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MALAYSIA, ISLAM AND
THE WIDER WORLD

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by

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Dr Farhan Nizami, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to address the oxford centre for Islamic studies. I would like to record my appreciation to Dr Farhan Nizami and members of the centre for providing me this very distinguished platform. It is my hope that the centre will continue to flourish as a premier institutions for the study of the Islamic world. Malaysia will continue to support the centre in many of its initiatives, especially towards creating a greater understanding of Islam in the west.

I speak before you in many capacities. I speak first and foremost as a Muslim. I am the son of a religion teacher, himself the son of an alim. When I was young, I would attend the English school near my village in the morning. In the evenings I was taught religion in my grandfather's madrassa which still stands today. I try to walk the path of Islam as faithfully and devoutly as I can.

I speak too as the prime minister of a multi-religious nation where the majority of the people are Muslim. By the blessing of Allah, today my country is peaceful, stable, democratic and rapidly developing. People of all faiths – Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and others – live in peace and harmony, with mutual respect and tolerance for each other.

I speak also as the chairperson of the organisation of Islamic conference, or O.I.C., a grouping of 57 countries with a population of 1.4 billion people. We comprise a little more than a fifth of humanity. As chairperson of the O.I.C., it is my obligation to reflect their sentiment, their grievances and their aspirations, and to convey their message.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Muslim world has been confronted with many challenges during its fifteen centuries of existence. Like Judaism and Christianity from which it draws a common lineage, Islam was born amidst strong opposition. It prevailed, and went on to become one of the world's great religions. But it suffered permanent schisms soon after the death of the prophet Muhhamad (pbuh). Muslim governments soon also lost some of the lofty and pristine values that Islam stands for and that the early governments faithfully practised. Tyranny and oppressive rule began to creep into the Muslim political landscape.

The Arab Muslim world nevertheless scaled the heights of civilisation, culture and learning in the 8th to 11th centuries. It learnt much from the Greco-roman civilisation, enriched it, absorbed it and passed it on to Europe. Arabic became the lingua franca of the Middle East. Literacy was high compared to medieval Europe. Schools were everywhere, and universities flourished. The seeds of a questioning and self-critical culture began to take root.

Although the crusades plunged the Muslim world into deep crisis, it was still capable of remarkable achievements under Persian, Spanish, ottoman and Mughal leadership. Muslim nations then fell under the European colonial yoke. They lost their sovereignty, and their people lost their freedom. Their resources were exploited and plundered. Palestine was taken away from the Arabs, and many of its people became displaced and refugees from their own land.

Since we broke from colonial servitude, some of us have managed to perform well. Oil has been a blessing to some countries, enabling them to attain living standards they would not otherwise have been able to enjoy. Some also instituted pragmatic political, economic, social

and educational reforms.

But despite some post-colonial successes in some parts of the Muslim world, there is also much cause for dismay. The sheer weight of the problems that face the Muslim world today is tremendous. Many Muslim countries are synonymous with poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition. Some stand out because of oppression, tyranny and injustice. Globally, Muslim countries are devoid of a common voice that is taken seriously.

Only a small minority of the 57 Muslim majority countries, five to be exact, is deemed as having high human development by the U.N.D.P.. 24 countries are in the medium developing category. The remaining 28, or half the Muslim world, are classified as having low human development. Only five countries in the Muslim world enjoy a per capita G.D.P. Above \$10,000 U.S. Dollars. 30 countries have a per capita G.D.P. Of less than \$1,000 u.s. Dollars .

Islam emphasises the pursuit of knowledge. The Quran begins with the word 'iqra' or 'read'. But the acquisition of knowledge is where much of the Muslim world lags. Educational standards are low and illiteracy high in many countries, due to poverty, poor management and allocation of resources, war and conflict. In some countries more than half the adult population is illiterate.

Corruption is another major problem in the Muslim world. We fare extremely poorly in transparency international's corruption perception index. Of the 133 countries surveyed in 2003, the Muslim country with the best record could only rank 26th. Four Muslim countries occupied the last ten rankings.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have painted a picture of almost wretched conditions in the Muslim world. It is reality, and compounding this harsh reality is a global order that exacerbates our suffering. I am willing to engage in self-criticism, but that must be tempered with identifying what I feel are wanton violations of human dignity, natural justice, human rights and international law that have directly affected the Muslim world. Yes, we have ourselves to blame, but that does not absolve policies that continue to oppress, obliterate and vilify millions of Muslims around the world.

