



STATEMENT OF HIS HIGHNESS
SHEIKH SABAH AL AHMAD AL JABER AL SABAH
AMIR OF THE STATE OF KUWAIT

**BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
ON THE INTERFAITH DIALOGUE**

12 – 13 NOVEMBER 2008

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK**

**In the Name of Allah
The Merciful – The Compassionate**

**Mr. President,
Your Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Heads and Members of
Delegations,**

With the traditional greeting of Islam, Assalam Alayukum Warrahmatu Allahi Wabarakatahu – May the Peace, Mercy and Blessing of Allah be upon you, I greet you all. I thank the Almighty God, we are all assembled here together in this hall . We came to foster the peace and the good of humanity, to seek to consolidate the links between us through dialogue and understanding, to focus on the values and bonds that join us, and reject the misgivings and suspicions that separate us.

Mr. President,

I congratulate you on presiding over this High-Level meeting and wish you success in the conduct of its deliberations. It is my pleasure also to make special reference to my brother, the Custodian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries, King Abdallah Bin Abdul Aziz, the King of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for his initiative to hold this high-level meeting here at the United Nations General Assembly Hall, which was originally established to embrace and consolidate dialogue, as an enduring principle of international relations, seeking to achieve peace and spanning bridges of cooperation and interconnection between nations and peoples. We therefore convey our total thanks and appreciation for His Majesty's gracious and continued efforts in this field, wishing him success in his endeavours that have our full support. We also value the good results of the World Conference for Dialogue which was held last July in Spain under the auspices and with the gracious efforts of The Custodian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries, King Abdallah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, and His Majesty King Juan Carlos of Spain.

Mr. President,

I cannot but also extend my thanks to His Excellency, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as well as to the United Nations specialized bodies for espousing the noble goals of dialogue, rooting the culture of peace among peoples, putting forward the programs and paving the way to create a world which renounces fanaticism and strengthens moderation, fuse the roots and melts the differences, eliminates the obstacles and open the horizons, magnify the common denominators between peoples and removes the impediments through cooperation.

Mr. President,

Our world today is going through difficult circumstances, as problems intensify and diversify, solutions become complex and difficult, the inability to resolve political issues in numerous areas of the world led to the emergence of new conflicts and civil wars, and pressing economic crisis became entangled with deadly natural disasters. New phenomena have surfaced and heightened, such as the phenomenon of terrorism, drugs and discrimination. The spirit of fanaticism and hatred became prevalent, the feelings of hate and exclusion have inflamed the followers of religious cultures and political inclinations, and the most violent accusations and different vilification were directed to their symbols, principles and values.

All these phenomena, have regrettably shaken the foundations of global stability, hence, as leaders and peoples, we must assume our historical responsibilities to carefully examine our painful reality through a serious and sincere dialogue between people, religions and cultures.

We should focus our efforts on consolidating the true religious and moral values, and on the common just principles which all religions call for, and from which all cultures advance, to become a meeting point for us which would join us together for the good and provide us with a basis and a common factor of cooperation and peace.

Today, more than ever, we are required to transform the culture of the world from a culture of hatred, fanaticism and war to a culture of dialogue and coexistence, factually and conceptually.

Our path to achieve this is through dealing and interacting positively with one another, without complexes or fear, departing from the fact that we are all entrusted with the destinies of humanity to harness for the benefit of mankind.

Mr. President,

Perhaps the start needed to follow on this road comes from the dialogue between the intellectual leaders of the followers of the divine religions and other beliefs, which has become part of the political scene. For instance, the United Nations contributed in creating the appropriate atmosphere, when the General Assembly issued its decision to consider the year 2001 as the year of dialogue among civilizations, resisting the campaigns of hatred and inflaming strife. Moreover, the United Nations issued another resolution to consider the year 2010, as the year of rapprochement among cultures.

Mr. President,

A sound analysis of the tragedies that humanity have endured, shows that under no circumstances these were a result of religious beliefs or cultural values, but rather the result of the pursuit of extremism, fanaticism and discrimination that afflicted some followers of the divine religions and other beliefs.

The divine religions, in their essence, method and teachings provide solutions to the problems that confront humanity, and are by no means a cause of those problems. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the clergy and the educated from all religions to highlight these facts and assist in correcting the misconceptions in the minds of those affiliated with those beliefs.

Moreover, men of intellect and educators have to create awareness among the young, cultivate in them the respect for the divine religions, ingrain in them the spirit of moderation, values of tolerance, and positive interaction between the different religions and beliefs.

Also, the media, which shapes the intellect and feeds the minds, must be positive when dealing in these subjects and must recognize the scope of its influence on forming enlightened and fair opinions, that believe in the interconnection and unity between humans.

Mr. President,

As leaders and peoples, we are aware of our historical responsibilities to fight extremism and discrimination, disseminate the method of moderation and steer way from exaggeration.

This is definitely no easy task, yet it is an important mission. We in Kuwait have multiple contributions, endeavours and programs in this field. Kuwait has founded an international center for moderation, which convened numerous intellectual conferences, among these were two international conferences held in London and in Washington during the past couple of years. The competent government agencies has also arranged programs and seminars targeting all sectors of the society, which contributed in raising the awareness about moderation among the populace. Kuwait has also convened and sponsored many regional and international conferences and seminars about the method of moderation in Islam, established the course of religious tolerance among peoples, as well as the respect of the beliefs of followers of other divine religions, the preservation of their dignity and refusal to offend their symbols, stood up against using religious beliefs as a basis for discrimination among the members of society, as well as to respect the different characteristics of peoples and their right to equality and collective living.

All of that is the origin of relationship between humans, and their achievement is the greatest purpose of all religions and cultures.

Mr. President,

The best outcome of our well-intended congregation in this hall will be the issuance of a universal commitment to respect all religions, to harm not, or intrude upon, or ridicule their symbols, but to deter such acts and those who call for them.

We must also commit to ban campaigns that seek to deepen the discord between religions and undermine the chances of peaceful coexistence among humans.

We must commit to, encourage and finance the programs that promote the spread of the culture of tolerance and understanding through dialogue, to become a framework of international relations, by way of conferences, seminars as well as developing educational, cultural and informative programs to achieve those goals.

Mr. President,

The best way for me to end this statement before this gracious audience is to quote the words of Allah the Almighty as he command us in the Holy Qoraan

“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honored among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All Aware.”

This is our course, this is our objective and ambition, this is our message to the entire world.