In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

One approach shared by all societies and faiths to draw public attention to an important question is designation of a day to promote it. When it comes to issues which affect the entire humanity, world days are designated so that all countries pay more attention to them. World Children's Day is an important day as such. Children, who account for a major part of human life today and are poised to take over the future of the world, should be at the center of family and government attention. Everyone has a duty, both religious and conventional, to try their best to educate children on the basis of morality and spirituality. To that end they should spare no efforts.

Thank God for conferring upon followers of Islam and other faiths a precious capital to invest on that front. All prophets and senior religious figures have urged us to protect the minds and bodies of our children. According to divine instructions, those who deal with children one way or another, have a duty to provide them with the best of education and healthcare, behave in a way which is free of violence and create a sense of self-confidence in them.

The words and deeds of the prophet of Islam (God’s peace be upon him and his household), who according to the holy Koran serves as a perfect example for Muslims, offer us the best of lessons as far as children are concerned. Now that World Children’s Day comes in the holy month of Ramadan, let me mention part of the Shabaniya statement. In the statement which was made by the prophet on the eve of Ramadan to remind the faithful of the lofty nature of this month and of the duties they had to accomplish during the 30-day period, Prophet Muhammad said: “Endear the elderly and show compassion to children... Be friendly to orphans so that when you pass away others treat your children in a friendly manner.” If this last instruction offered by the prophet is complied with, children of all generations will emerge prosperous. The prophet has been quoted on different occasions instructing the faithful to endear children, particularly girls. The Muslim prophet would say hello to children and respect them upon seeing them; he would never treat them in an angry way or talk to them with rage.

World Children's Day offers everyone an opportunity to think about their obligations to children, not just their own children, but all children. It is an opportunity to contribute to efforts to settle their problems. Thank God, the followers of different religions are well familiar with this responsibility. A statement issued during an eighth world religions forum for peace reiterated the commitment of religions to counter violence against children. Just like signatories to the statement, I believe the rights of children within families, societies and other social, political and economic environments need to be mapped out as efforts are made to protect such rights. I believe children all over the world are equally entitled to these rights. Boys and girls should be given equal opportunities to tap into their rights to education, healthcare,
growth and social contribution. When it comes to the problems of children, silence or denial will only worsen the situation. We need to admit to the bitter reality that violence against children does exist in houses, families, institutions and societies around the world. All means including the lofty instructions of God and the spiritual influence religious leaders wield should be tapped in order to change the situation and eliminate violent behavior against children. Proper educational methods should be taught to all. We need to know and teach others that nice behavior rather than violence is effective and efficient in education of children. We should know and teach others that although humiliation and punishment might temporarily affect the behavior of children, they are not a long-term, sustainable remedy. These points are all mentioned in stories attributed to prominent religious figures and experience of the past puts a seal of approval on them.

In conclusion, let me offer congratulations on World Children's Day to all children and young adults and to all benefactors who make efforts inside and outside our country for the betterment of the future of the younger generation, especially the staff and officials of the UN children’s fund. Let me pray to Almighty God to make them more successful than ever.

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