

**KEYNOTE SPEECHES - DIALOGUE SOCIETY'S 10TH
ANNIVERSARY DINNER AND AWARDS CEREMONY**

Can I just say it's ironic really that we're here at the Dialogue Society and that probably got more MPs here than you would have for a debate in a chamber. Maybe we ought to change venues. It's an absolute pleasure and a privilege to be with you this evening and many thanks to Ozcan for all the work that he's been doing, with each that he has given to the organisation. I was interested in the video, so he mentioned atheist and part of it just reminded me of some music going attended Robbie Cox Funeral [ph], and priest who is getting the service, said, many people will be shocked and surprised that one of the most celebrated atheists in British politics is here is at this church, and I will tell you why. He is not any old atheist. He is a Presbyterian atheist. And I'm pleased to see some of the avid guests that we've got people from the world of politics pretty obviously [indiscernible] [01:17]. Welcome. We've got many people from different embassies. We've got ambassadors. We've got distinguished guests. And it really is I think it says a lot about this organisation that you've managed to get so many people who are so interested in that work that you do. Some years ago, it was a chap, Colin O'Powell who has single record who was seen giving 2000 pounds to go back home, speaking about people I meet, any others here today. At the same time, Levy Henry [ph] just won the -- was it the New Faces Award, is that right? I am trying to -- anyway -- I will tell you what -- there is a New Face Award. And let me get it in you, just cut that and say this price of Lenin Brady [ph] and he said, "We don't know -- he wants to give me 2000 pounds to go back home. It's only 2 pound and 50 if you don't leave," which I thought was very powerful then, and is powerful today because I'm British. I'm English. I'm Lancastrian by birth. I inducted the "auctioneer." A Burnley football fan. Happened to be a Muslim -- all those things I'm proud of. And there isn't many countries in the world where I think you can actually say that and believe it without people being persuaded or anxious about you're staying there. And this is, in my view, the greatest country in world -- freedoms and privileges and the lives you have enjoyed here -- I think it's second to northern country. It's a great pleasure on the 10th Anniversary of the Dialogue Society to be with you, celebrating this anniversary with all the friends who are here, and I'm sure that you could have packed many more hotels and invited all the friends that you do have. I'm not surprised actually that this is a Turkish label. And I'm not surprised for a number of reasons. You said that in '99, you set up second generation British Muslims of Turkish descent. I was recently in Istanbul where I met with His Excellency, the Prime Minister Erdogan, and we had a really wonderful conversation. And I just thought that Turkey is uniquely a place as the bridge between East and West, Islam and Christianity, Asia and Europe, over the time keeping for this event, this evening, [indiscernible] [03:55] entertainment than Europe, and I can say that. And I'm only saying that because my wife is waiting elsewhere for one day in the year. Anyway, leave that to one side, I am in trouble, sincerely I am. But I think it's our belief, these colleagues' belief that a Turkish state as part of the European Union would send out a very powerful signal -- would be good for you, but also good progressive world. It was Lenin who said that are decades where nothing happens. And then there are weeks when

