

1

Human Fraternity Document and the Role of the United Arab Emirates

H.E. Ahmed Al Jarwan

Global Council for Tolerance and Peace

1.1 Introduction

In a world where social injustice, corruption, inequality, moral decline, terrorism, discrimination, extremism, and violence have spread, it is time to become united to cherish peace and work for its establishment. It is time to take in new strategies and new methods at the global level. It is time to act.

There is still hope in a bright future for all human beings, if we have faith in God, if we unite, and if we work together to advance the culture of mutual respect, to encourage dialogue, to defend the protection of belief, to defend justice, and to protect, empower, and educate women, children, and disabled persons.

A new milestone in the history of mankind has been achieved on 4 February 2019, the day where the Human Fraternity document has been released and signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi, UAE, the land of Tolerance.

1.2 UAE History with Tolerance and Peace

Being the beacon of tolerance and peace, since its foundation by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, UAE was chosen to host this historical event.

UAE has been founded on the concepts of tolerance, intellectual exchange, and cultural and economic openness. It promotes acceptance and understanding as its core values. UAE is considered as a symbol of peace and security, especially that it is located in a region shaken by wars, discrimination, and conflict.

2 *Human Fraternity Document and the Role of the United Arab Emirates*



Figure 1.1 Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan.



Figure 1.2 Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces once said that UAE is continuing its traditional approach to supporting the efforts and initiatives to help the people of the region and promote tolerance,



Figure 1.3 His Holiness Pope Francis and The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi.

coexistence, brotherhood, and mutual respect around the world, as it believes in the importance of these values.

He also said that “Undoubtedly, high moral values help maintain the stability and balance of societies, because, no matter how developed nations become, their development and success will always be fragile if it is not based on a solid moral grounding. The UAE has always been a nurturing home for tolerance and a deep-rooted value system, which we work hard to instill in our current and future generations.”

UAE is playing a pioneering role by being a role model in promoting tolerance and building peace through different projects, programs, activities, and initiatives such as the following:

- considering year 2019 as the year of tolerance;
- establishing the first ministry of tolerance in the world;
- providing international assistance to people with disasters;
- supporting projects in construction, education, health, and humanitarian assistance in many countries;
- embracing the values of tolerance, peace, security, and multi-culturalism with more than 200 nationalities living in mutual respect and enjoying a decent quality of life;
- conducting conferences;
- running sports tournaments;
- offering awards to recognize peace builders and tolerance advocates;
- setting the National Tolerance Program;

4 *Human Fraternity Document and the Role of the United Arab Emirates*

- establishing the Abrahamic Family House, after Abraham the revered prophet in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, to symbolize the state of coexistence and human fraternity;
- establishing the first multi-faith prayer room at Abu Dhabi International Airport;
- boasting more than 40 churches of different Christian denominations, as well as Sikh and Hindu temples;
- setting up anti-discrimination and anti-hate laws and centers to counter extremism;
- following up on the progress of the activation of the Document of the Human Fraternity;
- extolling the virtue of tolerance as it comes from an intrinsic part of the Islamic culture;
- observing tolerance at all levels: individual, organizational, national, and institutional;
- and many others.

All of this makes the release and the signature of the Human Fraternity document, in attendance of more than 400 religious' leaders, a powerful message to all mankind for living together and for a world of peace.

1.3 Insights on the Human Fraternity Document

It is a message to all of us, inviting us to promote, evolve, act, cooperate, and endure toward a happier, stable, and peaceful world.

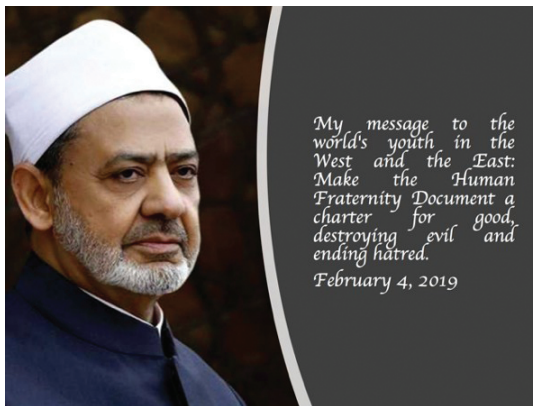


Figure 1.4 The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb.

The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb said on the occasion of the signing of the Human Fraternity document, “My message to the world’s youth in the West and the East: Make the Human Fraternity Document a charter for good, destroying evil and ending hatred.”

