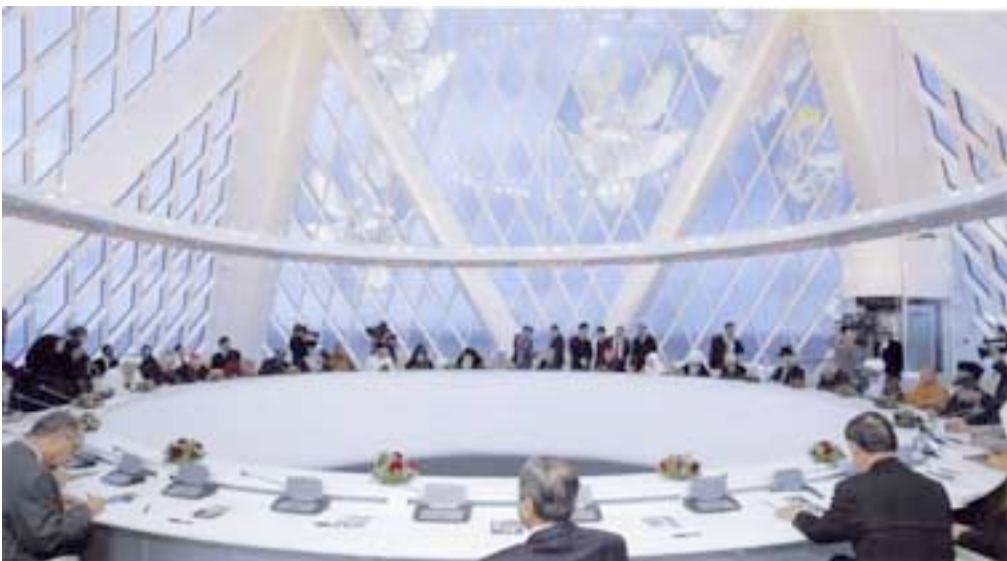




CONGRESS OF WORLD and TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

Posted 5th July 2009

II Congress of world and traditional religions



II Congress of world and traditional religions was held in capital city Astana of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 12-13 September, 2006.

Three years later after I Congress, leaders of world and traditional religions met each other in Astana again, and discussed such matters as religious freedom, inter-religious dialogue, and the role of religious leaders in strengthening global security.

The participants adopted a declaration on the results of the Congress, which states their visions of religions' role in the modern world. The declaration incorporates the agreements achieved over the triennial period of joint work and dialogue, oriented to strengthening the role of leaders of world and traditional religions in processes of establishing global peace.

Representatives from Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Taoism and Shinto, international religious organizations including World Conference of religions supporting peace, World Council of Churches were invited to participate in the Congress.

Head of state Nursultan Nazarbaev opened the Second Congress of leaders of world and traditional religions in the Peace and Accord Palace in Astana.

43 delegations from more than 20 countries are taking part in the forum, which represent all world and traditional religions and confessions of the world, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Daoism, and others. Famous political and social figures, including Director-General Kōichiro Matsuura of UNESCO, deputy UN Secretary-General Sergey Ordzhonikidze, ex Prime Minister of Malaysia doctor Mahathir bin Mohamad, representatives of legislative bodies, non-governmental organizations from a variety of countries were invited to participate in the Congress according to the agreement given by religious leaders.

- For the second time such a representative forum is gathered in Astana. I greet all of you and would like to express my gratitude and thankfulness to our honored guests. The Peace and Accord Palace, the building of which I was talking about at our first Congress, today opens its doors for you for the first time. The first Congress of leaders of world and traditional religions, which was held here, in Astana, in 2003, attracted the attention of the world community. Such a universal forum in terms of multifaceted representation of confessions had never been held prior to that Congress. That meeting in Astana gave a significant impulse to the global dialog between religions, different forums and conferences of global and local scales. Today we are opening the Second Congress of leaders of world and traditional religions. Three years ago 17 confessional delegations took part in our forum, and 29 delegations are taking part in this Congress. This positive trend is indicative and reflects the growing authority of our forum. It means that we continue to go together on the road of mutual understanding, of finding answers to the most complicated questions existing in the modern world, - Nursultan Nazarbaev said at the opening of the Congress.

