

His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal

NIWANO PEACE PRIZE 2008

8th May, 2008

Tokyo, Japan

Reverend Nichiko Niwano;

Bishop Stålsett;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends:

Peace be upon you all and God's compassion and blessings.

Spirituality, according to Dr. Daisetz Suzuki, whose study was published by the Ministry of Education in 1971, is "not something that has an existence somewhere, but since its operation can be felt we call it spirituality for the sake of convenience.....In trying to think about and give meaning to human life it is easier to communicate if we posit something like spirituality. Under no condition should we acquire a fixed idea regarding it."1 Despite all of the kind words you have said about me today, I refer to what the late King Baudouin of Belgium said, "I do not count".

As a child I was always taught to take other people seriously and myself not too seriously. I would suggest that there are too many ideologues and too many vested interests in today's world who, collectively, are suffocating with cosmopolitanism and conviviality. To me globalisation without a human face, is only globalisation of matter.

As Dr. Suzuki asserts, "A people cannot awaken to spirituality until they have proceeded a certain degree up the cultural ladder. In a certain sense, the existence of spirituality cannot be denied even in the consciousness of a primitive people, though it would have to be of an extremely primitive nature." My ancestors were Bedouin – el Badia, the first people, the pioneers, and I would certainly consider them spiritual, although, again, this term has a relative interpretation. The sadness is that there are many who have not yet taken the first path towards spirituality. Dr. Suzuki goes on to say, "It would be a mistake to regard it as the same as genuine and refined spirituality itself."2

In a quest to find solutions for the many conflicts taking place in our world today, I believe that we need to develop the noble art of listening. In 1967, I returned from university to listen to refugees. I did not reinvent myself. I came straight out of school to listen to people.

In a few days time, Bishop Stålsett is attending yet another conference on Islam and the West at Sharm El Sheikh. I wish they would change the title of the conference because there are more Muslims living today under non-Muslim minority rule (i.e. in the West) than there are Muslims living under Muslim majority rule. Muslims are a part of the West. Now, after all, if the intention of the title is to create a deliberate confrontation for political reasons, then I think we are committing our world to Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

I would like you to consider the following statistics and ask yourselves how to proceed on a path to Mutually Assured Survival (MAS). It is said that the population in the WANA region is estimated to rise from 400 million from the year 2000 to 750 million in the year 2050. During the 1990s the poor represented 20-25% of the region's population. The total number of the working force subsisting on \$1 per day remains constant, despite an increase in regional growth levels. In the WANA region, output per worker has been in decline since the 1980s, and yet this region shines economically. Why? For two reasons, oil and weapons. Every time we see the rise of the price of oil we do not see a correlated reference to the rise of food, of cereals.

I would like to say that listening goes beyond statistics. Nobody can live on statistics. In Somalia, at the southern end of the Rift Valley, the poor are devastated by fighting and ignored by the wider world. I cite Janine di Giovanni, an aid worker and social activist who says, "We went to the doctor's small stifling office and he gave me tea, then burst into tears of frustration. I have never been more ashamed of being white, European and by his standards rich. \$20 would buy him the beds he needed for the needy."³ The solutions don't talk about the dead or wounded civilians or the lack of humanitarian aid. In the Washington Post in 2003, it was made clear that civilian casualties in Iraq would not be mentioned. Let us look at how one young Kenyan "helps heal her divided country. Stellamaris Mulaeh organizes dialogues and service projects as alternatives to violence. She became Pax Romana's national coordinator for peace-building in Kenya and then became a mentor to youths in Nairobi's infamous Kibera slum. As violence from the contested election swept across the country after December's elections, she said, "I cried because I couldn't believe this is my country. Youth were killing. Youth were raping. Youth were destroying property and I felt I needed to do something"⁴. "Young people are a key force in driving much of the violence in Kenya, says Jacqueline Klopp, a professor at Columbia University. But, she notes that youth groups across the country also mobilised to stop it and will be a key to preventing it."⁵

So, in speaking of youth, I would like to turn to my dear friend, the Secretary General of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP), William Vendley, who sadly could not be with us today. Every time we met with communities the world over, we would say to them that they are servants of the community and we are the servants of the servants. We asked them how could we help them to help themselves. I congratulate the Japanese Chapter of WCRP in successfully hosting members of the International Youth Committee in meetings convened in Yokohama and Tokyo on 21st – 26th November, 2007. I am hopeful that the Global Youth Network will gain momentum

through the six inter-religious youth networks launched in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this quest for finding solutions, with the many conflicts taking place in our world today, the hatred industry is affecting youth, spreading prejudices and rejecting feelings of the other. We are in competition with this hatred industry. Our very competency is being affected. Not our integrity and noble ideas, but our competency at good governance. It is in such conditions of extremism that nihilism is flourishing and is negatively affecting the cultural affinity of people in many parts of the world, breaking down the ability to converse.