There are many instances of oppression. But the most obvious – and the one that every Muslim talks about – is Palestine. The Palestinians had their land taken away from them by the Balfour declaration, which has been aptly described as a 'promise of one nation to give to a second nation the land of a third nation'.

It is obvious to the majority of the world – as demonstrated by several United Nations general assembly resolutions – that Palestinians should be aided and supported, and Israel prevailed upon to withdraw beyond the 1967 border. Instead every issue and every argument is twisted to favour Israeli interests. The occupier is supported and armed while the Palestinians are denied the weapons to protect themselves. Israeli terrorist acts against Palestinian civilians are studiously ignored and portrayed as being in self-defence. One device to facilitate this is to deliberately confine the definition of terrorism to acts committed by sub-state or non-state groups, and exclude acts committed by states.

The sentiment of gross bias against the Muslim world does not end with the Palestinian

question. The world must never forget that Iraq was illegally invaded. The world was told before the fact that the invasion was necessary because of an imminent threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. We know today that this reason was baseless. Instead, today we are told that the invasion has made the world a safer place because Saddam has been deposed and captured. Perhaps once and, god willing, if a credible democracy, a functioning economy and security and order are restored, Iraqis may appreciate the absence of Saddam. But that end cannot justify the means.

What right does any country have to unilaterally invade another? Yes, Saddam was brutal and oppressive, but the climate of fear created by a doctrine of pre-emption and predominance is equally oppressive. It is of great concern because there seems to be no objective criteria which determines certain courses of action. Instead what we see is the practice of selective persecution on a global basis with Muslim countries bearing the brunt.

Iran is today threatened with dire consequences because it is suspected to be enriching uranium for nuclear weapons manufacture. Yet, the dominant view of the international community avoids mentioning the 200 nuclear bombs Israel is widely believed to possess in the Dimona complex. No inspections are pressed, no sanctions threatened. Certainly no attacks on Israel are advocated.

The portrayal of Islam as a religion of war and Muslims as fanatical terrorists by irresponsible and shallow broad brush strokes must also stop. A negative Islamic stereotype is not new or unique to the post-September 11th world. The negative profiling of Islam today, is reminiscent of western prejudices that were propounded by Voltaire and Francis Bacon in the 17th and 18th centuries. The underlying perception of Islam in the west today is not too far from Ernest Renan's late 19th century description of a religion that 'is the complete negation of Europe... the complete disdain of science, the suppression of civil society'.

There can be no meaningful dialogue for as long as these explicit and latent suspicions remain. To their credit, some western leaders have repeatedly stressed that this is not a war against Islam. But this cannot be sufficient when popular sentiment is driven by a sensationalist western media that focuses almost exclusively on extremist discourse. Islam is treated as a monolithic religion. The nuances of the debate within the Muslim world are totally ignored. The diversity of opinion among Muslims is unheard of. The many progressive experiments underway in Muslim societies are unreported.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have spent some time examining the critical failures of Muslim countries and also the international context in which the Muslim world finds itself. I would now like to turn to the positive developments that can be pursued in order to extricate the Muslim world from the malaise in which we find ourselves, and to encourage the west to engage in a more sincere and less patronising dialogue with us.

Looking inwards, the Muslim world's first priority is better governance, for this is the surest way to bring lasting peace, stability and prosperity to our people. In this regard, we must seek ideas and learn from best practices from all corners of the world. But the Muslim world can also find great inspiration and guidance from Islam and its own best practices. If only we rediscover the wisdom that is in Islam, we will find that it is thoroughly applicable to modern needs. It is certainly not an archaic and irrelevant vestige of a distant past.

The Islamic commitment to good governance is clearly embodied in the holy Quran. Any Muslim leader assuming power in their country should be reminded of the Quranic verse in surah an nisa verse 58: which means ‘Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice’.

Good and accountable governance was also demonstrated in the righteous conduct of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a law giver, administrator, judge and military commander. It is also instructive to look to righteous precedents such as the inauguration speech of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq as the first caliph, where he asked his followers to correct him if he erred in his decisions.