Speech of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan



Distinguished Leaders of World and Traditional Religions,

Dear guests of the Congress,

Three years have passed since the moment when we held our First Congress, which gathered together Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for the first time. As we agreed at that meeting, full of good will and intercession, we are again meeting each other in the heart of Eurasia, in Astana, the new capital of Kazakhstan. Today I am heartily pleased to greet all of you, who promote the light of high spirituality throughout the world, make all efforts to call nations to live in peace, accord and mutual understanding.

As you remember, at that meeting we made a decision to hold the next Congress in a specially built Palace of Peace and Accord. I kept my promise, the unique Palace has been built up according to the design of famous architect Norman Foster. And now I tell you that you are welcome to the Palace, to Kazakhstan!

The four sides of our Palace are oriented to the four sides of the world. In some sense this construction embodies independent Kazakhstan that friendly embraces all people of all nations and practicing different religions. Therefore, in multinational Kazakhstan, populated by people of about 130 nations and 40 confessions, peace, accord and mutual respect were settled in the independence years. Due to that, we have persistently established the Kazakhstani development model and have made impressive progress in the development of our economy.

Having voluntarily rejected nuclear weapons, we have turned Kazakhstan into a region of peace and stability. Having established friendly relations with our neighbors, we became a regional leader in maintaining global security. All of these allow us to acquire the trust of all peaceful forces and we got an opportunity to gather such a representative forum, at which you, the spiritual representatives of different nations and religions, demonstrate the confessional variety of the modern world.

This reputable forum has gathered in Astana for the second time. I am greeting all of you and would like to express my gratitude to the distinguished guests. The Peace and Accord Palace I talked about at our first forum, has opened its doors for you for the first time.

The First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which was held here, in Astana, drew attention of the world community in 2003. There had not been such a universal, in terms of confession, representation forum prior to the Congress. That meeting in Astana gave a significant impulse to the global dialogue of religions, different forums and conferences of regional and global scales.

Today we are opening the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. 17 confessional delegations took part in our forum three years ago. 29 delegations participate in the current Congress. This trend is indicative and reflects the growing authority of our forum. The trend means that we continue to go together along the road of mutual understanding, joint search of answers to complicated questions of the modern world.

The importance of inter-religious dialogue has increased over the time passed since the first forum. Unfortunately, many tragic events occurred over these years on all continents, explicitly and unambiguously demonstrated that numerous conflicts cannot be solved with only political or brutal force methods.

Moreover, indeed terrific acts are committed pretending to be committed for the sake of God, what is not approved by great religious leaders. On the other hand, there is a trend to accuse some religions of aggression.

This mutual rigidity is not decreasing. A civilized person is a person, who can doubt in his own views and look at the situation from another side. But some politicians experience lack of this. This is peculiar to people of high spirituality, who are in this beautiful hall today.

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We forget sometimes one great religious principle, the principle of nonviolence in thoughts, words and acts. But this ancient principle reflects quite modern phenomena.

A human's internal world, full of thoughts, emotions, worries and doubts, is a spiritual world, the field for religious search. Television, the Internet and mass media, making a thunderous echo, are words in their essence. Acts are the prerogative of politicians, who transfer those words and thoughts into acts. The refusal of violence at the level

of religious doctrine, of media and of political action is a real basis for survival in the modern world.

However, there is a growing aggression at all three levels. When religious leaders quite seriously discuss advantages of one religion over another, it is clear that this is the base of a conflict. When mass media publish and discuss in details humiliation of holy feelings of believers practicing other religions, it is clear that those journalists will face mockery of their own holy feelings sooner or later. When politicians without any doubts order to solve an ethnic or religious problem in a brute force way, it is clear that war will come to their homes. There shouldn't be place for aggressive sides in that triangle. And there shouldn't be place for aggression in the position of religious leaders.

A modern dialogue in the world full of conflicts very often resembles a dialogue between deaf and dumb persons. There is no necessity in the dialogue after which the sides leave, being one more time convinced in their infallibility. In my opinion, principles working in other areas must be applicable in this sphere. I would call them understanding principles. This is not a dialogue yet, it is the basis for its beginning. But without such a basis any dialogue will be a waste of time.

