

**Remarks by**

**Mr. Taher Masri**

**President of the Senate of Jordan**

**To The**

**World Forum of Spiritual Culture**

**Astana, 18-20 October 2010**

**Mr. Chairman of the Senate,,**

At the outset I would like to congratulate the President and the Government of Kazakhstan on hosting the World Forum of Spiritual Culture in Astana and to thank you -- and the organizers -- for your support and hospitality.

This forum demonstrates your commitment, and that of the government of Kazakhstan, to achieving the set objectives in encouraging global dialogue and active cooperation, to meet the challenges ahead and to better serve humanity and modern mankind.

**Mr. Chairman ,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the current pace of global development and advancement in technology, the world as we know it is becoming a small village -- bringing closer together

interaction between dissimilar values, cultures and ideologies. And while globalization is making the world do things in new ways; certain values and traditions will always remain different between cultures.

These distinctions need not cause division if one would respect the culture of another no matter how different. It is seldom that I can think of a nation state over the past century that has not been a melting pot of people from different backgrounds, cultures, religions or origins. While boundaries have become nearer, it is the loss of touch with spirituality and core values that is widening the gap between peoples.

Challenges persist and humans are becoming more and more entangled in material trends that continue to drive them further away from spirituality, culture and in some instances even tradition.

We should work to disperse the clouds of doubt that developed between civilizations. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a century of conflict between nationalities. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was an era of conflict between ideologies. And while we had hoped the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be a time of dialogue and coexistence, it is most alarming to realize that we have embarked on the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the criminal terrorist attacks of September 11, which may have indeed unified the world against terrorism, but have set it on a course of confrontation between civilizations. We should work together through this forum to prevent further polarization between the North and the South ... between different cultures .... between different religions.

The tragic events of September 11 were followed by wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and expanding the conflict in Palestine just to name a few in my region. In

the Middle East, 65 % of the population is under the age of thirty. The young generation is preparing to lead. It is awaiting new opportunities to excel and is looking to find ways to share in global progress. The Middle East must move out of the conflict threat zone. King Abdullah II reiterated on numerous occasions that the single-most important step in peace is a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict with the establishment of a sovereign, independent, and viable Palestinian state ... along with a secure and recognized Israel.

Lack of a settlement, builds frustration; empowers extremism and in instances leads to terrorism.

Education is key. We should teach the younger generation how to untangle itself from materialism and understand that not everything is consumable or disposable. We should rebuild confidence in the role of

spirituality in advancing quality of life. The sustenance of modern humanity depends on the ability of future generations to get in touch with their spirituality, appreciate their distinct traditions, and uphold their core values.

It is also essential to resist forces of division that seek to spread misunderstanding and mistrust, especially among peoples of different religions. The fact is, humanity everywhere is bound together, not only by mutual interests, but by shared commandments: to love God and neighbor. This is the basis for a Common World between different cultures and religions. Jordan with the support of friends is proposing at the United Nations an annual World Interfaith Harmony Week where the world's people, in their own places of worship, could express the

teachings of their own faith about tolerance, respect for the other and peace.

We must continue to maintain our identity as Muslims and stress our core values in a positive way, as is for followers of other religions.

**Mr. Chairman ,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Globalization is taking place whether we like it or not; in fact we realize that we need globalization to advance our own values and interests, and build our defenses to help maintain our traditions and identity. Spiritual culture can help remove contradictions and divisions in order to realize positive change and instill the ideals of cooperation and nonviolence. But spiritual culture and dialogue can only be part of a greater scheme; one that recognizes that peoples' behaviors are directly

affected by their quality of life, the scale of growth and development, their standards of living, and the ability to eradicate poverty, uphold equality, enforce the rule of Law and enhance good governance. Only then can human attitudes change positively...only then will education reap tolerance... and only then will powerful ideas make a real difference.



