



بعثة المراقبة الدائمة لمنظمة التعاون الإسلامي لدى الأمم المتحدة

THE TEXT OF THE MESSAGE OF HIS EXCELLENCY PROF. EKMELEDDIN  
IHSANOGLU SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC  
COOPERATION TO THE SPECIAL PANEL EVENT HOSTED ON MONDAY, 6<sup>TH</sup> OF  
FEBRUARY 2012 BY THE OIC PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION AT THE UNITED  
NATIONS HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK

“Excellencies, Distinguished Panelists, Distinguished Permanent Representatives, Participants from the Permanent Missions, UN Secretariat and institutions, Civil Society Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the occasion of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, I wish to convey my greetings to all who have contributed to the consensual adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution 65/5 proclaiming the first week of February each year as the World Interfaith Harmony Week. I would particularly like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for the initiative that he took to organize a major special event to be held at the General Assembly tomorrow under the title of “Common Ground for the Common Good” to mark the concluding day of the World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Promoting interfaith harmony is an important priority for the OIC. The OIC took the lead in pioneering Dialogue Among Civilizations at the United Nations as early as 1998 in order to promote intercultural and inter-civilizational understanding and mutual respect for diversity. Therefore, the UN General Assembly Resolution 65/5 falls in line with the OIC policies which aim at promoting a culture of harmony among peoples of diverse religious faiths, civilizations and cultural backgrounds. Taking this opportunity, I wish to express once more my warm felicitations and congratulations to His Majesty, King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for his vision and wisdom in initiating the proposal of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. My thanks also go to the sponsors of the resolution.

The resolution 65/5 complements other prominent initiatives including the initiative for interfaith dialogue by His Majesty Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia which after the major events held in Makkah, Madrid and at the UN General Assembly in New York in 2008, led eventually to the establishment of the King Abdullah Interfaith Dialogue Center in Vienna, as a result of commendable commitment on the part of the Governments of Saudi Arabia, Austria, and Spain. The Alliance of Civilizations initiative developed by Turkey and Spain and other intercivilizational and interreligious efforts certainly deserve utmost recognition and praise.

After the adoption of the resolution 65/5, I had called on the OIC Member States and the members of the international community to observe the World Interfaith Harmony Week every year in a befitting manner so as to help engender a culture of tolerance and understanding among diverse faiths and civilizations. I am happy to observe that both in 2011 and 2012 the Week provided inspiration to hundreds of gatherings and programs around the world. It is significant that most of these events were held at the local, grassroots level.

I believe that the observance of the World Interfaith Harmony Week will serve to the common efforts for peoples of all faiths and beliefs to coexist in peace, harmony and goodwill by providing impetus for joint action in different areas.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The call for a worldwide interfaith harmony gains more importance when we find ourselves confronted by radical and extremist elements who are active in pursuing an agenda of religious intolerance and hatred. In this regard, I am particularly gratified that the OIC's leadership paved the way in 2011 for the consensual adoption of two important resolutions by the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly under the identical title of "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion and belief". I am encouraged and heartened by the recognition and support that our initiative has received especially from the interfaith dialogue partners, including the prominent institutions represented in today's panel event. The Resolutions 16/18 and 66/167 provide a good basis for concerted action and implementation by states, at both the national and the international levels. The support of the partners of the interfaith dialogue would naturally be essential for a result-oriented action in fighting all sorts of religious intolerance, including Islamophobia, Christianophobia and Anti-Semitism.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly happy that the Permanent Observer Mission of the OIC to the United Nations in New York is organizing for the second year in a row a Special Panel Discussion under the theme of "The Role of Faith based Organizations and Interfaith Initiatives in Reconciliation and Peace Making" on the occasion of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Interfaith and faith based initiatives at community, national and international level have the potential of making positive contribution to reconciliation, mediation and peace making efforts in both first and second tracts, and I am confident that these sort of panel events will be instrumental in raising awareness on the past and ongoing efforts but also in evoking the immense potentials by helping forge new partnerships. The OIC General Secretariat recognizes and appreciates the courageous and noble contributions of all peacemakers around the world and offers its experiences and its moral and cultural authority and affinity vis-a-vis Muslim communities as an asset to be benefitted from by the peacemakers. The OIC General Secretariat itself will continue its mediation, reconciliation and peacemaking efforts in full partnership with the OIC member states, UN institutions, international and regional organizations and prominent peace institutes including the ones represented by the panelists of today's event.

I am confident that the distinguished panelists will provide a new vision and understanding to the distinguished participants on the importance of religious peace making as a concept and tool in the service of peace."

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu  
Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation