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**Templeton Prize Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II
at the 2018 Templeton Prize Ceremony
Washington National Cathedral, November 13, 2018**

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,

Thank you, all.

But I must begin today with a word about those who are highest in my mind today, the Jordanian families who are suffering and grieving in the aftermath of horrific flash flooding in my country.

There are no words strong enough to express my sorrow, the sorrow of all Jordanians, for the human loss caused by the double natural disasters, just weeks apart. And I want to commend to the world the Jordanians who raced to respond, the neighbours and medical teams and rescue units.

Truly, in facing tragedy—whether the deadly floods that struck Jordan or the deadly wildfires that struck California—we are, all of us, bound together in brotherhood. For the victims and their families, in Jordan and in California, I ask you to join me in a moment of silence.

Dean Hollerith, thank you for your warm welcome to the Washington National Cathedral.

Shaykh Hamza, and Professor Volf, and, my dear friend, Secretary General, thank you for your very, very generous words.

And a heartfelt thanks to Heather Templeton Dill, and the entire Templeton family and Foundation. May God reward the late Sir John for his tremendous legacy in affirming life's spiritual dimension and upholding positive values worldwide. I truly wish I had met Sir John in person, but meeting his family, who are carrying on his work, is meeting the best of what he stood for.

Today, I am truly humbled to be recognised by all of you. But let me say, everything you honour me for simply carries onward what Jordanians have always done, and how Jordanians have always lived—in mutual kindness, harmony, and brotherhood. And so, I accept this extraordinary prize, not on my own behalf, but on behalf of all Jordanians.

My friends,

Our country has long upheld religious mutual respect. The five prophets of “great resolve”—as they are called in the Quran—prophets of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, peace be upon them all, have blessed our land with their presence. Noah has a tomb in Karak. Abraham came through from the land of what is now Iraq, on his way to Hebron. Moses died in Jordan on Mount Nebo. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was baptised in Jordan, on the East Bank of the River Jordan, by John the Baptist. My country preserves this special site and others with great care, welcoming Christian pilgrims and other visitors from around the world.

The Prophet Mohammad, may peace and blessings be upon him, came to Jordan twice—once with his uncle as a boy, when he was witnessed by a Byzantine priest as a future prophet, and then later as a young merchant. It was that first encounter under a tree—which is still present in the Jordanian desert—that set the tone for Muslim-Christian coexistence and harmony in Jordan.

My friends,

These prophets of great resolve were on a journey, an internal journey of the self, to fulfil God's commands. And the first step of any such journey begins with the struggle, the jihad, within each of us, to be the best person we can be.

The greater jihad of the great prophets brought illumination to all of us. So here, at this Cathedral, as a Muslim, I'd like to say a word about jihad.

And I'm sure that's not something you hear too often within these walls. But nothing, nothing is more important to understand.

The greater jihad has nothing to do with the hate-filled fiction promoted by the *khawarej*—the outlaws of Islam, such as Daesh and the like—or the Islamophobes who also distort our religion.

It is, instead, the personal, internal struggle to defeat the ego, and the struggle we all share for a world of peace, harmony, and love.

As it has been said, in Islam, to love God and love one's neighbour are core commandments. As Shaykh Hamza noted, the Prophet Mohammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself."

This is the Islam I learnt in Jordan.

The Islam of kindness and mercy, not of madness and cruelty.

Traditional orthodox Islam, not modern fundamentalist Islam.

The Islam of "forgive and let live", not of "attack and nit-pick".

The Islam of fundamental principles—*usul* in Arabic—not of fundamentalist details.

The Islam of the holistic vision of the Quran and the *Sunnah*, not the cherry-picking of verses to suit a political agenda.

This is the traditional, orthodox Islam that is the faith of the vast, vast majority of Muslims around the world—1.8 billion good neighbours and good citizens who are helping build the future, in Jordan and the Middle East; in the US and Asia and Europe; and beyond. And we are working, on every continent, to defend Islam against the malignant sub-minority who abuse our religion. And we do this not to please our friends, not to please the world, but to please God. And as long as there is life in our bodies, and faith in our hearts, we will continue to do so, God willing, *In sha Allah*.

And we are not alone. The great commandments to love God and love one's neighbour, as has been said this evening, are found again, and again, in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other faiths around the world. It is a profound message, calling every one of us to struggle to look beyond ourselves. And this outward insight is the source and hope of all coexistence.

And when we talk about hope and coexistence, no issue is more important than Jerusalem. More than half of the world's people belong to religions that hold Jerusalem as a holy city—Islam, Christianity and Judaism. For Muslims, Jerusalem stands along with Mecca and Medina as one of Islam's three holiest places. And a special duty binds me and all Jordanians as Hashemite Custodian of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy sites.

With its long, multi-faith heritage, Jerusalem must be protected as a unifying city of peace. And I am tremendously grateful to the Templeton Prize for making it possible to further this work. A portion of the Templeton Prize will help renovate and restore religious sites in Jerusalem, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The entire remaining sum is also being donated to humanitarian, interfaith, and intra-faith initiatives, in Jordan and around the world.

My friends,

God says in the Quran: "For those who say, 'our Lord is God' and then follow the straight path, there is no fear, nor shall they grieve." (*Al Ahqaf*, 46:13)

And the Prophet Mohammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, let him behave with excellence and virtue (*ihsan*) towards his neighbour" (*Sahih Muslim*).

It is time to do all we can to maximise the good in our world, and bring people together in understanding. But it begins with the struggle, the jihad, within ourselves to be the best we can be.

And it's been said that all it takes for evil to prevail is for good people to do nothing. But together, God willing, we can achieve something important; we can create the future of coexistence that humanity so desperately needs. Let us keep up the struggle.

Thank you.

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