceptance through practical initiatives across the globe.

Youth are vital to success. I hope that from this Summit, we will launch student exchanges and joint university projects, to bring young people together, and show them that what humanity has in common is far greater than what separates us.

I also hope we can encourage leadership from the world's media, large and small. No group is in a better position to get the truth out, on every continent: that people of different faiths can live in peace and harmony ... that when we do, we are more equipped to face the challenges ... that only together, will we realize the prosperous future all of us seek.

Your Majesty King Abdullah,
Dear Friends,

This milestone gathering is not the end, but the beginning, of our journey. Your participation has helped us make a giant step forward on the path to global peace and acceptance. It is now up to all of us to walk the path that takes us to our goal.

Dialogue among civilizations is not a luxury. It is a necessity. Indeed, it is a duty that we must all fulfil, if we are to end the growing tensions that threaten global stability.

Today, everywhere in the world – the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia – people of faith and goodwill are coming together.

I pledge to you all, that Jordan will be by your side, a full partner, in every step of the way. Let us together, dare to shape a new future, a future free from injustice, free from hatred, free from cultural misconceptions.

God bless you, and reward your efforts.

Thank you.