

22 March 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the Interactive Thematic Debate on Fostering Cross-
cultural Understanding for Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies**

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to sincerely thank Mr. Riz Khan, for moderating this interactive debate in such an efficient and successful way.

I am grateful to the distinguished opening speakers and panelists for sharing their valuable ideas and views.

Let me also express my appreciation to the representatives of Member States, Observers, youth, academia and civil society who joined us today.

My thanks for your active engagement and interventions, and for your very useful inputs and ideas.

Some key points emerged today.

We discussed how to build bridges among different cultures and societies.

We considered how to promote dialogue and understanding to effectively address the current tensions and challenges that we face.

I was pleased that participants shared their very useful examples, lessons and approaches, from the international, regional and national levels.

Some participants underlined the need to tackle the fear of identity in a globalized world.

Respect for, and recognition of traditions are important in this regard.

It was emphasised that we need to collaborate based on values. Universal and common values.

Some participants mentioned the particularly important shared value of human dignity. Others emphasised the need for more equitable provision of basic services.

Participants alluded to the need to tackle injustice and the lack of representation at the global level.

It was also noted that all nations have contributed to our common heritage and history.

The role of media was explored.

As we have seen in many instances, the media, and in particular social media, is a critical tool that can be used in different ways.

It can promote cross-cultural interaction and dialogue, or it can be used to increase tensions among different faiths, ethnic groups or societies.

I would particularly underline the role of social media as a catalyst in the recent uprisings for justice, equality and basic rights, in particular in the Arab world.

We listened to prominent professors who spoke of the role of educational institutions, where, in our globalized world, students with many different backgrounds share the same classrooms and, often, build shared understandings.

As I mentioned this morning, we cannot overstate the interlinkage between cultural diversity and mediation.

Indeed, dialogue and mediation can help prevent and resolve conflicts and tensions, which in turn, will pave the way for more peaceful societies.

This is an area that should be further explored.

Some among you today emphasized that immigrants, particularly young immigrants, should be integrated to the political and economic spheres of the countries in which they live.

Youth was one of the main pillars of our discussion today.

I am happy that our young participants spoke out for a better world, and brought to the UN their personal experiences.

Participants also underlined that governments need to invest in, and communicate more with with youth.

We should benefit from the energy and creativity of the youth and their organizations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We took serious note of all of the points raised today.

And we will follow-up.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations will prepare a summary of this informal discussion.

This summary will be made available to Member States and other participants.

I hope that the ideas, views and suggestions raised today will trigger a re-thinking about the challenges before us, and how we can better equip ourselves to more effectively tackle them.

The Alliance has played a significant role since its inception.

Change and evolution are a natural part of life, so there is always room for boosting the Alliance.

By strengthening this important office, we can ensure it is fully prepared for the rapid and dynamic changes of today's world.

Let me thank you all once again for your interest and your active contributions.

The informal Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on Fostering Cross-cultural Understanding for Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies is now concluded.

The meeting is adjourned.