

23 January 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,  
President of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
on the Occasion of World Interfaith Harmony Week**

On 23 November 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the historic Resolution 65/5 proclaiming the first week in February to be observed annually as the World Interfaith Harmony Week. This resolution “Encourages all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world’s churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship during that week, based on love of God and love of one’s neighbour or on love of the good and love of one’s neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions.”

The importance of this reaffirmation “that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace” cannot be overstated. In our modern world, we have begun to recognize that our cultural diversity is to be treasured rather than feared. People of diverse religious and faith traditions are coming to understand that there is much to be gained by focusing on that which unites us as one human family sharing the resources of a common planet that is home to us all.

In recognition of the efforts of people of goodwill in all nations to observe the World Interfaith Harmony Week, and to highlight our commitment to the role of improved interfaith relations in achieving a global culture of peace, we will be holding a special event in the General Assembly entitled “United for a Culture of Peace Through Interfaith Harmony.” In my view, interreligious cooperation is a key component to bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means, the overarching theme for the 67th Session of the General Assembly.

We wish to commend Member States, UN agencies and civil society groups that have led the way to greater acceptance of interfaith peacemaking efforts that share the goal of ending violence in the name of religion. This is forging a new path to human security, while at the same time building partnerships to address humanitarian relief efforts, poverty reduction, sustainable development and other urgent concerns.

We recognize that lasting peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be simply legislated by governments alone. True peace must be based in reconciliation, an act of trust that requires the courage to forsake vengeance and engage in dialogue for a shared future on equal footing with those once considered enemies. This is the shift to a culture of peace that calls on all of us to reach into our hearts, and into our sacred texts and traditions, to bring forth a new spirit – a legacy of peace for generations to come.

I hope that religious communities will observe the World Interfaith Harmony Week, and take action to ensure that interfaith harmony becomes a solid pillar of the global culture of peace we are working together to build.