I salute Professor Yehuda Elkana⁶, himself a holocaust survivor, who points to the fact that in his graduate university with students from 85 nationalities, culture, attitudes to religion, fundamentalism, and political regimes, as well as economy and modern communications, have all become globalised -- yet the world is witnessing the spread of poverty and wars. I pay humble tribute to humanity and to the realization that the crises in our world today are a concern to all on moral, political and economic grounds. I recall when Alexandre Hay, former head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, came to see me in the late 1970s. He asked why did we not invite all the resistance movements in the world to spread the message that we had already spread to war colleges and military academies – a message for the introduction of humanitarian law. Henri Dunant wanted to make war more humane. My strategic objective is to establish a platform for a law of peace. In whatever few years I have left in this world, I would like to contribute in a humble manner to such a platform that can only be achieved through networking organizations all over the world such as Rissho Kosei-kai. I am here today to emphasise that common humanity is where we can begin – to give a voice to the poor and the powerless, to plead for unity in diversity, and to articulate a humanitarian perspective to cope with an increasingly global society.

I remember at the World Bank headquarters in Washington some years ago, at the invitation of Jim Wolfensohn, former President of the World Bank and Archbishop Carey, then Archbishop of Canterbury – I called them ‘cash and carry’ – discussing world crises at that time. Archbishop Carey suggested we get angry and our Jain colleague said, “No, that is against my faith – let us do something about world poverty”. Recently, Jacques Diouf expressed his frustration that the Security Council had not asked him to comment on the state of world hunger. I will be going in a few days to New York to give the keynote address to the United Nations General Assembly on the subject of ‘human security’. Let us accept that efficiency in communication is simple communication. In 1981, the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution relating to a New International Humanitarian Order. This was followed in 1983 by the establishment of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues (ICHI), which I co-chaired with the late HH Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan.

In 1985, our commission, representing twenty-eight nationalities, including your Professor Sadako Ogata, published the Report *Winning the Human Race?* The conceptual framework was based on an ethical core to help build a wider consensus. The cornerstones of this framework were the values, the morals, the ideals which Professor Hans Küng, in the Global Ethic Foundation⁷, has incorporated in the standards which, from time immemorial, have been a part of the collective

consciousness of the human species and which have ensured their survival and well-being and have stood the test of time. I cite: respect for life; a responsibility towards future generations; protection of the human habitat; altruism nurtured by a sense of mutual interest; and a recognition of human dignity and worth.

I was one of seven recipients of the United Nations Environment Prize of 2006 when Al Gore, also a recipient, spoke of 'global warming' and I spoke of 'human warning'. I believe in the intersection of society and nature. As a Muslim I share with all of you the importance of custodianship. We are on this planet to exercise our responsibility towards the other, whether nature or society. It is tragic that though we took up the three challenges of man's inhumanity to man, man's inhumanity to nature and man-made disasters, that I will probably have to turn to the NGOs after my speech in the General Assembly and say to them that they have told me that they are the lobby for the powerless, while I am the powerless lobby for the powerless.

What is tragic is that investments in human security are overlooked, while expenditures on arms are continually increasing. \$1.2 trillion are spent annually on arms and weapons systems.⁸ More so, is the widening gap between rich and poor, and the continuous asymmetry among people of the world. The world's four wealthiest people together are richer than the poorest 1 billion people and 40% of the world's population owns over 94% of the world's wealth. In Arabic, we say that poverty is poverty of the mind and richness is richness of the spirit, yet 2.8 billion people, almost half of the world's population, live on less than \$2 a day⁹.

This year celebrates the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ladies and gentlemen, clean drinking water is not perceived as a human right. It is a commodity to be bought and sold through the WTO and even the right to breathe clean air is not perceived as a human right.

In the Middle East region of over 50 million people, we have refugees of war, hunger and persecution. My region shoulders the biggest burden of the phenomenon, which Dr. Lothar Brock of the University of Frankfurt describes as Territoriality, Identity and Movement (TIM). In less than a decade, over half of the Middle East's population will be under the age of 18. \$104 billion was given in aid by developed countries in 2006 and was offset by \$123 billion in interest payments from developing countries¹⁰.