On the other hand, His Holiness Pope Francis also said, “The Document on Human Fraternity, which I signed today in Abu Dhabi with my brother The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, invited all persons who have faith in God and faith in Human Fraternity to unite and work Together.”

Taking in consideration the level of poverty, conflict, suffering of human beings, and distancing from our religious values — along with the feelings of frustration, isolation, desperation, injustice, lack of equitable distribution of natural resources, extremism, and many other issues that have been clearly mentioned in the Human Fraternity documents — we should not keep silent; we should unite and act to resolve all these issues, through dialogue, cooperation, and good education system, and the empowerment, protection, and support of women, children, elderly, disabled, and oppressed people.

All what has been achieved and what peace builders and tolerance advocates are working on nowadays are synchronized with many initiatives and programs proposed by many international entities such as UN, UNESCO, UNFPA, and many others.

The Document is considered a road map for global peace and coexistence and sets different principles, summarized in Figures 1.5 and 1.6.

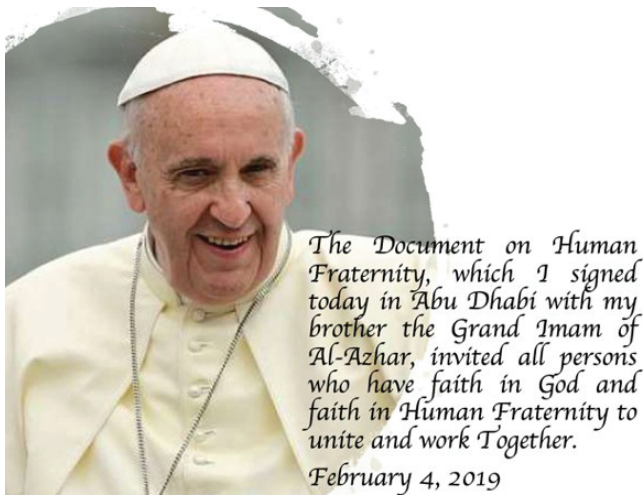


Figure 1.5 His Holiness Pope Francis.

6 *Human Fraternity Document and the Role of the United Arab Emirates*



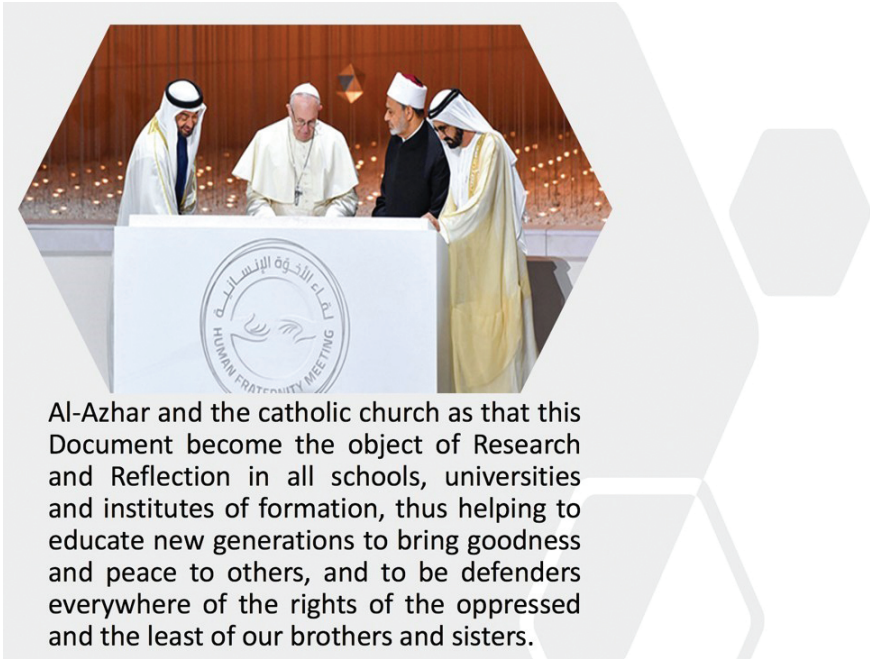
Figure 1.6 Human Fraternity document as a road map for global peace and coexistence.



Figure 1.7 Key principles of Human Fraternity document.

All programs, initiatives, activities, meetings, and projects to resolve these issues should lead to a world of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, and coexistence.

