

**SPEECH BY
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ENTITLED "ISLAM HADHARI OR CIVILIZATIONAL ISLAM" AT NATIONS
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ISLAM HADHARI OR CIVILIZATIONAL ISLAM
Promoting Good Governance Within Societies and Goodwill Between Peoples and
Cultures Internationally

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RECTOR, UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY,

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EXCELLENCIES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IN OUR WORLD TODAY, THERE IS A LOT OF MISPERCEPTION AND MISREPRESENTATION OF ISLAM, EVEN AMONG MUSLIMS, BUT MORE SO IN THE CHRISTIAN WEST. THERE IS AN EQUALLY INTENSE DEBATE ABOUT THE PROBLEM AMONG A WIDE SPECTRUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY RANGING FROM INTELLECTUALS TO INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENTS. I DO BELIEVE THAT THE DEBATE IS NECESSARY BECAUSE THIS IS A CRITICAL MATTER WHICH IS AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY. I WISH TO SPEAK ON THE SAME SUBJECT ON THIS OCCASION, HERE IN JAPAN, FOR CERTAIN IMPORTANT REASONS. FIRSTLY, THE ISSUE HAS MANY GLOBAL DIMENSIONS AND I CONSIDER JAPAN AN IMPORTANT GLOBAL PLAYER WHICH CAN CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS ENCOURAGING BETTER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE WEST IN GENERAL AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD. SECONDLY, THE JAPANESE PEOPLE WOULD BE ABLE TO APPRECIATE THE SERIOUS ERROR OF ASSOCIATING ISLAM OR ANY RELIGION WITH TERRORISM BECAUSE THEY HAVE WITNESSED SUCH VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM EVEN DECADES BEFORE THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER-11 EVER HAPPENED. IN THE 1970S, THE RED ARMY WREAKED HAVOC IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD. AND I CONSIDER THIS INSTITUTION, THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY IN TOKYO, A MOST APPROPRIATE VENUE TO TALK ABOUT THESE MATTERS. I HAVE KEENLY NOTED THAT IT IS THE STATED MISSION OF OUR HOST TODAY, THE INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES, TO CONTRIBUTE TO EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE PRESSING GLOBAL PROBLEMS THAT ARE THE CONCERN OF THE UNITED NATIONS, ITS PEOPLES AND MEMBER STATES. TO THE RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY AND TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE, I THANK THEM FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS ESSENTIAL DIALOGUE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

2. THE INTENSITY OF MISPERCEPTION AND MISREPRESENTATION OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS, ESPECIALLY OF THE GENRE BEING DISSEMINATED IN WESTERN COUNTRIES, HAS CAUSED THE WORLD TO SLIDE DANGEROUSLY INTO AN ERA OF FEAR AND DIVISION BETWEEN PEOPLES AND CULTURES. THE GREATEST INJUSTICE IS THE PARTIALITY TO ASSOCIATE ISLAM WITH EXTREMISM. THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT EXTREMISM HAS EXISTED SINCE ANCIENT TIMES. EXTREMIST MOVEMENTS OF ALL SHADES AND BELIEFS HAVE SURVIVED IN THE FRINGES OF VARIOUS SOCIETIES AND CULTURES, NOT ONLY IN ISLAMIC COUNTRIES. LET ME SUGGEST TO YOU THAT ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF THE MISPERCEPTION AND MISREPRESENTATION OF ISLAM LIES IN THE FALLACY OF MISTAKING THE EXTREME FOR THE NORM. AL QAEDA WHICH PREACHES HATE AND DESTRUCTION HAS BEEN VERY WRONGLY TAKEN AS SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF MUSLIMS. NOTHING IS FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH BECAUSE ISLAM PREACHES PEACE BETWEEN NATIONS AND PEOPLES AS WELL AS TOLERANCE BETWEEN DIFFERENT RELIGIONS AND CULTURES. LET ME ADD THAT THE TERRORISTS IN PARTICULAR MUST BE SINGLED OUT ONLY BY THEIR ACTS OF TERROR AND NOTHING ELSE.

