



International Institute of Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations  
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## In the Name of God

Dear professors

Esteemed thinkers

Ladies and gentlemen

We do recall that in June 1945, members of the United Nations officially undertook that the next generation should be spared the despair of war. And it was only a few months later that they agreed that the United Nations should base its constitution on ethical and intellectual bonds between human beings. That day they asserted that “political and economic relations between governments would not suffice and that some other arrangements should be made on the global arena”.

Now I would like to recite the eternal and humanistic poem by the Iranian widely celebrated poet Sa’adi:

“All Adam’s race are members of one frame

Since all, at first, from the same essence came.

When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed

The other members lose their wonted rest.

If thou feel’st not for others’ misery

A son of Adam is no name for thee.”

And most certainly you have heard the poem by contemporary American poet Archibald MacLeish, one of the ones who drafted the UNESCO Constitution: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, hence it is in the minds of the men that the concept of peace must be constructed.”

Therefore, it has been over 60 years that the world, weary of world wars, has constantly been called to be committed to a single thought: the necessity of creating peace, learning to appreciate the beauty of peace, building a culture of peace and discovering the processes to achieve peace.

If living in peace is a human beings’ deserved right -which it is indeed- many obstacles should be removed from their lives to achieve peace: poverty and inequality, violence and insecurity, self-absorption and impatience, self-centeredness and a lack of development and a lengthy list of other woes from which human communities suffered in the whole world.

The truth is that such peace is badly missing in the minds and lives of human beings today, as the longing for sustainable peace is a constant element of the dreams of each and every member of the global community day and night. Humans of our era have suffered hardship of war and have set off on even a more difficult path in fear of the trembling peace.

In your vicinity, Hiroshima and Nagasaki have witnessed haunting crimes and in my neighborhood Lebanon and Palestine are witnessing human catastrophe currently. Will this old and chronic human pain - the pain of war and crime and the fear of its occurrence- be curable?

Anyone in the world, given their experience of the world they have lived in, has sought ways to resolve the present frightful situation. The path I have sought and still seek is to search for and put an effort into living inside the framework of a new context:

Understanding of the paradigm of ‘dialog’ rather than ‘altercation’ and moving along the lines of ‘dialog among cultures and civilizations’ instead of clash between them and trying to

resolve the problems the world currently has, through launching intra- and inter-civilizational dialog.

I have said and still say that the world, in order for it to become a safe, free and developed haven for all people, requires just and sustainable peace and accordingly dialog is required in order for such peace to become indispensable to people's lives.

Dialog means living in fresh air, an air which will lead to mankind becoming capable of contributing to alleviating the pains in the actual world. Dialog is a process for realization of the culture of peace. — a culture that is inevitably needed for development, democracy and sustainable security in the world. It is inevitable for us to launch dialog between cultures as a driving force for living in the modern world.

By eschewing dialog, one will be subjected to deterioration and incapability, as an attitude of elimination will be the point where deterioration and incapability begin. Eliminating and being marginalized — either in terms of materialistic resources or spiritual resources — will consequently lead to nothing but deterioration and poverty. Any government or society that tends to eliminate or sideline part of its spiritual and materialistic resources, will inevitably become poor and incapable, whereas a government that adds to its capability of attracting spiritual and materialistic resources will obtain wealth and power. The elimination and the attraction — in whatever way they take place — can be realized and presented in the absence or presence of a culture or processes of dialog. Dialog is a modern means of discovering and enhancing the humans' capability of keeping restrictions in check. Dialog means enabling the new individual and society — a new opportunity for a new move.

Esteemed scholars,

We are gathered here today in the University of the United Nations — a circle that aims to cogitate about whatever that endangers peaceful life and to teach the ways that bring the world closer to peace. I assume that we all agree on one point, that today the world's coffers of peace are emptier than its coffers of war, both materialistically and spiritually. And we should try as hard as we can to seek a solution to this. As long as the governments and nations' investment in peace is just a fraction of their investment in war, the seeds of security, hope and progress will not grow in the minds of the people of the global community.

