



Fifth Annual Interfaith Dialogue

Love your neighbour

Remarks by Ambassador Vaqif Sadiqov

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- It is my honour to address today's meeting and reflect on one of the foundations that many faiths have in common – “Love the neighbour”. The number of distinguished participants in this event is a demonstration of the importance ascribed to the World Interfaith Harmony Week, established at the initiative put forward by H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan at the UN General Assembly in 2010.
- Need to consider different levels of relations: a human person and a religion, religion in a family, religion in a community, interstate relations.
- Despite differences between the religions, their commonality outweighs. It should be no surprise that the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim teachings are consistent. All major religions – Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism share the same values of humanity and respect, and teach the importance of loving neighbour. That is a straightforward consequence of all major religions having the same basis, namely the worship of the one true God.
- In Christianity, Jesus said that “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”. The Torah also states “Love

your neighbor as yourself, and not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor". Holy Quran puts neighbours in line with the parents calling to, and I quote: "do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbour from among your own people, and the neighbour who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom you rightfully possess".

- But is it really simple to love your neighbour as much as you love yourself? We claim that human beings and societies they set up should be generous, ethical, fair, kind and peaceful.
- Many societies face difficulties in relationships with neighbours. In today's globalized world it is becoming even more complicated with the increase in the number of refugees and migrants, forced to flee their homes and find shelter in new societies. It becomes more difficult "to love the neighbour", as certain societies, acting with prejudice "contribute" to the rise of the anti-refugee and anti-migrant sentiments, especially if those practice another religion and cultural behaviour.
- A common response to these challenges would be through awareness raising, media coverage, educational programs, school curriculum, etc. Each one of these ideas can succeed. But I would also recommend that these be supplemented with interpersonal relationships.
- Interfaith dialogue is often viewed as the task of religious leaders only. But in a globalized world we need to move away from the idea that interfaith dialogue can be left to practitioners or experts alone. It is in the face of our neighbours of other religions that we come to know these religions in their human form. And it is these face-to-face encounters that provide opportunities for us to learn more about the religions.

- This has historically been experience in my country, where Muslims, Jewish people and Christians have been neighbouring and peacefully coexisting together in harmony. Where one can witness Muslim mosques, Jewish synagogues and Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches, as well as other religious centers functioning besides each other. It is these types of friendships that create immense opportunities for perceiving and understanding other religions and cultures. Religiously plural societies flourish to the benefit of the common good.

- Good neighbourly relations between states is also crucial in the interstate relations, in ensuring peace and stability and sustainable development in the regions. The Preamble of the United Nations Charter pledged the resolve of the peoples of the world to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite the strength to maintain international peace and security. But unfortunately, the global neighbourhood we have in this volatile world is far from ideal and has many imperfections.

- The United Nations system is criticized these days. Many problems: ongoing conflicts, violations of human rights, economic inequality, migration, refugees, internal displacement, etc. On the other hand, we do not have a substitute for the United Nations. In 1945 the United Nations were united against a common enemy – Nazism. And what makes us united today?

- The emerging global neighbourhood is forging new bonds of friendship and interest, but in some cases it is also creating new tensions. We still witness the cases of not adhering to the principles of UN Charter, when some countries not only do not support, but destroy good neighbourly relations, which undermines peaceful coexistence in the regions. Neighbourhood ethics, mutual respect, territorial integrity, sovereignty and non-intervention are among the norms and values that should guide the world. As the Golden Rule that can be found in all religions says, people should treat others in the way that they would wish themselves to be treated.