3. IT IS A COMMON MISPERCEPTION, RESULTING IN MANY PREJUDICES, THAT ISLAM IS AN ARAB RELIGION OR A RELIGION FOR ARABS ONLY. THE TRUTH IS THAT THERE ARE MORE THAN 1.2 BILLION MUSLIMS SPREAD BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC AND THE PACIFIC WITH AN IMPORTANT PRESENCE IN EUROPE AND AMERICA. AS A WHOLE, MUSLIMS MAKE UP SOME 19% OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLE. IN FACT, THERE ARE MORE MUSLIMS IN OTHER COUNTRIES THAN IN ARAB COUNTRIES. IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ALONE, PARTICULARLY IN INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND BRUNEI, THERE ARE MORE THAN 300 MILLION MUSLIMS. THE DETERIORATING STATE OF AFFAIRS BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE WEST MUST BE GLOBALLY ADDRESSED BECAUSE THERE ARE 2 BILLION CHRISTIANS AND THEY REPRESENT SOME 32% OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION. IT IS MOST UNFORTUNATE, TO SAY IT MILDLY, THAT CERTAIN GRAVE EVENTS IN THE LAST DECADE HAVE BROUGHT THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE CHRISTIAN WEST TO A DEFINING MOMENT IN THEIR RELATIONS. BUT WE MUST NOT ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION THAT THESE TWO GREAT CIVILIZATIONS ARE DESTINED TO CLASH WITH EACH OTHER. WE MUST NOT ALLOW THIS DICTUM TO BECOME A SELF FULFILLING PROPHECY.

4. ANOTHER DEEP-SEATED FALLACY WHICH MUST BE CORRECTED IS THE NOTION THAT ISLAM IS ANTI-DEMOCRATIC AND INHERENTLY ANTI-MODERN, THAT MUSLIMS ARE TURNING THEIR BACKS ON MODERNITY. WHILE THIS FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE CAN EASILY BE THE SUBJECT OF AN ENTIRE LECTURE ON ITS OWN, LET ME JUST BRIEFLY DISPEL THE NOTION THAT ISLAM IS IN ANY WAY INCOMPATIBLE WITH ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAT IS MODERN. THE PROBLEM EXISTS BECAUSE OF THE TENDENCY TO EQUATE MODERNIZATION WITH WESTERNIZATION, THAT THE MODERN MUSLIM INCLUDES ONLY THOSE WHO SHARED WESTERN VALUES. IT MUST BE EMPHASIZED THAT THE CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY, RATIONALIZATION AND RENEWAL IS CENTRAL TO THE TEACHINGS AND TRADITIONS OF ISLAM. THE TEXT OF THE HOLY QUR'AN CONTAINS MANY

VERSES WHICH REQUESTS HUMANS TO USE HIS OR HER INTELLECT, TO PONDER, TO THINK AND TO KNOW. CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL THINKING IS ENCOURAGED AND EXHORTED IN ISLAM. IT IS THEREFORE WRONG TO CONSIDER MUSLIMS AS BEING INCAPABLE OF ABSORBING MODERN IDEAS AND PRACTICING A MODERN WAY OF LIFE.

5. THE HISTORY OF MUSLIM CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IS WELL DOCUMENTED. A WELL KNOWN ISLAMIC CENTRE OF LEARNING, CORDOVA IN SPAIN, HAD CONTRIBUTED MUCH TO THE RENAISSANCE IN EUROPE. THE MUSLIM CONTRIBUTION TO MANKIND AND THE GROWTH OF CIVILIZATIONS IS ESPECIALLY NOTABLE IN THE AREA OF MATHEMATICS, CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS, ASTRONOMY AS WELL AS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES. THEREFORE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IS NOT ALIEN TO ISLAM. WHAT IS NEEDED TODAY IS FOR THE MUSLIM TO DRAW INSPIRATION FROM THE RICH SCHOLASTIC TRADITION OF ITS OWN PAST IN ORDER TO BEGIN ITS OWN RENAISSANCE IN THE WORLD OF TODAY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

