

Foster peace not war: Young Muslims to Obama

ZULFIKAR MAJID

Doha (Qatar), Jan 22: On the concluding day of three-day Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow, Global Conference, held here, 300 young Muslims from over 70 countries, including four Kashmiris, have urged the US president, Barack Obama and the world community to ease tensions and foster peace with Muslims.

In an open letter to Obama published in Washington Post on Tuesday before he took oath of office, the MLTs said: "In the face of the world's many unprecedented challenges, and with Barack Obama as the new US President, there is no better time for men and women across the globe to present a case for positive change. We, as 300 MLTs living in 76 countries around the world, respectfully present this open letter to Obama and the World Leaders of Today," The letter urges Obama and World leaders to support policies that enhance development and protect human rights, not war, because these rights are universal and their violation inhibits our efforts to sustain peace, tolerance, and hope.

"If we are to inaugurate a new era of hope and peaceful engagement, Muslim and non-Muslim world leaders must allocate resources to meet basic needs, infrastructure, the environment, education, and job creation, because healthy, well-educated, and engaged citizens are more invested in their societies and are less likely to be swayed by radical ideologies," the letter adds.

"Generate opportunities for intellectual and cultural advancement, because creative minds are better positioned to find solutions to complex challenges. Promote youth participation in government and civil society, because in order to resolve our most intractable conflicts and problems, we must galvanize the youth to become part of the solution," it further reads.

The MLT open letter calls on the World leaders to ensure full political participation of the people, including youth, women, and religious and ethnic minorities, to safeguard their democratic rights, "because extremism is curtailed and prosperity ensured when all members of society are engaged, speech is free, governments are open, and civil societies are robust."

"Respect the contributions of all, including Muslims and non-Muslims, to their respective societies and to global civilization, because a world built on mutual recognition and understanding is achievable only when everyone is valued. Safeguard our shared—Muslim and non-Muslim—values of peace, pluralism, and cooperation, because we draw upon these values to positively transform our communities," the letter reads.

The MLTs also sought honest dialogue and engagement as equals between leaders of nations, "because committing to respectful and trusting relationships amongst leaders sets a powerful example."

"Pursue dialogue and diplomacy to resolve longstanding conflicts, as these conflicts destroy individuals and societies and weaken our efforts to instill hope and guarantee justice," it added.

The letter is relevant given Obama's determination to find a "new way forward" with the Muslim world based on "mutual interest and mutual respect" - a goal that he mentioned in his inaugural address.

The MLT conference was organized by the American Society for Muslims Advancement (ASMA) in collaboration with the Cordoba Initiative and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

The executive director ASMA, Daisy Khan told Greater Kashmir that the copies of the letter would also be sent to the leaders individually.

"Now is the time to move towards a space where Muslims will be known as people of peace," she said.

Among, 300 MLTs, four were from Kashmir. They included Zulfikar Majid, Basharat Peer, Dr Yasmin Ashai and Dr Tanveer Ahmad Khan.