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DIALOGUE SOCIETY'S 10TH
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decades happen. And I think are privileged that we live and have lived in an era when across to say that in weeks when decades happened. And if we look back, not that long ago, you were told that Reagan and Gorbachev will shake hands. [Indiscernible] [4:45] the Berlin Wall from tumbling down. Who would have thought that Mandela and De Clerk would shake hands and it was like [indiscernible] [04:53] down. Who would have thought Ruby and [indiscernible] [04:56] would shake hands [indiscernible] [04:58] and release [indiscernible] [04:59]. Who would've thought Adams, Trimble [indiscernible] [05:02] would sign what they call the Good Friday agreement and bring peace to Northern Ireland. Who would have thought in 2009 that United States would have an African-American President? And who would have thought in 2009 that [indiscernible] [05:20]. But we know that change isn't always a positive thing. We know that. Who would have thought after some 50 years at that time, and the loss of 6 million Jewish lives [indiscernible] [05:38], Europe will once more witness the horrors of extreme Nazism and hatred as [indiscernible] [05:44] Bosnia, Kosovo and elsewhere. Who would have thought that we would see 9/11, 7/7, Istanbul, Madrid? Who would have thought would see Muslims killing Muslims in the name of Islam? Who would have thought that in this enlightened millennium, every 3 seconds a child would die because of [indiscernible] [06:10]? Every minute, a woman would die due to pregnancy-related causes? And every year 6 million people die from HIV, AIDS, TB and malaria? And that's precisely why it's our belief as one of the top [indiscernible] [06:30] countries in the world we have got responsibility that goes beyond our shores. And that's why I'm very proud that the [indiscernible] [06:39] announced that 0.7% of our gross national income will be spent on overseas development assistance and that we then legislate to ensure that that happens. And don't get me wrong. We of course, there is some [indiscernible] [06:57] there but it is in our best interest as well because we live in that interdependent and interconnected world -- with things that happened thousands of miles away can have an impact on our doorstep. Things like resource [indiscernible] [07:14], disease, [indiscernible] [07:15], and even terrorism, will recognize national or international boundaries and borders. And so if we can make one part of the world a happy place, then the world benefits from that. As you were speaking, I was just crossing out lots of things because you said much of the many things that I was going to say, but I was going to give an example of your [indiscernible] [07:46] event which is a very powerful example of how creatively you can reach out and have dialogue. Using food, as you say, is always powerful. But also the work that you did with big matters about the importance of dialogue in Islam which [indiscernible] [08:03] and is helping to dispel misconceptions about Islamic faith. I have huge respect for the work of the Dialogue Society, and I'm very pleased with my department in supporting in a small way this very important work. It is taking a proactive rather than a reactive stance in tackling its various activities, emphasising dialogue in Islam, excludes extremist ideology. And by encouraging and equipping and empowering the Muslim community and Muslim community organisations and faith leaders in a practice of interfaith and intercultural dialogue, the Dialogue Society is deradicalising by default. I'm also pleased, as we've been told, that on this anniversary falls the first English Interfaith Week and also the 16th Annual Islamic Awareness Week, both events that my department is very pleased to be associated with and supporting. Interfaith Week is being facilitated by the Interfaith Network for the UK and my department. It is faith [indiscernible] [09:15] with organisations around

the country, holding events from all exhibitions and interfaith seminars, from football matches to pilgrimage walks, from the good deeds of [indiscernible] [09:28] to the good food of shared meals -- to bring major faith communities as well as those with no religious beliefs closer together. All for [indiscernible] [09:39] John Benham [ph] and I recognise that there is immense practical value, two sides there -- in having faith groups work closely together to overcome social religion, promote cohesion, and build social counsel. Positive relationships between faith leaders help sustain some communities under the intense pressure back in 2001 where a lot of communities were exploring into rights. Most recently, the efforts of faith groups to build relationships not only amongst themselves but also with the place where politicians and counsels has helped manage tension in the face of extreme provocation from right-wing extremists [indiscernible] [10:26] to the so called English Defence League. These issues are difficult but many hundreds, if not thousands, of members of different faiths are working tirelessly and quietly to [indiscernible] [10:40]. This is something which we are very deeply, deeply grateful for. Their efforts not only help to build communities, the resilience, distress and tension, but also a powerful force for good and social change. And I tell you, when all [indiscernible] [10:59] the power of dialogue.

Not long ago one of the worlds' elected, a British National party councillor, and I happened to have a [indiscernible] [11:09] the next week, and it was about 30 people [indiscernible] [11:14]. And the idea of coffee mornings for me is actually to go and listen. I know that politicians like to speak and I'm proving that this evening, but it was actually to go along and listen. And I went there, and I said to the 30 or so people, I said, "Right, you can speak about anything you want. Nothing is bad." That was some really honest discussion of one of the issues, and there's a kind of oneness in the air and maybe it's because they just selected not them but the word, I just selected a BMP councillor, I'm not sure. And I try to quote some of them to say something. They must say anything. Listen. The whole point that they are being here is to listen. And then one women, she kind of [indiscernible] [12:00] the GNG and the courage to say--well, actually we can speak, can we? And I said, "Okay, you can speak." She said, "Well, we can't speak physical fitness." And I said, "Of course, you can speak. You know what [indiscernible] [12:12]." I said that, "Believe me you can speak. Say what you want to please. I'm here to listen." And eventually, she said something like, "Is it true that Muslims hate Christians and want to take over the country? And may I speak please?" Not by what she said [indiscernible] [12:13] but by the fact that she actually said it. And I wasn't there to judge her, just listen. And then all the people started to speak, and it was kind of similar note. I have said once and I'm not going to respond. I going to get 4 or 5 people from [indiscernible] [12:46] in a month's time, but then respond. They agree and the most [indiscernible] [12:54] event and in fact one of those documentaries where you got this warming captions in the end of it - they are kind of kissing and hugging you, not literally, but it wasn't far off. But what they recognise during that experience, actually the differences that they had were quite [indiscernible] [13:12] and the commonality that existed was quite striking and profound [indiscernible] [13:18] and it's so crucial to live in a country where still there's far too much segregation, there is social segregation which is pragmatic and this special

