



**REMARKS OF H.E. MR. NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER
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**AT THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH LEVEL MEETING
“PROMOTING TOLERANCE AND RECONCILIATION:
FOSTERING PEACEFUL, INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES
AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

New York, 21 April 2015

**Your Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly,
Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations
Excellencies,
Distinguished faith leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a distinct honor for me to be here with you today.

**I want to begin by thanking you for traveling all this distance so we can
join hands for the exciting two working days ahead of us.**

**Mr. Secretary-General; thank you for believing in the United Nations
Alliance of Civilizations and supporting the convening of this very special
meeting.**

**I was very glad with your announcement of this High Level Meeting when
you addressed the Summit on Countering Violent Extremism at the White House
this past January.**

**I would also like to thank the President of the General Assembly who
showed interest in galvanizing this proposal and for putting his team behind it
and working closely with my team.**

Our meeting brings, political and religious leaders, from across the globe. They are here to speak with one voice and say: NO to what divides us and YES to what unites us.

Tolerance and Reconciliation are such two noble human values. They are values inherent in all major faiths. Sadly, for the past few years, we have been witnessing un-imaginable acts of violence, terrorism and human atrocities committed in the name of religion

Such heinous acts brought many regions of our world to a boiling point, fueling the burning furnace of xenophobia, radicalization and discrimination.

A persistent question echoed across the globe: what can be done to stop the scourge of this vortex?

Today, the United Nations is writing history. This meeting is a step in the right direction.

For the first time ever, the Secretary General, the President of the General Assembly and the High Representative of a UN specialized Agency are co-organizing and convening together a High Level UN meeting, to address unique, new and emerging threats to International Peace and Security.

The reason we are here, above all else, is to hear from you, political and religious leaders, on how we can counter the increasing, intolerance, violent extremism, terrorism and relapsing of whole societies in the black hole of cultural and ethnic tensions.

Second, to demonstrate the true meaning of understanding and respecting others' faiths and beliefs.

And finally, how key values such as tolerance, reconciliation and mutual understanding can be translated into meaningful and mutually beneficial actions that eventually, all of you will carry to your communities.

Here at the United Nations, we achieved, among other outcomes, an important universal document; the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism strategy. The Alliance is focusing, in particular, on its first Pillar that we call it: Pillar (1), which focuses on the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

We know from our experience — from both the successes and the failures — that regardless of how much we improve our security, terrorism will not go away until we address the conditions conducive to its emergence and growth.

At the same time, world leaders will adopt, this September, the new 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The mission of the Alliance is indeed similar to Sustainable Development Goal 16, on the need for securing peaceful and inclusive societies.

Therefore, it is not a coincidence that we specifically chose such a diverse gathering of individuals to come together for this event, in order to persuade you and your communities that the only way to achieve, the human advancement and sustainable development we want, is to secure an environment that enjoys peace, stability and protects human rights.

But to do so effectively, we need to work together with you across sectors and across faiths.

Governments and Member States alongside religious leaders alongside civil society and community leaders.

Muslims alongside Christians and Jews, alongside Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and all other faiths, all working hand in hand as responsible leaders to encourage our people to do the same.

This is not a meeting that ends with lengthy documents. It is a meeting that ends by your future actions, when you leave back home and persuade your communities with the inevitability of co-existence and the future we all want.

You will be our agents and messengers of peace, so please do so.

Irrespective of how atrocious and wickedly cruel I find the actions of radical groups, condemning them here in this meeting will not end the source of the problem unless we create the necessary counter narratives to respond, effectively, to their evil.

Without our global preventive actions, they will still be able to recruit more young people and grow further.

Without our collective efforts, global issues like migration, media and education, will be misused and possessed with the same evil that threatens our existence.

There are much to do with the social media, to combat the viral messages of insult, hate, incitement to hatred and recruitment of new terrorists.

Our leaders need to show more responsibility in order to effectively respond to these new kinds of threats. Good governance is not luxury any more; it has become a necessary requirement to ensure our global safety and security in our planet that became a Global Village.

There are much we need to do with our social environments of marginalization, economic austerity and lack of equal opportunities in which we find our selves ashamed of social injustices that doesn't fit the 21st century.

Much of what the UN does, and indeed much of what we are trying to address through the new Sustainable Development Goals, that will guide all of us through 2030, attempt to address these imbalances.

But, again, let me be clear: we cannot make progress on any of these targets without your partnerships, as Member States, faith leaders, intellectuals, civil society, and others. Everyone has a role to play.

Moreover, to deliver on its mandate, the UN especially needs the support of the women and men who lead our faith communities.

They exist among the seven billion people in this world and identify themselves as peers of their religious communities.