The first principle is - no jaundice, refusal of the stereotypes of mutual perception formed throughout ages. There is no need to maintain a dialogue without rejecting negative stereotypes. There was much blood and hostility in the long and dramatic history of Kazakhstan. It is enough to say that a third of the Kazakhs were physically exterminated, perished from severe conditions or emigrated in the first thirty years of the 20th century. We do remember all, but we do not use it as a reason for hatred and aggression. The danger of historic stereotypes is often in that they call for evil, not for good. There are too many victims and wounds in the modern world. But my political experience says only one thing: it is necessary to overcome own stereotypes.

The second principle is - the conscious rejection of intrusion into sacred matters of other people. What is sacred for one person must not be a subject of humor or jokes for another person. This is a simple rule, which is often broken not only by journalists and politicians, but sometimes by religious leaders themselves, who are not cautious about their words concerning other religions.

We often say that there are believers of more than 40 confessions living in peace in Kazakhstan. And these are not just words, you could not see any humiliation of religious feelings in any Kazakhstan newspaper or television channel over the last 15 years. This is prohibited by the Constitution of the country. At the same time there was no need to prosecute anybody. The answer and explanation are simple: there is a tolerance and understanding climate for all believers in the society.

The third principle is - a joint response of world and traditional religions to new atypical threats. In the world of policy these non-standard threats are connected with terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, transnational criminality. There is a deeper problem in the world of religion. This is a gap with millennium

spiritual traditions. This is a worldwide spread phenomenon. This is a radical negation of such spiritual type that is connected with traditions of the world religions. Misunderstanding of this threat, which could destroy the foundations of modern religious institutes, causes fruitless arguments. The spiritual situation in the modern world is very dynamic and religious institutes are a part of society, which must take into account new risks and threats to the foundations of its existence.

These principles could form the carcass of understanding.

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There is the most common principle in any kind of human activities. The following platform could be such a principle in the area of religious dialogue, which is similar to political dialogue in terms of external forms, but completely different from it in its nature. "To search a basis for dialogue through divinity in a human being, not through a human being in divinity". Despite of its abstractedness, this principle is very important.

Indeed, the incompatibility of many religious doctrines with each other has not divine, but human reasons. God is one, according to all world religions, and this is the proof of the human nature of incompatibility.

There is another reason. All world religions say about serious spiritual transformation, about the neglect of a small human identity in the face of God.

At last, all great spiritual leaders said about especially dangerous arrogance, the arrogance of all-knowing. Who can pretend to be the one who can propagate the word of God in the best way? In my opinion, such a pretension is a sin.

In practical sense, the special role of this principle is to look at the world, taking into account other spiritual perspectives, without breaking the main values of other religions. I am deeply convinced that politicians only follow some deep religious postulates, regardless whether they realize them or not. Therefore, the readiness of religious leaders to start searching divine, not human in other religious systems might be the basis for more human political decisions in the world.

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The growth of religious intolerance is partly the result of globalization in some sense. Many different cultures and religions are in immediate contact now. Migration, television, types of different cultures make a mixture. Globalization has revealed the global economic injustice. Billions of destitute people have seen the life standards of the modern world and have realized that never will they live such a life.

A kind of "spiritual escape" is taking place under these circumstances. But this is not an "escape to God", this is an "escape from reality". This can lead to a new cultural shock, when religion will become not an appeal to God, but a search for a platform for justification of hatred against the modern world and its injustice. Actually, time can

turn back. This global cultural problem cannot be solved only with political actions. The role of spiritual leaders is the decisive one in this case.

Using religion for political mobilization of population is a means, that has been used in the history for many times. The means that always ended in tragedy. The especial responsibility of world and traditional religions' leaders is not to use religious sermons in political conflicts, to prevent usage of sermons by state structures and illegal organizations from solving their problems, which are far away from God.

The cult of God is the foundation stone of any genuine religion. For ages cultures based on faith have the word alive in history. In some sense the preservation of its religious spirit is the guarantee for surviving of nations in history. It is obvious that the world will never follow a single model of civilization project. The realizing of this key element of history including the modern history is very important for us, politicians. It seems, the world is starting to realize one simple fact after heavy shocks, global terror, the growing threat of nuclear weapons and vast casualties over the six years of the new century. The fact is that the cultural and religious diversity in the world is the reality, which must be adopted and accepted as the environment of the human kind. Any other treatment might destroy the world.