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If I am speaking of dialog, at the heart of the idea sits the need for attention and focus on the part of all cultures and civilizations and for the opening of new windows.

I have said before that the concept of security and peace is now different from the previous model in terms of substance. Peace is now realized as a crucial, sustainable and comprehensive concept. Peace is now something more than security and preemption — one that includes a creative interaction which has been promoted from the level of relations between governments to relations between civil organizations.

In fact, peace in the present time is a gem of the thought whose main carriers are active people and responsible citizens. One can clearly see the results of the emergence of the civil society on the international arena, a civil society in which the public opinion enjoys a determining role at a global level. The military facet of power by itself can neither advance nor prevent things. Unfortunately in the process of globalization, violence and crime have also become global. The threats against global security have become so extensive that even the most secure and powerful countries of the Cold War era have been subjected to such threats.

Under the circumstances, devising bellicose strategies will drive the human world towards violence, disturbance and extremism, as it takes away chances for attending to pains humans have been suffering from for long. Nonetheless, pinning hopes on showing power through doctoring the public opinion is not an easy job at an age when the communications technology is so advanced. The current world consists of a variety of worlds and resources. In order to be able to constantly regulate such a world and pass the treacherous pathways, one would require to reach a new understanding of the international equations, an understanding that will take into account the public opinion and rely on the cultural and civil capacities.

Today, I stress this idea and the necessity to put further effort into this, from the perspective of a researcher from inside of the civil society and from the International Institute of Dialog

among Cultures and Civilizations. I am asserting today that the capacity of the dialog strategy can and must be used to promote peace and tackle the problems the world is currently suffering from. I am saying that 'dialog among civilizations' can and should be used not as an abstract concept but as a concrete notion that can be applied to all issues concerning human beings.

If the world is engaged with a streak of complex economic, social, cultural and political issues, the common sense that is formed within the context of dialog can be helpful in addressing all major and minor problems by which the human community is troubled.

The agenda for peace cannot be outlined unless the big talks and demands of preserving peace, are accompanied by small but clear measures taken for that purpose. There is no doubt that the key to the peace agenda are practical by-laws for preservation and promotion of democracy, justice, human rights, an equal rights for all to development and the return of the men to their spiritual origins and their observation of ethics, which is badly missing on the international relations arena.

In order to set foot on this path, we inevitably need a new approach: We should heed the power of logic rather than following the logic of force. Millions of people are suffering from extreme poverty. The world is faced with numerous obstacles in terms of equal use of materialistic and spiritual resources, environment, ethics and materialization of sustainable development. Therefore, in order to solve such real problems, we should speak of realistic rather than abstract plans.

Under the circumstances how can one speak of an 'end to history' as long as only the powerful and rich can enjoy spiritual and materialistic possessions in the world and as far as double-standard criteria leave no place for justice and freedom? Now it is time for us to reach to a new and correct definition of human concerns and design new and practicable solutions to reduce and alleviate such concerns.

We should create new links between the experience of different societies and new scientific approaches. Acceptance of these musts, and similar musts, is translated into arrival in the area of dialog among cultures and civilizations and presentation of plans to achieve that. A new understanding of the global issues and new solutions for these issues will only be possible and advance in an appropriate dialog context.

Civil and international organizations are the places where these dialogs can be carried out. We should put an effort into using such places rightfully. Today, if all global communities want to enjoy a fair share of the modern science, modern economy, modern communications as well as modern technologies and reach sustainable development, their basic rights and an all-out security, they should know and apply the opportunities and capacities of dialog in this new paradigm. In the paradigm of dialog, international, inter-governmental, national and civil organizations require to adopt an approach towards and build structures for dialog to take place.