segregation – when those two things come together -- then that is a recipe for problems moving forward. One each faith, and I think the point you were making is that it isn't really rocket sciences. It's simply about you're walking the town centre, you see somebody who's different, perhaps you don't know me -- speak or acknowledge a little smile, that [indiscernible] [13:51] that person will go. And they will start to just, "That was weird. I don't know this one." And so it's little, tiny interactions that don't take much time or effort, but that can be incredibly, incredibly powerful. And that's what I talk very briefly about our course to share values because I think quite often people felt that governments have this list of shared values, or British values, and we expect people to sign up to them. And actually our approach is quite different. We think the process of discussing where shared values are -- is as powerful, if not, more powerful than the outcome, because in that process you get interaction and the engagement and the dialogue that you speak about. And when you do have changes in terms of identity – I would like to share with you a quick anecdote. And I was doing a radio forum, and I have shared something so powerful [indiscernible] [14:59] and he said, "It's a disgrace." He said because the Scottish can celebrate their culture, the Welsh can celebrate their culture, the Irish – they can celebrate their culture. What about English? Why can't we? And I said, "Brother, as a fellow Englishman, tell me what do you want to celebrate because I want to celebrate with you." And he said, "Do you agree that's it is a disgrace that the Scottish can celebrate their culture? The Welsh can celebrate their culture? The Irish can celebrate their culture? The English -- why can't we?" And I said, "No, honestly, brother -- I heard you the first time. All I'm asking you is what is it that you want to celebrate because I've been wondering and I want to celebrate it with you." And he said, "So you see, it's not a disgrace that a Scottish..." And at this point, I said to him, "You don't really know what do you want celebrate." [Indiscernible] [16:00] and off he went. But I tell you one thing -- we dismissed that individual at our [indiscernible] [16:08] where people like that of all religions unknown, of all different backgrounds in our communities, in our society, in our cities, towns and villages -- they feel that they have been denied something. You have to verbalise it – they cannot. To define it -- they cannot. To articulate it -- they cannot. But my God that they have been denied something. And that leads to a psychological vacuum, and if we don't fill it with the values that I've lived this evening, then there are sensitive people out there that fill it as we currently speak. And [indiscernible] [16:45] said something -- I think it's on the video clip. And I just want to echo what she said -- that we live in a world where we say certainly to this country that we're proud, and I agree of great British traditions, about tolerance, for example. And to be slightly controversial, I would say put your tolerance in the den because actually I don't want to be tolerated. Women in senior management don't want to be tolerated. The sale people don't want to be tolerated. The LGBT community does not want to be tolerated. All the people don't want to be tolerated. Tolerance is fickle and it is skin-deep. When you [indiscernible] [07:25], you miss the train, you tolerate they way -- these are hardly positive experiences. We need to move the society, as Sarah said, which it isn't about tolerance – it is about acceptance, a mutual acceptance which is something which is much deeper and much more sustainable, for when we have the most challenging times in our country [indiscernible] [17:51] as we move forward.

Finally, I just want to congratulate all those receiving awards of appreciation this evening -- the volunteers, sponsors, and supporters of what keeps community organisations like the Dialogue Society going and enables them to carry out the important work that they do. And I would say that we are all leaders in our own way, in our own community, in our family, in social circles, and [indiscernible] [18:20] this evening that we know are quite right, and we hear things that we know are quite right. And sometimes for various reasons, we're not able to challenge that, but it's my belief that it's our absolute duty to challenge that in a positive way. And Edmund Burk reminds us that to be able to fulfil [indiscernible] [18:37] people do nothing. And I know that you're not the kind of a people that are doing nothing.

Thank you.