

**Tentative Programme for the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious
and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace
4-5 October 2007**

Thursday 4 October

- 10.00 – 13.00 hrs - Opening of **the High-level Dialogue** by H.E. Dr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly (Plenary meeting, General Assembly Hall), on the theme *“Interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religious or belief and cultural diversity”*
- Statements by Member States and Observers to the United Nations
(Statement should not be more than 7 minutes)
- 15.00 – 18.00 hrs. - **Hearing with Civil Society, including NGOs and the private sector** (Trusteeship Council Chamber)
- Opening of the Hearing with Civil Society by the President of the 62nd session of the General Assembly, followed by two panel discussions
- Remarks by Mr. Jorge Sampaio, High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations
- **Panel 1: Challenges of Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation Today**
- Floor will be open for interaction with Member States after the panel’s presentations
- **Panel 2: Best Practices and Strategies of Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation Going Forward**
- Floor will be open for interaction with Member States after the panel’s presentations

Friday 5 October 2007

- 10.00 – 13.00 hrs - **Continuation of the High-level Dialogue**
15.00 – 18.00 hrs (Plenary meetings, General Assembly Hall)
- Closing remarks by the President of the 62nd session of the General Assembly
- High-level Dialogue concludes

**List of speakers, respondents, invited guests and moderators at
The Informal Interactive Hearing of the General Assembly on Interreligious
and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace
Thursday 4 October 2007, 15.00 -18.00 hrs**

Panel 1: Challenges of Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation Today

Speakers:

- **Ms. Gulvaira Shermatova**, Director, L'auravetli'an Information & Education, Network of Indigenous Peoples, Russia
- **Prof. Paul Knitter**, Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture, Union Theological Seminary, USA
- **Prof. Gamal I. Serour**, Director, International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research, Al Azhar Centre, Egypt
- **Dr. Sohan Lal Gandhi**, President, Anuvrat Global Organization, India
- **Mr. Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa**, Joint Executive Director, Interfaith Mediation Centre, Nigeria

Respondents:

- **Mr. Manuel Manonelles**, Director, Foundation for a Culture of Peace, Spain
- **Mr. Thalif Deen**, UN Bureau Chief, Inter Press Service International Association, Sri Lanka
- **Prof. Eliseo Mercado**, Chair, National Peace Council, Philippines
- **Rev. Judith Van Osdol**, Continental Coordinator of Women's Ministries, Latin American Council of Churches, Argentina
- **Ms. Katy Sarre**, Chief Executive Officer, INFOGEST, Senegal

Moderator

- **Dr. William Vendley**, Secretary-General, World Conference of Religions for Peace, USA

Panel 2:

Best Practices and Strategies of Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation Going Forward

Speakers:

- **Sr. Gerardette Philips**, Representative, Islamic College for Advanced Studies/Religious of the Sacred Heart
- **Ms. Georgette Bennett**, President and Founder, Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, USA
- **Rev. Carlos Tamez**, Representative, Comunidad Teologica de Honduras, Honduras
- **Ms. Mitra Deliri**, Representative of the Bahá'í International Community and Director of External Affairs Office of the Bahá'ís of Tanzania, Tanzania
- **Mr. Effenus Henderson**, Chief Diversity Officer, Weyerhaeuser Company, USA

Respondents:

- **Prof. Steven Rockefeller**, Co-chair, Earth Charter International, USA
- **Sr. Francisca Ngozi Uti**, Representative, Centre for Women Studies and Intervention, Nigeria
- **Dr. Josef Boehle**, Coordinator, UNESCO Chair in Interfaith Studies, University of Birmingham, UK
- **Mr. Tatsuya Yoshioka**, Director, Peace Boat, Japan
- **Ms. Fatima Ahmed**, Executive Director, Zenab for Women in Development, Sudan

Moderator:

- **H.E. Mr. Abdullah Ahmed Mohamed Al-Murad**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations

Invited Guests:

- **Mr. Qamar-ul- Huda**, Scholar of Islamic Studies and Comparative Religions, Pakistan.
- **Dr. John Taylor**, Representative, International Association for Religious Freedom, Switzerland

Civil Society Task Force members:

Members of the Civil Society Task Force, whose names appear below, may also be called upon to engage in the hearing, as necessary.

