



Statement

by

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam
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to the United Nations**

**at the
General Assembly**

"High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace"

Thursday, September 7, 2017

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*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY. 10017*

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to thank you for organizing this High Level event which gives us the opportunity not only to celebrate but also to renew the commitments made almost two decades ago in the adoption of the “Declaration and Plan of Action on the Culture of Peace”.

It is an honor for me to address this honorable assembly on a theme dear to my country and so timely indeed when the world is witnessing a surge in violence, extremism, hatred and xenophobia.

More than ever do we need to sow the seeds of dialogue between civilizations, cultures, religions, and of course peoples. Dialogue, resulting from mutual respect on the basis of justice, equality and fundamental freedoms would help lead to peaceful coexistence, a global partnership where each is a unique enrichment, and difference is not a threat, nor diversity a survival battle.

It is indeed through such belief that Lebanon is striving despite numerous challenges to remain a model of coexistence, pluralism and openness.

Mr. President,

This year’s theme focuses on early childhood and the importance of sowing the seeds for a culture of peace.

As we meet today, hundreds of millions of children and youths are trapped in conflicts around the world. It is our vital responsibility to attend to them first. Education for peace is the way and the end.

Sadly, during the past few years, we have witnessed, especially in our part of the world, a hideous distortion of genuine messages of tolerance and coexistence. Abject massacres were committed falsely in the name of religion leading to unjustified hostility and rejection of anyone claiming to belong to such religion.

The culture of peace requires a true knowledge of the values and cultures of our societies. Religious and spiritual leaders have a primary role in promoting the genuine message of religion in this regard.

Moreover, the culture of peace cannot be achieved without comprehensive efforts to eliminate the driving causes of instability and violence such as poverty, exclusion, and marginalization and to achieve sustainable development through the respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

It is indeed through enhanced institutions with equal and full citizenship, where rights and freedoms are protected and real participation guaranteed that nations can best preserve their diversity and build sustainable peace.

Finally Mr. President, needless to remind that the culture of peace will always be flawed, if not unachievable as long as it is not based on the prevalence of justice and the respect of the rule of law in the relations between nations and peoples, especially in the troubled Middle East that I come from.