It is the responsibility of everyone — politicians, leaders, intellectuals, scientists, technologists, educators, philosophers, religious figures, artists, media professionals, and women and men of different cultures — to work



Al-Azhar and the catholic church as that this Document become the object of Research and Reflection in all schools, universities and institutes of formation, thus helping to educate new generations to bring goodness and peace to others, and to be defenders everywhere of the rights of the oppressed and the least of our brothers and sisters.

Figure 1.8 The Human Fraternity document to become the object of research and reflection in all schools, universities, and institutes of formation.

together, united hand by hand to build the human values, to promote tolerance and peace everywhere, and to develop with sustainability to empower human beings; and this is what peace builders and tolerance advocates are doing. Everyone should work on actualizing the Human Fraternity document through our academic and social programs, our projects serving women and youth, sustainable development, society and community building, media and communication, our meetings that are open for dialogue, brainstorming, negotiation and discussion, our collaborations, and our conferences and symposiums to develop and revive the moral values and coexistence in human beings, and minimize these catastrophic crises.

From educational perspectives, His Holiness Pope Francis and The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb asked all schools, universities, and academic institutions to study the document, conduct applied research, and seek means of incorporating its principles and objectives in their curriculum to build a new generation of peace builders and tolerance advocates.

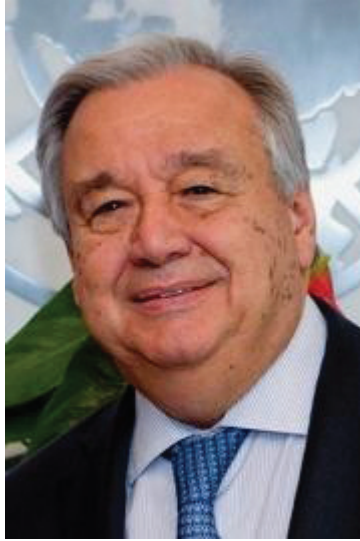


Figure 1.9 H. E. Antonio Guterres.

António Guterres, the United Nations General Secretary, commented on the Human Fraternity document saying that “the Human Fraternity Document, signed by The Grand Imam and Pope Francis, represents the practical application of religious tolerance and respect, and a direct and intended message to all believers that diversity in religion is a divine wisdom, just like difference in color, gender and language. I look forward to the realization of the efforts of the Committee through meetings with religious leaders and heads of international organizations and other figures, in addition to various initiatives that would spread peace and love among all human beings.”

He also added that “the signing of this document by the world’s top religious figures reflects the universality of its message that involves necessity of respecting and protecting the principle of religious freedom. This couldn’t have been possible without the support and efforts of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, in getting this document signed and implemented to promote global coexistence and understanding. I also admire the diversity within the Committee entrusted with achieving the document’s objectives, as it contains representatives of different religions and nationalities.”

1.4 Higher Committee of Human Fraternity

The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity comprises a diverse set of international religious leaders, educational scholars, and cultural leaders who were inspired by the Document on Human Fraternity and are dedicated to sharing its message of mutual understanding and peace.

The board includes those from the UAE, Spain, Italy, Egypt, and the USA and will expand to incorporate leaders of other denominations and beliefs in the coming years.

Members of the higher committee include:

1. Miguel Guixot, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the Holy See, who has been appointed as the role of Chairman;
2. Judge Mohamed Abdel Salam, Advisor to The Grand Imam, who acts as Committee Secretary;
3. Professor Mohamed Mahrasawi, President of Al-Azhar University;
4. Monsignor Yoannis Gaid, Personal Secretary of Pope Francis;
5. Mohamed Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism — Abu Dhabi;
6. Dr. Sultan Al Rumaithi, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Elders;
7. Yasser Al Muhairi, an Emirati writer;
8. Rabbi Bruce Lustig, a Senior Rabbi at Washington Hebrew Congregation.



Figure 1.10 The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity.

