SUSTAINABLE PEACE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE
THE CONCEPT OF PEACE IN ISLAM
Dr Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ (كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَارِزًا يَوْمًا لِلنَّاسِ فَأَتَاهُ جِبْرِيلُ فَقَالَ مَا الْإِيمَانُ قَا الْإِيمَانُ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَبِلِقَائِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْبَعْثِ قَالَ مَا الْإِسْلَامُ قَالَ الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَتُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤَدِّيَ الزَّكَاةَ الْمَفْرُوضَةَ وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ قَالَ مَا الْإِحْسَانُ قَالَ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ...

ABU HURAIRA REPORTED: One day the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) appeared before the public and a man came to him and said: "Prophet of God, (tell me) what is Imān?" Upon this he (the Holy Prophet) replied: - *That you affirm your faith in God, His Angels, His Books, the encounter with Him on the Day of Judgment, His Prophets and that you affirm your faith in the Resurrection hereafter.*

"(Tell me) what is *Islām?*" The Holy Prophet replied: - *That you worship One God and do not associate to Him anything, that you perform prayer, that you observe the prescribed zakāt (charity), and that you fast during the month of Ramadan.*

"(Tell me) what is *Ihsān?*" The Holy Prophet replied: - *That you worship God as if you see Him because if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you.*[1]

AL-ĪMĀN

Thus, based on this well-known Hadith (Tradition) of the Holy Prophet, there are three pillars of a solid edifice of peace in Islam: *al-'amn* (الأَمْن) *al-salām* (السَّلَام) and *al-hasan* (الحَسَن). Indeed, these three Arabic words constitute the roots of the fundamental concept of security, peace and solidarity in Islam.

A common translation of the Arabic word of *al-īmān* as "faith", does not show the exact meaning of the roots of the word. The three root letters of *al-īmān* (ن ا م) point to the idea of *al-'amn*: *security, safety, continuity, reliability, trust.* Hence, the meaning of *al-īmān* is

not just the faith of the faithful, but rather the security of the secure, the safety of the safeguarded; the continuity of the persevering; the reliability of the reliable and the trustworthiness of the trustworthy.

The active participle of *al-īmān*, which is the fourth verbal form of Arabic, is *Al-Mu'min* (المُؤْمِن), commonly translated as "the believer", consequently means the one who is security minded, who is safer, who perseveres, who is reliable, who is trustworthy of confidence. Thus, the *mu'min* is a confident man because he is self-confident, as a result of the security of his inner soul security, *al-'amn*. Hence it is meant that his *al-īmān*, trust in God, which is a result of his ability to trust in his inner feeling of security, *al-'amn*, as well as his ability to communicate his inner security with the outside world.

The opposite to *al-īmān* within the context of a faithful society is not *al-kufr*, "disbelief", but rather *al-nifāq*, "hypocrisy." Here *al-kufr* is taken out of context because it points to the idea of a denial of belief in God, but the idea of *al-nifāq* is not a denial of belief as such. The *nifāq*, hypocrisy, is an intentional misleading claim of faith as a trust in God and in man.

The state of *nifāq* is a sign of insecurity within the inner man and a lack of man's moral responsibility towards establishing peace in society. We are told in a Hadith that you may recognise a hypocrite (*al-munafiq*) by three signs: the first sign is that when he speaks, he lies; the second sign is that when he promises, he fails to keep his promise; and the third sign is that when he is entrusted, he betrays the trust (آيَةُ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثٌ: إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ، وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ وَإِذَا اؤْتُمِنَ خَانَ).

Thus the trustworthy (*al-mu'min*) is just the opposite to the hypocrite (*al-munafiq*) because when he speaks, he tells the truth; when he promises, he keeps his promise; and when he is entrusted, he fulfills the trust. Hence, the one who is *al-mu'min* (faithful), and who is in a state of *al-īmān* (inner security) and *al-amān* (public trust), is a genuine Muslim who loves peace, who works for peace,

and who brings solidarity and cooperation into society. For we know that it is neither the meek nor the aggressive who will inherit the earth, but the cooperative, which means the peaceful, man.

AL-ISLĀM

The journey from a state of al-īmān, that is to say a deep inner awareness of security, to a state of al-islām, that is to say a genuine acceptance of the idea of peace as against the idea of war, is the most important journey of human life. In the same way as we have examined for the word al-īmān, we have three root letters for al-islām (س ل م) to guide us to the real meaning of Islam and Muslim. The letters sīn, lām and mīm are the three Arabic letters that designate the concept of peace in Islam as the core drive of an entire Weltanschauung of a Muslim.

It is not inaccurate to say that Islam means submission to the will of Allah Almighty, but it is not fully understood if we do not add that Islam means: **peaceful** submission, **peaceful** acceptance and **peaceful** practice of Islam by the name of Allah Almighty. It is the very idea of Islam that bears witness to an historic affirmative action that "there shall be no compulsion in religion" (لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ).

