

Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri

The Media and Intercultural Dialogue

Arabic original version included

Publications of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
-ISESCO- 1440H / 2019



Table of contents

❖ Preface	7
❖ Sultan Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, a figurehead of dialogue and rapprochement of peoples	11
❖ Morocco: a crossroads of dialogue and co-existence	13
❖ The media are dialogue and dialogue is a medium ...	13
❖ A development-oriented human mission	15
❖ A tool to steer society towards prospects of progress	17
❖ A linguistic analysis of media and information	18
❖ Public opinion-making	19
❖ Dialogue: a means to foster mutual understanding among peoples	20
❖ Dialogue, rapprochement and alliance	21
❖ Dialogue in the Arab and Islamic heritage	22
❖ Obstacles that hindered the launch of the International Year of Dialogue	23
❖ Expanding the scope of cultural dialogue to include interreligious dialogue	24
❖ Fez Conference on Intercultural Dialogue	25
❖ Dialogue at the service of peace	26
❖ Serious dialogue creates purposive media	28

Preface

The media and dialogue are closely linked because of the interrelation that exists between their missions. The media's mandate is to present the truth to the larger public while dialogue aims to shed light on what is right and achieve a state of conviction and certainty about the issues put on the table of dialogue. This makes the media and information an open dialogue and dialogue a form of channeled media, their common objective being to serve the truth and justice at the same time, using a large and diversified spectrum of means, ways and methods. However, this diversity remains limited to form and does not extend to content as forms may change to match the means but contents remain in their essence and depth constant and immutable.

This interchangeable relationship between the media and dialogue places both at the service of the objectives they seek to fulfill. Whilst dialogue strives to foster understanding, co-existence and rapprochement among nations and peoples and to promote the culture of justice and peace, information and the media aim to consolidate the civilizational and intercultural dialogue through the sterling role they play in creating an environment conducive to the spread of values of a harmony promoting dialogue, which in turn leads to the establishment of peace and security by removing all causes of tension in human relations and international crises.

While purposive media are a creator of peace, constructive and serious dialogue safeguards and protects this peace. And while media that circumnavigate proper procedures and do not respect rules and regulations,

ethics and the norms of the profession may ignite the first sparks in tension hotspots around the world, leading to crises and even triggering wars, dialogue, if not based on sound foundations and carrying a noble human mission with lofty objectives as its end goal, may contribute to disrupting the balance of relations among peoples, which in turn may negatively impact international cooperation in many ways.

From this all-encompassing perspective, the study of the positive role the media can play in consolidating intercultural dialogue becomes a crucially important issue worthy of attention at the academic, cultural and information levels and of the interest it is garnering globally, particularly at this critical juncture experienced worldwide and where efforts continue to be expended by the international community to alleviate the severity of multilateral conflicts, if not abolish them entirely, through a ceaseless drive to bolster intercultural dialogue and elevate this dialogue to a level where it consecrates the alliance of civilizations.

While many means and ways may exist to fulfill this noble purpose and this lofty goal, the media, under all their forms and operating at various levels, are one of dialogue's key tools considering the plethora of instruments and advanced mechanisms they can make use of to advance intercultural dialogue and bolster the international and multilateral efforts being incessantly combined at many a level, whether official or popular, to achieve the noble objectives around which rallies the entire international community.

I have always taken a keen interest in issues of intercultural dialogue and alliance of civilizations and pored over the study of all aspects inherent to dialogue and from all angles, whether academic research, theorization, establishing the roots of dialogue or authoring books on the subject, or at the level of general cultural action through the lectures

I deliver at universities, forums and research centers, the working papers I contribute to conferences and symposia, my writings for newspapers, or through granting press or televised interviews. As a result, the subject of intercultural dialogue has become one of my favorite subjects and is monopolizing a good part of my intellectual interests at this point in time marked by an increased interest in dialogue issues at many levels, and even more after the creation of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in whose international forums I regularly take part and from whose pulpit I presented ISESCO's perspective on dialogue from the standpoint of the Islamic human civilization.