The wish of one cultural tradition to impose its values on other cultures, attempts to build social relations using others' standards will never lead to mutual understanding. On the contrary, such an exacting cultural expansion will cause an adequate response. Only respectful treatment of the historic traditions of other nations, justice and sincerity in relations between civilizations, religions and nations are able to form the world of accord and spirituality.

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A human being is tended to address his or her own problems to the spiritual spheres. However, a society often dresses quite earthy things in religious garments. What is often named a conflict and contradictions between religions, in most cases is a conflict between states, between economic groups or certain politicians. Religion is a sacred conversation inside any human soul, but it is often treated as a social agreement between people.

It is necessary to take into account the reality of the modern world in order to establish inter-religious dialogue. Before it was the interaction between religions, sometimes productive, sometimes bloody; today it is the global dialogue of the religious and secular worlds.

The modern society has developed three crucial postulates during the long evolution. These are internal personal freedom, property protection, social support by society and state. But some political ideologies do not recognize these postulates. And many geopolitical battles are due to this contradiction. It is time to confess that it is not a conflict between religions, but the conflict of not religious values.

Kazakhstan in its practical policy takes as an axiom that internal personal freedom is a condition of inter-confessional tolerance. It is due to that while being a part of the cultural Islamic continent, we do not throw obstacles to the development of all world and traditional religions in Kazakhstan.

If a state, nation or religion considers external cultural field through the prism of annexation, conquest, the own habitat will unavoidably deteriorate. The Kazakhs always attributed to their own master, spirit, own aruakhs to each place. This deep integration of a human, religion, territory has been the salvation filter, which kept the soul of my nation. Tolerance is a practical, not abstract conception for the Kazakhs. A balanced state policy in the area of religious relations is carried out in Kazakhstan since getting independence. It is based on the following basic principles. I would call those principles of accord.

Firstly, those are legislative and institutional foundations of religious and human freedom. The Constitution prohibits any forms of discrimination, including confessional discrimination or because of other social differences. The Law "About freedom of conscience and religion in the Republic of Kazakhstan" formed all legal foundations for free work of religious unions. The country has ratified 40 international agreements and treaties with regard to human rights, including the UN fundamental pacts in this area.

Secondly, those are favorable and equal conditions for religious confessions, which must be established by the state. The liberalization of the religious area contributed to a sharp increase in the number of religious institutes, which had increased by five times in the years of independence. The majority of Kazakhstan's population considers themselves as Muslims. But I would like to emphasize that Islam domination in Kazakhstan does not prevent the functioning of other religions. There is a notable increase in the number of non-Muslim organizations. The number of Russian Orthodox parishes and the number of Catholic parishes have been increased by four times and by two times respectively over the years of independence. There are more than one thousand missions and prayer houses of protestant unions in the country, 21 Jewish communities function as well and the Buddhist temple has been established for the first time in Kazakhstan.

Thirdly, the promotion of international and inter-confessional dialogue in Kazakhstan is a mainstream of our activities. We have created such a unique institute of international and inter-confessional institute as the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. I would like to add, that starting from this year all major religious holidays are announced to be days-off, in order to offer an opportunity for all believers to hold cult events without any obstacle. Our model of international and inter-religious accord is Kazakhstan's contribution to the global process of interaction between different confessions. We would like to be apprehended in this namely way on the international arena.

There is a need for special caution and some healthy conservatism in order to avoid the trap of "lost in God quest". The necessity of a balance between tradition and

novelty is especially clear for me, since I am a politician. But the role of world and traditional religions is very important not only in terms of preserving spiritual heritage. It is also a spiritual practice developed throughout centuries, which is the only remedy from the experiments beyond the human understanding. We are already in the zone of massive intrusion of unusual, extreme forms of God quests, and also of genetic technological experiments beyond the limits of traditional ethic. Therefore, the role of world and traditional religions is not only becoming actual, but is transforming into a key factor of preserving true spirituality by the human kind.

