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## **Remarks by UN Secretary General António Guterres at the 2018 Templeton Prize Ceremony**

**Washington National Cathedral, November 13, 2018**

Your Majesty,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

There are many things a secretary general does because he is forced to do so; they come with the job, but, fortunately, there are some that I can do with real joy and enthusiasm. And one of them is to be here, this evening, in this wonderful cathedral, and to pay tribute to King Abdullah—the outstanding statesman, the messenger for peace, and, if Your Majesty allows me to say so, a very dear friend.

And in this world where we see, unfortunately, proliferating both hatred and chaos, there are a few pillars of wisdom and compassion, and one of the most solid of these pillars is the awardee of this year's Templeton Prize.

And so, it is a great honour for me to be here this evening to pay tribute to His Majesty King Abdullah. Because for those like me that know him, this honour comes as no surprise. No one better than King Abdullah deserves to receive this very renowned award.

Many previous Templeton Prize-winners have been honoured for their work to reconcile belief in God with scientific and mathematical inquiry. As an engineer by training and a man of faith, I have never seen any contradiction between these two essential elements of the human experience.

But His Majesty brings his faith to bear in a completely different arena: political leadership and global diplomacy. The successful conduct of international affairs depends on seeking common ground and unifying principles.

And as King Abdullah well understands, these are to be found principally in the values that bind us as members of one human family, which means in our spirituality, and in all the great world religions.

Faith is too often used to divide us. But it should provide pathways for people to come together in their diversity. By seeking religious harmony and understanding within Islam, and between Islam and other religions, His Majesty has courageously demonstrated that belief in a power greater than ourselves can bridge differences, create unity, and contribute to peace, stability and security.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

King Abdullah's promotion of peace within Islam, and between Muslims and people of other beliefs, has contributed to global peace and progress in many ways in our worlds. We had very important references tonight to the Amman Message of 2004. It was a remarkable initiative that King Abdullah initiated, in an expression of unity, mutual respect and brotherhood between all Muslims, and a message of good news, friendship and hope to the world.

It sets out the values of compassion, mercy, respect for others, and freedom of belief as principles that define Muslims and their communities. And its affirmation that terrorism and violence have no place in Islam was a timely and welcome effort to prevent the escalation of sectarian tensions, as it was already referred tonight.

And King Abdullah's support for scholarly initiatives, including the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, has also fostered mutual understanding and cooperation among Muslims. The Common Word initiative, also referred to several times this evening, launched by His Majesty in 2007 aimed to ease tensions between Muslims and Christians, based on the values common to both religions, values that were also reminded several times tonight: love of God, and love of neighbour.

And King Abdullah's proposal for World Interfaith Harmony Week was unanimously adopted and is now observed every year around the world. The King's family, the Hashemites, are directly descended from the Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, and have a long history of respect for other faiths.

This outstanding family in recent times has been the Custodians of both Muslim and Christian religious sites in Jerusalem. And the King has continued this tradition in many ways, from funding the construction of Christian churches on the East Bank of the River Jordan, to supporting Christians threatened by Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

Not to mention the millions of Palestine refugees, Jordan has received about 1 million Syrian refugees and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees with a generosity that should be referred to today in a world where—unfortunately—refugees are, so many times, forgotten or even ostracised.

And I have to confess to all of you one thing; I was High Commissioner for Refugees, and many times I went to Jordan.

Jordan was paying an enormous price because of the Syrian conflict. The price because of the direct impact of the war on the security of the country, but also because of the overwhelming presence of a number of refugees that represented an enormous portion of the population in the country. But as High Commissioner for Refugees, I had the obligation to go and to ask the government of Jordan to do the impossible—even more. And sometimes, the government would tell me, look, I mean, it's not possible, really. We cannot do more. And then, I would visit Your Majesty, and the impossible would become reality.

You have been an extraordinary symbol of generosity and solidarity in today's world, and this is something I would never forget, because I lived in some of the most difficult and emotional moments in my life. And I know that your generosity was inspired both by your Muslim faith and by your solidarity with all fellow women and men.

King Abdullah's investment in humanism and solidarity has always been apparent in his championing of young people, in Jordan, at the United Nations and around the world. He has taken the lead in showing young people that they are valued, they are important, and they are respected.

This is part of His Majesty's broader efforts to foster freedom of belief and social cohesion, mutual respect, inclusion and hope.

King Abdullah has acted upon his responsibility to address the root causes that can undermine social cohesion and create conditions in which extremism can flourish. He has demonstrated what true leadership looks like, in our times and for our world.

Dear friends,

We face deep insecurity and instability in many parts of the world. Societies are divided. Racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are on the rise. The three great monotheistic religions have contributed so much to enrich our world and global civilisation. And each puts great value on solidarity and humanity.

We cannot stand by as they are pitted against each other to further political agendas of dominance and intimidation.

King Abdullah's leadership, based on love of God and love of one's neighbour, is an important antidote that resonates everywhere: from communities to societies to the international arena.

And let me be clear—his message is not about tolerance, because tolerance is not enough. King Abdullah calls on us to do far more than tolerate each other. His message is one of respect, solidarity and love.

And I hope this celebrated award will help to spread that message of respect, solidarity, and love even more widely.

Your Majesty, I congratulate you on this prize and wish you all success in all your future endeavours.

Thank you very much.

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