Honoring an invitation from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in the Moroccan city of Fes, I delivered a lecture on 11 December 2013 on the subject of the Role of the Media in Promoting Intercultural Dialogue. In this lecture, I delved into the origins of the mission of the media as an instrument of societal development, a medium of social stability and soundness and a public opinion maker. This served as my introduction to analyzing the concept of intercultural dialogue promotion using different means and tools, with the premise that a serious and purposive dialogue furthers the rapprochement of peoples as the carrier of a peace message and, in fact, as one of the pillars of world peace. I established a systematic link between the media and dialogue, a connection dictated by their very common nature and end goal. I started this lecture with a brief note on the person whose name this University carries, Sultan Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah al-Alaoui, a sterling pioneer of dialogue, co-existence and rapprochement of the world's countries in the 18th century AD, and a source of immense pride for his country the Kingdom of Morocco and for the entire Islamic Ummah, before I proceeded to shed light on the special role that Morocco has been playing on the stage of intercultural dialogue and the alliance of civilizations.

I resolved to have this lecture translated into English and French and publish the three versions in one volume as has been my tradition with most of the lectures I deliver, intent on generalizing their academic benefit and ensuring that the concepts addressed and explained in these lectures and the conclusions made reach a wider audience of native speakers of these three languages and do not remain confined within one language.

May Allah guide us onto the path of righteousness.

Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri

Director General of
the Islamic Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization -ISESCO-

Sultan Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, a figurehead of dialogue and rapprochement of peoples

It is a pleasure for me to meet with you today in this inaugural lecture⁽¹⁾ of the 2013-2014 academic year, answering the kind invitation of his Excellency Dr Ibrahim Aqdim, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at this University named after a great Moroccan monarch who himself holds a prestigious position in the history of Morocco. He was a shining example of openness onto the world and a unique model in the way he laid bridges of understanding and harmony between his country and other countries, including but most prominently the United States of America of which he recognized the independence, thus making Morocco the first country in the world to recognize the independence of the United States of America and to conclude the “**Treaty of Peace and Friendship**” with this country in 1787. This Treaty became one of the key records of the history of international diplomacy as a vanguard and immensely valuable diplomatic instrument that instituted cooperation ties with the fledgling country in the New World. He also concluded conventions and treaties with the kings of Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, France, the Netherlands and England.

Sultan Sidi Mohamed III, son of Sultan Moulay Abdellah al-Alaoui, inherited from his grandfather the illustrious Moulay Ismail the

(1) Delivered on 11 December 2013.

desire to explore far horizons and a profound awareness of the importance of forging understanding and cooperation ties with the international powers of the 18th century. He was an erudite and as a scholar and wrote many valuable books in *hadith*, *fiqh*, literature and Sufism. He was also a ruler and a reformist who developed the judiciary and educational systems and built schools and libraries, and a pioneer of a human dialogue aimed at serving world peace in the 18th century, an era during which it was a rarity for a head of state to display such openness of mind and unwavering determination to explore far horizons and to leave the confines of the national arena to the much broader international one.

With these brief words I wished to pay tribute to this sultan who was infused with the spirit of the culture of peace, a true believer in dialogue, vanguard in his positions, actions and international interactions, a man who represented the jewel in the crown of the Alaoui dynasty, a man whose name this university has the honor of carrying. In the historical records of his actions and achievements I have come across what can truly be considered as the first stirrings of international dialogue with the prominent rulers of those times, and what constituted a ground-breaking initiative in which he could take pride as could his country with its prestigious civilization and illustrious history. Indeed, since the rule of King Hassan II, may Allah have mercy on his soul, and through the present prosperous era of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may Allah protect him, this country has been carrying high the banner of dialogue at all its levels, making Morocco the destination of choice to which flock all believers in the culture of dialogue who promote harmony and earnestly endeavor to establish peace on earth and lay the foundations of world peace.