The challenge we are facing today is to find a solution for the human dignity deficit in order to avoid the formation of an entire generation ripe for radicalization and extremism. The head of the United Nations World Food Programme, Josette Sheeran, recently described the food crisis affecting the world's poor as "a silent tsunami which knows no borders, sweeping the world"¹¹. The facts are against the future of the world. Now, ladies and gentlemen, let me speak in its favour.

In his pioneering work, Hersh Lauterpacht made his contribution through his thoughts on a law of peace. My belief in the power of ideas for peace has given me an objective of a platform for a law of peace, as I earlier mentioned, in a framework of a Coalition for the Global Commons. If the first

sphere is government and the second sphere is business, let the third sphere be the interconnectedness of issue-driven ideas: education and employment; society and nature. Let us call for a Coalition of the Global Commons by 2012. If governments are the network of political decision makers and business is the network of financiers and economists, who is making the case for humanity's current global commons? Can we become the powerful lobby for that silenced majority which cannot afford to sit on its hands much longer? Can we develop a common concern with a common platform bridging religion and societies? The Global Commons calls for us to build on hopes in a spiritually ontological approach, which is inherently universal.

Empowering citizens is no less important than the shining examples of post-war South-East Asia and South Asia. I would like to remind you that I am a West-Asian. One of you asked earlier that if I am from the Middle West, what is the New West and the Far West? From the Japanese perspective, surely the Near West is China and the far West is Brazil. Let me remind you of the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China, two of which are already members of the Security Council and one (India) is a gate crusher. [India, as with Pakistan, is a member of the nuclear club, which seems to be some sort of qualification to become a member of the Security Council, mind you.] At least two of the BRICs are looking for membership in the Security Council. As I have said to the Brazilians and the Indians, if and when they become members of the Security Council, how are they going to change our world for the better?

We used to hear of the North-South divide. Today, it is Islam and the West or the West and the rest. Is it not time to develop Euro-Atlantic cooperation with Asia, including West Asia and North Africa? Peaceful cooperation can provide a context for security and cooperation within the Eurasian framework so that fragmentation, division and confrontation do not become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Let us think supra-nationally. DESERTEC12 is a concept that I presented to the European Parliament in November last year to speak, like the Europeans before us, of building bridges through a supra-national objective. The Europeans spoke of a community of coal and steel. Today, we are calling for regional cooperation with concentrated solar power leading to stability and economic reconstruction in providing clean water and energy for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

The decision taken by Japan, following World War II, to establish its position in the international community as a nation dedicated to peace, was evident in its strong determination not to allow the devastation of war to be repeated. The statement of your Diet in 1988, emphasising that the stability of oil cannot be limited to the oil-producing region, but should include the hinterland countries as well, is a call for regional cooperation on the basis of universal standards, a call for an end to micro management and the start of a new global governance for energy interdependence.

When Dr. Suzuki indicated how the Japanese spirituality influenced Buddhism, he said, “Since spirituality is essentially a living thing it does not always assume a position of passivity. Even in the physical world the existence of a genuinely passive thing has never been possible. If we suppose one thing's existence to be one power, then any power that is added to it will breed many varied responses, according to the force of its apparent passivity that is in reality an active force in great movement.”¹³

Karen Armstrong, in her reference to the wisdom of the ancient 'Axial Age', the term she borrowed from the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, goes back to a time in history when human kind was affected by confusion, injustice and conflict. In such times humanity came into being through the insights of diverse yet complementary traditions; biblical monotheism, Greek rationalism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and Confucianism and Taoism. Today, what we need is a movement of illumination. My wife's maternal family come from the Suhrawaddy's of Bengal. Sheikh Suhrawaddy called for the wisdom of illumination. My wife was born in Calcutta. Her father hails from Bhopal. My mother was born in Istanbul, my father was born in Mecca and I am from Jordan. Diversity is not a theory for me. Richness and unity in diversity, are measures of civilization. We need a movement that is parallel to the ancient 'Axial Age', which would affirm our shared humanity regardless of our diversity and would have within it the active force of Japanese spirituality.

Professor Shimon Shamir referred to the concept of 'acceptance of the other' believing it could be reached through recognition, dialogue and solidarity. In this context, people of different religions and faiths can indeed agree on shared goals and social betterment while respectfully disagreeing on the specifics of theology. Accepting the existence of 'the other' is not an inherent threat to one's own existence.

