THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

20 January 2011

Excellencies and Friends,

I wish to draw your attention to a decision taken recently by the General Assembly, which I believe has a unique, historical and unprecedented potential to promote the healing of interfaith tensions in the world. These tensions themselves constitute one of the world's greatest challenges.

On 20 October 2010, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution A/65/5 entitled "World Interfaith Harmony Week". The initiative is based on the inclusive yet spiritually essential foundation of "Love of God and the Neighbour and Love of Good and the Neighbour".

At a time when the world is faced with many simultaneous problems – security, environmental, humanitarian and economic – enhanced tolerance and understanding are fundamental for a resilient and vibrant international society. There is an imperative need, therefore, to further reaffirm and develop harmonious cooperation between the world's different faiths and religions.

The resolution "encourages all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world's churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship during the first week of February" – proclaimed the World Interfaith Harmony Week – "based on Love of God and Love of Neighbour or on Love of the Good and Love of one's Neighbour, each according to their own traditions and convictions".

I lend my full support to this call and we, at the United Nations, are proud to be the platform for its launch. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al-Hussein are owed a great debt of gratitude and thanks for their continuing efforts to advance and sustain the promotion of interreligious harmony and world peace.

Finally, while recognizing the call of the General Assembly to be entirely voluntary, my hope is that it will, nonetheless, find the broadest possible observance among Member States of the United Nations.

Yours sincerely,

BAN Ki-moon