Morocco: a crossroads of dialogue and co-existence

It is no coincidence that Morocco has been at the forefront of the world's countries endeavoring to consolidate intercultural dialogue and the alliance of civilizations at this critical point of our existence today. The call to purposive dialogue, harmony, cohesion and co-existence was first launched from this country with the prosperous civilization, history and culture, a country that is diligently advancing on the path of economic, scientific and technological progress. The two illustrious monarchs, His Majesty King Hassan II, may Allah shower His mercy on him, and His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may Allah protect him, are stellar figures of interreligious, intercultural and civilizational dialogue, and such quality is unique to Morocco among all countries of today's Islamic world.

The topic I chose to address before you today and which relates to the “**Role of the Media in Promoting Intercultural Dialogue**” is not foreign to the main concern preoccupying the international intellectual, cultural and academic elites at this stage as one of the axes of international relations in their cultural contexts, namely building peace by spreading the values of dialogue through all channels. At the forefront of these channels are the media with all the tools at their disposal, their diverse methods and systems and their various categories.

The media are dialogue and dialogue is a medium

By their very essence and nature, the media are a special form of dialogue using media channels for interaction between the informer and the audience, whether the latter is a spectator, a reader or a listener.

Dialogue, in its philosophy and objective, is a form of information exchange. The media message, if properly formulated in the full respect of the rules and ethics of the profession and in pursuit of noble objectives, is similar to the message carried by dialogue in the sense of being an exchange of information and a sharing of experiences and viewpoints between parties in a dialogue, irrespective of its level.

With this exchange of ideas through purposive dialogue, we come closer to the realm of the media and a relationship of reciprocity emerges between dialogue and the media. The noble objectives of both converge at the desire to unravel the truth, irrespective of the methods used or their diversity. Through dialogue certainty is reached and knowledge is acquired of what the other party has in mind, what they seek to achieve and what areas can be the subject of consensus on the path to the truth and out of the quagmire of illusions, misconceptions and stereotypes about the other and his beliefs, his perspectives or stances, his possible reactions, preoccupations and interests, or his viewpoints about current issues and matters of common interest. The truth is the ultimate goal pursued by the interlocutors of a dialogue.

The same applies to the media. These set out to find the truth, pave the way for the receiver to grasp this truth, understand its dimensions and take cognizance of all its aspects in order to reach a state of absolute conviction. Purposive media that respect the ethics of the profession choose the quest for the truth as their first and foremost goal, on all matters and at all levels. Truth-seeking media are the opposite of the media of misinformation, distortion, deception and sensationalism which corrupt the audience's perception of the simple truth.

This interrelation between the media and dialogue, which springs from a profound perception that transcends appearances, places the former at the service of the latter and opens before the latter wide horizons to reinforce and bolster the mission of the former, which denotes an interchangeability of roles. The media play a multipronged role in consolidating intercultural dialogue, while dialogue has a role to play in consolidating the mission of the media so that they can discharge, in the best possible manner, their common objective of revealing the truth, enlightening the public opinion, educating, entertaining, serving the local or the international community, as long as the media have a universal message to convey to the whole world.

But let us ponder these two questions:

- What is the mission of the media, their mechanisms and their content?
- What is intercultural dialogue, its objectives, means and methods?

I think I should start by answering the first question to gain insight into the larger picture, and then I will move on to the second question to clarify the exact meaning and significance of dialogue.

A development-oriented human mission

The media's mission, embodied in the contents of the written, audio-visual and electronic press and in communication in its academic dimensions and functional concepts, is a development-oriented human mission, which makes the media and information a branch of human sciences as well as of political and economic sciences. The study of information involves the study of all these

sciences, along with literature, linguistics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, geography, law, politics and economics. A person pursuing a career in the media and information field must study all these sciences in view of their interrelatedness and the fact that the mission of the media is the sum and quintessence of all human sciences' mission and their *crème de la crème*.

In older times, the man of letters was described as the person mastering the best in every art. Today, we can say that the media practitioner is someone with a degree of knowledge from every field of learning, hence the importance of studying information and media sciences at university and post-graduate levels. It is no coincidence that this branch of study is known as “**information sciences**”, for information has many a science attached to it, assimilated with it, branching from it and completing it. The media are a fully integrated and cohesive system of which the balance would be disrupted by the loss of any of its elements or in the event one of these components suffers some weakness.