6. MY COUNTRY, MALAYSIA, IS AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY OF NEARLY 20 MILLION PEOPLE. THIS INCLUDES AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF A NON-MUSLIM MINORITY OF 33%. BUT WE ARE DETERMINED TO SHOW BY EXAMPLE THAT AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY SUCH AS OURS CAN BE MODERN AND PROGRESSIVE AND GOVERN ALL THE PEOPLE FAIRLY AND JUSTLY. WE DRAW INSPIRATION FROM ALL THAT IS CORRECT ABOUT ISLAM, AND WE CALL THIS APPROACH ISLAM HADHARI, TRANSLATED INTO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS CIVILIZATIONAL ISLAM. WE HAVE DEFINED IT AS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANKIND, SOCIETY AND COUNTRY BASED ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS AND ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION.

7. BEING A MULTI-ETHNIC AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS COUNTRY, MALAYSIA IS MORE THAN CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO MAINTAIN HARMONY BETWEEN PEOPLES OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS AND DIFFERENT CULTURES. ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF SCHISMS IN SOCIETY RESULTS FROM ECONOMIC INEQUALITY. THEREFORE, EVER SINCE THE EARLY DAYS OF OUR INDEPENDENCE NEARLY FIFTY YEARS AGO, THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE IT A MATTER OF DELIBERATE POLICY TO APPORTION THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH IN AN EQUITABLE MANNER. THE DISTRIBUTIONAL STRATEGY AIMS AT REDUCING THE ECONOMIC DISPARITIES AMONG THE ETHNIC GROUPS AND IMPROVING THE CORPORATE EQUITY OWNERSHIP BY THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY. WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY WHICH IS CAREFULLY CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF AN EXPANDING ECONOMIC CAKE. NO ONE HAS BEEN DEPRIVED FOR PURPOSES OF FAVORING ANOTHER. TO BE FAIR AND JUST AT ALL TIMES IS INHERENTLY ISLAMIC.

8. IN THE SPHERE OF GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS, WE HAVE BEEN EQUALLY SUCCESSFUL IN APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF POWER SHARING AS A MEANS OF MAINTAINING UNITY IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY. THE POWER OF GOVERNING HAS BEEN SHARED ON THE BASIS OF THE ETHNIC STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION

RATHER THAN ON THE BASIS OF IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDES. IN FACT, MALAYSIA HAS BEEN RULED BY A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY SINCE DAY ONE OF ITS INDEPENDENCE IN 1957. THE GOVERNING PARTY, WHICH IS A GRAND NATIONAL COALITION OF POLITICAL PARTIES, HAS CONSISTENTLY BROUGHT GROWTH AND STABILITY TO THE COUNTRY IN ALL THE YEARS THAT IT CONTROLS THE REINS OF GOVERNMENT. WHAT WE PRACTICE IS ACTUALLY A SYSTEM OF GOVERNING WHICH REQUIRES ALL IMPORTANT DECISIONS TO BE MADE ON THE BASIS OF CONSENSUS. THE SYSTEM ENSURES THAT THE MINORITY IN THE GOVERNMENT ARE NEVER MARGINALIZED OR OUTVOTED. THE CYNICS WOULD SAY THAT POLITICS IS THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE. IN MALAYSIA, WE DO WHAT WE DO BECAUSE IT IS NECESSARY. BUT THE POINT WHICH I WISH TO MAKE NOW IS THE POINT THAT MALAYSIA IS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF DEMOCRACY THRIVING IN AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY.

9. WE HAVE UNRESERVEDLY PROCLAIMED TO THE PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA THAT IT IS THE INTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT TO NURTURE INTO BEING A PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY THAT IS COMPATIBLE WITH MODERNITY BUT ONE WHICH IS FIRMLY ROOTED IN THE NOBLE VALUES AND INJUNCTIONS OF ISLAM. YOU CAN ACCURATELY SAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT IN MALAYSIA IS ISLAMIC BASED, BUT IT GOVERNS FAIRLY AND JUSTLY ON BEHALF OF ALL THE MULTI-ETHNIC AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS CITIZENS OF MALAYSIA. THE GOVERNMENT USES THE TEN FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM HADHARI AS THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ESTABLISHING GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE MALAYSIAN SOCIETY. THE TEN PRINCIPLES HAVE BEEN LISTED AS FOLLOWS:

- I. FAITH AND PIETY IN ALLAH;
- II. A JUST AND TRUSTWORTHY GOVERNMENT;
- III. A FREE AND INDEPENDENT PEOPLE;
- IV. A VIGOROUS PURSUIT AND MASTERY OF KNOWLEDGE;
- V. BALANCED AND COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT;
- VI. A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE;
- VII. THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF MINORITY GROUPS AND WOMEN;
- VIII. CULTURAL AND MORAL INTEGRITY;
- IX. THE SAFEGUARDING OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT;
- X. STRONG DEFENSE CAPABILITIES

10. ISLAM HADHARI IS NOT A NEW RELIGION. IT IS NOT A NEW MAZHAB OR RELIGIOUS ORDER. NEITHER IS IT AN EFFORT TO SEEK APPROVAL FOR A MORE FRIENDLY AND GENTLE IMAGE OF ISLAM. ISLAM HADHARI IS CERTAINLY NOT AN UNDERTAKING TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE SO-CALLED ISLAMIC THREAT. ISLAM IS NOT A THREAT TO ANYONE. THE TEN FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM HADHARI EXPLAIN AND SUMMARIZE THE CENTRALITY OF ISLAM IN THE LIVES OF ITS BELIEVERS, THE WAY IT IS TO BE APPRECIATED AND PRACTICED IN THESE MODERN TIMES.

11. YOU SHOULD BE AWARE THAT ISLAM IS NOT JUST A RELIGION BUT A WAY OF LIFE FOR THE MUSLIMS. BUT WHEN DEALING WITH MUSLIMS, YOU MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THEIR RELIGION BECAUSE, I REPEAT, ISLAM IS THEIR WAY OF LIFE. ISLAM HADHARI IS CERTAINLY A GUIDE FOR THE WAY MUSLIMS SHOULD RELATE TO THEIR FELLOW HUMANS, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF OTHER RELIGIONS.

THE HOLY QUR'AN IS VERY EXPLICIT IN STATING THAT ISLAM RECOGNIZES THE EXISTENCE OF OTHER RELIGIONS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

12. I HAVE EARLIER DISMISSED THE EXTREMISTS AS THOSE WHO DO NOT SPEAK FOR TRUE ISLAM. BUT I DO NOT FOR A MOMENT UNDERESTIMATE THEIR CAPACITY FOR DISRUPTING THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY OF THE WORLD. ALL OF US SHOULD REFLECT UPON THE FACT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF 19 PEOPLE WHO CARRIED OUT THE ATTACK ON THE TWIN TOWERS IN NEW YORK IN 2001 HAD CREATED A GLOBAL IMPACT VASTLY SURPASSING THEIR SMALL NUMBERS. THEY CHANGED OUR WORLD AND AFFECTED OUR DAILY LIVES. TWO ISLAMIC COUNTRIES WERE INVADED AS A RESULT.

13. HOWEVER, I MUST QUICKLY MAKE THE OBSERVATION THAT THE CONQUESTS OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ HAVE NOT STOPPED TERRORISM. THIS IS BECAUSE WE CANNOT ELIMINATE TERRORISM BY SEEKING AN ENEMY TO BE DEFEATED MILITARILY. THE TERRORISTS CANNOT BE DEFEATED ON THE CONVENTIONAL BATTLEFIELD BECAUSE THEIR BATTLEFRONT IS NOT KNOWN. IN FACT, THE TERRORISTS CAN CHOOSE TO ATTACK ANYWHERE, ANYTIME. UNPREDICTABILITY IS THEIR GREATEST ASSET. IT IS THEREFORE NECESSARY TO TRY TO PENETRATE THEIR MINDS RATHER THAN THEIR DEFENSES. ONLY THEN WOULD WE BE ABLE TO FIND THEM AND DEAL WITH THEM.

