



*Paper by*

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*On:*

**Promoting Cultural Pluralism and Peace through  
Inter-Regional and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue**

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*All praise be to Allah, peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad,  
his family and his companions*

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

It is my pleasure to address you today on the theme of **“Promoting Cultural Pluralism and Peace through Inter-Regional and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue”**.

But allow me, first of all, to express my thanks to Mr Ilyas Umakhanov, Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, for inviting me to take part in this important meeting.

In the course of this paper, I will address three key topics, namely:

- **Cultural pluralism.**
- **Dialogue among cultures, civilizations and followers of religions.**
- **Impact of dialogue, in the context of cultural pluralism on the establishment of world peace.**

Cultural pluralism is a constant feature of human societies. People have different cultural orientations and backgrounds, in the same way as they have different beliefs, races and languages. Being a natural trait, difference generates pluralism in all aspects of life, and is known

in international literature as cultural diversity and described by UNESCO as “creative”.

Cultural pluralism reflects the national identities of people and nations; the more diverse identities are, the more varied cultures will be. This will accordingly give rise to a number of cultural, civilizational and spiritual specificities, which represent the special features of belonging to a community with a unique identity.

Therefore, we are dealing with three main contents, namely:

- **Identity.**
- **Diversity,**
- **Pluralism.**

The “UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity” adopted by the 31<sup>st</sup> session of UNESCO General Conference, held in Paris, in November 2001, provides accurate explanations of the concept of cultural pluralism with different identities. Under the heading of cultural diversity as the common heritage of humanity, the Declaration states that “Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind”.

In a context of increasingly diverse societies marked by the growing scope of cultural diversity, leading to cultural pluralism in its broadest sense, it is necessary to ensure a harmonious interaction, along with the will to coexist among individuals and groups with

plural and diverse cultural identities. Hence, the importance of inclusive policies favoring integration of all groups and their involvement in public life as a guaranty of social cohesion, a vital civil society and everlasting peace.

Against this backdrop, respect for cultural pluralism is a significant input into cultural diversity. Being contingent upon the existence of a democratic framework, cultural pluralism facilitates cultural exchange, and encourages creativity as an enriching component of public life; and hence its political dimension

Moreover, cultural diversity, as agent of development, expands the range of opportunities available to each individual. It is also a driving force of development, not only from the vantage point of economic growth, but also as a prerequisite for a sound emotional, affective, moral and spiritual life.

Cultural pluralism also requires dialogue as a means for understanding and rapprochement among cultures and civilizations, and for peaceful coexistence among peoples and ethnicities. Transversal dialogue is essential to addressing challenges arising from conflict of interests and the instrumentalization of ethnic differences for dubious purposes.

If we look into Islamic heritage, of which an important part originated in Central Asia, scrutinizing the intents of Islam and the

contents of the Arab Islamic culture, and reviewing the contributions of this heritage to human civilizations, we will find that the Islamic civilization abounds with a rich and diverse cultural heritage that was founded on dialogue, rapprochement and coexistence among followers of religions, madhahibs and races. Indeed, this diversity stems from Muslims' interactions, creativity and openness to the human civilizations and cultures that existed at the time. They were open-minded in dealing with people from different religions, as they embraced the positive side of their respective cultures, lived together in harmony and encouraged them to promote free thought and creativity in the different fields of knowledge. As a result, scientists, intellectuals, philosophers and poets were all bound by a relation of fraternity and fellowship, and worked together to advance science and other fields of knowledge.

Allah Almighty created people as different, in terms of languages, races and colors. This is what is commonly referred to by 'cultural pluralism'. This very concept of difference is mentioned to in the Holy Quran: **“O men, We created you from a male and female, and formed you into nations and tribes that you may recognise each other. He who has more integrity has indeed greater honour with God. Surely God is all-knowing and well-informed.”** Difference is Allah's established rule, and Allah made it this way to enable people to get acquainted with each other, and exchange knowledge in order to

pave the way for dialogue, regardless of religion, gender, language, color, ethnicity or region.

Allah also says in the Holy Quran, **“Among other signs of His is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variety of your tongues and complexions. Surely there are signs in this for those who understand.”** Therefore, only through dialogue can we foster mutual acquaintance and understanding among cultures, civilizations and followers of religions. Dialogue is the choice of the wise and champions of peace, shared values and world security.

Allah also says, **“But if your Lord had pleased He could have made all human beings into one community of belief. But they would still have differed from one another.”** The intended meaning in this verse refers to differences in religion, morals and deeds. The divine wisdom has ordained that people be different, which is a blessing many people are not aware of.

**Based on our field experience and academic expertise in this connection, we affirm that dialogue, in this deep and comprehensive sense, is the choice of sagacious persons that ultimately leads to the fulfillment of noble goals which elevate Man, create progress and build the future.** Moreover, given its cardinal importance as a prerequisite of stable human life, dialogue has an impact on building world peace. No real peace can be

established and edify the new human civilization without a multilevel dialogue among political leaders; intellectual, cultural, and creative elites; and religious leaders, peace, for those are makers of peace who pave the way for the elimination of the causes of tension among nations and peoples, and provide the appropriate conditions for understanding, reconciliation, tolerance and concord.

In the same vein, it is worth stressing that serious and constructive dialogue among cultures, civilizations and followers of religions contributes immensely to promoting world peace, spreading the values of peaceful coexistence, and a culture of justice and peace and entrenching the principles of citizenship, democracy and good governance. This dialogue can also lead to profound mutations in international relations, and redress the current disruptions in global affairs, readjust the power balances at all levels, so as to improve the state of our world, and establish security and peace.

**While cultural pluralism is a distinctive feature of humanity, interregional and interethnic dialogue is the most important element in peaceful coexistence based on the principles of democracy and human citizenship. It is the essential prelude to building a new world free of wars and crises to serve the supreme interests of all peoples.**

Today, more than any time before, dialogue has proved a vital necessity. Civil wars and the ongoing crises in the Middle East and West and North Africa region; and the murder and racial and religious displacements as is the case in Myanmar where, according to Human Rights Watch, 288 Rohingya villages were torched and tens of thousands people were displaced or killed; all these are all the result of the blind fanaticism and bitter hatred. If constructive dialogue had prevailed in these regions on many levels, and cultural and religious pluralism had been properly used to promote interregional and interethnic dialogue and among governments and peoples, we would not have faced these appalling catastrophes. More importantly, if the governments of the world states had engaged in a positive, earnest and effective dialogue, the Security Council would not have failed in fulfilling the mission it was originally created for: maintaining world peace and security.

I hope that the world comes back to its senses and that the will of good will triumph over evil tendencies so that the world becomes fairer, more secure and more peaceful.

Thank you for your attention.