In view of all the above, the mission of the media becomes global and all-encompassing since it is built around a diversity of knowledge, multi-skills, a deep understanding of the concepts constituting the backbone of today's general culture, an ability to analyze and comment, draw conclusions and take the true measure of events and facts, and lay bridges of concord and rapprochement between the diverse communities of each society and between nations and peoples. The media play a decisive role in consolidating intercultural dialogue, which role explains the quality of globalism attributed to the media's mission.

A tool to steer society towards prospects of progress

We conclude from this analysis that the media are the tool that steers humanity towards greater prospects of global, balanced and sustainable development and progress. While the study of information sciences is almost no different to other sciences in terms of curricula and methods, it does differ in content and concepts, which difference confers on this branch a special cachet among all other university studies, reflecting its intimate link to all fields of public life, to the edification of the present and to the shaping of the future.

If we delve deeper, beyond the academic connotations and professional significance to address this aspect of the topic from a linguistic angle, we will find that the common root between the terms '*ʾIlam*' (information and media) and '*ʾilm*' (knowledge) -the three letter root verb *ع-ل-م*- refers to a host of far stretching meanings inherent to learning, understanding and assimilation. Informing, which linguistically refers to the act of conveying a piece of knowledge to an interested third party and involves the act of transferring this knowledge, is based on the principle of taking cognizance of a matter. Thus, media that meet all professional criteria are also those that rely on correct and sound knowledge to acquire the attribute of '**proper media**', i.e. **the media of the plain and simple truth**. Taking cognizance of a matter entails proper understanding first, full assimilation and then full knowledge which covers all aspects and angles. These are the objective conditions for the process of gaining knowledge as such, and the same objective conditions apply equally to the media per se.

A linguistic analysis of media and information

Since we are meeting today in the halls of the Faculty of Letters and Humanities, I saw fit to draw your attention to the genius of the Arabic language in that it associates the media with knowledge, which does not exist in any other language where the media is limited to the simple act of **'notification'**, i.e. conveying news as they come, as opposed to informing which involves full knowledge of a matter with all that this requires in terms of cognizance, assimilation and understanding. Thus, the mission of the media was originally of a scientific nature, and knowledge was the key element in this process of information. In language, to learn about a matter is to gain enough knowledge about it to reach total certainty and conviction. Knowledge precedes information and conviction is the ultimate goal of knowledge. The media that rely on absolute facts and trustworthy pieces of information have a profound impact that alters awareness and mindsets and changes man and society, opening the doors wide open for the consolidation of intercultural dialogue and spreading the values of understanding and co-existence among nations and peoples.

Needless to say, the role of the media in the development, stability and soundness of society exceeds in importance any other role given to a science. The media are a maker of public opinion and a guarantor of the conditions of progress in all fields. Public opinion-making remains the highest form of influence guiding the process of setting the directions towards which public life is channeled. Such powerful and effective impact plays a decisive role in either the progress or regression of a society since it may be positive just as it may be negative. The media become negative when their foundation is made up of rumors, lies and misconceptions, when they turn a

blind eye to the truth, deny or reject it or seek to obliterate or hide facts from the audience.

Public opinion-making

Seen under this light, the making of public opinion becomes one of the heavy industries serving as a cornerstone in the renaissance of nations. The media are the engine driving the potentialities of a nation towards achieving progress, prosperity and openness onto wider horizons, the advancement of democratic and economic edification and consolidation of social development, and the establishment of peace and security within human societies by spreading values of intercultural dialogue and alliance of civilizations, and by disseminating the culture of harmony, tolerance, understanding and mutual respect among nations and peoples.

As developing countries, including those of the Islamic world, look forward to renewing their civilizational edifice on sound bases of political, economic and social reform, to modernizing the educational systems and developing science, technology and innovation as stepping stones towards integrating the information society, scientifically advanced, academically refined and professionally accomplished media play a key role in paving the way towards these broad horizons and to fulfilling these noble objectives.