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I know the contents of the documents adopted at our Forum. I would like to suggest several additional ideas to your attention, which are preliminary and could be discussed later, not at this meeting.

Taking into account the growing significance of spiritual word in the modern world, we are going to start from 2007 a periodic "religious hour" on one of the leading television channels of the country.

This will be an opportunity for spiritual leaders to deliver a good and religious tolerance sermon directly to many millions of people. Knowing the immense authority of the people sitting in the hall and those religious institutes they are representing, I would like to call you to appeal to the governments of your countries to follow the example and to establish something like this on all continents of the Earth.

While creating the Peace and Accord Palace, I was dreaming about the highest spiritual gathering, which would sanctify these walls with their presence. My dream has come true. But a dream would have short wings without a continuation. I would like to officially invite leaders of world and traditional religions to deliver honorary lectures to Kazakhstani people in the Palace once a year. It would be one of the brightest spiritual events in Eurasia, if world leaders of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Judaism, Confucianism and Shinto would annually deliver their word of peace and accord to my compatriots.

Cathedrals, Mosques, Churches, Temples, Pagodas were ones of the main architectural sightseeing places in the capitals of the world. We are not an exception. But inter-religious understanding should not remain as only words in the new millennium. It should be expressed in a material, architectural form. We think that there is no more important symbol than peace and accord in a human soul and between human souls. Astana demonstrates an example of such an architectural symbol, and we hope that Peace and Accord Palaces will be constructed in the capitals of countries, represented in Kazakhstan today by their spiritual leaders.

The global nature of both inter-religious contradictions and inter-religious dialogue allows speaking about the fact that the United Nations Organization should announce one of the nearest years as the international year of religious and cultural tolerance. I think that this initiative could be supported by many states in the modern world.

I would like to conclude my speech with the words of genius Kazakh thinker Abay, who said:

"A human being is a friend to a human being. The reason is that all in this life including birth, education, the feeling of satiety, hunger, sadness, grief, the form of the human body, the way of coming to this world and the way of leaving this world, are the same to all people. And in another world everything, including death, funeral, decay, the Judgment Day, sorrows and drags, enjoyment with goods of both worlds are the same. All people are guests to each other, and a human being is a guest in this life. Is it worth to slander, to be at enmity because of another's richness, to be envious because of another's happiness, to be hostile to each other because of vain things?"

I think these words are close to all participants of the Forum.

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Distinguished guests,

Today we have made another great step to eternal values granted by God to a human being, to mutual understanding, to peaceful and dignified life, to the harmony of interests.

Nobody has a right to forget the truth known to everyone: Creator is common, the universe is common, heavens are boundless, and we, as children of one father and one mother, must live together in peace and accord.

It is obvious today that new global challenges are arising throughout the world.

May God bless you all with favor and charity in the noble way!

Thank you for your attention!

Astana, 12 September, 2006.

Declaration of the II Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions



We, the leaders of world and traditional religions, gathered at our Second Congress in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan:

- building on the success of the First Congress, which took place in the city of Astana on 23-24 September 2003 and engaged internationally recognized world religious leaders in an important initiative of inter-religious dialogue;
- wishing to help strengthen mutual understanding between cultures, religions and ethnic groups which form the basic components of world civilizations, and aiming to prevent conflicts based on cultural and religious differences;
- acknowledging that religion, having always been a fundamental element of human life and society has, at the beginning of the new century, assumed a significant new role in establishing and preserving peace;
- recognizing the great responsibility held by religious leaders for spiritual teaching and advocacy on behalf of current and future generations, and their vital role in establishing a spirit of mutual respect, understanding and acceptance in the face of new challenges;
- underlining the unique character of every religion and culture, and considering cultural and religious diversity to be an important feature of human society;

- expressing concern about increasing inter-religious and interethnic tensions in the world deriving from the exploitation of religious and national differences as a justification for violence which causes suffering to innocent victims;
- stressing that extremism and fanaticism find no justification in a genuine understanding of religion and that the vocation of all religions demands the refusal of violence and appeals to respect and peaceful coexistence with peoples and religions;
- believing that the difficulties in inter-religious and intercultural relations are related both to a fundamental imbalance in international politics, economics, social, humanitarian and information resources, and to the manipulation of religion for political ends;
- discussing and debating the above-mentioned concerns within the main theme of the Congress - "Religion, society and international security" in the context of two special blocs;