- **Mr. Ari Alexander**, Co-Executive Director, Children of Abraham, USA
- **Dr. Kezevino Aram**, Director, Shanti Ashram, India
- **Mr. Erol Avdovic**, UN Correspondent, Deutsche Welle, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Mr. Hiro Sakurai**, UN Representative, Soka Gakkai International, and Former President, Committee of Religious NGOs, Japan

Note: Speakers and respondents have been requested to participate at the Informal Interactive Hearing in their individual capacity.

Concept Note

Informal Interactive Hearing with Civil Society

2007 High-level Dialogue of the General Assembly on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace

Background:

On 25 May 2007, the General Assembly adopted draft resolution A/61/L.60 entitled "High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace". The Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly has convened a 'Task Force' of civil society representatives to help ensure the effective participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in the High-level Dialogue, scheduled to be held on 4 and 5 October 2007.

The great need for *Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace* is a theme that has attracted increased attention amongst governments, UN agencies, religious communities, spiritual movements, civil society and humanists at the beginning of the 21st century.

The effects of globalization processes, international travel and migration, the fast-expanding capacities of communication, tensions amongst diverse ethnic and religious groups, the realities of war, worldwide threats of terrorism, and the grave consequences of global climate change, have all highlighted the urgent need to deepen the cooperation and understanding between cultures, religions, and civilizations. Multi-stakeholder partnerships need to be developed to respond effectively to these global crises, enabling the shared engagement of very diverse constituencies.

The General Assembly Resolution A/61/221 entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace" adopted on 20 December 2006 by all Member States provides a good introduction to the theme of interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace, acknowledging the importance of freedom of religion and belief as well as emphasizing the need for respect for a diversity of religions and cultures.

The United Nations has a long record of defending freedom of religion and belief as a fundamental human right and a foundation for peace and justice. First stated by the global community in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this right was given the force of international law by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In 1981 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

In addition, the many interreligious and intercultural initiatives and activities that religious communities, interreligious organizations, humanists and other civil society organizations have been conducting in an organized manner now for over a century need to be acknowledged and lessons learned from this rich history. While the amount of organized intercultural and interreligious activities has continued to increase through the last century, this has not been able to

significantly diminish or stop violence and discrimination taking place as a result of misuse of religious sentiments and loyalties.

Social, economic, environmental, and territorial issues are often the underlying reasons for conflicts and tensions, which are then aggravated and exploited by extremists manipulating the loyalties and grievances of diverse cultural, ethnic or religious groups. The UN system and its agencies, as well as other multilateral institutions and regional bodies, are addressing now this complex set of challenges and are seeking ways forward, in order to find policies, structures and programmes that can acknowledge and respond to the multiple causes as well as the interdependencies of the current crises we are facing concerning the above outlined issues.

Objectives:

The High-Level Dialogue and its informal Interactive Hearing aim to strengthen efforts of interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation by engaging a variety of actors and constituencies, especially in government, civil society and the United Nations system. These three parties have also been at the core of the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace formed after the 2005 Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace. The High-level Dialogue further seeks to promote a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, advance multi-stakeholder coalitions, including with the private sector on related issues, further strengthen the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, and translate shared values into action in order to achieve sustainable peace in the 21st Century.

These objectives are also built on a diverse series of activities and initiatives undertaken by religious NGOs, interreligious organizations and various UN agencies especially over the last two decades. The most widely publicized UN initiatives include, inter alia, the UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001), the UNFPA *Culture Matters* (2004) and the Report of the *Alliance of Civilizations* (2006). Another notable resource is the *Final Document of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination* of the Madrid Conference (2001).

