

## ”THE MAKKAH DECLARATION“AT THE CLOSE OF THE WORLD ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ON DIALOGUE

The World Islamic Conference on Dialogue was concluded on Friday, the second of Jumadah al-Akhirah, 1429 AH (June 6<sup>th</sup> 2008) in the Holy City of Makkah, by announcing its communiqué, containing a declaration entitled “Makkah’s Call” which serves as a synopsis of the outcome of all the discussions and seminars that took place among the guests, as well as the papers that were presented at the conference. The document contains opening speeches at the onset of the conference, including that of His Highness, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, the speech of the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and the speech of President Hashemi Rafsanjani. King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz’s speech was therefore considered an important and essential document of the conference. Participants in the communiqué said: “This conference comes at a time when the world is facing many challenges threatening the future of humanity. These challenges warn of more moral, social and environmental disasters threatening the world as a whole. This is the entire outcome that is expected when humanity strays from the Path and Guidance of the Creator.”

The conference made it clear that Islam has effective solutions to those crises and that the Muslim Nation is invited, with its entire cultural and indispensable legacy, to contribute its share alongside others, to these challenges: {Now hath come unto you light from Allah and a plain Scripture. Where-by Allah guideth him who seeketh His good pleasure unto paths of peace. He bringeth them out of darkness unto light by His decree, and guideth them unto a straight path} [The Holy Qur’an: 5].

Other cultures also possess visions regarding those challenges currently afflicting the world in its entirety; other cultures, with all the human experience they have amassed, share in common with Muslims the efforts of coming up with effective solutions to resolve world challenges and crises. Divinely inspired messages, as well as positivist philosophies share something human in common, namely the commitment to virtuous ethics, and the rejection of injustice, aggression, moral decadence, the disintegration of family, the -damage that is happening to the environment and the imbalance taking place in the climate, which all cause misery to humanity.

A true and thoughtful dialogue exploiting humanly shared values is necessary for a joint action, which can face up to contemporary problems and protect humanity from their ill effects.

Participants in the conference were Muslim scholars, researchers, clergymen and heads of Islamic centres and associations from different parts of the Muslim World, as well as Muslim communities abroad. There were also representatives of Islamic agencies, which are keen on dialogue with other human cultures and civilisations.

***Participants discussed the following four points:***

1. The Islamic basis of dialogue
2. Dialogue method, guidelines and means
3. With whom do we conduct dialogue?
4. Dialogue groundwork and topics

***1. The Islamic basis of dialogue***

***A. Islam's call for dialogue***

The conference discussed the validity of dialogue and the Islamic call for it, as well as the reasons and the ample religious texts calling for dialogue, establishing the foundations upon which dialogue should be based, laying down its etiquette and manners and showing examples of it. The conclusions drawn at the conference were as follows:

- The differences between nations and peoples, and their distinctiveness in their beliefs and cultures is an arrangement preordained by Will and the Wisdom of the Creator, which made it necessary for them to get to know and help one another, and to further themselves together, and work on their mutual problems through their shared values which lead to their peaceful coexistence, and a competition among them to build the Earth, and do virtuous deeds: {For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. However, that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ} [The Holy Qur'an: 5: 48].
- Dialogue is a genuine Qur'anic course of action, and a Prophetic tradition all prophets followed in their dealings with their peoples. The Prophetic tradition presents a clear exemplary model to the eyes of those who ponder upon the dialogue of the Prophet, peace be upon him (henceforth PBUH), with the Christians of Najran (in Saudi Arabia, near the border with Yemen), and his letters to the kings and the great men of nations. Dialogue, therefore, was one of the most important means of spreading the guidance of Islam to the rest of the world.
- By reflecting on the community of Medina, which the Prophet (PBUH) established, we look at it as an exemplary model of positive coexistence among followers of all faiths. This calls to attention and highlights the precedence of Medina, rendering it into the best example to follow in terms of intercultural coexistence; this precedence that laid the groundwork for cooperation in working on common objectives, and exerting joint efforts on establishing the values of justice, of righteousness and all noble human ethics.