I. "Freedom of religion and recognition of others";

II. "Role of religious leaders in enhancing international security"

appeal to people of all religions and people of good will across the globe, and:

- call upon them to abandon enmity, discord and hatred; and embrace common respect and generosity, recognizing the reality of cultural, religious and civilizational diversity;
- declare our determination together to tackle and ultimately eliminate prejudice, ignorance and misrepresentation of other religions by placing particular focus on what religions hold in common as well as what distinguishes them;
- condemn all forms of terrorism on the basis that justice can never be established through fear and bloodshed and that the use of such means in the name of religion is a violation and betrayal of any religion that appeals to human goodness and dialogue;
- reject all false inventions and wrongly created stereotypes about the violent nature of religions and attempts to attribute terrorism to any particular religion;
- call upon all to work together to address and eliminate all causes of terrorism, thus promoting human flourishing, dignity and unity;
- declare our rejection of any form of pressure or violence to convert followers of one religion to another;
- reaffirm the pivotal role of education, youth policy and cultural activity for understanding, solidarity and social cohesion.

We also call upon the global community, international and regional organizations, states and governments all over the world to:

- actively support the process of intercivilizational dialogue; exert sustainable efforts towards creating a culture of peace, strengthening its principles as a firm basis of international politics and the life of all people;

- work to establish a more fair world, to consolidate international law and justice, and to implement UN resolutions and signed international agreements, and to find effective means of establishing peace and security all over the world;
- heed the voices of victims of oppression and terrorism and use all means to seek a just settlement of the existing conflicts, thus addressing the grievances that nurture violence;
- reject totally the development, production and possession of weapons of mass destruction and promote the strengthening of non-proliferation regimes;
- respect and protect the sanctity of religious symbols and places and take appropriate measures

Based upon the abovementioned, we, the leaders of world and traditional religions,

RESOLVED TO:

- take concrete collective measures for encouraging and highlighting positive perceptions of inter-religious relations by organizing joint meetings, seminars and addresses in the mass media, the Internet and other places of influence;
- strongly promote interreligious tolerance among younger generations to make them more devoted to dialogue and encourage them recognize universal values;
- integrate questions of the dialogue between civilizations and religions into curricula at all educational levels with a view to helping young people to respect and understand religious and cultural difference without hostility;
- use our spiritual influence, authority and resources to further establish peace, security, stability and contacts between each other in order to make a combined contribution to the prevention and resolution of disputes among different religious communities;
- offer our experience and best efforts to governments and people or groups and powers involved into conflicts in order to assist them in easing tensions, forming where appropriate joint delegations to conduct negotiations with them;
- commit to make efforts to promote and realise the goals stated in this Declaration, and to assign the Congress Secretariat to propose a plan for the best possible translation of these recommendations into reality;
- conduct the Congress of religions on a permanent basis and hold the third Congress of the leaders of world and traditional religions in 2009. For the Secretariat to present proposals on time and place of the next forum;
- bring to the attention of the General Assembly of the United Nations the conceptual and practical role performed by the Congress in promoting dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions and its considerable achievements in interreligious understanding, inviting support for the further activity of the Congress.

Astana, 13 September 2006

Principles of Inter-Religious Dialogue



1. Dialogue shall be based upon honesty, tolerance, humility and mutual respect. It requires effective perception and learning, resulting in performing good deeds.
2. Dialogue shall assume equality of all partners and create the room for free expression of opinions, perspectives and beliefs, including the integrity of each culture, language and traditions.
3. Dialogue shall not be aimed at the conversion to another faith, as well as to abuse or demonstrate the superiority of one religion over another. It should not be aimed at eliminating differences, but rather at the cognition and res
4. Dialogue assists in avoiding prejudices and misinterpretation of faiths of other religions, thus encouraging their cognition and understanding of them. It helps to prevent conflicts and the use of violence as a means for reducing of tension and resolving dis-putes.
5. Dialogue offers a way towards the peaceful coexistence and fruitful cooperation of peoples. It encourages better education, and may also promote to a better understanding of the dialogue, the importance of mass media and lessen the risk of religious extremism.
6. Inter-religious dialogue can serve as an example for other kinds of dialogues, especially social and political ones.
7. Dialogue, conducted in a spirit of tolerance, emphasizes that all people inhabit the same globe. This assumes certain shared values such as sacredness of life, dignity of all human beings and the integrity of creation.
8. Dialogue emphasizes that religion plays a vital and constructive role in the society. It promotes common good, recognizes the important role of good relationships between people and respects the specific role of the state in a society as well.
9. Dialogue is fundamentally important for future generations to benefit from better relations between people of different religions and cultures.