Similarly, the General Assembly held on 10 and 11 May 2007 an informal Thematic Debate on 'Civilizations and the Challenge for Peace: obstacles and opportunities' to explore the reasons behind the growing level of mistrust between people of different religions and cultures; and to examine how and why cultural and religious differences increasingly fuel, and are used to justify, conflicts.

As a means of stimulating discussion during the Interactive Civil Society Hearing on the afternoon of 4 October 2007 toward the achievement of the above-mentioned objectives, the following guiding questions are offered for consideration:

Questions for the 1st Panel, "Challenges of Interreligious & Intercultural Cooperation Today"

- Who are the 'main actors' of interreligious and intercultural cooperation across all sectors (civil society, government, UN) today? What does it mean to be a 'main actor'?
- What are the current modalities of interreligious and intercultural cooperation? How has it changed markedly from the past since the onset of globalization? How can we characterize regional differences?
- What are the most pressing current issues and greatest barriers to successful interreligious and intercultural cooperation that the 'main actors' face today?
- What are the relations between culture & religion? Is there a widely accepted relation or does it depend on context, historical and local differences?

Questions for the 2nd Panel, "Best Practices & Strategies for Interreligious & Intercultural Cooperation Going Forward"

- What are some examples of successful interreligious and intercultural cooperation today, locally, regionally, globally? What elements/aspects of these examples can be applied to other contexts, regions, faiths, ethical traditions?
- How can the 'main actors' strengthen interreligious and intercultural cooperation in the future (i.e. what modalities, processes and institutional arrangements can be found)?
- How can the interaction between the 'main actors', programmes, and initiatives for interreligious and intercultural cooperation in the UN system context be better coordinated, enabling more cohesion and synergies (for example, as called for in A/RES/61/221)?

Outcomes:

The desired outcomes of the High-Level Dialogue and its informal Interactive Hearing are not only to build upon, but also to develop further the outcomes of key conferences and initiatives mentioned in General Assembly resolution A/61/221 and under the 'Objectives' section of this concept note. While some outcome proposals (see some selected examples below) made at earlier conferences have already been implemented, much work yet remains to widen and strengthen the network of participating actors, to more effectively institutionalize their work with and through the UN, to significantly raise the level of political support and resources committed, and to dramatically increase the number and quality of ground-level implementation projects underway.

For example, following the conclusion of the 2005 Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace held at UN headquarters, the outcome on strategies to enhance interfaith cooperation towards peace was transmitted to the President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly as input to the High Level Plenary Meeting in September 2005. In the search for cohesion, cooperation and further

development, building on past conferences as well as other like minded initiatives, it is helpful to recall some of the then (2005) intended outcomes:

- An expansion and deepening of the relationship between the United Nations and civil society, including religious nongovernmental organizations;
- Practical actions in the fields of education and the media in order to foster understanding, tolerance and cooperation between peoples of different religions and beliefs so as to overcome intolerance and combat stereotypes and misperceptions, with particular reference to the Programme of Action under the Global Agenda for the Dialogue Among Civilizations (2001);
- The formation of an open-ended tripartite group composed of representatives from Member States, the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations to follow these issues through mechanisms already available in the United Nations system but also by identifying new ways to address interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational issues and concerns, including the opportunity and mechanism for religious leaders to speak, interact and respond more clearly and quickly in times of violence, crises and conflict;
- An invitation to the Secretary-General to explore enhancing implementation mechanisms and to follow up on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue Among Civilizations of 2001 adopted by the General Assembly and other initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

Since then (2005) the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and the Alliance of Civilizations have been launched, both building on years of preparatory work and their own distinct origins.

UN agencies have continued to engage with intercultural and interreligious issues, for example UNESCO in its intercultural and interreligious programmes, UNFPA in seeking culturally sensitive approaches and UNICEF in working together with religious communities on a wide range of programmes for children.

The initiatives and organizations mentioned here in the concept note, as well as other like minded organizations working locally, regionally and globally, continue in their efforts to implement their respective strategies and recommendations. Participants in this Interactive Hearing are encouraged to bring in their expertise, ideas and best practices to advance interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation everywhere in the world and to strengthen the outreach to support this cause.