14. TERRORISM IN ALL ITS FORMS AND MANIFESTATIONS MUST OF COURSE BE CONDEMNED BECAUSE THE TERRORIST RESPECTS NEITHER THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE NOR THE VALUE OF PROPERTY. HOWEVER, NO AMOUNT OF INTERNATIONAL OUTRAGE AND CONDEMNATION WILL MAKE ANY IMPRESSION ON THE PERPETRATORS OF TERROR. WHAT WE NEED IS WORLDWIDE COOPERATION TO IDENTIFY THE TERRORISTS, TO FIGHT THEM AND REMOVE TERRORISM AS A CONSTANT THREAT IN OUR MIDST.

15. WE NEED TO SHARE INTELLIGENCE AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION BETWEEN OUR NATIONAL AUTHORITIES, PARTICULARLY REGARDING TERRORIST TRAVEL AND FINANCING. EARLY WARNING IS A VERY NECESSARY PART OF DISASTER PREVENTION.

16. WE MUST KNOW THE MOTIVATIONS OF TERRORISTS IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY THE ROOT CAUSES OF TERRORISM. WE MUST KNOW THE MINDS OF THE TERRORISTS AND UNDERSTAND THEIR MENTALITY. FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM TO BE EFFECTIVE AND THE RESULTS ENDURING, WE MUST TACKLE THE PROBLEM AT SOURCE. THIS COULD BE POLITICAL INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION AGAINST PEOPLES AND COUNTRIES OR A BRUTISH LIFE ENTRENCHED IN PERVASIVE POVERTY. IT COULD BE A PERVERSE DESIRE FOR IDEOLOGICAL DOMINATION. OR, IT COULD INDEED BE SOMETHING ELSE YET TO BE UNCOVERED. BUT DISCOVER THE ROOTS WE MUST IF WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT ELIMINATING THE SCOURGE OF TERRORISM FROM THIS WORLD OF OURS.

17. IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY, DISRUPT, CAPTURE OR KILL THE INDIVIDUAL TERRORIST. HOWEVER, UNLESS THE ROOT CAUSES ARE ADDRESSED AND REMOVED, NEW RECRUITS WILL TAKE THE PLACE OF THEIR LEADERS OR GROUPS DESTROYED IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THEM. AFTER ALL, TERRORISM IS NOT A NEW PHENOMENON. IT HAD MANY MANIFESTATIONS IN HISTORY. TERRORISM NOT ONLY PREDATES AL QAEDA; TERRORISM WILL ALSO OUTLIVE AL QAEDA. WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE IS NO SINGLE SOLUTION APPLICABLE TO ALL SITUATIONS.

18. FURTHERMORE, THE WEST MUST ACCEPT THAT TERRORISM IS NOT A PROBLEM AFFLICTING THE ISLAMIC WORLD ONLY. IT IS ALSO NOT A PROBLEM WHICH CAN BE DEALT WITH BY THE WEST ALONE. TERRORISM CAN ONLY BE ELIMINATED BY JOINT ACTION BETWEEN THE WEST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD. THIS WE MUST DO, FOR THE SAKE OF OUR OWN TIMES AND FOR THE SAKE OF OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

19. I HAVE SPOKEN AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. IT IS NOT MY INTENTION, HOWEVER, TO SUGGEST THAT THE ERADICATION OF TERRORISM IS THE SECRET FOR REMOVING THE ANIMOSITY AND ANTAGONISMS WHICH NOW EXIST BETWEEN THE WEST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD. THIS IS A MUCH BIGGER PROBLEM WHICH IS MORE DEEP SEATED AND PERVASIVE. IT REQUIRES HUGE INVESTMENTS IN GOODWILL TO RECTIFY. IT IS A QUESTION OF ABANDONING THE POLITICS OF FEAR AND DISTRUST. IT REQUIRES BANNING THE PREACHING OF HATRED AND INTOLERANCE.