10 Human Fraternity Document and the Role of the United Arab Emirates

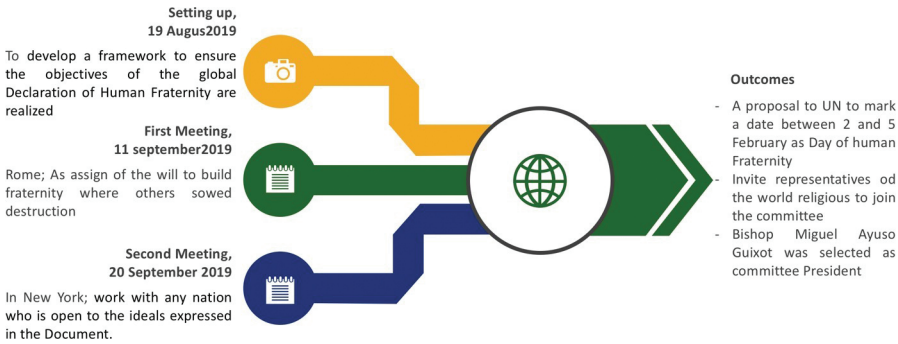


Figure 1.11 Summary of the achievements of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity.

The responsibility of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity

The members of the higher committee are responsible for:

- establishing the groundwork for its future activities, as it is in its early stages of its formation;
- acting on the aspirations outlined in the Document on Human Fraternity;
- meeting with religious leaders, heads of international organizations, and others across the world;
- supporting and spreading the values of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence;
- providing counsel on a variety of initiatives, including the Abrahamic Family House to be built in Abu Dhabi;
- including leaders of other faiths, denominations, and beliefs;
- undertaking complex challenges facing communities of all faiths, with an approach of openness, learning, and dialogue.

Summary of the higher committee achievements is presented in Figure 1.11.

1.5 The Document of Human Fraternity

Introduction:

Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved. Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures, and all human beings (equal on account of his mercy), believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need.

This transcendental value served as the starting point for several meetings characterized by a friendly and fraternal atmosphere where we shared the joys, sorrows, and problems of our contemporary world. We did this by considering scientific and technical progress, therapeutic achievements, the digital era, the mass media, and communications. We reflected also on the level of poverty, conflict, and suffering of so many brothers and sisters in different parts of the world as a consequence of the arms race, social injustice, corruption, inequality, moral decline, terrorism, discrimination, extremism, and many other causes.

From our fraternal and open discussions, and from the meeting that expressed profound hope in a bright future for all human beings, the idea of this *Document on Human Fraternity* was conceived. It is a text that has been given honest and serious thought so as to be a joint declaration of good and heartfelt aspirations. It is a document that invites all persons who have faith in God and faith in *human fraternity* to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters.

Document:

In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties, and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love, and peace.

In the name of innocent human life that God has forbidden to kill, affirming that whoever kills a person is like one who kills the whole of humanity, and that whoever saves a person is like one who saves the whole of humanity.

In the name of the poor, the destitute, the marginalized, and those most in need whom God has commanded us to help as a duty required of all persons, especially the wealthy and of means.

In the name of orphans, widows, refugees, and those exiled from their homes and their countries.

In the name of all victims of wars, persecution, and injustice.

In the name of the weak, those who live in fear, prisoners of war, and those tortured in any part of the world, without distinction.

In the name of people who have lost their security, peace, and the possibility of living together, becoming victims of destruction, calamity, and war.

In the name of *human fraternity* that embraces all human beings, unites them, and renders them equal.

In the name of this *fraternity* torn apart by policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit, or by hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and the future of men and women.

In the name of freedom, which God has given to all human beings creating them free and distinguishing them by this gift.

In the name of justice and mercy, the foundations of prosperity and the cornerstone of faith.

In the name of all persons of good will present in every part of the world.

In the name of God and of everything stated thus far; Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and the Muslims of the East and West, together with the Catholic Church and the Catholics of the East and West, declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard.

We, who believe in God and in the final meeting with Him and His judgment, on the basis of our religious and moral responsibility, and through this Document, call upon ourselves, upon the leaders of the world, as well as the architects of international policy and world economy to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace; to intervene at the earliest opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood and bring an end to wars, conflicts, environmental decay and the moral and cultural decline that the world is presently experiencing.

We call upon intellectuals, philosophers, religious figures, artists, media professionals, and men and women of culture in every part of the world to rediscover the values of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, human fraternity, and coexistence in order to confirm the importance of these values as anchors of salvation for all, and to promote them everywhere.

This Declaration, setting out from a profound consideration of our contemporary reality, valuing its successes and in solidarity with its suffering, disasters, and calamities, believes firmly that among the most important causes of the crises of the modern world are a desensitized human conscience, a distancing from religious values and a prevailing individualism accompanied by materialistic philosophies that deify the human person and introduce worldly and material values in place of supreme and transcendental principles.