***B. Dialogue Objectives***

Dialogue is the most important window through which Muslims look at the world. Through dialogue, many objectives can be attained. Most important among these objectives are the following:

- Acquainting people with the true meaning of Islam, its canons and human principles, in addition to its great cultural legacy entitling it to effectively contribute to guiding the progress of human civilisation.
- Refuting the fallacies that were levelled against Islam, and correcting the misperceived image formed in religious, academic, and media circles against Islam, its countries and institutions.
- Contributing to facing up to the challenges, and finding solutions to problems caused by humanity's straying off the path of faith and its rejection of its values and teachings, which made it vulnerable prey to vice, injustice, terrorism, violations of human rights and to the harm done to the environment that is bestowed upon humanity by Allah, the Exalted.
- Supporting and defending the just causes regarding human rights, and forming a universal public opinion that advocates and cares for those rights and works towards attaining legitimate demands for them.
- Unveiling the claims of those propagating an apocalyptic conflict of civilisations, and rejecting their claims that Islam is enemy to modern civilisation and progress; those claims that serve to evoke a phobia against Islam and Muslims and impose upon peoples of the world the reign of one culture.
- Getting to know non-Muslims and their cultures, and reinforcing those commonly shared principles with them, so that they can attain a peaceful coexistence, and a serene human society; so that they can work side by side in spreading virtuous ethics and values, and that they can uphold justice, virtue and peace, while struggling against hegemony, exploitation, injustice, moral decadence, the disintegration of family and other evils threatening societies.
- Coming up with solutions to problems and hostilities arising between Muslims themselves and others, majorities or minorities, living side by side with them in their countries, or societies, and creating an atmosphere suitable for social and national coexistence; an atmosphere free from disaffection, antagonism or aversion.
- Achieving understanding with other human civilisations and cultures, emphasizing the participation of Muslims in this multicultural mix of humanity, and making use of this understanding for the sake of attaining world peace and safeguarding it.
- Supporting discourse among followers of different schools of Islam, in an effort to promote national unity and reduce the effects of fanaticism and rivalry.

## ***2. The method of dialogue, its guidelines and means***

### ***A. The method of dialogue and its guidelines***

The conference studied the approach to dialogue and its guidelines from a Qur'anic perspective where lessons can be learnt from the discourse between prophets and their peoples, and where the attributes of legitimate dialogue, its guidelines and prohibitions can be deduced. It further studied the practical application of this course in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and in the lives of his companions and the scholars

who followed his guidance: {Say: This is my Way: I call on Allah with sure knowledge, I and whosoever followeth me Glory be to Allah! and I am not of the idolaters} [The Holy Qur'an: 12: 108].

In this regard, the conference emphasised the following points:

- The commitment to Islamic conduct and manners of objective and sensible dialogue and dialogue based on evidence and to a congenial -dialogue, without belittlement or denigration of the beliefs of others, since this is unacceptable to Islam and contradicts the need for objectivity in this dialogue {And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong; and say: We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender} [The Holy Qur'an: 29: 46].
- A meaningful dialogue, a peaceful coexistence and cooperation among followers of divinely revealed messages as well as others by no means implies giving up on firmly held beliefs or compromising religious principles. Nor does it involve making up lies against other religions. It rather means cooperation in all that is beneficial to humankind, in preserving their dignity, protecting their rights, fending off injustice and aggression against them, providing solutions to their problems, and offering them dignified means of making a living. These values are commonly shared by all divinely revealed messages, and are ratified by all positivist constitutions and human rights declarations. Dialogue then follows along the Qur'anic guideline: {To you be your Way and to me mine} [The Holy Qur'an, 109: 6].