When the media ascend to such high levels, they become a tool of global reform, an instrument of modernization and a gateway to development that extends to all fields of public life. Indeed, every science specializes in one vital field, with the exception of information sciences which extend to cover all fields of life. Thus,

media figures become leaders in thought, pioneers in revival, shining beacons that light the way ahead, and pathfinders clearing the way before the fulfillment of development objectives in all fields.

However, academically and professionally speaking, such refined level is only attained by those media figures that have enjoyed a good university education, outstanding professional training and an open cultural coaching.

Now that we covered all the angles of the mission of the media and taken cognizance of the concepts and significance attached to its philosophy we can move to the mission of dialogue and ponder its purpose.

Dialogue: a means to foster mutual understanding among peoples

Promoting intercultural dialogue through all channels and mechanisms systematically results in the rapprochement of cultures. Dialogue becomes a tool and a mechanism of fostering understanding among peoples, which mutual understanding is one of the foundations of peace, the ultimate goal behind any effort made within the framework of dialogue, rapprochement and dissemination of the culture of peace.

The concept of intercultural dialogue first emerged in the Islamic world, and from there the United Nations General Assembly decided to dedicate 2001 as the “**United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations**”. In doing so, the international community conferred on the concept of dialogue a new dimension and a profound significance.

Intercultural dialogue was a first step on the path to the alliance of civilizations. As I mentioned in a book I published in Cairo in 2008 titled “**Towards the Alliance of Civilizations**”, this alliance is crucial to the regulation of human life and the harmony of its elements, and is the lifeline that can rescue the world from the grave dangers besieging it. It is equally important in laying the bridges of understanding, cooperation and coexistence among nations and peoples in a world prey to conflicting, disorienting and sometimes clashing political, economic and cultural ideas, schools of thought and theories, all negatively impacting on human life in all its manifestations.

Dialogue, rapprochement and alliance

This systematic association between dialogue, rapprochement and alliance is the starting point in understanding the relationship between the consolidation of intercultural dialogue and tolerant understanding at all levels, internationally, regionally and nationally. Such clear understanding of this relationship and consciousness of this interrelatedness entail that we strive as best as we can to make our goals a medium to fostering understanding among peoples, to ensure that dialogue does not remain a mere intellectual luxury, an abstract theory or nicely turned words rehashed by the select few in closed salons.

All of this presupposes that we turn dialogue into a potent tool for spreading the values of mutual understanding, the culture of tolerance and the virtue of co-existence among all peoples of the world, which would make intercultural dialogue a productive and effective element in the life of people.

That is the gateway to consolidating intercultural dialogue on bases of a culture of dialogue, mutual understanding, and mutual respect of cultural diversity which UNESCO does well to describe in its literature as “**creative cultural diversity**”, i.e. a diversity that generates peace, creates harmony and furthers understanding which is the cornerstone of cultural and civilizational understanding and the essence of peaceful co-existence.

Purposive and constructive media play a crucial and valuable role in consolidating these lofty values, in deepening the impact of creative diversity and in widely spreading the culture of peace, harmony and coexistence among nations and peoples.

Dialogue in the Arab and Islamic heritage

If we research our Arab and Islamic heritage, delve deep into its riches and review its contributions which have enriched human civilization, we will find that the Islamic civilization holds an immensely rich and diversified legacy edified around dialogue, rapprochement and the coexistence of the followers of various religions, creeds, doctrines and ethnic groups. Muslims opened up their minds to the followers of other religions, enfolded them, co-existed with them and encouraged them to think in all freedom and be creative in all fields of knowledge and science. Scholars, thinkers, philosophers, the wise and the erudite and poets were all united by the bonds of human brotherhood and the fellowship of knowledge.

Such is the shining example of the intercultural dialogue that rose high to become the rapprochement of cultures as we know it in today's language. It was an extraordinary human and civilizational

example of tolerance, co-existence and intercultural dialogue and rapprochement, certainly worthy of being emulated today.