While recognizing the positive steps taken by our modern civilization in the fields of science, technology, medicine, industry, and welfare, especially in developed countries, we wish to emphasize that, associated with such

historic advancements, great and valued as they are, there exists both a moral deterioration that influences international action and a weakening of spiritual values and responsibility. All this contributes to a general feeling of frustration, isolation, and desperation leading many to fall either into a vortex of atheistic, agnostic, or religious extremism, or into blind and fanatic extremism, which ultimately encourage forms of dependency and individual or collective self-destruction.

History shows that religious extremism, national extremism, and also intolerance have produced in the world, be it in the East or West, what might be referred to as signs of a “third world war being fought piecemeal.” In several parts of the world and in many tragic circumstances, these signs have begun to be painfully apparent, as in those situations where the precise number of victims, widows, and orphans is unknown. We see, in addition, other regions preparing to become theaters of new conflicts, with outbreaks of tension and a build-up of arms and ammunition, and all this in a global context overshadowed by uncertainty, disillusionment, fear of the future, and controlled by narrow-minded economic interests.

We likewise affirm that major political crises, situations of injustice, and lack of equitable distribution of natural resources — which only a rich minority benefit from, to the detriment of the majority of the peoples of the earth — have generated, and continue to generate, vast numbers of poor, infirm, and deceased persons. This leads to catastrophic crises that various countries have fallen victim to despite their natural resources and the resourcefulness of young people which characterize these nations. In the face of such crises that result in the deaths of millions of children — wasted away from poverty and hunger — there is an unacceptable silence on the international level.

It is clear in this context how the family as the fundamental nucleus of society and humanity is essential in bringing children into the world, raising them, educating them, and providing them with solid moral formation and domestic security. To attack the institution of the family, to regard it with contempt, or to doubt its important role is one of the most threatening evils of our era.

We affirm also the importance of awakening religious awareness and the need to revive this awareness in the hearts of new generations through sound education and an adherence to moral values and upright religious teachings. In this way, we can confront tendencies that are individualistic, selfish, and conflicting and also address radicalism and blind extremism in all its forms and expressions.

The first and most important aim of religions is to believe in God, to honor Him and to invite all men and women to believe that this universe depends on a God who governs it. He is the Creator who has formed us with His divine wisdom and has granted us the gift of life to protect it. It is a gift that no one has the right to take away, threaten, or manipulate to suit oneself. Indeed, everyone must safeguard this gift of life from its beginning up to its natural end. We therefore condemn all those practices that are a threat to life such as genocide, acts of terrorism, forced displacement, human trafficking, abortion, and euthanasia. We likewise condemn the policies that promote these practices.

Moreover, we resolutely declare that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility, and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions and from interpretations made by religious groups who, in the course of history, have taken advantage of the power of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women in order to make them act in a way that has nothing to do with the truth of religion. This is done for the purpose of achieving objectives that are political, economic, worldly, and short-sighted. We thus call upon all concerned to stop using religions to incite hatred, violence, extremism, and blind fanaticism, and to refrain from using the name of God to justify acts of murder, exile, terrorism, and oppression. We ask this on the basis of our common belief in God who did not create men and women to be killed or to fight one another, nor to be tortured or humiliated in their lives and circumstances. God, the Almighty, has no need to be defended by anyone and does not want His name to be used to terrorize people.

This Document, in accordance with previous international documents that have emphasized the importance of the role of religions in the construction of world peace, upholds the following.

- The firm conviction that authentic teachings of religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, *human fraternity*, and harmonious coexistence; to re-establish wisdom, justice, and love; and to reawaken religious awareness among young people so that future generations may be protected from the realm of materialistic thinking and from dangerous policies of unbridled greed and indifference that are based on the law of force and not on the force of law.