Further and more detailed information on selected major conferences, initiatives and reference documents can be found on the web site of the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace:

<http://www.un.org/ga/president/61/follow-up/hld-interreligious.shtml>

2007 High-level Dialogue of the General Assembly on Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation and Understanding for Peace

On 25 May 2007, the General Assembly adopted draft resolution A/61/L.60 entitled "High-Level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace". The Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly has convened a 'Task Force' of civil society representatives to help ensure the effective participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in the High-level Dialogue, scheduled to be held on 4 and 5 October 2007.

The Task Force will report to the Office of the President of the General Assembly and seek to provide a key link to relevant civil society networks and organizations globally. Task Force representatives will be asked to work with the UN to facilitate the optimal engagement of civil society in the High-level Dialogue, taking into account the constraints of time, budget, and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

I Mission of the Civil Society Task Force:

The Civil Society Task Force will help support the Office of the President of the General Assembly in key decisions relating to civil society's input into the High-level Dialogue, in particular as regards the participation of civil society in the interactive hearing of the General Assembly with civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to be held on the afternoon of 4 October 2007.

II Composition of the Civil Society Task Force:

The members of the Civil Society Task Force represent:

- Networks specialized in interfaith dialogue
- Networks specialized in intercultural dialogue
- The private sector
- The media
- The Committee of Religious NGOs

III Criteria for the selection of Task Force Members

Task Force members were selected following consultation with representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and all relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as the Office of the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. This group sought to ensure that collectively the Task Force members:

- equitably represent stakeholders in all regional groups of the United Nations
- represent various religions and cultures
- are experts and have actively engaged in interreligious and intercultural dialogue

- constitute a gender balanced group
- include a youth / children's perspective

Task Force members were selected on the understanding they can commit to volunteer the appropriate time and effort from June to October 2007.

In addition, Advisers have been asked to support the Task Force, acting as an interface with the broad NGO groupings affiliated to the United Nations that they represent, as well as other relevant civil society constituents that may not be directly represented on the Task Force.

CIVIL SOCIETY TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Alexander, Ari (Mr.)

Co-Executive Director

Children of Abraham

Aram, Kezevino (Dr. /Ms.)

Director

Shanti Ashram

Avdovic, Erol (Mr.)

UN Correspondent

Deutsche Welle

Sakurai, Hiro (Mr.)

Former President

Committee of Religious NGOs

Sarre, Katy (Mrs.)

Chief Executive Officer

INFOGEST

Van Osdol, Judith (Rev.)

Coordinator for the Women and Gender Pastoral

Latin American Council of Churches

ADVISERS:

Bloem, Renate (Ms.)

President

CONGO (Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the United Nations)

Boehle, Josef (Dr.)

Coordinator

UNESCO Chair in Interfaith Studies, University of Birmingham, UK

Kirby, Joan (Sr.)

Chair

NGO/DPI Executive Committee

Vendley, William (Dr.)

Secretary General

Religions for Peace

EX-OFFICIO:

ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

DESA NGO Section

DGACM

DPI

GLOBAL COMPACT

OPGA

UN-NGLS

UNEP

UNESCO

UNFPA

UNICEF



General Assembly

Distr.: Limited
21 May 2007

Original: English

Sixty-first session

Agenda item 44

Culture of peace

Benin, Guinea, Indonesia, Madagascar, Morocco, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, Senegal and Suriname: draft resolution

High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 61/221 of 20 December 2006, entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, in particular its decision to convene in 2007 a high-level dialogue on interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity, in coordination with other similar initiatives in this area,

Acknowledging the developments in mutually reinforcing and mutually inclusive initiatives, such as the progress in the implementation of the plan of action on dialogue among civilizations, the appointment of the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations and other interfaith and intercultural initiatives at the national, regional, interregional and international levels,

1. *Decides* to hold the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace on 4 and 5 October 2007 at the ministerial or highest possible level, and that it shall be organized as follows:

(a) Three plenary meetings, one on the morning of 4 October and two on 5 October 2007;