### ***B. Means and procedures of dialogue***

The conferees made their recommendations to the Islamic World League to focus on dialogue, its procedures, institutions, means and programmes, urging the League to:

- Form a universal body for dialogue, comprising the Muslim Nation's Islamic organisations keen on dialogue, with the aim of coming up with a unified strategy in terms of following up on its affairs, setting its activities in motion in coordination with all parties concerned.
- The conference decided to form a team of specialists, to be selected by the league from among those who participated in the conference, to study the steps needed in forming a universal body of dialogue, and to provide a vision for it which can be presented at a later meeting for the parties concerned about dialogue in the Muslim World, in addition to following up on the announcements issued at this conference.
- Establish King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Intercultural Dialogue, with the aim of promoting a culture of dialogue, while training and qualifying the skills needed for it on precise scientific bases.
- Set up King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's International Award for Intercultural Dialogue to be granted to international organisations and personalities that contribute to the advancement of dialogue and the achievement of its goals.

- Hold conferences, symposia and seminars that bring together followers of divinely revealed faiths alongside people from different civilisations, cultures and worthwhile philosophies. Academics, media figures and clergymen representing a wide spectrum of world cultures should be called to these conferences.

Appreciating what different Islamic organisations have done for dialogue, the conference urges them to do more in terms of cooperation and coordination to advance it and make it serve the interests of the Muslim Nation through the following steps:

- Conducting dialogue within its legitimate guidelines and objectives; -guaranteeing the high-priority pursuits of the Muslim Nation; studying all its issues in a well-prepared manner, within the prescribed rules and according to Islamic manners of dialogue; abstaining from vilification, belittlement, or adopting an offensive stance in it, while taking pride in the cultural uniqueness of the Muslim Nation and representing it in dialogues in a manner befitting its cultural stature.
- Unifying the Muslim stance towards dialogue through the international bureau responsible for it within the Islamic World League, considering this bureau to be the meeting point of coordination for dialogue institutions and committees, and endorsing the strategic visions that emerge from it.
- Focusing the dialogue on common human interests, and working on -attaining peaceful coexistence, social justice and security among peoples of the world from different cultures, in addition to facing up to modern-day challenges.
- Promoting the culture of dialogue in Islamic societies, and having keen interest in publishing books and translations dealing with it, while warning against the calls for the clash of civilisations and their adverse consequences on world peace. This is in cooperation with all the Ministries of Culture, Media and Education in Muslim countries.
- Relying on previous experiences of dialogue, and working towards advancing it, and developing its programmes through more cooperation with Muslim countries and organisations in their dialogue programmes, with the aim of bolstering the dialogue project of the Muslim Nation, and putting it at the service of attaining its objectives.
- Qualifying a group of scholars with international experience in dialogue in its various fields and disciplines, and training them on the effective participation in international conventions and conferences of dialogue.

### **3. *Whom do we conduct dialogue with?***

The conference discussed previous instances of dialogue between Muslims and others throughout the past five decades and was hopeful of new horizons of dialogue with followers of other divinely revealed faiths, denominations and cultures. Its suggestions were as follows:

- Opening channels of dialogue with followers of divinely revealed faiths, positivist philosophies and valid ways of thinking, in fulfilment of the Prophet's (PBUH) mission as stated in the Holy Qur'an: {And We have not sent thee (O Muhammad) save as a

bringer of good tidings and a Warner unto all humankind; but most of humankind know not} [The Holy Qur'an: 34: 28], which helps accomplish common human pursuits.

