

Statement of H.E. Ambassador Ms. Saja MAJALI, Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Geneva

- Jordan is a land with an ancient culture.
- It has cradled many a civilization and religion.
- It is a place where many a prophets passed, lived, died or were buried.
- It is a most sacred place.
- It has witnessed many cherished historical events, as well as God's miracles on earth.
- In Jordan, you can on daily basis enjoy the music of the Azan calling for prayer, blending in perfect harmony and tune with that of the chiming church bells.
- Muslims and Christians feel respectively at ease in each others' churches and mosques.
- Just open the Quran or Bible, Old Testament or New, and you will immediately understand what I mean, and why many have made my country, their destination of pilgrimage.
- For example:
- Outside the old walls of my own hometown the city of "Al Karak", you can find Noah's mausoleum, that very place, where it is also believed that his Ark was built.
- Lott's Mausoleum is situated in a cave located 60 km from Al-Karak, and 35 km away from this cave stands a dry column of salt, the remainder of no other than his Lott's wife who if you remember was turned into a pillar of salt for disobeying God's will.
- From Jordan's Mount Nebo, Moses would view the Holy Land but would never

enter it. He would die and be buried in Moab.

- At Bethany Beyond the Jordan, Jesus would be baptized by John the Baptist, and would from there carry the torch of faith that was carried by Moses, and the other prophets before him.

From that very place, he would also declare the good news of God.

- In Safawy, you can visit the tree that shaded Prophet Mohammad as a ten year old boy during his visit to Jordan accompanying his uncle in a Quraishi caravan.

A priest by the name of Bohayra, would perceive a cloud covering him and notice a tree bending and folding its branches – by God’s command- to cast a shadow and shelter him from the heat of the sun.

Witnessing this miracle would make Bohayra feel that this boy must be the expected prophet that was mentioned in the Holy Book.

Uncovering the child’s back he would expose the sign symbolizing the seal of prophethood.

- The examples I have given show from where we in Jordan, leadership and people, are coming from in our narrative and outlook.
- The feeling of belonging to this Holy Land has made Jordanian Muslims and Christians live side-by-side in a spirit of respect and cooperation and as equals.
- It has also given us all, we feel, a special responsibility based on our heritage, to reach out to the world with a message of tolerance and co-existence which offers a real example of understanding, respect and fraternity among different faiths and can be an inspiration for all.
- In this, we are guided today by the vision of His Majesty King Abdullah.
- Being the 41st descendant of the Prophet Mohammad, he has made the Islamic principles of justice, peace, social harmony and tolerance central to his agenda for the nation, to build a prospering Jordan at the heart of a region at

peace.

- Under his wise leadership, Jordan has become an open, modern country rooted in the values of peace; the equal dignity of all people; the rule of law; and the pursuit of excellence and the strong belief in tolerance and respect for others.
- He has also taken it upon himself to explain the true nature of Islam and,
- has worked to sustain and increase interfaith dialogue in order to preserve the cultural and spiritual heritage of all the great faiths.
- As custodian of the holy places and religious sites in Jerusalem, he spares no effort to protect these sites, and preserve its identity and safeguard this Holy City as a place of worship for all.
- He has also spearheaded numerous global initiatives for tolerance and dialogue. Among these are:
 - The 2004 Amman Message, which aims to clarify the true nature of Islam, reject, extremism and violence, consolidate the cohesion between the 8 Muslim sects and call for peaceful coexistence among the world's 1.5 billion Muslims. This call has been supported by recognized religious scholars throughout the Muslim world.
 - The initiative "A Common Word", a call for peace between Muslims and Christians, an overture from Muslim scholars to their Christian counterparts, declaring the common ground between Christianity and Islam based on calls for "Love of God" and "Love of the Neighbour".
 - And, the UN's Global Interfaith Harmony Week, which builds on these two initiatives, and which we are observing here today here at this Library, within the confines of the Palais des Nations.
 - And I take the opportunity at this juncture to thank Mr. Pisano, its Director, Mr. Nikhil Seth the Executive Director of UNITAR, as well as Mr. Meijha for preparing for this event all those present distinguished Speakers as well as participants for making such an event possible.

The Interfaith Week

- The interfaith week was proposed at the 65th session of the UN General Assembly in 2010.
- As a means to:
 - to resist forces of division that spread misunderstanding and mistrust especially among peoples of different religions.
 - and to provide an opportunity to people all over the world, in their own places of worship, to express the teachings of their own faith about tolerance, respect for the other and peace.
- On 20 October 2010, it was unanimously adopted by the UN.
- This simple resolution simply:
 - Proclaims the first week of February of every year the World Interfaith Harmony Week between all religions, faiths and beliefs;
 - And encourages all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world's churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship during that week, based on love of God and love of one's neighbour or on love of the good and love of one's neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions;
- The beauty of the resolution is in its simplicity, practicality and inclusiveness.
- It moves the discussion forward: out of the conference rooms; and into the world's homes, schools, offices, and lives through concrete activities.
- It is not limited to specific monotheistic religions or beliefs but is meant to include all followers of any religion, faith or belief in a universal and inclusive manner.

- In proclaiming this observance, the United Nations General Assembly encourages all States to use the first week of February to spread “the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world’s churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship.
- This simple idea works well as the number of functions staged, as part of the International Interfaith Harmony Week have shown.
- Since the adoption of this resolution, the first week of February has been observed annually as World Interfaith Harmony Week activities commemorating it have continued to grow steadily. This will be the seventh year. Up till 410 events have been scheduled.
- In 2016 over 800 events held in total, and the judges received 83 applications for the H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan Prize for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016 prize.

The three winners have been identified:

First Prize: **EUCLID “Common Word” Interfaith Harmony Week (Euclid University):**

The Gambia and international partners for An academic paper, as well as several events looking at interfaith relations in Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, and United States will ensure that this event has a lasting impact.

The Second Prize: **2016 World Interfaith Harmony Week-Philippines UniHarmony Partners Manila:**

Over 20 activities involving 23 organizations were run over the first week of February involving thousands of people. This was a major event with good coverage and excellent organization.

And the Third Prize: for Interfaith Harmony Halifax and 12 partners Canada: An interfaith group that has widened its impact year-on-year. Amongst other things this year saw: Proclamations of World Interfaith Harmony Week from

the Province of Nova Scotia and the City of Halifax , and Declarations of Interfaith Peace and Friendship.

- I would like to end my intervention by quoting what his Majesty had recently said at a Luncheon in Washington after a prayer breakfast:
- There is ground on which we can stand that doesn't shift, that cannot shift – the unchanging spiritual values we share. Tolerance, mercy, compassion for others, mutual respect – these principles unite and strengthen a civilised world.
- And it is those common ideals that bring us all together. Because they are the foundations of every religion; whether we bow in a mosque, kneel in a church, pray in a temple, or simply engage in a selfless act of kindness, we are joined in faith.
- Our faiths teach us that we are defined by our choices, not our circumstances. By the choices we make or the choices we don't. By our action or our inaction. By kindness or cruelty. Boldness or doubt. Compassion or indifference.

What we are doing today in commemorating this week I think is showing that we all can make the right choices.