Obstacles that hindered the launch of the International Year of Dialogue

While the United Nations General Assembly declared 2001 as the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the world was thrust in the second half of that same year into a tempest of international crises that have negatively impacted the concept itself of dialogue, and international peace and security. Over the last decade and past three years of the current decade, the world witnessed grave developments in many of its parts which continue to be volatile today. Such developments are essentially the outcome of breaches of international laws, of unwillingness to adhere to dialogue values at all levels, and of the international media's deviation from their human mission and failings in discharging their noble mandate.

Despite all these setbacks, the international community has not yet surrendered to the despair that is affecting the whole world, nor did it allow the preoccupation of superpowers with what is known as the war on terror to hinder its endeavors to identify new means and ways to boost intercultural dialogue, hence the concept of the alliance of civilizations adopted by the former Secretary General of the United Nations and for which he decided to create a high commission. Thus, the concept of cultural dialogue was bolstered with that of civilizational alliance. This strong connection gave rise to a positive development that is heading in the right direction today, triggering a sharp increase in optimism and hopefulness and stimulating a renewal of confidence in the eternal human values from which sprung the two spearhead ideas of dialogue and alliance.

Expanding the scope of cultural dialogue to include interreligious dialogue

Successful and pioneering experiments of intercultural dialogue and alliance of civilizations have given cause to the expansion of the scope of intercultural and civilizational dialogue to include interreligious dialogue that we at the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization refer to as the dialogue among followers of religions which we believe to be the most accurate and expressive description. What has given a strong impetus to this form of dialogue and opened up wide horizons before human understanding and tolerance and the respect of difference was the initiative launched by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz Al Saud for Dialogue among the Followers of Religions and Cultures. This noble initiative took body during the high-level meeting held at the United Nations headquarters in New York in November 2008, a significant gathering that consecrated the endeavors of the human family to build a new world on strong foundations of understanding, tolerance and coexistence. The initiative was crowned with the creation of the **King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)** in Vienna, Austria, in collaboration with the Kingdom of Spain, the Republic of Austria and the Vatican. During the past month, the Centre organized the first international forum on “**The Image of the Other: Interreligious and Intercultural Education**” in which I had the honor of participating. In my address at this forum, I said that education was the foundation of dialogue at all levels and that education was the best starting point to lay the foundations of understanding, cooperation and complementarity in the drive

to create an intellectual framework for dialogue. I also stressed that dialogue was not an automatic process occurring between two parties but a two-way process that begins with reaching an understanding on specific issues and consensus on set goals, bolstered by a mutual desire from all parties to reach outcomes that can shatter the barriers of introversion and isolation, dispel the clouds of mistrust and doubts, abolish illusions, misconceptions and the stereotypical perceptions a dialogue participant holds of his interlocutor.

Fez Conference on Intercultural Dialogue

Since our theme today is the consolidation of cultural dialogue, and since we are in the shining city of Fez, I feel that the occasion dictates that I mention the royal message addressed by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may Allah protect him, to the participants in the first International Conference on Intercultural Dialogue held here in Fez last October. This message, an immensely valuable, relevant and important document, is by all standards a document of international caliber and comes to enrich the literature of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, the alliance of civilizations and the culture of dialogue with the vanguard ideas it contains.

This royal message has sketched a roadmap for the international elites involved in issues of dialogue and the numerous matters that flow from them, and for workers in this crucial field. His Majesty the King laid emphasis in his message on an important truth which we should all, as people preoccupied with dialogue issues, stop at and ponder at length to better understand it, and that is the impossibility of turning intercultural dialogue and the respect of cultural diversity into a tangible reality internationally without

their being first entrenched nationally. This measure would be the first step towards bolstering the internal front and preserving the soundness of the social fabric in these times of sectarian strife, doctrinal conflicts and widening gap of political conflicts among nations and peoples and between people within the same society.

These can only be overcome through a consolidation of dialogue at all levels: the dialogue of cultures and civilizations and the national dialogue which is the internal one which flows in many paths to enhance harmony, foster concord and reinforce the fabric of national unity which is the strong fortification protecting society against collapse, disarray and loss of might.