We need their help to advance and give meaning to the global conversation and protection of human rights.

All of the world's major religions bear shared commitments to building peace and emphasizing the oneness of humanity, to standing on the side of the marginalized, and to working to resolve conflicts.

Therefore, religious mediation compliments and supports preventive diplomacy. This is the true purpose of religion.

Tomorrow, this organization would want to listen to voices, opinions, guidance and recommendations of those peers of faiths and religions.

We equally need the responsible leadership of our heads of state and government more than ever before, to make progress on development and find durable solutions to our various crises.

From water access to universal education to prolonged International and Regional Conflicts and fighting communicable diseases.

These are huge responsibilities, therefore no nation can succeed alone in these tasks; success in these areas requires sincere global action.

But, as I say all this, I also feel compelled to state that there are areas in which we need to significantly change our approach; one that is often on my mind is the space and opportunities we give to young people.

In many parts of the world, around 70% of our population is under the age of 30. Yet, if you were to look at the role young people have in decision making, you would notice their notable absence.

Indeed, many young people who are politically active and frustrated with the few avenues available to them to create meaningful change, struggle with a persistent feeling of dis-empowerment. This is understandable.

More troublingly, this feeling is precisely what allows extremist organizations to prey on them.

We must take this chance away from the extremists, if we are serious about our goals.

With the challenges that are now in front of us, it is my firm conviction that the greatest gift we can give to our next generation is to leave them with a different set of stories, different perceptions and narratives.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is part of that change with its focus, not only on Youth, but also on media, migration and education as crucial components of its work.

In this regard, I would like to highlight 4 specific observations.

First, we must build trust. Trust at state level and at community level.

Words like “dialogue”, “reconciliation”, and “empowerment” mean little if not supported by concrete actions that address the, often valid, grievances young people have.

Second, we need human-centered approaches that show sensitivity and seriousness to taking a shared journey with our partners on the ground.

If we don't take into account our shared and differentiated responsibilities, we would be distant from the real world we are living in.

And, if we look at our cultural diversity as a problem, we better change this mis-conception because planet earth is our universal address and we will always have to learn how to share it, all together.

Third, we need to honestly and consciously work toward overcoming our own short-comings.

What I mean when I say this is that; in doing the work of countering violent extremism, we need to take into account that our preventive action should not be limited to only reforming the UN as a body.

Our actions should also entail reforming the way we responsibly execute our actions in accordance with International Law.

Preventive action should include the empowerment and reform of the relevant existing instruments needed by the International Community, to respond to, and cope with, the new and emerging ideological threats, for the sake of our collective security and Human Rights for all.

Finally, our focus must always be on measurable behavioral shifts. For instance, if we are trying to eradicate the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, we can choose to condemn the practice, issue statements or fatwas against this dynamic.

But we must at the same time ask ourselves if our actions are working and leading to concrete results. If not, then we must boldly go back to the drawing board and try new approaches, based again on listening to those whom we are trying to influence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Manifestations of religious based intolerance and violence are increasing across the globe. Such unjustifiable acts have culminated into targeted killings against innocent people from different faiths, spreading stereotyping, xenophobia and racism.

Such unjustified prejudices would only play into the hands of terrorists and threaten our global stability, international peace and security as well as human rights and development. Moreover, these acts violate the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and International Law.

The scourge we are all facing as a Global human family runs contrary to the values of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which embraces as its

core mission the promotion of cultural diversity, religious tolerance, and inclusiveness.

UNAOC has consistently amplified these values that are best promoted through, peaceful and meaningful dialogue in accordance with universally accepted norms and shared values.

Peace, stability, intercultural harmony and Sustainable Development are closely inter-linked and mutually re-inforcing; they are key factors to accomplishing an environment conducive to prosperity and Human Rights.

Therefore, we need to protect our future and our generations from the forces that fuel tensions, hatred and violence.

The United Nations, since its inception was given the sacred task of addressing threats to international peace and security.

The existing United Nations resolutions, including the resolutions of the General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council, as well as other UN and regional instruments, provide the international community with legal and moral tools to prevent and combat the roots of hatred and intolerance.

These viable norms must always be at the core of our global discussions.

Sadly and despite the efforts made, certain ideological mindsets continue to project their uncivilized face in our world. Yet, these vicious forces should not hamper our efforts nor deter our political will to prevent and combat the new and emerging threats in all their forms.

These collective efforts should become priority to the international community for the sake of our Global Human Sustainable Development.

In closing, I hope that I have said enough to help frame our conversation over the next two days. For my part, I count on engaging with each one of you on the floor and on margins of this meeting

My conviction remains strong that, with sincere intentions and persistent focus, we can succeed in overcoming our major differences.

I thank you.

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