

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Your Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, Representative of His Majesty the King

Your Royal Highnesses, Your Beatitude, Your Grace, Excellencies, and Honored Guests,

May the Peace, Mercy and Blessings of Allah be upon you,

Please allow me to welcome you all on this blessed occasion; the inaugural prize-giving ceremony of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. We are very happy that representatives of the winning events are with us today and we bid them welcome in a manner that befits the tremendous work they have done and their impressive contributions to this week which celebrates all of humanity without exception.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week initiative proposed by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in late 2010, has become a reality today and the goal of this noble humanitarian initiative is to spread peace and harmony among all people and to promote mutual respect between the adherents of the world's different religions and beliefs. The World Interfaith Harmony week is only one of many efforts and initiatives that His Majesty King Abdullah II has lead in the fields of intrafaith and interfaith dialogue. These efforts also include the historic *Amman Message* of in 2004 and the *A Common Word* initiative of 2007.

Your Royal Highness, Representative of His Majesty the King,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year has witnessed many impressive events celebrating the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Countries, organizations and even individuals have launched events and activities to celebrate this initiative. There were approximately 400 events held all around the world; 64 of which applied for the WIHW Prize. It is our fervent hope that these numbers will continue to grow in the coming years.

Appreciation and gratitude goes to the three winners of the prize for their sincere efforts and their humanitarian work. Others who contributed to this week are also appreciated, even if their efforts were limited to conducting lectures or seminars; all the efforts were collaborative in nature and had the same aim: to promote interfaith harmony around the world.

Allah the Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: "It is He Who made you vicegerents on Earth" (*Fatir*, 35:39). Being a vicegerent requires human beings to build the earth through good deeds and mutual love, far away from killing, strife, violence and the rejection of the other. Accordingly, one of the greatest commandments of both Islam and Christianity is "love of God and love of Neighbor," this is what this initiative is built upon.

I welcome you once again, Your Highnesses, the winning parties, and the audience, and I pray that Allah the Almighty will crown these blessed efforts with the spread of the spirit of harmony and tolerance among all human beings, no matter how different in religion or belief they are.

May the Peace, Mercy and Blessings of Allah be upon you all.

*Wassalamu alaykom wa rahmatu Allah*