The royal message to the international conference on intercultural dialogue has thus issued a loud and clear call to the international community to begin this intercultural dialogue with an internal one, if it is to become constructive and effective and have tangible outcomes and effects on the international reality, bolstered by media that shape a public opinion that is responsive to the values of dialogue and infused with the culture of dialogue.

Dialogue at the service of peace

If the media bent on disseminating the truth, enlightening the public opinion and building human relations can bring about the conditions conducive to the peaceful co-existence of nations and peoples, intercultural dialogue will put these relations to contribution in serving peace. This only goes to confirm that good media that are respectful of professional ethics and of the mission they carry are a strong factor in the consolidation of dialogue at all levels, the dialogue of the followers of religions, the dialogue

of cultures and civilizations, the dialogue of political leaderships from among decision-makers and elected representatives, and the internal dialogue which paves the way for consensus on alternatives to reform, modernization, the development of societies and the national policies aimed at the protection of achievements and at meeting the requirements of sustainable global development.

Seen under this deep and all-encompassing light, dialogue becomes the choice of the wise which will invariably lead to the fulfillment of the noble objectives that elevate man, make a reality of progress and edify the future. This form of dialogue can only be consolidated and put to contribution as the powerhouse of sustainable global development if and only if the media play their role in civilizational edification, economic growth and human brotherhood, and promote the values of loyalty to the homeland and dedication to serving Man's causes.

If the media operate at this refined and high level, and if dialogue rises to this level of seriousness and effectiveness, the results will have a tremendous impact on public life, whether locally, regionally or internationally. They will mirror the extent of progress under which man's life will prosper, security will prevail at all fronts and peace will rule within all societies.

For humanity, today's reality is rife with sources of concern and tension factors. It reflects a negative phenomenon born essentially out of the deviation of the world's media apparatuses from their noble human mission, and the absence of dialogue among the prevailing human cultures. Had the media adhered at all their levels to the noble mission entrusted to them and which they are meant to embrace and promote, and had intercultural dialogue proceeded on the path drawn out for it and risen to the lofty level where it

serves man's interests first and foremost, this reality would have been satisfactory and humanity would be living in spiritual, cultural, social, economic and political peace and world security.

Such is the superior level of the role played by the media in promoting intercultural dialogue and strong is the impact that intercultural dialogue can have on the prosperity of human life. The media are failing in the mission they should accomplish in the current context of introversion, isolation and rejection of intercultural dialogue, and dialogue is not evolving or bearing its fruits within a context where the single opinion prevails, where all windows are closed to what is unfolding around the world, and where horizons shrink before the freedom-loving man who aspires to lay bridges of communion, rapprochement, co-existence and dialogue with all cultures.

Serious dialogue creates purposive media

In all cases, it is the believer in dialogue values, infused with the spirit of the culture of dialogue, who creates purposive media, not media based on negative sensationalism, alarmism, the masking of the truth and the alteration of awareness. I underscore the term **negative sensationalism** because sensationalism per se is needed in the practice of the media provided it is constructive and positive and pursues good intentions and beauty, and provided it sets out to stir man's positive feelings and inclinations towards goodness and righteousness, feelings that are beneficial to man and society and to the human family at large.

To conclude this inaugural lecture at the Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, allow me to present to this prestigious university a

copy of a letter sent by Sultan Sidi Mohamed Ibn Abdellah to the governor of Dubrovnik, one of the cities of modern day Croatia and which was in his times an independent principality. The gist of the letter is a protest against the violation by ships flying the flag of the principality of Dubrovnik of an agreement on the transport of pilgrims to Moroccan ports and the confiscation by Moroccan authorities of the wayward ships. At the end of the letter, the Sultan pardons the contravening ships and releases them with a warning against committing such violations again. I found the original of this letter at the national archives of the city of Dubrovnik and obtained a copy. It stands as a proof of the power and might of the Moroccan state under Sultan Mohamed Ben Abdellah and its far-reaching influence, but witnesses before and after that to the tolerance and human spirit shown by this mighty Sultan.