(b) The overall theme of the High-level Dialogue will be “Interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity”;

2. *Also decides* to hold an informal interactive hearing on the afternoon of 4 October with representatives of civil society, including representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to be chaired by the President of the General Assembly;



3. *Requests* the President of the General Assembly to determine the list of invited participants to the informal interactive hearing and its exact format and organization, in consultation with Member States, taking into account the views of the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, the relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and to prepare an informational note on the organization of work of the informal interactive hearing;

4. *Also requests* the President of the General Assembly to include in his or her closing remarks the highlights of the informal interactive hearing and later to circulate a summary of the discussions of the informal interactive hearing;

5. *Invites* the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in cooperation with the concerned United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other relevant bodies of the United Nations system, to contribute to the preparation of the High-level Dialogue and the informal interactive hearing.



General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 March 2007

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 44

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/61/L.11/Rev.2 and Add.1)]

61/221. Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹ in particular the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,

Recalling its resolutions 56/6 of 9 November 2001, on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, 57/6 of 4 November 2002, concerning the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, 57/337 of 3 July 2003, on the prevention of armed conflict, 58/128 of 19 December 2003, on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation, 59/23 of 11 November 2004, on the promotion of interreligious dialogue, 59/143 of 15 December 2004, on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001–2010, and 59/199 of 20 December 2004, on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance,

Underlining the importance of promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among human beings in all their diversity of religion, belief, culture and language, and recalling that all States have pledged themselves under the Charter to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

Taking note of the adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome² in which the Heads of State and Government acknowledged the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity, reaffirmed the value of the dialogue on interfaith cooperation and committed themselves to advancing human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere, as well as to encouraging and promoting tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation at the local, national, regional and international levels and among different cultures, civilizations and peoples in order to promote international peace and security,

¹ Resolution 217 A (III).

² See resolution 60/1.

Alarmed that serious instances of intolerance and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, including acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by religious intolerance, are on the increase in many parts of the world and threaten the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Emphasizing the need, at all levels of society and among nations, for strengthening freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, respect for diversity of culture and religion or belief, dialogue and understanding, which are important elements for peace, and convinced that the guiding principles of democratic society need to be actively promoted by the international community,

Reaffirming that freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity, and that in ensuring the free flow of ideas by word and image, care should be exercised that all cultures can express themselves and make themselves known,

Affirming the need for all States to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, in an effort to prevent the targeting of different religions and cultures,³ contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes and reduce the potential for animosity, clashes and even violence,

Considering that tolerance for cultural, ethnic, and religious and linguistic diversities, as well as dialogue among and within civilizations, is essential for peace, understanding and friendship among individuals and people of different cultures and nations of the world, while manifestations of cultural prejudice, intolerance and xenophobia towards different cultures and religions may generate hatred and violence among peoples and nations throughout the world,

Recognizing the richness of nomadic civilization and its important contribution to promoting dialogue and interaction among all forms of civilization,

Taking note of the valuable contribution of various initiatives at the national, regional and international levels, such as the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, the Bali Declaration on Building Interfaith Harmony within the International Community,⁴ the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures, Enlightened Moderation, the Informal Meeting of Leaders on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace,⁵ the Islam-Christianity Dialogue, the Moscow World Summit of Religious Leaders and the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, which are all mutually inclusive, reinforcing and interrelated,

Mindful that those initiatives identify areas for practical action in all sectors and levels of society for the promotion of interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue, understanding and cooperation,

Recognizing the commitment of all religions to peace,

³ As recognized also in Security Council resolution 1624 (2005).

⁴ A/60/254, annex.

⁵ See A/60/383.