- Freedom is a right of every person: each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression, and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, race, and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives. Therefore, the fact that people are forced to adhere to a certain religion or culture must be rejected, as too the imposition of a cultural way of life that others do not accept.
- Justice based on mercy is the path to follow in order to achieve a dignified life to which every human being has a right;
- Dialogue, understanding, and the widespread promotion of a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and of living together peacefully would contribute significantly to reducing many economic, social, political, and environmental problems that weigh so heavily on a large part of humanity.
- Dialogue among believers means coming together in the vast space of spiritual, human, and shared social values and, from here, transmitting the highest moral virtues that religions aim for. It also means avoiding unproductive discussions.
- The protection of places of worship — synagogues, churches, and mosques — is a duty guaranteed by religions, human values, laws, and international agreements. Every attempt to attack places of worship or threaten them by violent assaults, bombings, or destruction is a deviation from the teachings of religions as well as a clear violation of international law.
- Terrorism is deplorable and threatens the security of people, be it in the East or the West, the North or the South, and disseminates panic, terror, and pessimism, but this is not due to religion, even when terrorists instrumentalize it. It is due, rather, to an accumulation of incorrect interpretations of religious texts and to policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression, and pride. This is why it is so necessary to stop supporting terrorist movements fuelled by financing, the provision of weapons and strategy, and by attempts to justify these movements even using the media. All these must be regarded as international crimes that threaten security and world peace. Such terrorism must be condemned in all its forms and expressions.
- The concept of *citizenship* is based on the equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice. It is therefore crucial to establish in our societies the concept of *full citizenship* and reject the discriminatory

use of the term *minorities* which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority. Its misuse paves the way for hostility and discord; it undoes any successes and takes away the religious and civil rights of some citizens who are thus discriminated against.

- Good relations between East and West are indisputably necessary for both. They must not be neglected so that each can be enriched by the other's culture through fruitful exchange and dialogue. The West can discover in the East remedies for those spiritual and religious maladies that are caused by a prevailing materialism. And the East can find in the West many elements that can help free it from weakness, division, conflict, and scientific, technical, and cultural decline. It is important to pay attention to religious, cultural, and historical differences that are a vital component in shaping the character, culture, and civilization of the East. It is likewise important to reinforce the bond of fundamental human rights in order to help ensure a dignified life for all the men and women of East and West, avoiding the politics of double standards.
- It is an essential requirement to recognize the right of women to education and employment, and to recognize their freedom to exercise their own political rights. Moreover, efforts must be made to free women from historical and social conditioning that runs contrary to the principles of their faith and dignity. It is also necessary to protect women from sexual exploitation and from being treated as merchandise or objects of pleasure or financial gain. Accordingly, an end must be brought to all those inhuman and vulgar practices that denigrate the dignity of women. Efforts must be made to modify those laws that prevent women from fully enjoying their rights.
- The protection of the fundamental rights of children to grow up in a family environment, to receive nutrition, education, and support, are duties of the family and society. Such duties must be guaranteed and protected so that they are not overlooked or denied to any child in any part of the world. All those practices that violate the dignity and rights of children must be denounced. It is equally important to be vigilant against the dangers that they are exposed to, particularly in the digital world, and to consider as a crime the trafficking of their innocence and all violations of their youth.
- The protection of the rights of the elderly, the weak, the disabled, and the oppressed is a religious and social obligation that must be guaranteed and defended through strict legislation and the implementation of the relevant international agreements.

To this end, by mutual cooperation, the Catholic Church and Al-Azhar announce and pledge to convey this Document to authorities, influential leaders, persons of religion all over the world, appropriate regional and international organizations, organizations within civil society, religious institutions, and leading thinkers. They further pledge to make known the principles contained in this Declaration at all regional and international levels, while requesting that these principles be translated into policies, decisions, legislative texts, courses of study, and materials to be circulated.

Al-Azhar and the Catholic Church ask that this Document become the object of research and reflection in all schools, universities, and institutes of formation, thus helping to educate new generations to bring goodness and peace to others, and to be defenders everywhere of the rights of the oppressed and of the least of our brothers and sisters.

In conclusion, our aspiration is the following.

- This Declaration may constitute an invitation to reconciliation and fraternity among all believers, indeed among believers and non-believers, and among all people of good will.
- This Declaration may be an appeal to every upright conscience that rejects deplorable violence and blind extremism; an appeal to those who cherish the values of tolerance and fraternity that are promoted and encouraged by religions.
- This Declaration may be a witness to the greatness of faith in God that unites divided hearts and elevates the human soul.
- This Declaration may be a sign of the closeness between East and West, between North and South, and between all who believe that God has created us to understand one another, cooperate with one another, and live as brothers and sisters who love one another.
- This is what we hope and seek to achieve with the aim of finding a universal peace that all can enjoy in this life.