The shariah as it evolved through the centuries also gave due emphasis to moral leadership as the essential prerequisite for a government that upholds Islamic principles and values. Honesty and integrity; a passion for justice and a sense of fairness; love of the people, especially the poor, and a willingness to listen to their grievances; and a readiness to seek counsel from the wise and the learned, were some of the attributes of leadership and good governance outlined by famous Islamic thinkers such as al Farabi and al Mawardi, al Ghazzali and Ibn Khaldun.

Justice in particular figures prominently in the Islamic notion of good governance. It is because justice is so pivotal to good governance that concepts such as equality before the law and the rule of law were given so much importance in early Islamic jurisprudence. It may also be worthy of note that long before the modern era, Islamic law had already recognised the centrality of due process.

The rule of law and due process in turn are linked to yet another vital principle in Islam: the independence of the judiciary. It is significant that more than 1,400 years ago the fourth caliph, ali ibn abi talib, declared that judges should be ‘above every kind of executive pressure or influence, fear or favour, intrigue or corruption’. Indeed, a number of judges in Muslim history had defended the independence of their office even at the cost of their lives.

If the independence of the judiciary was a sacrosanct principle in Islam so was public accountability which many contemporary thinkers would regard as the cornerstone of ethical governance. Following the prophet’s example, the second caliph, umar al-katthab, ensured that every aspect of personal conduct that impinged upon the well-being of the people was subject to public scrutiny. Hence, that remarkable instance of umar seeking the permission of the people to use a bit of the medicine kept in the bait-ul-mal for his ailment.

The observance of the canon of accountability in Islam was often matched by respect for the people’s views. Morally upright caliphs accommodated opinions that were different from theirs. In fact, there is a hadith that even eulogises differences of opinion within the ummah as a sign of divine blessing. It explains why, at different points in Muslim history, there were healthy discussions and debates about religious and political matters among scholars and segments of the populace.

It is with this in mind that today we must also encourage reform and renewal in Islamic thought. I have always believed that by opening up the discursive space in the Muslim world,

we enrich our intellectual tradition and directly challenge the extremist doctrines that Islam has become synonymous with over the last few years. Muslim political leaders, scholars and intellectuals must be courageous enough to encourage, and not stifle, voices of moderation and reason. Whether one refers to these voices as modernist Islam, or progressive Islam, or even liberal Islam, I believe they have an important contribution to make to the renewal of Islamic thought.

Islam must not be ossified and fossilised by blind imitation of traditional thought and opinion. Rigid obscurantism, exclusively literalist doctrines and atavistic notions of a past ideal prevents Islam from being a religion for all time as intended by Allah. We must be open to the prospect of reform or *islah* and renewal or *tajdid*.

In this regard, I have repeatedly called for the relevance of contemporary *ijtihad* which is the effort a Muslim jurist or scholar makes in order to deduce a law or opinion, which is not self-evident, from the sources of the *sharia*. The problems that contemporary Muslim societies are confronted with today are not the problems of the 6th century. Political institutions, economic systems and societal structures are different from what existed during the time of prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the pious caliphs and the great imams and scholars of Islam. People are organised under nation states today and not alliances of tribes. The world economic system has increased in depth and breadth, and is increasingly interlinked. Science is constantly pushing the boundaries of human achievement. Islamic thought must not be isolated from these changes.

The contemporary Islamic scholar, Yusuf al-Qaradawi acutely recognises the necessity for renewal in Islamic thought and has voiced his fear that modern Islamic movements will oppose the ‘free thinkers among its children’ and close ‘the door to renewal and *ijtihad*, confining itself to only one type of thinking that does not accept any other viewpoints’.

The increasing relevance of contemporary *ijtihad* must also be accompanied by a renewed emphasis towards the understanding of *al-maqasid al-shariah* or the objectives of Islamic law. Islamic legal and intellectual thought cannot only preoccupy itself with conformity to the letter of the divine text. The *shariah* must not only be seen as a set of black letter laws but also as a system of values, where the specific rules and laws are manifestations of those overriding values.

The science of *al-maqasid al-shariah* was an important but often neglected development in Islamic history. Its development by thinkers such as Hujjatul Islam al-Imam al-Ghazzali and al-Shatibi was motivated out of a similar concern that we face today – that Islamic thought must concern itself with the broader objectives of our religion and not solely on its prohibitive aspects or exclusively literal interpretations.

