

AMAL ALMOALLIMI:

Thank you so much, good morning, everybody. I hope that you saved the best for last.

As Mrs Alajouanine here mentioned, dialogue is our tool to better understanding, peaceful coexistence and a better world as a result. As our experience in Saudi Arabia with National Dialogue, I should start with the first National Dialogue that happened in Riyadh. The participants were all males and that was difficult enough for the first time, for Mr Al Muammar to gather these people together and to convince them to come around the table of dialogue. In the second National Dialogue, Mr Al Muammar decided to invite women in this Dialogue. For the first time in Saudi Arabia, we have a governmental platform for women to speak and to participate in public affairs, in policy, in things regarding international relations with other countries; so, there were ten women versus sixty men participating in that dialogue. The third Dialogue next year was about women themselves and about their rights and their aspirations, and how they want to live in Saudi Arabia, and how they want to participate more in the social, political, and educational issues in our country. So, at that conference we had thirty-five women versus thirty-five men, and that was the first time we had equally 50% participating. So, this was in the National Dialogue.

People who are witnessing Saudi Arabia now are wondering how we could survive these rapid changes going on in Saudi in the last three years. We've had a lot of things going on in the social, the culture, in economic, in every aspect of life in Saudi Arabia. The answer is always because we are a young country, we have 70% of our population under 35; but my answer is: no, it is because we have a decade of National Dialogue, where we have discussed all these issues, and we have submitted our recommendations and our demands to the decision-makers, and we have talked a lot about all these issues; we have researchers, we have public polling opinions, and a lot of effort that bring us to this resilience that we are witnessing now in our community. Are we there yet? No, of course. Do we need National Dialogue? Yes, indeed, we need many more National Dialogues to come.

Another point I would like to refer to is talking about coexistence. Is coexistence enough in itself? I don't think so. Coexistence, meaning that you acknowledge that there is someone who is different from you, living somewhere next to you. Is this enough? In my opinion, no, it is not, unless it is turned into integration, collaboration, convivence, which is the first time I have heard this word while I was coming to this conference, so, yes, this is what we need and this is what we have to work together to achieve.

How do we achieve this? For the time being, what I am seeing is NGOs efforts and projects like Salam preparing young generations to learn more about diversity, coexistence, convivence. And this all is OK, but we need more, we need to collaborate together as governments, as institutes, as religious institutes, as schools, as mosques, as churches, as

temples, all of us together, contribute together to help to pave the way for new generations for an easy way to communicate and to get into fruitful dialogue together.

At the end, I would like just to say that coexistence does not come haphazardly or by chance. It has to be a constant effort to build it, and this effort has to contain or include training skills, set of values that they have to learn. Some people they have it by default, but other people need to work to get these skills and these values.

At the end, it is important to learn the art of living, as Mrs Alajouanine also said. In my opinion, art and literature are our breach to understand each other and to learn more about other cultures. So, let's practice more art, let's communicate together more and let us be more open to learn other cultures and other people. It is a great chance for me today to be here to answer your questions about myself, about my country, about my culture, and to learn more from you about your cultures and your countries as well.

Thank you.