



Commemorative address of Reverend Professor Fadi Daou, President of Adyan Foundation
On the occasion of the reception by Adyan of the 35th Niwano Peace Prize
Tokyo, May 9, 2018

Honorable Audience
Brothers and Sisters,

A strong feeling of global communion inhabits me, while I stand here before you to receive on behalf of Adyan Foundation and its community the 35th Niwano Peace Prize. Peace cannot be divided. Peace is one, and it is the way of uniting our divided lives and humanity. By choosing Adyan as the winner of the Niwano Peace Prize, you not only honor the mission and the work of Adyan Foundation in strengthening coexistence in diverse societies, and in promoting reconciliation and spiritual solidarity, but also you recognize the deep invisible bounds that exist between you and us and with every peacemaker on this earth. We indeed are all companions in the same journey of peace, which is the future of our human family. Thus, with my colleagues, we came to Japan from the small country of Lebanon, and from the far and wounded Middle-East, to thank you for identifying in and offering for strangers like us the deep bounds of brotherhood and solidarity. Therefore, we consider ourselves, not a mere name added to the long honorable list of the recipients of the prestigious Niwano Peace Prize, but a new brother/sister entering this beautiful global family of peacemakers. Although each one of us works for peace separately, and in different ways and contexts, yet by doing this, we collectively serve and nourish the unique soul of our humanity, and build its common future.

With these feelings of communion and solidarity, I would like to thank Niwano Peace Foundation, the Chairperson of its Board of Directors Dr. Hiroshi Niwano, as well as the members of the Niwano Peace Prize International Selection Committee, for their trust in Adyan Foundation, recognizing that its mission and work significantly contribute to furthering the cause of world peace through interreligious cooperation. We are honored and humbled by this recognition. As Nelson Mandela one day said “a person does not become a freedom fighter in the hope of winning awards”, we also consider that our work for peace and unity, despite all challenges and dangers we encounter, is our duty, and the source of meaning of our humanity. By receiving the Prize we don't hide our pride, but we also and mainly experience the responsibility to continue this mission, with its daily and simple details, to ensure that the light of humanity won't vanish from any heart, and that the hearts' communion will bring the sunshine of peace.



Inspired by the example of the founder and first president of the lay Buddhist organization Rissho Kosei-kai, Nikkyo Niwano, we do believe with you that “peace is not merely an absence of conflict among nations, but a dynamic harmony in the inner lives of people as well as in our communities, nations and the world.” Peace hence is not an activity reserved to some experts. Peace is the responsibility of every human being, and especially of every believer. Peace is a life journey that we approach in Adyan through our slogan that says: “Diversity builds Unity”. This slogan reflects the foundation’s spirit which ensure that only by recognizing and enabling diversity, we can build authentic and sustainable unity and honor human dignity. Therefore the three core values that hold, in our view, this peace journey are: Diversity, Solidarity and Human Dignity. Yet, unfortunately peace is not a peaceful journey. It’s rather a daily struggle, facing deviations from these values and healing humanity from its sicknesses. I would like to mention three of these challenges, and share with you how together we are called to face them, while building peace and unity.

Dear Brothers and Sisters

First, where there is no diversity, there is no peace. Instead there are domination, discrimination, exclusion, and oppression. Those who want to build peace without recognizing diversity, they finish by creating unfair and hegemonic situations, and generate sufferings and violence. One of the biggest threats to the world today is extremism. In fact Extremists are those who see the world according to their sole image, and refuse to see truth, beauty and reality outside their ideological realm. Today, our world is indeed sick of different forms of **extremism**: religious, ethnic, cultural, ecological, nationalistic and ideological. When diversity is denied, men become the enemy of life, including their own one. The whole world is still under the shock of the atrocities recently committed by Daesh (ISIS) in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the world. It’s a deep wound in the soul of our humanity when we witnessed the killing of people and the destruction of churches, temples, and mosques, as well as archeological and cultural heritage, in the name of God. It’s also a betrayal of human’s soul when cultural differences, or economic privileges, are used as an argument to close the doors in front of refugees and to exclude and discriminate ethnic or religious minorities, or to abuse vulnerable people.

We are today called more than ever to become “global citizens”, in the sense of holding a shared responsibility towards each other’s and towards the environment. But we cannot be global, in the meaning of encompassing and embracing human and environmental causes, if we are not inclusive. This why, we developed at Adyan Foundation the concept of “**inclusive citizenship**” to contribute in healing the world from extremism, sectarianism and populism. It’s a cultural, educational, and political approach of making diversity builds unity.



The late Pope Saint John Paul II, former head of the Catholic Church, saw in the Lebanese experience of coexistence a model for the world, when he said: “Lebanon is more than a country, it’s a message of freedom and an example of pluralism for East and West.” Others advocate for Lebanon to become a World center for dialogue between cultures and religions. Thus, I receive this Peace Prize, not only on behalf of Adyan, but also on behalf of Lebanon, so that the country regains confidence in its internal and global civilizational mission, where coexistence is the beautiful synonym of peace.

Despite all current wars and conflicts in the Middle-East, we are also glad to share with you that the young generation in the multicultural and multi-religious Arab countries, is eager to embrace diversity and be agents for coexistence and inclusive citizenship. More than 23 Million of them used our online Media Platform for Pluralism, called “Taadudiya” for its first year; and hundreds of Trainers in Lebanon and 12 other Arab countries are spreading the values of citizenship and coexistence among tens of thousands in their societies. With these youth, we firmly believe that the sun of peace is just here behind the clouds of injustice and violence. And the clouds always don’t last.

