

**Conférence de lancement du Projet Aladin
27 mars 2009 – Maison de l'UNESCO, Paris**

**Discours de M. Farouk Abd-El-Aziz Hosny,
Ministre de la Culture
Au nom de Monsieur Mohammed Hosni Moubarak,
Président de la République Arabe d'Égypte**

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

At this meeting we encounter two moments which are diametrically opposed in significance: the first revives a memory of cruelty and horror, the second one of mercy and peace. In between them emerges an intervenient spot for contemplation wherein we meet today so as to reject and condemn the first, but to consider how to bolster and universalize the second. Let my greeting to you, therefore, be a one of peace for the whole world in its variety of races, religions and shades of colour.

This international gathering is thematically bold, bold in that we are able to conduct a dialogue, not without a sense of trepidation towards its very vocabulary. Indeed we have hesitated long enough in handling its theme in the discourse of international culture whose positive aspects we seek to reinforce so that they could replace the negative options of some peoples, namely, waylaying, clashing, and the imposition of a single view or a single culture. As for the first moment of significance for this symposium, that is, the holocaust, the decades that have elapsed since its occurrence made us remember this human tragedy and take a lesson so as to create an international situation wherein it could never be repeated in any society in today's world, a lesson of the place and time of its occurrence; it is a lesson with dimensions to be studied.

It was the Nazis' Era where this exceptional crime took place in times of the twentieth century - the crossroad of mankind. In it, Europe emerged from the decades of renaissance dominated by theory to times of modernity and modernization wherein theory has been adapted for the easy employment of means of establishing security and the creation of prosperity for all people.

Perhaps no place or time will ever be free of tragedies of a painful past, and this will not make the twentieth century unique, as there are now other crimes being committed, at the hotbeds of fierce conflict in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and other regions in the world.

Even so, whatever be the places or the times which witnessed and still witness the violation of the human principle of interdependence and cooperation, how should we clearly and candidly deal with the questions raised by our symposium today?

Let me state clearly that this tragedy constituted a transgression against Islam as religion as well, and the group of people who believes in Islam – as Muslims. Yes, it was a transgression against Islam whose basic principles reject the exclusion, coercion and abuse of the other. It was a transgression against Muslims because their Semitic

and human brothers were killed in such huge numbers, their only 'fault' being belonging to a religion whose principles share their loftiness with the principles of all other religions, that is, the Jewish faith. The source of anguish was not alone the huge number, for the taking of a single life in Islam equals the killing of all people, and to sustain a single soul is to sustain all mankind.

We look forward and endeavour to ensure the return of free and peaceful coexistence, as indeed had prevailed for centuries in our region. Throughout this time, the religion of a given individual, whether a Jew, a Christian or a Muslim, never precluded his participation in the development of his society's civilization. This means that the tensions of contemporary coexistence are caused by an epistemological problem which we should resolve by adopting programmes and initiatives designed to acquaint all peoples with the history, religions and cultural contributions of their neighbours.

May I add a contemporary principle which enables us all to participate in condemning that tragedy, as well making our memories of it a motive for preventing its recurrence? Well, it is the principle of Human Rights clearly and decisively enshrined in paragraph five of the UN statute which stipulates "the condemnation, without reservation, of all aspects of religious intolerance, any incitement against, punishment of, or doing violence against persons or sects on the basis of ethnicity or religious belief, wherever this occurs".

This principle has been translated into the UNESCO contribution and documented resolutions, as an activation of its basic principle, namely that there is no culture superior to any other, and that all the people of the world have participated in creating human civilization. The UNESCO should in fact be applauded for initiating the call, a few years ago, for a culture of peace. To this end it has developed a number of programmes and held important conferences, in implementation of its charter. The essence of this charter's idea is that a change in the prevalent ideas about conflict and war is capable of banishing the ghost of war, in so far as it is "an idea engendered by the human mind".

Abraham was the father of all, into the furnace of iniquity he entered as an individual but emerged as a nation, in order to forge one nation of us all. It behooves us to become a single human entity, so as to fulfill our vocation in having a progeny enjoying good neighbourliness and peace.

Peace be unto you.