

**ADDRESS OF HIS EMINENCE
METROPOLITAN EMMANUEL OF FRANCE**

**World Conference on Dialogue
The importance of Dialogue in Contemporary Multicultural Society**

Madrid, Spain

Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Participants,

First of all, please allow me to congratulate the organizers of this important initiative, and especially express my gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques of Islam, King Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz Al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the Muslim World League. Such conferences highlight the need we all have to communicate with one another despite our differences in creed. Please allow me also to extend my warmest congratulations to His Majesty, King Juan Carlos of Spain and the hospitable land of the kingdom of Spain for the organization of this important event. Our multicultural world together with its religious pluralism has brought us all together and the only way we will be able not only to peacefully coexist, but also to understand each other, is by listening to one another. Therefore, it is a great pleasure and honour to address all of you here today and extend

the greetings of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, as well as of the World Council of Churches, an international organization of Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant churches worldwide, both of whom I represent here today.

Interreligious dialogue has been at the top of the pastoral concern and agenda of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for a long time. The Orthodox Church, and in particular the Ecumenical Patriarchate, for years has shown its dedication and support of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the possibility of the coexistence of the peoples who come from different cultural traditions. The same applies of course to the World Council of Churches that continuously works for the promotion of interreligious dialogue throughout the world.

There are certain circles in the world today which believe that churches and religions should have no say whatsoever in society and that in religions lies the source of conflicts on an international level. We cannot deny the fact that there are people who wish to use and abuse religion as a source of conflict. As His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew said, addressing the plenary of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, "It is well known that

the inhabitants of our planet confess many religions, and that on many occasions a variety of tendencies and denominations have developed within each religion, at many times with contradictory beliefs. It is also known from history that often in the past, and on certain occasions even in our times, religious reasons were put forth to provoke individuals, or even entire peoples, to warfare or to enliven the militancy of those involved. However, we at least – the people of so-called western civilization – have been convinced that pure religious faith in itself does not find any pleasure in engaging its followers in warfare and conflicts with the faithful of other religions, for the truth does not walk along either with militant power nor with numerical, or any other, superiority. “The truth is known through the Word and the personal experience of it in a pure and selfless heart.” Let us not forget the statement of the 1992 Berne Declaration, the 1994 Bosphorus Declaration and the 2001 Brussels Declaration that “a crime committed in the name of religion is a crime against religion.”

Our deep and abiding spirituality stands in stark contrast to the secularism of modern politics. The failure of anthropocentric ideologies has left a void in many lives - the frantic pursuit of the future has

sacrificed the stability of the past. Communities of faith can balance secular humanism and nationalism with spiritual humanism and ecumenism - and we can temper the mindless pursuit of modernity with our own healthy respect for tradition. But we can only do this if we are united in the spirit of the one God, "Creator of all things visible and invisible": Christians, Jews and Muslims alike, as well as all other religions and communities of faith who are present here. And although we cannot deny our differences, neither can we deny the need for alliance and teamwork to help lead our world away from the bloody abyss of extreme nationalism and intolerance. For it is precisely when we disagree that we have the greatest opportunity to demonstrate tolerance.

Furthermore, allow me to highlight several points that manifest our guidelines for interreligious dialogue in general. We believe that:

1. religions are not and should be not at the disposal of peoples to disturb the heavenly peace of God with the unacceptable hysteria leading to warfare on earth;
2. religions are not willing to ignore their teachings regarding the unity of mankind in order to serve recent ideologies of division and social conflicts;

3. religions are not willing and are not at the disposal of those who believe that they should replace exegesis of their teachings on peace and justice in the world for the sake of contemporary ideologies, such as “war of all against all”;
4. religions are willing, through the means of interreligious dialogue, to find ways to serve together with more efficacy and responsibility the suffering humanity of our times;
5. religions are willing to bring together their contributions for educational programs which will promote the mutual respect and sincere understanding among peoples of different cultures and religions in order to progressively overcome the unhealthy phenomena of blind fanaticism and religious intransigence;
6. religions are willing to collaborate within the context of the contemporary ecumenical dialogue in order to defend peace, social justice, and human rights in the relations among peoples regardless of their religions, nationalities, races, social status or other kinds of discrimination;

7. religions are willing to support the governments of their peoples and the international organizations for a better understanding of the fundamental principles for the peaceful coexistence of all peoples.

In a culturally diverse Europe it is vital that we engage in authentic and sincere dialogue, such as this one, built on respect for the dignity of every human person created – as we Christians firmly believe – in the image and likeness of God. The faithful of all religions manifest their obedience to the Creator, who wishes all people to live in the dignity that the Creator has granted them. Inter-religious challenges are part not only of Europe's multi-faith societies, but of multi faith societies around the globe, in which we seek to advocate and protect the dignity of the individual. Let us all keep in mind our common Abrahamic roots, as well as the common desire of all religions to safeguard our world, so that we can realize a future worthy for the generations to come, all of us together, regardless of our different religions and cultural backgrounds. Let us all stand united in the face of our globalized world.

Thank you very much.