Reverend Niwano [to Rev. Nichiko Niwano], your esteemed father, after meeting His Holiness Pope Paul VI when he was invited to attend the last period of the Second Vatican Council -- the first time in history of the Catholic Church that a member of another religion was invited to a meeting of its leaders -- said, and these are his own words,

"The Pope ... rose upon seeing me enter the room and welcomed me by name. I raised my hands and the prayer beads I was holding in a Buddhist greeting. Then the Pope extended his hand, shook mine and finally took it between his, where it remained throughout the audience. The Pope said, "It is important for people of religion not to cling to factions or denominations, but to recognize one another and pray for one another". I then said to the Pope, "I shall exert my best efforts for the sake of world peace". I was refreshed and encouraged by the sincerity and truth of what he said..."¹⁴

We are still inspired by the words of that meeting.

My message today is a message of hope – hope that will give people a chance to realise their shared commonalities that are inherent in their spirituality – a spirituality of the human soul. The Holy Qur'an exhorts: 'Truly, God does not change the plight of people until and unless they change what is in themselves' (Surat ar-Ra'd [13:11]).

It has always been, and still is, man's inhumanity to man that causes suffering. I quote the words of Archbishop Hélder Pessoa Câmara of Brazil, who said, "When I give food to the poor they call me a saint. When I asked why the poor have no food, they called me a Communist". He wrote the Spirit

of Violence, which links structural injustice with escalating rebellion and repressive reaction, in 1971 at the time of the Vietnam war.

Our future wellbeing depends on drawing strength from our faiths and from our shared commonalities. May I conclude by citing Jalaluddin Rumi:

Hear this much, that, whereas the totality of actions

Is not affected without God's direction,

When the decree of God becomes the pleasure of man,

Then man desires the fulfillment of God's decrees;

And this too spontaneously, not in hope of reward,

But because his very nature is congruous therewith.

Jalaluddin Rumi

High-minded intentions are no substitute for a meaningful programme of action. It is my wish to reaffirm faith in the ability of humankind to overcome the colossal challenges facing it, that somehow, somewhere, the vicious circle of confrontation and conflict has to be broken.

Let me remind you that in this world today, there is a law of war. There is no law of peace yet. Maybe this can become an objective that we can share in a partnership of humanity, an objective that the NPF can help to promote. I am a member of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor. We are currently working on the construction of a citizens charter and social charter for every region of the world in which we live so that we can interact not on the basis of interdependence, but on the basis of intra-independence recognising the other and working with him and with her in a spirit of cosmopolitanism and of peace.

I thank the Niwano Peace Foundation for honouring the victims with whom I have worked for so many years and for helping, through this gathering, to give them hope for it is they who are deserving of hope. In Arabic we say we are only guests in this world. I personally am committed to the message of hope. My wife and I commemorate 40 years of marriage this year and are blessed with four children and six grandchildren so far. The only reason I get out of bed each day is to remember that family basis and the basis of millions like them. I do not count, but thank you anyway.

1 Suzuki, Daisetz (1972), Japanese Spirituality, pg 97

2 Suzuki, Daisetz (1972), Japanese Spirituality, pg 16

3 Nobody's children, Comment is free, guardian.co.uk, 1 May, 2008

4 How One Young Kenyan Helps Heal Her Divided Country, by Jill Carroll, Staff Writer of The Christian Science Monitor, April 16, 2008 edition

5 Ibid

6 Y. Elkana, (2000), 'Rethinking-Not Unthinking the Enlightenment', Yehuda Elkana, President and Rector, Central University (CEU), Budapest. HYPERLINK, http://web.ceu.hu/papers_speeches.html

7 Global Ethic Foundation for Inter-cultural and inter-religious research, Education and Encounter, www.weltethos.org

8 Global-commons.org, Berlin, 2008

9 Ibid

10 Global-commons.org Berlin, 2008

11 US Responds to Worsening Global Food Crisis, by HYPERLINK "<http://www.greendaily.com/bloggers/melissa-schober>" Melissa Schober, May 1st 2008

12 The DESERTEC Concept for Energy, Water and Climate Security, HYPERLINK <http://www.desertec.org>

13 Suzuki, Daisetz (1972), Japanese Spirituality, pg 94

14 Extract of text written by Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald, April-June 2006 issue of Dharma World