Closing speech of Nursultan Nazarbayev at the II Congress



Dear Congress's participants,

Distinguished guests,

I am pleased to state that **the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is turning into a reputable international forum working on a constant basis.** This means that the idea of inter-confessional dialogue is extremely required and is becoming a real factor of the international life.

Therefore, it is especially important that the Congress's participants have reached the unified understanding of the Universal Principles of inter-religious dialogue and have approved them.

Taking into account their great significance, **I suggest submitting them for consideration to the United Nations Organization.**

Speeches of the respectable hierarchs and discussions, which were held during the Congress, demonstrated one more time the readiness of confessions' leaders for dialogue and their aspiration to hold the dialogue in a tolerant and mutually respectful way.

It is very important that respectable Congress's participants have directly announced about the harm and falsity of confrontation ideology concerning inter-religious relations. It plays on the side of those, who are interested in the propagation of religious extremism.

Today, religious extremism and terrorism are fed by the completely new system of extremist views, which is being turned into a non-traditional and irrational ideological weapon.

Five years ago the world was shocked with the tragedy of the 11th of September, 2001, when terrifying in their cruelty terrorist acts in the USA, demonstrated the danger of destructive forces practicing violence and terror. We were convinced one more time that our world is fragile and mutually linked.

Facing global threats, the whole world had united against that evil. Today the future of a human kind depends on us. We must make all efforts in order to eliminate the ideology of terrorism and to establish the values of humanism common to all mankind.

Therefore, it is necessary to oppose the ideology of tolerance, accord and dialogue to the destructive ideology of terrorism.

A very important idea, that we must avoid to use religious ideology for advocating ambiguous political goals, was released at our forum.

Religion served as the source of calming in human souls, as the factor of mutual attraction between nations and states for ages. I doubt that there is anything comparable to the potential of religion in the modern world.

The theme of developing inter-religious dialogue for preserving and strengthening values of the modern civilization was on the agenda of our forum. We are talking about such values as the humanity of religious consciousness, cultural heritage of religions, diversity, principal equity and respect of religious traditions, spiritual education and tutorship.

All these important statements were reflected in the adopted **Declaration of the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions**. The global need for changing "confrontation ideology" into the "peace culture" was deeply reflected in the document.

I am thankful to the Congress's participants, who very high appreciated Kazakhstan's efforts for maintaining culture and religion dialogue, our activities on fight against national, cultural, religious intolerance. This is always amongst **the key priorities of Kazakhstan's internal and foreign policies**.

In this regard I would like to announce today the initiative on the creation of the **International Center for Cultures and Religions under the aegis of the Congress**.

The Center could perform educational, scientific researches and humanitarian projects, study potential conflict aspects of the religious situation in the world.

The main tasks of such center might be holding of international meetings and the promotion to contacts and mutual understanding between religious figures and political elites in different countries, publishing books.

Having your blessing, **the Center could start its work in the nearest future and occupy the Peace and Accord Palace. I hope you will support this initiative.**

In conclusion I would like to note one more time the fundamental role of religious leaders for the achievement of our common aim - **ensuring the prosperous and safe present and future.**

I would like to express our gratefulness to the heads of the delegations and to all participants for your contribution to the noble mission of people's rapprochement and for the effective support of our forum.

Thank you very much for your attention!

