



**UGANDA**

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**STATEMENT BY**

**HE AMBASSADOR FRANCIS K. BUTAGIRA,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 45: CULTURE OF PEACE**

**At the**

**63<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**

*New York, 13 November 2008*

*Please check against delivery*

**Mr President**  
**Your Majesties and Highnesses**  
**Excellencies**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure for me to address you all at this important high-level meeting. I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting. I wish to thank most sincerely the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdelaziz of Saudi Arabia for initiating this meeting and his dedication and contribution in the pursuit of inter faith dialogue and understanding. When I look at God's creation, I marvel at his wonderful architecture. From majestic mountains, valleys, rolling hills, plains, glimmering sand, vibrant rain forests, name it, it is all beautiful scenery. Then I turn my thoughts to the living creatures. I see tall people, short people, people of all shapes, people of all colors and hues. I see a variety of animals and bird species in their different and beautiful colors. Again, I marvel at the wonderful architecture God created. Finally, I recall different cultures, faiths and religious beliefs and values. In short, Mr President, diversity is beautiful and so God decreed.

Who are we then to disrupt this wonderful chemistry God put in place? Those extremists who distort religion for their own purposes and who kill in the name of religion thinking they will go to heaven, they will be disappointed when they find themselves in hell. They have rebelled against God's creation. So we should strive to live at peace with one another, respect different cultures and faiths for no faith is superior to the other. I was enthralled by what His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdelaziz said yesterday and I quote ..."*religions through which the Almighty God sought to bring happiness to mankind should not be turned into instruments to cause misery ...*"

**Mr President**

This meeting is significant as it represents an opportunity for the entire world community, of all faiths, to interact with a view enhancing our collective peaceful coexistence and bonds of friendship. It is also significant because of the preparations underway for the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2010 by the United Nations System. We have witnessed in the recent past a number of commendable initiatives at the international level to promote inter faith dialogue. This meeting is unique because it is an unparalleled opportunity for us all to dialogue as people of different faiths and cultures under the UN umbrella but with a common goal and destiny. It is imperative that we use this 'umbrella' to engage in a very serious dialogue and that is why Uganda gives this initiative its full support. However it is necessary that, in all our endeavors a coordinated effort is made to minimize the duplication of initiatives. We in Uganda consider inter faith dialogue as necessary choice and not an

option. We know that all religions share common denominators. They espouse; equality, peace and tolerance.

We should therefore not spare any effort individually, nationally and at this global level to become more active in countering ignorance by offering positive information on inter faith beliefs. We should dispel negative stereotypes and extremism. Uganda is a multi-religious faith country where people of different faiths live side by side in relative harmony. As a country, we have deliberately encouraged inter faith collaboration and partnership. The experience has been exemplary and has generated consensus among the different faith communities to work together. It has resulted in true friendships and other opportunities to work together in community. We are committed to maintain and sustain the momentum and are willing to share our experience and make a positive contribution to this process.

**Mr President**

This meeting comes at a time of momentous events and changes in the world. It comes one day after the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the first World War, at a time when our focus is on conflict prevention and resolution initiatives. It also comes at a time of re-focus on human dignity, family values and development. Our faith should be a catalyst to bring us together as it has done today to reflect, understand and address these challenges. Together we must do more to address the challenges of poverty, widespread hunger, gender inequality, environmental deterioration and lack of education, health care and clean water. We should deal conclusively on actions to reduce debt and increase aid, trade and technology transfers to the less fortunate.

We should also recognise that the range of human development in the world is vast and uneven, with astounding progress in some areas amidst stagnation and dismal decline in others. As people of faith we should recognise that balance and stability in the world requires the commitment of all nations, rich and poor, and a global development compact to extend the wealth of possibilities to all people. Our religious and moral values should inspire us to address the problems that face humanity. They should be our rallying call to deal with these important issues of our time for peace and cooperation. We must commit resources towards this endeavour.

**Mr President**

This meeting underlines the crucial role faith can play in enhancing peaceful coexistence, peace, harmony and prosperity for us all. It is our duty and must be our pledge. Uganda supports this initiative and it is our commitment to work tirelessly for a peaceful and prosperous world.

I thank You