Al-Imam al-Ghazzali’s specific identification of five main objectives of the *sharia*, namely life, intellect, faith, property and progeny is relevant today. Other thinkers have since added to that list justice, human dignity and even economic development. The science of *al-maqasid* allows Muslims to focus on a more fundamental notion of religion, freeing us from excessive literalism and legalism. It is through this that I believe Muslims can find answers to contemporary problems from within our faith.

By understanding the al-maqasid al-shariah and by placing it as a basis for contemporary ijtihad, we are also rekindling a tradition of reason and intellectual inquiry, which will in turn lead to a culture of learning among Muslims. The great Egyptian reformer Muhammad ‘Abduh aptly observed at the end of the 19th century that ‘the Quran directs us, enjoining rational procedure and intellectual enquiry into the manifestations of the universe, and as far as may be, into its particulars, so as to come by certainty in respect of the things to which it guides. It forbids us to be slavishly credulous, and for our stimulus points the moral of people who simply followed their fathers with complacent satisfaction and were finally involved in an utter collapse of their beliefs and their own disappearance as a community’.

‘Abduh’s observations could easily be based on verse 190 from surah ali-imran in the Quran: which means ‘behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternations of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding’.

The ulul al-bab or men of understanding the Quran refers to are people of reason, of science, of philosophy and of technology. To me the verse represents a categorical imperative for Muslims to unshackle our minds and, further, to acquire and master the sciences and technology in order to stay relevant in the modern world.

Ladies and gentlemen, as far as Malaysia is concerned, I believe we have tried to walk the middle path of moderation. We have committed ourselves to the Quranic exhortation in surah al-baqara verse 143: which means ‘thus have we made you an ummah justly balanced’. A divine reminder for Muslims to observe and practice moderation, and to avoid the extremes.

While we recognise that rituals are important, that the written word of the Quran is sacred, we also believe that as Muslims we must also understand the spirit and ultimate objectives of our religion. We also believe that rituals alone will not make us good Muslims. We are enjoined to find success in this world and in the hereafter. We must therefore never forget about progress in this world.

Over the past two decades, we have seen the rapid rise of Islamist movements. Many of these groups have become political and participate in the legitimate political frameworks of their respective countries. Some of these groups have remained apolitical, concentrating instead on social and dakwah, or missionary, activities. And, unfortunately, some have taken to violence.

Those that work within their country’s political framework have become synonymous with, what is referred to as, political Islam. They participate in politics, yet they envision a goal which may be very different from the political system in which they participate.

In my country, the opposition pan-Malaysia Islamic party has politicised religion to the extent that it claims a monopoly on Islam. They canvass for votes by telling villagers that they would be assured of heaven if they vote for their party. They have been known to decree members and supporters of my party as infidels.

During the general elections in 1999, the Islamic party saw its biggest gains ever. It tripled its representation in parliament and took control of an oil-rich state. Faced with a strengthened Islamist opposition, some in my party – which promotes an inclusive and progressive Islam –

thought that we had to become more Islamist than the opposition. This was, of course, a very dangerous slippery slope. I believed that Malaysian political choices were influenced to some extent on the issue of religiosity, but what was more important to the voters were good governance and broad-based economic growth.

When I took over in October of last year, I embarked on some modest reforms in order to address the grievances which led to our erosion of support in 1999. I took a hard line on corruption. I ordered an extensive reform program for the police force. I stressed on the need to have credible and independent institutions of government like the judiciary. I embarked on balancing the budget and redirecting government spending on needy socioeconomic programs. I emphasized on the need to develop the agricultural sector so that the rural areas – which are predominantly Muslim – would not be left behind.

By the grace of Allah, the electorate responded. My party was returned with its biggest majority since independence and we were able win back the state we lost in 1999. We have demonstrated that we can roll back the Islamists, not by engaging in a ‘holier-than-thou’ contest, but by addressing the root causes of anger and frustration. I postulate that the issues that we addressed are similar to those in many other Muslim countries, and by tackling these issues, Islamists can be overcome in a democratic contest.