- Openness to all contemporary influential trends, in the domains of -politics, research, academics, media, among others, and not limiting this openness to religious leadership alone.
- The inclusion of groups with anti-Islamic attitudes, with the aims of presenting the truth about Islam and clearing up the misconceptions that may be the reason of their hostile attitudes.
- The conference does stress the world's need for dialogue to attain understanding, and reach agreements on ways to deter the clash of civilisations. The recommendations of the conference to the Islamic World League, Muslims governmental and non-governmental organisations are as follows:
  - The production and dissemination of literature in various languages, refuting the clash of civilisations theories, unveiling their inherent dangers against the future of humanity, and holding an international conference about (The Dangers of the Clash of Civilisations Theories on the Security and Peace in the World), with the participation of influential religious, cultural, political and academic figures.
  - Demanding from the countries of the world, and on top of that the UN, to perform their duties in confronting the culture of hatred among peoples of the world, and facing up to corrupt supremacist and -racist ideologies which urge their followers to hate others and look down upon them, jeopardizing world security and peace and violating teachings of divinely revealed faiths and international laws, and viewing these ideologies as crimes endangering peaceful coexistence among peoples of the world.
  - Urging Muslims in countries where they live alongside non-Muslims, be they a majority or a minority, to hold dialogue with non-Muslims as a way of resolving any potential differences in order to secure a peaceful social coexistence, viewing dialogue that attains harmony as the most important type of dialogues.
  - Urging Muslims living in non-Muslim countries to hold direct dialogue with citizens of those countries, stressing the need for espousing good and genuine citizenship, without neglecting their religious duties.
  - Working together with Muslim countries and organisations in asking the UN, and international human rights organisations, governmental and nongovernmental, to make insulting campaigns directed at Islam, the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), and the Holy Qur'an a crime, and enacting resolutions which condemn offending prophets and their religions, while preventing the exploitation of freedom of thought and freedom of the press in a way that is detrimental to international coexistence and peace.

#### **4. *Bases and topics of dialogue***

##### **A. *Dialogue bases***

The conference discussed the foundations upon which a serious dialogue about commonly shared human principles can be established, stressing the importance of general Islamic principles for coexistence and dialogue; principles that are surely aimed at attaining humanity's pursuits for happiness. These principles are:

- The belief in the uniformity of the origin of human beings and their equal rights to humanity and dignity: {O humankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty towards Allah in Whom ye claim (your rights) of one another, and towards the wombs (that bare you). Lo! Allah hath been a Watcher over you} [The Holy Qur'an: 4: 1].
- Rejecting racism and bigotry, and condemning abominable supremacist ideologies on the grounds that those dearest to Allah Almighty are those with the most piety. It has been pointed out in the Prophetic Tradition that: "O peoples, your God is One, and you come from the same father; therefore, Allah does not favour Arabs over non-Arabs or non-Arabs over Arabs, nor does He favour red people over black ones or black people over red ones, except those who are most pious."
- The sound instinct bestowed upon humans by Allah, the Almighty, Who created humans and predisposed them to good rather than evil, and to justice, rather than injustice. Humanity's disregard and indifference to Allah's Guidance and His prophets' teachings are the main reasons for humanity's misery, threatening its future, and out of which there is no way but to heed Allah's Call: {But if there come unto you from Me a guidance, then who so followth My guidance, he will not go astray nor come to grief. But he who turneth away from remembrance of Me, his will be a narrow life} [The Holy Qur'an: 20: 123-4].

What encourages Muslim dialogue with proponents of other divinely revealed faiths is the fact that Islam recognises these faiths and believes that the basis of all these faiths is one and the same which is the call to worship the One True God of all, and that Muslims make absolutely no distinction among Allah's prophets {But those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them, unto them Allah will give their wages; and Allah has ever been Forgiving, Merciful} [The Holy Qur'an: 4: 152].

Another encouraging aspect of this dialogue is the universal nature of -Islam, and the humaneness of its laws, which are full of virtues, justice and mercy for the entire human race {We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples} [The Holy Qur'an: 21: 107].

### ***B. Dialogue topics***

The conference previewed the topics of discussions and urged Islamic and international organisations participating to give priorities to the following issues:

- The protection of high moral values and standards against moral decadence on the pretext of personal freedom.
- Phenomena such as terrorism, violence, extremism, and accusations of infidelity, while studying reasons behind such phenomena, the ways to eradicate them, and

how to amass international cooperation to face up to them through various means, in addition to refuting the accusation that associates such phenomena with Islam and Muslims.