Secondly, because peace it’s a struggle for justice and common good, it can’t coexist with this second world’s sickness that is **indifference**. We are fortunate to live in an era where great achievements were accomplished for our humanity. It’s impressive to see the scientific, medical and technological progress done in the last century. It’s even amazing to notice how much we are currently connected through the revolution of social communication. Yet, we all know how much our world is still suffering from wars, conflicts, starvation, exploitation, etc. It seems that we can be at the same time globally connected through satellite and internet, exposed to the global information, and still extremely isolated within our own bubble. Hence, we very much lack to be aware of our interconnectedness and our responsibility towards each other. Even for some people, religion can be used as a segregating bubble that isolates them in a peaceful mindset and unfortunately nourishes a kind of spiritual egoism and irresponsible indifference.

Since its foundation, Adyan has worked to move interreligious dialogue from formal and apologetic debates, to a common commitment based on what we name “**Religious Social Responsibility**”. It is important that dialogue constitutes a platform for mutual understanding, helping in overcoming stereotypes and prejudices, and for bridge building and cross-communal relations. However, it’s even more important today, for the credibility of dialogue and of religions themselves, to become a platform for common commitment to uphold together the just causes of humanity.



Religious Social responsibility pushes believers from different backgrounds to serve together the persons in need, to defend their rights and dignity, and to work as partners for peace and reconciliation. Believers cannot seek peace and good only for themselves or their own community. Religions hold universal mission, and so they have to demonstrate that what they promise is not exclusive. When our global and even local challenges are common, why we need to insist on working separately, and sometimes working in competition. Humanity and human vulnerability are not and should not be the field for interreligious competition. Human vulnerability is and should always be the opportunity for all persons and especially believers, to join their compassionate efforts to serve and love their brothers and sisters in humanity. I know that compassion is an essential value in Buddhism as well as in other Asiatic spiritualities. Similarly, in the Islamic tradition, it is clearly said in a hadith for the Prophet Mohamed that the closer to God is the best servant for mankind, regardless its religion. In Jesus teachings, it is as well clear that the way to love and serve God is the service rendered to the vulnerable humans.

As a response to the dramatic situation of the Syrian population affected by this terrible lasting war, Adyan gathered experts and religious leaders from different Christian and Muslim denominations, and invited them to join their efforts with us, to offer to the displaced population, and especially to the youngest generation, education for peace and resilience, and to protect them from the risk of radicalization. We hence tried to prepare the Syrian children to become the future peacemakers instead of becoming the fuel for an endless war.

Rather than using religious teaching for the justification of any type of egoistic or sectarian domination or segregation, especially in times of conflict, Religious Social Responsibility helps believers, from different communities, to live empathy beyond sectarian borders. In brief this reminds us that religion is made for human beings and not the opposite. Therefore the work for humanity is the most authentic reflection of the heavenly message of any religion.

Thirdly, our Humanity is also sick from **discrimination** that is against the fundamental dignity of every human being. As peace, I believe that **Human dignity** is indivisible too. Therefore nowadays the strongest heroes are those who stands against the current sometime of their own people to fight discrimination and ensure respect and human dignity for all.

Allow me to share with you one meaningful story and powerful example of interreligious collaboration in protecting Human dignity. Sameh and Hanaa are a Christian Copt man and a Muslim woman from Upper Egypt. They both live in a rural and poor area, where social and religious discriminations are source of recurrent conflicts between their respective communities. Within such conflictual framework, the other is usually dehumanized and demonized, to justify hatred and violence against him. Sameh and Hanaa refused to fall into



this antagonism, and decided to stand together against this situation that is generating victims and injustice. They both and together had the courage to go against the current, and created a shared program of peace education activities for the youth from both Christian and Muslim communities. They were totally unknown, until we knew about them and we produced a short movie to promote their story two months ago. More than 2 Million Egyptians saw their story. They became models for refusing discrimination and they recently received in Egypt, their country, the National Award for Coexistence.

We need nowadays this type of heroes to save our world and humanity: disarmed people who can stop conflicts and overcome discriminations by the only force of faith, love and determination.

Honorable audience,
Dear brothers and sisters

Peace is one of the names of God in many religions. Thus, we do believe that peace is both our legacy and our future, and therefore we can't escape our mission of peacebuilding. The former winner of the Niwano Peace Prize, the theologian Hans Kung, stated that there won't be World peace if there is no peace between religions. I think that today, we can revert the statement and say: there won't be religions if we don't have peace. I mean as well as religions and interreligious collaboration are a major path for peace; peace itself is also the path for authentic religious belief and interreligious relations. Religions will lose their force and credibility if they continued to be instrumentalized to legitimize conflicts and hatred, or if they were unable to recognize and embrace their own diversity, to come together in solidarity, to serve and honor human dignity.

The Award we are receiving from you today with lots of gratitude, will be our daily reminder that, despite all sacrifices, we shall work and make sure that nobody lose hope in peace, so they don't lose faith in religion and even in humanity. Since 2006, from the early beginning of Adyan Foundation, we were working for this mission. Starting from today, will continue serving this vision, with a new reality, that we will move forward being aware about the presence on our road of beautiful partners, brothers and sisters, represented by the global community of Niwano Peace Foundation. Peace is the only victory worth fighting for, and we are glad and proud to hardly work for and win this battle together.