

H.M. King Abdullah II addresses Netherlands parliament.

The Hague, October 30, 2006

Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim;
Honourable Chairpersons,
Distinguished Members of Parliament:

I am honoured to speak before this historic institution. The Netherlands has been a leader in the cause of partnership among nations ... a long and true supporter of peace in my region ... and a valued friend to Jordan. The renowned Dutch scholar, Erasmus, began his treatise on peace with the words "Peace Talks." For so many years, the voice of Peace has been your country's voice. We hear it, and we thank you.

My friends,

We meet here at a time of serious – and shared – challenges: Achieving economic opportunity and security, in an era of global competition. Strengthening the bonds among people and cultures. Finding the path to peace out of bitter conflicts, and reconstructing shattered nations. And perhaps most importantly, giving youth the future of hope that they need and deserve.

Separated and divided, we cannot meet these challenges. Working together, we can. Because, just as no nation is isolated from the world's problems ... so, too, every nation has a contribution to make to progress and peace.

The fact is, there is no single template for the way forward: no one correct political formula; one global culture, one road to development. A unilateral peace is no peace at all. From the neighborhood to the world stage, the future depends on cooperation. That means building on the strengths we all contribute: our unique cultures and heritage; our models of excellence; our assistance to those in need; and above all – our mutual respect.

Such partnership is at the heart of recent global efforts to bridge cultural divides, especially between Muslims and non-Muslims. We have seen how fast misunderstandings travel and the damage they can do. We need to move just as firmly to prevent such crises before they occur.

The reality is that the vast majority on both sides are people of good will. There are powerful bonds among Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. And we hold deep values in common: tolerance; respect for others; responsibility for those in need; good citizenship; and the primacy of peace.

More – much more – needs to be done to build understanding. I am proud that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, a Muslim country, has taken a leading role. We are home to a historic Christian community, and have a long tradition of respect for all. Globally, we have worked to build an active interfaith dialogue. We work closely with Muslims everywhere to assert Islam's true teachings, commanding peaceful co-existence and respect for others, and condemning extremism and terrorism. And we are continuing to get our message out. International gatherings of Muslim scholars have unanimously declared the invalidity of extremist fatwas that violate Islamic precepts and justify violence.

The path to tolerance and respect is not for Muslims alone. All nations and peoples must play a role. That means speaking out against stereotypes and disrespect at every level – and demonstrating that commitment in action. Most important, my friends – Let us, together, teach and help our young people to shape a new future: respecting differences ... but understanding our common humanity.

Partnership is also at the core of global economic development. Our century is one of great economic advances – and tremendous potential. But there is an urgent need to expand the sphere of opportunity and prosperity. Global wealth disparities, and the lack of economic security and hope, are serious dangers. We must all respond. A fair, strong, and inclusive global economy is not just an idealistic goal – it is critical to the stability and prosperity of the entire world.

My country's own development strategy has focused on reforms that will help our people compete in a world marketplace. We are improving education ... streamlining and decentralizing development ... strengthening the job-creating private sector ... and encouraging export-oriented investment. Our efforts have had measurable, positive results, including strong productivity and GDP growth, and declining budget deficits and public debt.

In fact, Jordan is one of the key, lower-middle income countries that are leading the developing world in reform success. To ensure this progress and to keep it going, I recently convened a new group of lower-middle income countries, which we call the G-11. We are working to mobilize global recognition and international support. Development aid, fair trade measures, and debt relief are not the only ways the developed world can help. Just as important are trade opportunities and investment partnerships that provide win-win potential for all.

The Netherlands has played a committed, positive role in global development. We hope that in the years ahead, our countries will continue to cooperate in all aspects of development. One important area is knowledge exchange – sharing best practices in education, global commerce, and entrepreneurship.

We cannot talk about development and progress without talking about peace – the global partnership that may be most important of all.

Recent and ongoing crises in the Middle East challenge all nations. Conflict, instability, and occupation in our region have sent shockwaves worldwide. Peace throughout the region needs our full efforts.

In Iraq, there is a critical responsibility to help the Iraqi people rebuild and restore stability. A civil war in Iraq would be a major threat to the security of all neighboring states. We must reach out to all groups, to assure them of our support for Iraq's stability and to assist them in fighting terrorism. Jordan has taken significant steps to help the Iraqi people through humanitarian aid, civil and security training, and reconciliation efforts. We recognize the commitments your own country has made – nationally and through the EU – to support Iraq's security and stability. This active support has been, and remains, vital.

Lebanon also demands our concern. Europe has played an important role in ending this summer's aggression, and in supporting the Lebanese government.

These are vital measures. But stability in the Middle East will only come by focusing on the region's core problem ... the source of instability and violence over decades ... a central grievance, felt throughout the Middle East and indeed the world. And that is the continuing denial of Palestinian rights. Until we end that wrong, new generations will remain vulnerable to the sponsors of hate and violence ... and conflict will breed more conflict, year after year.

A solution is difficult – but, my friends, a solution exists. It recognizes that peace cannot be imposed by unilateral force, but rather, in partnership and trust. It answers the real need for security and justice ... for both parties. And it accords with the international legality that the United Nations and the International Court of Justice support. The terms are clear and measurable: a two-state solution ... guaranteeing Israel's security to live in peace with its

neighbours ... and providing, at long last, a sovereign, viable, and independent Palestine. This is the Arab Peace Initiative, first articulated in Beirut in 2002.

It is time to move peace forward. We need an international partnership of action, to encourage and support a return to negotiations and keep the parties moving towards results. And we must act now. Time is critical. With every day of delay, more lives are lost and more futures destroyed.

The partnership for peace ... for development ... for understanding: all reflect humanity's common bonds. Our people, our countries, our region and our world will share earth's destiny. We must and can make it a future of promise.

In the 10th Century, al-Zubaidi, a Muslim scholar from Andalusia in Spain, wrote that: "All lands in their diversity are one, and men are all brothers and neighbours."

He was echoing a timeless teaching of our faith. For as God says in the Holy Qur'an: "Mankind! We created you from a pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other."

So let us, indeed, know and respect one another. Nations and peoples of good will make a powerful coalition. With God's help, we will succeed in partnership and peace. Thank you very much.