

13 November 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the closing of the debate on Agenda Item 45: Culture of peace**

Your Majesties,
Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Ministers
Distinguished Delegates,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Brothers and Sisters,

As we come to the close of this remarkable meeting, I am both heartened and astonished by the outpouring of appeals that we have heard over the past two days. I thank you all for contributing to this ongoing dialogue on the culture of peace.

This meeting has proven that while we do, obviously, have differences in our religions and theologies, we are very much united in our essential values. Just as important, we must apply these values if we are to survive the consequences of the convergence of man-made crises that we face at this critical historical juncture.

Religions and theologies are necessarily rooted in cultures and are thus inevitably different. We should celebrate and thank God for such diversity. While we might agree that homogenization is good for milk, it is not good for human cultures. We must defend the cultural identity of all peoples with the same determination that we must defend the bio-diversity of our planet.

At the level of values, whether faith-based or flowing from our rich ethical-philosophical traditions, we see the hand of God. There are, however, values, or rather, anti-values, that do not come from these roots. They spring from the dominant culture that foments hatred, intolerance, greed and social irresponsibility.

His Majesty, our brother the King of Saudi Arabia and Custodian of the Holy Mosques, King Abdullah ben Abdel Aziz Al Saud, expressed this very clearly, and I quote: "Every tragedy suffered in today's world is ultimately a result of the abandonment of the paramount principle enunciated by all religions and cultures: the roots of all global crises can be found in human denial of the eternal principle of justice."

We have heard calls for restoring the values of compassion and solidarity to the increasingly barren landscape of political decision-making. And speakers from all corners of the Earth have insisted that

we put people above profit as the ultimate measure of success in the increasingly heartless and bankrupt world of business.

From our brother Shimon Peres, President of Israel, we heard that we have abandoned our faith by opting for greed. He pointed out that for us to change the world, we must change ourselves first. I could not agree with him more. Referring to this meeting, he said that it was capable of beginning a movement of great importance to the world.

And we note the call by Mr. Gordon Brown, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to apply our values to ensure that we be remembered as the generation that ended illiteracy and reversed our negative impact on climate change.

We have heard from those who adhere to no particular faith, but bring messages of hope and love. For surely the values that are central to our faiths can be just as strongly felt and defended by those who are not religious.

We have heard urgent appeals to transcend our narrow self-interests as nations and as peoples, as communities and as individuals. We have heard the call to restore trust and care and solidarity in our institutions.

The message is very clear: Either we restore the timeless values of brotherhood and sisterhood or we will surely flounder in a morass of indifference and self-induced destruction, which will extend to the entire planet.

Excellencies, we have come together in the midst of a gathering perfect storm, whose intensity and destructiveness are forcing all of us to rethink the way that we are conducting ourselves as human beings.

We are aware that this storm is of our own making. And that it will take heroic measures to prevent this storm from destroying our aspirations for economic, social and spiritual well-being wherever we are in the world.

We have come together realizing that we must take responsibility for the billions of people who are living in inexcusable poverty and deprivation. Leaders have referred to the innocent millions whose lives are tipping into crisis and poverty because of irresponsibility and greed of people in far-off places. We must change this with urgency.

Yes, we have defined this moment as a turning point in human history where courageous, even heroic leadership is needed. Let us draw on the reservoirs of love and solidarity that all of us possess. Let us be courageous and heroic. I deeply believe we can.

In his statement at the beginning of this meeting, the His Majesty King Abdulla ben Abdel Aziz Al Saud, said, and I quote, "Our dialogue, conducted in a constructive manner, should, by the grace of God, revive and reinstate these lofty ideals among peoples and nations. No doubt, God willing, this

will constitute a glorious triumph of what is most noble over what is most base in human beings, and will grant mankind hope of a future in which justice, security and a decent life will prevail over injustice, fear and poverty”.

This has been such a meeting! In a couple of weeks at our meeting on financing for development in Doha, we will have a chance to show the world that we are indeed serious about making solidarity the guiding principle in our resolutions and our actions.

Thank you.