20. BOTH THE WEST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD MUST FIND EFFECTIVE WAYS TO RENDER IRRELEVANT THE EXTREMISTS WHICH EXIST IN THEIR MIDST. WE MUST IGNORE THE IDEOLOGUES WHO PORTRAY RELIGION AS THE BOGEY FOR ALL THE POLITICAL TROUBLES IN THE WORLD. WE MUST EXPOSE THE BIGOTS WHO EXPLOIT THE POWER OF RELIGION TO FUEL THEIR OWN POLITICAL SCHEMES. WE MUST BE WILLING TO DISTINGUISH WHAT IS TRUE AND WHAT IS FALSE ABOUT THE GREAT RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD.

21. WE MUST ALSO CEASE TO DENY THE EXISTENCE OF GLARING INJUSTICES AND ARROGANCE IN THE TREATMENT OF PEOPLES AND COUNTRIES, WHICH HAS CAUSED PROFOUND ANGER AND DEEP RESENTMENT. WE MUST BE HONEST ENOUGH, AND BE BRAVE ENOUGH, TO ADMIT THAT THE UNENDING OCCUPATION AND OPPRESSION OF PALESTINE BY ISRAEL, AND THE CONTINUING DOMINATION OF IRAQ BY WESTERN POWERS ARE TWO OF THE MAIN FACTORS DIVIDING THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE WEST. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT A FINAL RESOLUTION OF THESE MAJOR PROBLEMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST WILL BE A POSITIVE TURNING POINT IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES, AND BRING ABOUT A SEA CHANGE IN WORLD AFFAIRS.

22. WE MUST FURTHERMORE BE RESOLUTE IN ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE DETERIORATION IN THE STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES IS NOT IRREVERSIBLE. THE SLIDE CAN BE ARRESTED IMMEDIATELY IF THE VOICES THAT CALL FOR DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING ARE ALLOWED TO PREVAIL. ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DIVIDE, THERE DO EXIST MANY WELL-WISHERS, FACILITATORS AND COMMUNICATORS WHO GENUINELY WISH TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN THE RACES AND RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD. ON THIS POINT, I WOULD LIKE TO REPEAT TODAY SOMETHING I HAVE ALREADY SAID SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST ON OTHER OCCASIONS SUCH AS THIS, AND IT IS AS FOLLOWS.

23. WE CAN CONTINUE TO SHOW RESTRAINT AND BE POLITE TO EACH OTHER BUT NOTHING WILL CHANGE UNLESS WE ALSO CHANGE OUR ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATIONS. WE NEED TO REMOVE OUR PREJUDICES. THE ANIMOSITY AND ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE WESTERN AND ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS WILL NOT COME TO AN END IF THERE IS A SECRET AGENDA TO CONTROL AND DOMINATE. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE WEST AND ISLAM SHOULD BE PREMISED UPON THE MORAL PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY. THE WEST SHOULD TREAT ISLAM THE WAY IT WANTS ISLAM TO TREAT THE WEST. BOTH SIDES SHOULD ACCEPT EACH OTHER AS EQUALS. RECIPROCITY, RESPECT AND EQUALITY SHOULD BE INCULCATED AND ACCEPTED AS THE NECESSARY PREREQUISITES FOR A HAPPY AND HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLES AND CULTURES. WE DO NEED TO CONTINUE TALKING AND DEBATING IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT THIS OBJECTIVE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

24. I HAD SAID AT THE BEGINNING THAT IT IS A MISPERCEPTION TO VIEW ISLAM AS AN ARAB RELIGION. HOWEVER, IT IS TRUE THAT THE ARABIC LANGUAGE HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN ISLAMIC TEACHINGS AND TRADITIONS. THIS IS BECAUSE ARABIC IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE HOLY QUR'AN. HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO, IT WAS ALSO THE LANGUAGE FOR SPREADING THE WORLD OF LEARNING, THE ARTS AND THE SCIENCES. LET ME THEREFORE CLOSE BY QUOTING AN ARAB PROVERB. IT GOES AS FOLLOWS: "WHAT COMES FROM THE LIPS REACHES THE EARS; WHAT COMES FROM THE HEART REACHES THE HEART". TO DAY, I HAVE TRIED TO SPEAK FROM MY HEART. I DO HOPE THAT IT HAS REACHED YOU AT THE SAME SPOT.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.