1. *Affirms* that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of the dialogue among civilizations and of the culture of peace;

2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on interreligious dialogue in the context of its efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, as well as activities related to a culture of peace, and welcomes its focus on concrete action at the global, regional and subregional levels and its flagship project on the promotion of interfaith dialogue;

3. *Recognizes* that respect for religious and cultural diversity in an increasingly globalizing world contributes to international cooperation, promotes enhanced dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations and helps to create an environment conducive to the exchange of human experience;

4. *Also recognizes* that, despite intolerance and conflicts that are creating a divide across countries and regions and constitute a growing threat to peaceful relations among nations, all cultures, religions and civilizations share a common set of universal values and can all contribute to the enrichment of humankind;

5. *Reaffirms* the solemn commitment of all States to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹ and other instruments relating to human rights and international law; the universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question;

6. *Urges* States, in compliance with their international obligations, to take all necessary action to combat incitement to or acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by hatred and intolerance based on culture, religion or belief, which may cause discord and disharmony within and among societies;

7. *Also urges* States to take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life and to make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation, where necessary, in order to prohibit any such discrimination, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or belief;

8. *Reaffirms* that the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute to political and social stability and peace and enrich the cultural diversity and heritage of society as a whole in the States in which such persons live, and urges States to ensure that their political and legal systems reflect the multicultural diversity within their societies and, where necessary, to improve democratic and political institutions, organizations and practices so that they are more fully participatory and avoid the marginalization and exclusion of, and discrimination against, specific sectors of society;

9. *Encourages* Governments to promote, including through education, as well as the development of progressive curricula and textbooks, understanding, tolerance and friendship among human beings in all their diversity of religion, belief, culture and language, which will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance, and to apply a gender perspective while doing so, in order to promote understanding, tolerance, peace and friendly

relations among nations and all racial and religious groups, recognizing that education at all levels is one of the principal means to build a culture of peace;

10. *Recognizes* the contribution of the media to developing a better understanding among all religions, beliefs, cultures and peoples and to facilitating a dialogue among societies, as well as to creating an environment conducive to the exchange of human experience;

11. *Supports* practical initiatives at the regional and national levels by all parties concerned, including the media representatives themselves, to encourage the media to enhance its capacity in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace, development and human dignity;

12. *Encourages* the promotion of dialogue among the media from all cultures and civilizations, emphasizes that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, and reaffirms that the exercise of this right carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals;

13. *Affirms* that the relevant United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, shall endeavour to undertake coordinated measures to promote universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity and to prevent instances of intolerance, discrimination and incitement of hatred against members of any community or adherents of any religion or belief;

14. *Decides* to convene in 2007 a high-level dialogue on interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity, in coordination with other similar initiatives in this area;

15. *Decides also* to consider declaring one of the coming years as the Year of Dialogue among Religions and Cultures;

16. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the systematic and organizational follow-up of all interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational matters within the United Nations system and overall coordination and coherence in its interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue and cooperation efforts, inter alia, through the designation of a focal unit in the Secretariat to handle these matters;

17. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session on the implementation of the present resolution.

*83rd plenary meeting
20 December 2006*



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

12 September 2007

Excellency,

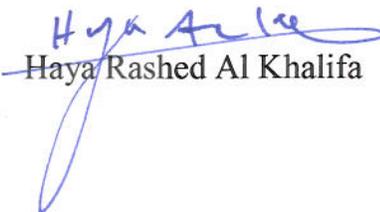
I wish to refer to a letter of the Office of the President of the General Assembly dated 15 August 2007, transmitting a list of proposed speakers, respondents and moderators at the Informal Interactive Hearing of the General Assembly on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, to be held in the afternoon of 4 October 2007 in connection with the High-level Dialogue on 4 and 5 October. In that letter, Member States were kindly requested to consider the list and provide their comments, if any, by Wednesday 29 August 2007.

In this connection, please find enclosed for your information a tentative programme of the High-level Dialogue and the Informal Interactive Hearing with Civil Society, as well as the list of speakers and respondents for the latter.

In order to facilitate discussions at the Informal Interactive Hearing with Civil Society, please find attached a concept paper which I trust will provide useful background information for this event.

Once again, I wish to invite your government to participate at the ministerial or highest possible level, and look forward to your cooperation and active participation.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.


