



**REMARKS OF H.E. MR. NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER
UNITED NATIONS HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS**

BEFORE THE

**GLOBAL BUSINESS & INTERFAITH PEACE AWARDS
RIO 2016**

**Awards will be presented on 6th September 2016, the night before the opening of the
Paralympics Games in Rio de Janeiro**

**DELIVERED BY HANIFA MEZOU, PhD SENIOR ADVISOR, HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND CIVIL
SOCIETY**

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6 SEPTEMBER 2016

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

Dear Colleagues and friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to be able to participate to this award ceremony, and particularly to deliver a message on behalf of His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, who conveys his profound regrets on being unable to participate personally in your deliberations.

Hanifa D. Mezoui, PhD
Senior Advisor, Humanitarian Affairs and Civil Society
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

REMARKS OF H.E. MR. NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER
UNITED NATIONS HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
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It is an honor to speak to you today as a member of the jury deciding on the finalists for the **Global Business and Interfaith Peace Awards** in partnership with the UN Global Compact Business for Peace, and Religious Freedom and Business Foundation.

This award is presented at the eve of the Paralympics Games in Rio de Janeiro, which represent a symbol for peace. The importance of sports for peace, understanding between culture and nations, and human development for all, has been recognized by the United Nations in many platforms. Already in 1993, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 48/11, which called for the revival of the ancient Greek tradition of an Olympic Truce.

During the truce period, enemies were expected to lay down their weapons to allow the athletes and the spectators to participate and enjoy the Games. The United Nations Millennium Declaration reiterated the importance of the Olympic Truce to promote peace and human understanding through sport and the Olympic Ideal. It shows the power that sports has to promote education, health, to foster understanding and respect across culture and nations. Sports are a foundation of peace and development.

In addition to UNAOC's major pillars, namely: Media, Migration, Education and Youth, since I took over the helm of the Alliance, fully aware of the importance that sports plays in the life of youth worldwide, I have launched a number of **initiatives that highlight the importance of sports** as a key tool to promote understanding across people from all cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Together with arts and entertainment, sports are part of our tool kit to build bridges of respect and understanding across people from all parts of the world.

Today, we are launching the First Edition of the Global Business and Interfaith Peace Awards, with the conviction that the business sector, the religious community and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations are important actors in “**promoting peaceful and inclusive societies**”.

The businessmen and women who will accept this award today are those who have demonstrated strong leadership and have integrated the Sustainable Development Goals and interfaith understanding and peace into their business.

As High Representative to the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations this award is closely linked to the mission of the Alliance.

The Alliance strives to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue among people from all different cultures. It is important to build mutual respect and bridge the gap among people’s different cultural and religious identities while promoting diversity.

To accomplish these goals it is crucial for religious and faith leaders to work together to use their influence to encourage *interfaith dialogue* and prevent violent religious conflict.

Promoting a dialogue between religious groups, civil societies, governments, and the private sector is an important tool for peace.

This award recognizes those who have taken an initiative to use their business as a platform for promoting positive change and tolerance in our society.

I would like to take a moment to thank Brian Grim, the President of Religious Freedom and Business Foundation (RFBF), who pioneered this award initiative. By implementing SDG 17 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development,” RFBF is collaborating with Global Compact and the UNAOC in acknowledging these distinct business leaders at the international level.

Religious Freedom and Business Foundation is a charitable organization that guides businesses in advocating for religious freedom and how it will be beneficial on the corporate level. It works on engaging the private sector with governments and civil societies.

Global Compact is a resource for any business leader who is looking to advance sustainability and responsible business practices in their company. Businesses should aim to work alongside Global Compact’s 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

Focusing on religion is crucial in ensuring there is peace and equality. When there is inequality, there is violence. Radicalism emerges when people feel unsafe or unequal in their society. When

societies have religious freedom and equality there are other human rights and social and economic goods present.

The UNAOC has established many programs that promote interfaith and cultural tolerance, to name just two:

The UNAOC's **Summer School Programme** extends the themes of interfaith and multiculturalism. It is based on the idea that people have more in common than what divides them.

The Fellowship Program is an educational initiative aimed at exposing our world's emerging leaders to religion, media, culture, politics, and civil society. It is a platform for sharing knowledge and ideas, and inspiring partnerships across faiths, borders and cultures.

We have also two well-established awards:

The Intercultural Innovation Award is a partnership between the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the BMW Group that aims to select and support the most innovative grassroots projects that encourage intercultural dialogue and cooperation around the world.

PLURAL + is a joint initiative between the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the International Organization for Migration, with a network of over 50 partner organizations, who support the creative video of young people increasing awareness and respect for diversity.

Today we honour twelve business leaders who have proven themselves committed in interfaith and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is exceptional that in the midst of the global crisis we are facing today, there are still leaders who continue to believe in ethics and peace. The people we have honoured today have committed their businesses in ensuring progress is made in the Sustainable Development Goals and working for a future where everyone is treated equally.

"The Olympics prove that countries can move from armed conflict to athletic competition. They are a chance for us to see that we are all human and that no one should be left behind."

Thank you