

عمان - المملكة الاردنية الهاشمية

الاربعاء 1 رجب 1438 هـ - 29 مارس/آذار 2017م



مجلس
جامعة الدول العربية على مستوى القمة

الدورة العادية 28

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الأمين العام للأمم المتحدة

في الجلسة الافتتاحية

لمجلس جامعة الدول العربية على مستوى القمة

الدورة العادية (28)

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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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ADDRESS TO THE SUMMIT OF THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
Jordan, 29 March 2017

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

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Your Majesties,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Excellencies,

Ah salaam alaikum.

I thank His Majesty King Abdullah II and the Government of Jordan for inviting me to address this important Summit of the League of Arab States.

Your Majesty, I was Prime Minister of Portugal when I first had the honour of meeting you.

Then, as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, I worked closely with Jordan for ten years, and always found in you a strong supporter of peace, a generous host to people fleeing conflict, a wise strategist and a good friend of the United Nations, committed to multilateralism.

You are the King of Jordan, but above all, you are a citizen of the world.

The United Nations attaches the highest importance to our partnership with the Arab League. In this third month of my tenure as Secretary-General, I am making what is already my second trip to the region. Above all I am here to listen and learn as a lifelong friend and partner.

We meet at a moment of profound anguish.

Across the region, conflict and displacement are widespread.

Across the world, Arab and Muslim communities face growing prejudice.

Too many people have fallen into the trap of presenting the despicable acts of Daesh or Al-Qaeda as driven by Islam when in fact they utterly defy the faith. Indeed, Muslims themselves are the primary victims.

And too many populist political leaders -- for short-sighted and cynical reasons -- distort Islam to spread anti-Muslim hatred, playing into the hands of terrorist and extremist groups.

My experience as High Commissioner for Refugees showed me the true nature of Islam, as Arab countries extended remarkable hospitality to wave upon wave of people fleeing violence and persecution.

Refugee protection is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Arabian peninsula -- refugee protection defined not only for Muslims but for all.

As the Holy Koran tells us in the Surah Al-Tawbah: "And if anyone of the disbelievers seeks your protection then grant him protection so that he may hear the word of God, and then escort him to where he will be secure".

What a remarkable example of tolerance, compassion and modernity.

There is nothing in present-day international refugee law that was not reflected in the Holy Koran or the Hadith of the Prophet, Peace Be Upon Him.

Today we need this same spirit at this critical juncture for the region's diverse people.

It breaks my heart to see developed countries closing their borders to refugees fleeing this region, and worse, sometimes invoking religion as a reason to keep them out.

Your Majesties,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Excellencies,

I come to this Summit with a strong hope for the future.

I appeal to your leadership in shaping a new Arab world able to address and solve, by itself, differences through dialogue and cooperation.

Divisions in the Arab world have opened the door to foreign intervention and manipulation, breeding instability, sectarian strife and terrorism.

At this time of transition and upheaval, unity will be critical.

The United Nations and I stand ready to work with you. The priorities that I have outlined for my time in office have direct relevance to our partnership – from

strengthening prevention to sustaining peace to advancing inclusive and sustainable development.

I also believe it is my duty to use my good offices, cooperating with Member States, as an added dimension for conflict resolution.

It is time to end the fighting in Syria.

I hope that the Astana process manages to achieve an effective ceasefire. We will do everything we can to enable the Geneva-based political talks to lead to genuine negotiations.

By now it should be clear to all involved that while fighting terrorism is essential, any success will prove ephemeral without a political solution that allows the Syrian people to freely decide their own fate.

In Iraq, I welcome the progress in retaking territories from Daesh, including Mosul. We are ready to cooperate with Prime Minister al-Abadi and all Iraqi leaders towards a truly inclusive and nonsectarian system of governance in which all communities feel represented, respected and safe.

I also strongly believe that if we all work together, 2017 can see Yemen and Libya coming out of the vicious cycle of violence and conflict.

Your Majesties,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Excellencies,

Each of these conflicts has created tremendous suffering, displaced millions of people, unsettled an entire region and contributed to a new threat of global terrorism. They have consumed countless lives and much of our attention.

But that must not distract us from seeking to heal the longest open wound in the region: the plight of the Palestinian people.

For far too long, the international community has failed to provide the avenues and support for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

I understand the deep sense of despair of the Palestinian people. The dreams of generation after generation have been confined by the parameters of conflict, humiliation and half a century of occupation.

Some may think that the situation can simply be managed.

But Palestinians and Israelis do not need conflict management, they need conflict resolution.

The two-state solution is the only path to ensure that Palestinians and Israelis can realize their national aspirations and live in peace, security and dignity.

There is no Plan B.

That is why it is important to stop all unilateral actions that can undermine the two-state solution.

This is particularly true in relation to the need to stop settlement activities, which are illegal under international law. It is also important to condemn terrorism and to avoid incitement.

I salute the Arab League for offering a pathway through the Arab Peace Initiative.

We should not be allowed to be skeptical about the prospects for peace – because at the end of the day skepticism is an elaborate form of surrender to the assumptions of the moment.

On the contrary, when things are difficult, we must invest more.

Your Majesties,
Your Highnesses,
Excellencies,

Two-thirds of the Arab world's people are under the age of 30 – the highest share ever. This demographic momentum will last for at least the next two decades and requires massive investment in skills and participation. Fighting youth unemployment must be the top priority from the point of view of not only development, but also security for communities in the region.

The empowerment of women is especially crucial – as a matter of human rights and as a spur to human development. One recent study of the Middle East and North Africa indicated that achieving full and real gender parity would increase the region's gross domestic product by \$2.7 trillion by 2025.

We must likewise enable civil society groups to play their vital role as partners of Governments in advancing democracy and strengthening social cohesion.

Your Majesties,
Your Highnesses,
Excellencies,

I look forward to working with you to build on the long history of partnership between the United Nations and the Arab League.

I myself come from a part of the world where the Arab heritage is strong – Al-Gharb Al-Andalus. I stand before you today as someone with profound appreciation for the contributions of the Arab world to global civilization.

And as you may know, we have our own version of “insh’Allah” in my own country. In Portuguese, we say “oxalá”.

But even as we say insh’Allah, let us recognize the power and responsibility that lies in our hands to improve the lives of the people we serve. Your leadership and unity will be crucial.

Thank you. Shokran.