This Qur'anic declaration of the seventh century is unique not only in its historic initiative, but also in its farsighted Divine vision for humanity that had learnt that forceful submission (not only to a religion, but also to any ideology) had not been working and will never work. Therefore, the idea of Islam has brought about a principle that a forceful submission to God is not acceptable to God Himself. Only peaceful acceptance of a submission to God is a valid submission to God because God Himself is the Peace, al-Salām, and thus He accepts only peaceful worship and peaceful relations among human beings. Of course, we are aware of the fact of physical laws in which the entire universe or multiverse is made to function willingly or unwillingly (طوعاً أو كرهاً), but here we are talking about human freedom of choice for good (الإختيار), which is recognised by God: (2 التغابن) هو الذي خلقكم فمنكم كافر ومنكم مؤمن - It is God who has created you while some of you are now disbelievers and some of you are believers. [Sura Al-Thaghabun: 2]

Indeed, the peaceful submission to God assumes a peace of mind which comes as a result of the inner security of al-īmān, that is to say a trust in God who has breathed his spirit into Adam, when he was only clay, neither alive nor dead (ونفخ فيه من روحه) in order for him to become al-insān, the human being with a light of his reason, because in order to survive man must acquire knowledge, he must go through the process of learning, he must go through the process of thinking, he must activate his faculty of reason. This is why we have it in our Islamic tradition that: The first thing created by God was the 'aql (reason), and as the great Muslim philosopher and mystic Imam Muhammad al-Ghazālī had said it: - The power of reason is God's balance on earth (سلطان العقل الذي هو ميزان الله في الارض [2]).

If al-islam means the peaceful submission to Allah Almighty, then the word al-muslim, which is an active participle of the Arabic fourth verbal form of islām, literally means "a peaceful man", the man who spreads the peace in the world. This is best expressed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, by his definition of a Muslim when he said: - The Muslim, i.e. the peaceful man, is the one who make other Muslims, i.e. other peaceful men, to be safe from his hands and his words! (المسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه ويده...).

It is the "Other", whoever he/she is, that should feel at peace and safe by a Muslim at any time and at any place. It is this idea of peace and safety of the "Other" that encouraged the early Muslim jurists to

> Islam is not opposite to non-Islam and that Muslim is not opposite to non-Muslim. Islam is opposite to *fasād*, "corruption;" to *zulm*, "injustice;" to *ijrām*, "crime;" and to *'unf*, "violence;" and the Muslim is opposite to corrupt, unjust, criminal and violent people.

arrive at an historic moral and legal principle based on an overall spirit of *Shari'a* Law, that each and every non-Muslim person in a Muslim society must enjoy five essential human rights: the right to life (*al-nafs*), the right to religion (*al-dīn*), the right to freedom (*al-'aql*), the right to property (*al-māl*) and the right to dignity (*al-'ird*). It must be said that this principle of basic human rights was adopted by Muslim Jurists centuries before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 by UNESCO.

This historical evidence shows that Islam is not opposite to non-Islam and that Muslim is not opposite to non-Muslim. Islam is opposite to *fasād*, "corruption"; to *zulm*, "injustice"; to *ijrām*, "crime"; and to *'unf*, "violence"; and the Muslim is opposite to corrupt, unjust, criminal and violent people.

AL-IHSĀN

The third pillar of an Islamic edifice of peace and security is the idea of *al-ihsān*, the fourth verbal form of three Arabic root letters (ح س م), which point to beauty-beautiful, to well- wellbeing, to good-goodness, to right-righteousness. Thus, in the said Hadith we read that one should always maintain his/her human character to be beautiful in the eyes of others, he/she should be always be concerned for the wellbeing of others, he/she should always be good to others and he/she should always be righteous to fellow human beings to gain the title of *al-muhsin*, the one who is doing well, good and right to others, not only to be praised by man, but also to be seen by God, who sees what he/she is doing although he/she does not see God. This is the highest degree of beauty of the human soul, this is the highest moral value of the human being - indeed, this is the highest ideal of a concept of peace for the human society.

CONCLUSION

In this short article on the occasion of September 21, 2012 that has been proclaimed as the International Day of Peace, *Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future*, I have tried to show that the very words Islam and Muslim carry the message of peace and security in the world. It is worthwhile to note that unlike Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism, the name of Islam is not derived from a person but from an abstract concept, i.e. the concept of peace. Therefore, Islam is a faith of peace and a Muslim is a peaceful man.

However, the fact that Islam is portrayed as a religion of violence and Muslims terrorists should not confuse genuine Muslims to believe in peace and to work for peace in the world. Conflating Islam with violence and terrorism is very unfortunate and misleading.

It is not the first time in history that a religion is misinterpreted by the prejudices of those who are stuck in their hatred towards the Other; it is not the first time in history that a concept of a faith has been constantly misguided in the opposite direction; and it is not the first time in history that the victims of prejudices must realise that a misconception about them will not go away by itself. They must rise up and speak up about their real concepts of life, of faith, of culture and of peace in the world. But not only speak, they must act in a convincing manner, so that what they say they believe and preach but also practice in their own lives. A personal example is more powerful than a thousand words of empty preaching.

Indeed, as Muslims we must admit that there are some irresponsible men among us who are doing a disservice by their service to Islam and Muslims in a way that no one understands and no one can accept. They are spreading misconceptions about Islam and Muslims in such a way that generations will have a hard time to clear it up. An injustice does not justify another injustice. Muslims are advised by Allah that they should promote peace and do justice even to their enemy in order to change their heart and make them their friends: *Good and Evil are not the same. Therefore, you should always promote Good and thus if there is an enmity between you and him, he might as a result of your goodness become your sincere friend.* [Al-Fussilat: 34]

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ (فصلت:43)

And that is the concept of peace in Islam - making all people friends with one another, especially in a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-racial and multi-lingual society such as the society of Europe.

Endnotes
1. al-Bukhāri, *al-gāmi' as-Sahih*, Book. II: k. *al-Imān*, Nr. 48 and Book. LX: k. *tafsir al-Qur'ān*, Nr. 300.
2. (الغزالي، مشكاة الانوار، 71)