

World Interfaith Harmony Week

LETTER OF SUPPORT

by Dr. Halit Eren, Director General, Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul, Turkey

Interfaith harmony is a vital condition for universal peace. Proclamation of the World Interfaith Harmony Week by the UN, to be observed on the first week of February of every year, is an auspicious step in global context which will help engender awareness and participation of peoples of the world in building a culture of tolerance, understanding and harmony between faiths, beliefs, cultures and civilizations. In my capacity as the head of an 57-member intergovernmental research institution, subsidiary of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and member of the Group of Friends of the UN Alliance of Civilisations, I would like to pay tribute and express heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty King Abdullah II for the seminal and timely initiative of Their proposal which met unanimous approval of world community. The initiative is regardful of one of the main challenges facing humankind in the present time and promises to bring substantial progress towards the diverse faiths and cultures recognizing each other. Differentiation and discrimination based on faith and cultural affiliation have throughout history often been the cause of dissents and conflicts and unfortunately continue to be so in different parts of the world. This is certainly not in conformity with the environment of mutual recognition that the present climate of interactions and interdependencies of peoples would suggest and require. The initiative of the World Interfaith Harmony Week carries in itself an invitation to leaders and adherents of the different faiths to begin regarding their diversities from a refreshed perspective. This new approach coupled with earlier and concomitant parallel calls and efforts can ultimately lead to acknowledgement of diversities as a positive factor that enriches universal peace, progress and happiness.

On this occasion I would like to underscore IRCICA's continuous engagement in the same direction as derived from its mission as the culture and civilization research centre of the OIC. In this capacity, for the last thirty years IRCICA has coordinated research on the history, the cultures and the interactions of peoples in different regions of the world, past and present. Through programs of studies and safeguarding of arts and sciences, architecture and cultural heritage in various parts of the world, IRCICA brought together professionals and students from different communities to work together for common purposes. This gave tangible results in promoting intercultural awareness and raising consciousness among the hundreds of participants in each program about cultural heritage as part of world heritage. IRCICA will continue its activities in this direction with all the honour and pride it derives from endeavoring to contribute to Interfaith Harmony.

I believe the World Interfaith Harmony Week will establish itself as a global tradition that is reinforced year by year. With wishes of success,

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