But there was an Islamic dimension to all of this. It cannot be denied that Islam has become an increasingly powerful imperative for Muslims to act today. Muslims find it compelling and obligatory to act in the name of Allah and for the sake of the religion. Sadly, this great imperative has resulted in actions that Islam prohibits and condemns. Killing innocent people and bombing harmless targets are all acts that have been misguidedly committed in the name of Allah.

It demonstrates, however, how powerful an imperative religion can be. In Malaysia, we believe that this compulsion to act because of religion can be directed towards good, towards progress, towards development. We call this approach Islam hadhari, literally civilisational Islam, or an approach towards a progressive Islamic civilisation. It is an approach that values substance and not form. It is an approach that seeks to make Muslims understand that progress is enjoined by Islam. It is an approach that is compatible with modernity and yet firmly rooted in the noble values and injunctions of Islam. It posits ten fundamental principles which Muslim countries must demonstrate:

- 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. Protection of the rights of minority groups and women;
- viii. Cultural and moral integrity;
- ix. Safeguarding natural resources and the environment;
- x. Strong defence capabilities

With these principles to guide us, with our consistent and continuing record of improving

governance for the people, and by practising and observing a high commitment to public accountability, Malaysia offers a modest working model of renewal, reform and, perhaps, renaissance in the Muslim world. I do not pretend that Malaysia has all the answers to the many problems of the Muslim world. I am also aware that different countries need different solutions to their problems. But I do believe that Malaysia can be a showcase of what it is to be a successful, modern Muslim country.

Ladies and gentlemen, Malaysia chairs the O.I.C. At a very critical juncture for the Muslim world. I believe that there are an increasing number of Muslim countries in the O.I.C. That recognise the shortcomings and failures in the Muslim world. Some are embracing the reforms that I have spoken of. Initiatives are being made towards good governance and an intellectually more open and vibrant ummah. But these steps cannot be taken in isolation. Reforms in the Muslim world must be accompanied by visible and meaningful changes to the foreign policies of key western countries.

If the policies of these countries remain as dogmatic and manichean as they have been, almost mirroring the hard line stance of some extremists in the Muslim world, then those of us who want reform, renewal and progress will lose out. If the dominant western policy remains unchanged, it will harden attitudes in the Muslim world. Those who want to carve a moderate space in the middle will be labelled apologists and, worse, apostates. The extremists on both sides will drive our civilisations apart and the twain may never meet.

The Muslim world does not want lip service from the west that this is not a war against Islam. The time for action is overdue. First, the war on terrorism must recognise and address the root causes of terrorism like the Palestinian problem. The west must acknowledge the powerful emotional pull that Palestine has on Muslims. Second, is to address the abject conditions in which the majority of Muslims live in today. There has been no genuine articulation, let alone action, from the west towards promoting trade, investments and capacity building in the Muslim world. Third, as I mentioned in my address to the United Nations general assembly earlier this week, is to strengthen multilateralism and reform the U.N. So that it genuinely reflects the views of the majority of its members.

But even before addressing any of these issues, the west needs to understand something about the Muslim world. I once debated with a senior official from the united states about the need to address what I call the root causes of terrorism. The official told me that it was not important because hijackers on September 11th were mostly well-educated, upper middle class Muslims. I was told that they were not poor neither were they from palestine, so the two issues did not motivate them.

What the west needs to learn about the Muslim world is, notwithstanding the occasional disunity among O.I.C member countries, Muslims see ourselves as a collective ummah. Unlike western individualism, Muslims have a strong sense of fraternity as a community of believers. This means empathy. This is why Muslims who are not affected by poverty or who have nothing to do with Palestine feel so strongly about this issue. This is why without addressing the root causes, the war against terrorism will not succeed.

As chair of the o.i.c., Malaysia will continue to support, as we have since the September 11th attacks, the war against terrorism. We will condemn terrorist acts committed by Muslims. We

will continue to confront those who claim to fight in the name of Islam but are not worthy to be called Muslims. We will encourage reforms in the Muslim world. But at the same time, Malaysia will continue to use our resources and goodwill towards pressing for substantive changes in the way the world works. What is more important, however, is a willingness for the west to meet us half way and demonstrate that their policies can change accordingly.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have spoken about the problems and I have pointed the way in which I believe the Muslim world and the west should proceed. Speeches by prime ministers normally end here. But today, I want to offer something a little more. I want to offer a specific commitment from my country in moving the process along, so I ask for a little more of your time.

