Professor Nasser David Khalili speech on receipt of the Dialogue Among Cultures Award 2014

Euro-Mediterranean meeting of Projet Aladin
12th July 2014, Paris

Monsieur le Président de l’Assemblée nationale,
Madame la minister de la Justice
Altesses, Excellences,
Mesdames, Messieurs,
Cher amis,

I am humbled by the great honour that you have bestowed on me. I’d like to thank the Aladdin Project and, the chair of its Board of Directors, dear Anne-Marie, and its Executive Director, dear Abe Radkin. Many thanks also to Ambassador Jacques Andréani, chairman of the Committee on Conscience, and the distinguished members of this committee.

As a Jew born in a Muslim country I fell in love with Islamic art not because it was Islamic but because of its splendour, beauty and diversity, and at a young age realised that culture can play a huge role in bringing nations and people together.

Shakespeare said that the only difference between word and the world is the letter L, which stands for languages. My interpretation of it is the language of harmony, the language of peace and the language of respect.

We have to understand that we are all born as a human being first; religion is given to us at birth.

The statistics show that out of world population of 7 billion, almost half are either Jewish, Christian or Muslim. Since 1998 the Maimonides
Interfaith Foundation has been active in creating bridges between the three Abrahamic faiths.

In my humble opinion, all the interfaith institutions and organisations should join forces and work hand in hand with the United Nations, UNESCO and governments around the world to achieve our objectives especially with children in primary schools if we do not want to be in the same situation as we are now.

God said to Moses I am who I am and Jesus said the Kingdom of God is within you and in the last sermon the Prophet Mohammed peace be upon him said, the biggest Jihad is to conquer oneself.

As the Confucius Zen said: heaven is my father, earth is my mother and people are my brothers and sisters.

I believe that Glory belongs to God and humility belongs to man.

Regardless of our beliefs or following in any of the major religions or even being an atheist, at the end of the day faith plays a role in every human being. If you are flying on a plane from A to B you put your faith in the hands of the pilot, and if you are in hospital and need major surgery, you put your faith in the hands of the surgeon, or for that matter, if you are ever desperate you rely on one faith one way or the other.

End.

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