



Benazir Bhutto
Leader of the Opposition
Islamic Republic of Pakistan

October 5, 1998

The Honorable Kofi Annan
Secretary General
United Nations
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

Since the ending of the Cold War, many have predicted a confrontation between the Islamic and Western civilizations. While I have never agreed with this view, a series of recent events pose new and unsettling threats to the development of a stable international community of the 21st century.

While the vast majority of leaders worldwide support tough and decisive efforts to combat terrorism, the unilateral American strikes on targets in Afghanistan and Sudan have been viewed in the Muslim world as harbingers of a new and dangerous era in relations between the West and Islamic societies.

There is concern that the efforts in the Middle East and Northern Africa, in Eastern Europe and in South Asia to build stronger bridges between the Western and Islamic worlds have now experienced a significant set back.

Most recently in Pakistan we are confronted with a regime intent on installing a dangerous brand of dictatorship, cloaked in religious garb. Other Muslim nations are also feeling the pull of a growing militancy of extremist groups. Something must be done to prevent the fulfillment of what the American academician Samuel Huntington called "The Clash of Civilizations".

In this light, I suggest that the time has come to consider convening a high-level summit exclusively between the leaders of the Western and Muslim nations, with the intent to reduce mistrust, increase cooperation, and build stronger ties between our nations and the multilateral organizations that serve our respective communities.

The last few decades have witnessed the development of a number of transnational regional, security and trade associations, for example, NATO, ASEAN, OIS and NAFTA. To date, no formal association exists between East and West to manage delicate security issues, combat terrorism, increase co-operation and reduce suspicion. We now need a new channel of communication

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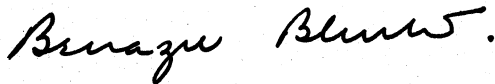
at the highest levels between the leaders of the Western nations and those with the strongest influence within the Muslim world.

It is time for those who lead to acknowledge that a new and potentially destabilizing trend has begun -- the demonizing of civilizations -- and move now with proactive leadership to thwart this growing menace to international peace and security.

I hope you will discuss this notion within the UN and with your colleagues around the world. In the meantime, those of us in the Islamic world who believe that the only promising future must come from upholding the ideals of moderation, tolerance and democracy shall continue to persevere in our struggles.

I hope you will give this suggestion due consideration, and I will look forward to hearing of your thoughts at the appropriate time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benazir Bhutto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent dot over the 'i' in "Benazir".

Benazir Bhutto
Leader of the Opposition
and Chair, Pakistan Peoples Party
Islamic Republic of Pakistan

BB/jb