For the remainder of our term as chair of the O.I.C., I am committing my government to three key areas. The first is to establish Malaysia as a centre for conflict resolution. Not enough work is being done formally in Muslim world in trying to resolve conflicts. While I support initiatives towards civilisational dialogue, I believe it will be more meaningful if the commonalities of principles and ideals among and within civilisations are matched with measures to build confidence and secure peace in conflict areas.

This initiative should not be confined to conflict areas in the Muslim world, but also to other nations in the developing world. Since peace is at the heart of the Islamic faith, I believe that we should demonstrate our commitment to peace in a formal, structured and institutionalised manner. We will work closely with conflict resolution centres in the west to learn from them so that Malaysia will be able to use our goodwill in the Muslim and developing world to seek lasting, sustainable resolutions to conflicts.

Second, I would like Malaysia to take the lead in energising trade and services in the Muslim world. At the moment intra-trade between O.I.C. Member countries is worth 800 billion u.s. Dollars, which is only 6-7% of total world trade. If trade and investments are seen as necessary ingredients for development, we want to encourage the rich capital available in some Muslim countries to be allocated and invested in potential growth markets in the Muslim world.

In particular, Malaysia will be focused on the niche areas of halal products and Islamic financial services that are of great potential. The global halal food market has been estimated to be worth 150 billion U.S. Dollars a year. If more of the 1.8 billion Muslim consumers world-wide can be tapped into, the halal food market can grow to more than 560 billion u.s. Dollars a year.

Similarly, Islamic financial services is another sector with tremendous growth potential. With currently over 250 billion U.S. Dollars worth of Islamic assets under management and a further 400 billion u.s. Dollars in Islamic financial and equity investments being made, the numbers are not insignificant. We are estimating a 20-30% rate of growth for Islamic financial instruments per annum, with many customers and clients coming from non-Muslim individual and institutions.

Third, I would like to offer Malaysia as the focal point for promoting a more open and diverse Islamic discourse. Our universities will work together with institutions around the

world, such as the oxford centre, to promote a critical dialogue that needs to take place within the Muslim world. As much as it is necessary for Muslims to find common ground with people of other faiths, we must also open up the discourse within the ummah.

Malaysia will invite scholars of Islam from all over the world to initiate the process of intellectual reform and renewal. This will not be easy. We may initially be opposed by those who believe that they and only they can participate in religious discourse. It is for this reason that this effort must not be exclusivist in nature. While I believe that progressive or modernist thinkers must be given the space and opportunity to propagate their views, I believe it must be done within the context of a dialogue within Islam involving those with more conservative or literalist leanings.

Commentators in the west who have picked up on the nuances of this debate in the Muslim world have categorised it as a 'battle' within Islam between the moderates and the conservatives. I would rather fashion it as a dialogue. A 'battle' over who would claim or reclaim ownership over Islamic discourse would not benefit anyone in the Muslim world. It would become a zero-sum game. Instead, we must get scholars who are trained in the traditions to interact with scholars trained in the modern disciplines in an open environment in order to produce a lively and constructive debate.

With apologies to those who identify themselves on either side of the so-called divide, I am reminded of what the famous Iranian sociologist Ali Shariati said, 'the tragedy is that, on the one hand, those who have controlled our religion over the past two centuries have transformed it into its present static form and, on the other hand, our enlightened people who understand the present age and the needs of our generation and time, do not understand religion'.

While I do not agree entirely with Shariati's characterisations, his sentiment is sensible in that what is needed in the Muslim world is a meeting of minds in order to expand the space for debate and discourse. It is my hope that this initiative will find a network of similar experiments around the world, so that its objective can be multiplied to as many countries, reaching as many Muslims as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen, I end with hope that Islam will flourish once again with the rise of great Muslim civilisations that will do justice to teachings of our faith. I also end with the hope that the Muslim world and the west can overcome this turbulent period together; that we find courage in ourselves to make the necessary changes to our policies and within our societies. Let the future not speak of bloody borders, but of equal alliances, fair trade and scientific collaboration between us. I leave you with what the Quran speaks on goodwill among god's children from surah al-hujurat verse 13.

'O mankind! We created you from a single pair of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, not that ye may despise each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is he who is most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things'. Thank you.