- Phenomena such as injustice, oppression, tyranny and exploitation of poor nations under the rubric of liberation of people and protecting human rights.
- Causing damage to the environment, and dealing with any harm done or expected to be done against it, in order to avoid widespread dangers and disasters against all of humanity: {Work not confusion in the earth after the fair ordering (thereof) } [The Holy Qur'an: 7: 56].
- Family problems and the decline in morality that affected stability, legal marriage and procreation in a family, while harnessing international cooperation to protect the family, availing it with the essential elements in terms of material and moral support it needs to raise a generation that builds the earth in accordance with divine guidance.
- The role of media in our modern times, and the attempts by some media outlets to corrupt high moral standards, to incite divisions, to prop up conflicts, and to promote deviance, crime and addiction. Stressing the need for shoring up international cooperation to steer the media into the direction of disseminating high moral standards and virtuous values.
- Human rights and the violations committed against them, and the need for international cooperation to protect them, and to set up the guide-lines that guarantee humans an honourable and dignified living.
- The various challenges faced by humans on cultural, social, ethical and educational levels.

***The conference's call to peoples, governments and organisations of the world:***

Through discussing the various challenges faced by humanity, the conference made a call to the peoples, governments and organisations of the world from all cultures and religions, urging them to:

- Reach an agreement between the world and us on the basis of belief in our Creator, worshiping Him only and seeking His Guidance which He revealed to His prophets and messengers.
- Jointly confront the aspects of the injustices, tyranny, and hegemony, and work together on putting an end to wars, conflicts and international problems, while cooperating on promoting the culture of tolerance and dialogue; supporting the institutions of dialogue; expanding its horizons and adopting it as the means of understanding and cooperation, in addition to strengthening the foundations of world peace and refraining from wasting humanity's resources and capabilities in the production of weapons of mass destruction which threaten the future of Planet Earth. This is in addition to the need for cooperation in the promotion of high moral virtues, and the formation of an international institution for ethics, undertaking the task of confronting the moral corruption and dealing with illegitimate out-of-wedlock



relationships, while protecting the family against impending dangers in such a way that guarantees everybody's right to living in a happy family.

- Work together on building the Earth in accordance with the Will of the Creator Who entrusted the task of building and improving it to Adam and his progeny, in addition to thwarting the infringement on posterity's right to life in a pollution-free environment and working on defusing the dangers of pollution through joint action to reduce its effects and keep in check technological and industrial advancement.
- Cooperate in improving the conditions of the world, most of which has been overtaken by rampant corruption and misery; conditions which are in dire need of Allah's Mercy, and that is the essence of Allah's Message to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to all the prophets (peace and blessings be upon them): {We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples} [The Holy Qur'an: 21: 107].

In conclusion, participants at the conference expressed their deep appreciation for the efforts that King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, is exerting in the area of dialogue and his sponsorship of this great conference, hoping for his endorsement of its decisions and recommendations.

Participants also addressed him, may Allah protect him, asking him to kindly invite distinguished and specialist figures in dialogue from Muslims and proponents of other divinely revealed religions and venerated positivist philosophies to present the Islamic vision of dialogue that was conceptualised through this conference and agree on a practical form of international fruitful dialogue that could contribute to solving the problems that humanity is suffering from today at the nearest opportunity. They also asked the King to proceed with his international efforts through the UN, other countries and international organisation as he sees appropriate.

Scholars participating at the conference expressed their support of his Highness's efforts, may Allah protect him, in serving Islam and Muslims and all of humanity, which help achieve cooperation, stability, and peace in all human communities of all faiths and cultures.

They also expressed their gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its keen interest in dialogue, and its sponsorship of its events and conferences.

Moreover, participants at the conference expressed appreciation to the efforts of Islamic World Association and its affiliates in their promotion and defence of Islam and its Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Furthermore, they stressed the need for its continued positive participation in seminars and discussions that had an obvious favourable impression in promoting the culture of dialogue and correcting many misconstrued ideas about Islam and Muslims.

Finally, peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and companions. We ask for Allah's Blessings for success in our deeds.

***Issued in the Holy City of Makkah Friday 2/6/1429 AH***