The truth is that despite needs and necessities for dialog as well as the great possibilities for dialog, there still are many structural and organizational impediments in the way that should be overcome. The dialog of cultures and civilizations is an international issue that cannot remain restricted to an inter-governmental level. In terms of the paradigm of dialog, even such credited and effective organizations as the United Nations need to review their statements in order to be able to use their civil organizations at full strength and capability. They should also use academic and cultural institutions as well as scientists, thinkers and artists across the globe. These organizations are more capable of promoting dialog on an international arena than between states. Perhaps establishment and enhancement of affiliated scientific, educational and cultural institutions such as the University of the United Nations can make up for part of the shortage. The notion of setting up the International Institute of Dialog of Cultures and Civilizations as an international NGO — which I have been seeking and hopefully bearing results — is also a step towards that end.

Identification and application of structures and processes of dialog in order to understand and resolve the actual global issues is a necessity facing us all. Therefore, may I ask for permission to address a few certain issues before my speech ends?

1. Dialog of cultures and civilizations means application of everything that we have over a shared subject rather than imposition of ideas on one another. We should know and learn that we can think and work alongside one another, rather than in opposite directions.
2. General human issues comprise all cultural, economic, social and political areas, from sustainable development, environmental issues, human rights, democracy and alleviation of poverty to confronting extremist violent groups. Let us accept that there are different experiences and notions in terms of how these concepts should be realized and dealt with. We should seek and build organizations and institutions to negotiate about these certain issues.
3. What we essentially need to do in the first phase is to clarify certain topics for dialog — from water, energy and campaign against desertification, to democracy, sustainable development and human rights. In the next phase, these issues should be discussed from economic, social, cultural and political perspectives. Today any specific subject should be attended to as an interdisciplinary subject. The dialog, today, is not a phenomenon that only involves different cultures and civilizations but cultural researchers are also required to be engaged as well. Today, scientists, intellectuals and politicians living in different worlds with differing views of the world, should be able to have dialog with one another over different human issues. The University of the United Nations, as an organization that seeks to achieve this objective, can be modeled as a particularly successful example. The International Institute of Dialog among Cultures and Civilizations, too, tries to take and promote similar measures.
4. Dialog among civilizations takes account of improvement in all areas of life, which is why it is closely linked with sustainable and all-out development, global security and peace, democracy and freedom for all people anywhere around the world. The policies and programs of dialog can and should involve all these areas, both in cultural and political spheres and in socio-cultural spheres.

What are the basic questions for us in order to launch dialog over these issues?

- What are the major grounds for man-to-man, man-to nature and man-to metaphysics conflicts?
- What are the root causes of social inequality?
- What makes peace so shaky and the world so vulnerable to insecurity?
- Why is it slow and difficult to achieve democracy in the world?
- Why is it that deep and new gaps are formed even in the communications age, when distances have closed?
- Why is today's mankind subjected to such horrendous situations as modern poverty, insecurity and violence?

Facing such whys, should we not think about the new responsibilities of governments, civil and international organizations?

Concentration on the moral hazard in the behavior of the governments, role of religion in different communities, accountability of those wielding power, balance between competition and cooperation, relationship between lack of development and terrorism, dialog between traditionalism and modernity, interaction between globalization and naturalization and similar general topics can found the basis for more detailed discussions over the issues of the day. More importantly, the necessity for reforming the functions of governments and international organizations can be raised. It has been correctly asserted that big thoughts should be made with small works. Time should not be wasted.

I feel it is incumbent on me to thank all the efforts made here and there in line with this attitude. That you share any subjects with intellectuals, experts and politicians and seek to bridge the gap between different areas of research, education, culture and politics, while maintaining the independence of each individual area, this is a great idea that is perfectly appreciated. I should also like to thank the researchers and experts who have placed the

issue of the campaign against desertification on a global agenda for discussion and have even come here to honor this meeting.

5. We should not forget that if there are many threats and hazards facing the world, there are also great hopes and opportunities to improve the situation. Through dialog we can hope to build a new world and achieve new spiritual and materialistic resources. Although insecurity, poverty and war are present in our world, willingness and an attempt to create peace, development and sustainable security makes up the underlying face of the world. We can build the world, God-willingly.

Enthusiast hath no faith in dreaming disturbingly

But in building the soil into a new world.