Astana, 13 September, 2006

Participants of the II Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions



Ministries and authorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan put forth great efforts to make the preparation and process of this II International Congress successful.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (hereinafter - MFA RK) and the foreign offices of the RK conducted purposeful and complex work for the leaders of religions, religious organizations and honored guests to participate in the forum. As a result, the Event was attended by **25 religious leaders** (7 of which are representatives of Islam, 7 are representatives of Christianity, 4 representatives of Buddhism, 2 representatives of Judaism, 1 representative of Shintoism, Taoism, Hinduism, and heads of 2 religious organizations) and **14 honored guests** from 26 countries of Europe, Americas, Asia, Africa and Middle East. In total, there were 160 participants. For the first time, Astana was visited by delegations from Libya, Thailand, Armenia, South Korea, as well as the heads of other international religious organizations of the USA and Switzerland.

Islam was represented at the Congress by delegations headed by the highest leaders of the religion - Supreme Imam Al Azhara Muhammad Sayed Tantawy (Egypt), Secretary General of World Islamic League Abdallah ben Abdel Mohsen Al-Turki (Saudi Arabia), President of the Muslim Organization "Djamaat-e-Shabab-e-Islam" Salman Al-Hussein Al-Nadvi (India), Ex President of the International Islamic University of Pakistan Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi (Pakistan), Member of Supreme Cultural Council of the IRI Ali Akbar Sadiqi Rashad (Iran), Councillor of the Secretary General of the World Association of Islamic Convocation Ageli Farkhat Almeri (Libya), Head Mufti of Kazakhstan Absattar kazhi Derbisali.

Christianity was represented by delegations headed by Honored President of the Pope's Council of Justice and Peace Roger Etchegeray (Vatican), Metropolitan of Minsk and Sloodsk, Exarch Patriarch of Byelorussia Filaret (Russia), Constantinople Patriarch of the Orthodox Church Bartholomew I (Turkey), Bishop Nicolas Banes (Anglican Church, UK), Head Patriarch and Catholicos of All the Armenians Garegin II (Armenia) and Secretary General of the Lutheran World Federation Doctors Ishmael Noco.

Buddhism was represented by the delegation headed by Deputy Chairman of the All China Association of Buddhists Jia Mu Nian (China), Head of Buddhist Center Demberel Choizhamts (Mongoli) and Rector of the University Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalay Pra Darmokosadjarn (Thailand).

Judaism was represented by the delegation headed by Rabbi General of Ashkenaz of Israel - Jonah Metzger, Rabbi General of Sefard of Israel - Shlomo Amar, **Shintoism** - the delegation headed by the Board Chairman of the Association of Shinto Temples Kuni Kuniaki (Japan), **Taoism** - the delegation headed by Deputy Head of the Administration of Religious Relations Jian Jianiun (China), **Hinduism** - by the delegation headed by world famous theology scientist Shantilal Somaya. **Religious organizations** - the Head of the Program of the World Council of Churches on Issues of the Middle East - Michelle Nseir (Switzerland) and the President of National Council of Churches Michael Livingstone (USA).

The Honored Guests of the Forum were such famous politicians, heads of international organizations, states and governments as Sergey Ordzhonikidze - Director General of the Geneva UN Office, Koichiro Matsuura - UNESCO Director General, Mahathir Mohammad - Ex Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahmud Zakzuk - Minister of Wakufs of Egypt, Alejo Vidal Cuadras Roca - 1st Vice President of the European Parliament, Rene van der Linden - Chairman of the Parliamentary Assemble of the European Council, Staf Nimmegeers - 1st Deputy Chairman of the Senate of the Kingdom of Belgium, Kim Won Ki - the Deputy of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, Ex Speaker Emery de Montescu - Senator of the French Republic and others.

Besides the participants and the guests, the Congress was attended by the deputies of the two Chambers of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, members of the Government of Kazakhstan, representatives of the Assembly of Nations of Kazakhstan, Diplomat Corps accredited in Kazakhstan.

The Congress was greeted by heads of states and international organizations: the UN Secretary General Coffi Annan, President of France Jacque Chirac, ex President of Turkey Suleymen Demirel, ex Presidents of the USA Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, Ex President of France Gescar d'Esten, ex President of the Czech Republic Vatslav Gavel, Prime Minister of Turkey Rejep Erdogan, Prime Minister of Spain Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, Ex Chancellor of Germany Gerhard Schroeder, and high hierarchs of different Churches - the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexis II, the Arch Bishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the President of the Japanese Buddhist Association Ko Yasuhara and others.