Haya Rashed Al Khalifa

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

13 July 2007

Excellency,

I wish to draw your attention to General Assembly resolution 61/221 of 20 December 2006 entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace” and General Assembly resolution 61/269 of 25 May 2007 entitled “High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace”.

As you may recall, by these two resolutions the General Assembly decided that the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace would be held on 4 and 5 October 2007, with a plenary meeting on the morning of 4 October, and two plenary meetings on 5 October – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The theme for the High-level Dialogue is “Interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity”. Due to the limited time for these meetings, each delegation will be kindly requested to observe the time limit of 7 minutes for each intervention. The list of speakers will be open for inscription with the Secretariat as from Wednesday, 15 August 2007.

The General Assembly further decided to hold an informal interactive hearing with representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector on the afternoon of 4 October, and that it would be chaired by the President of the General Assembly. In this regard, I am pleased to forward to you an information note, outlining the preparation for this informal interactive hearing, as attached herewith. I will also revert to you once the nomination process for the informal interactive hearing is complete.

Given the importance of the subject matter, I would like to extend my invitation to your government to participate actively in the above-mentioned meetings at the ministerial or highest possible level.

I look forward to your continued support and cooperation in this matter.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Haya Rashed Al Khalifa', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Haya Rashed Al Khalifa

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**High-level Dialogue of the General Assembly
on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace
and
Informal Interactive Hearing with Civil Society, including Non-Governmental
Organizations and the Private Sector**

Overview:

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/221 of 20 December 2006, (OP. 14) decided “to convene in 2007 a high-level dialogue on interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity, in coordination with other similar initiatives in this area”.
2. In its resolution 61/269 of 25 May 2007, the General Assembly further decided that the High-level Dialogue would be held on Thursday and Friday, 4 and 5 October 2007 at the ministerial or highest possible level, and that it shall consist of three plenary meetings: one in the morning of Thursday, 4 October and two on Friday, 5 October.
3. The General Assembly also decided to hold in the afternoon of 4 October 2007 an informal interactive hearing with representatives of civil society, including representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to be chaired by the President of the General Assembly.
4. The objective of the informal interactive hearing is to provide an opportunity for Member States to dialogue with experts from civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector representing diverse regions, cultures and perspectives, with a view to strengthening efforts to promote interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation. The highlights of the hearing will be reflected in the closing remarks of the President of the General Assembly on 5 October 2007. The outcome of the informal interactive hearing will be a summary of the President of the General Assembly for circulation to Member States at a later date.
5. The Office of the President of the General Assembly has formed a ‘Task Force’ to help ensure the effective participation and equitable geographic representation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in the interactive hearing. The function of the Task Force is to assist the President of the General Assembly in the organization of the hearing by recommending possible formats and drawing up a list of participants.

Provisional format of the informal interactive hearing:

6. The informal interactive hearing will be held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber and will be opened and presided over by the President of the General Assembly.

7. Following the opening, the hearing will be divided into two consecutive segments on the following tentative topics:

(a) *"Challenges of Interreligious & Intercultural Cooperation Today"*

(b) *"Best Practices & Strategies for Interreligious & Intercultural Cooperation Going Forward"*

Nomination and list of participants:

8. Representatives of civil society organizations, including representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector, wishing to participate in the hearing as a speaker or respondent, must submit a complete Nomination form by Monday, 23 July 2007, in order to be considered.

9. The President of the General Assembly will circulate to Member States by the first week of August the list of invited participants chosen from among the nominated representatives of civil society, including representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Travel arrangement and visa process:

10. Nominees should obtain timely information on the United States visa application process. If a visa is required, it is best to apply two months in advance of the intended date of arrival in the United States.

Funding:

11. While not guaranteed, funding for travel and accommodation may be available for a limited number of participants. Requests for funding can be indicated on the Nomination form. Priority of funding will be given to speakers from developing countries, and on the basis of need, pending the availability of funds.

Contacts:

12. Inquiries should be directed to the Office of the President of the General Assembly:

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