Mr. Prime Minister,

Mr. Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I thank Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik, Mr. Elie Wiesel and the International Peace Academy for this timely initiative.

The theme of the Conference “Fighting Terrorism for Humanity” is particularly apt, because humanity is the first victim of terrorist acts. The venue chosen is tragically very appropriate. It is here in New York where, two years ago, nationals from about 80 countries – Pakistanis included – fell victim to international terrorism.

The horrors of 9/11 forced us to mount an international campaign against terrorism. Today the Al-Qaida is only a shadow of its past, but the questions before us are: Will terrorism outlive Al Qaida? What precisely is terrorism? What are the causes of terrorism including religiously inspired terrorism? What can the leaders of the world do to purge this menace for all times to come? And most importantly how can we avert a clash of civilizations and work for understanding and cooperation between diverse faiths?

The world today has indeed become a dangerous place riven with strife, suspicion and confrontation. Religious faiths – which should be the source of hope, tolerance and peace – are pitted against each other. Our destiny, and the future of succeeding generations, is held hostage by a minority of extremists.

I urge the world leaders here to use their wisdom and authority to influence events and be the catalysts of change. They must not flow with the current that threatens the collapse of global civilization into confrontation and conflict.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. It predates its modern description by centuries. Its history is as much Asian and Middle Eastern as European and Latin American. Terrorism transcends secular and religious barriers. The “reign of terror” was originally associated with states suppressing people. Non-state actors also committed acts of indiscriminate violence. Anti-colonialist movements were often dubbed as terrorists. Since the end of Second World War, terrorists have been motivated by considerations ranging from ethnicity to ideology to cults.
What is new is that, the decade of 90s saw a sudden upsurge in militancy and violence. At the end of the Cold War, hopes were kindled for a peaceful and harmonious world. But these hopes were soon shattered with the genocide in Bosnia and Kosovo. Militancy in Palestine grew and Kashmir saw the rise of an armed indigenous resistance in response to Indian repression. In Afghanistan a self-destructive civil war raged, creating a vacuum and a haven for international terrorists. Militants spread their tentacles to Central Asia. After 9/11, terrorism became equated with Al Qaida and its franchises – and by a misperceived extension with Islam. This is an artificial and very perilous linkage. Now, the Middle East has become even more volatile because of the situation in Iraq. And, there is a growing sense among Muslims that Islam, as a religion, is being targeted and pilloried.

**Mr. Prime Minister,**

To fight terrorism, the strategic decisions which Pakistan took after September 11 are very consistent with our moral principles, our national interests and our vision of Pakistan, standing tall among the nations of the world that respect and strongly adhere to the principles of humanity.

Pakistan’s actions speak louder than words. Our support has been critical in the war against terrorism. This support will continue until our shared objectives are fully met.

In Pakistan we are fighting terrorism in all its dimensions. We are operating against Al Qaida or any elements which misuse our territory for the export of terrorism across our borders or internationally. No foreigner, no terrorist will be allowed to use our soil for plotting or launching attacks from Pakistan. The other dimension, and I dare say, the more serious dimension of our anti terrorist campaign targets sectarian and religious extremism.

While operating against Al Qaida and their supporters is a short term strategy, the longer term strategy is designed to deal with religious extremism. For overall success we must address the menace of terrorism simultaneously in its short and long term perspectives.

For operating against Al Qaida, we have developed an effective intelligence network based on human intelligence, technological capabilities and aerial surveillance. This is now backed by an effective Quick Reaction Force to hit located targets. We are also adopting measures to choke the sources of terrorist financing. Therefore, in the short term strategy of striking against terrorists, we are well poised for success in Pakistan. A similar capability and action is required in the vast vacuums of the Afghan countryside to produce the optimum impact in the entire region. It must be understood that it is not a conventional military operation that is required of sweeping and searching the entire mountain ranges which would be practically impossible. It is more an intelligence operation where we locate hostile targets and launch a swift
military action against that located targets. Assertions in the Western and Indian media that all Taliban activity in Afghanistan emanates from Pakistan, or that Pakistan is not doing enough, are baseless and, may I add, thankless. Such aspersions display either deliberate discrimination or insufficient understanding of the ground realities. No nation has done more in the war against terrorism than Pakistan.

The short-term actions against terrorism must be accompanied by a long-term strategy. Otherwise, the war against terrorism may fail. We have to look beyond Al Qaida to the breeding grounds of terrorism. What motivates a suicide bomber to take his own life and kill innocent civilians? In order to eliminate terrorism, we must understand its causes. The fact is that today most of the unresolved political disputes and issues involve Muslims. Their demands for justice are often brushed aside. This has given rise to hopelessness, frustration and desperation. Foreign occupation and the suppression of the right of peoples to self-determination leading to a sense of despair is a direct cause for suicide bombings and terrorist acts.

Is it not ironic that even as we come to grips with the ravages of terrorism, we do not have its precise definition? Is it that political expediency dictates avoiding the truth? We must have a clear, legal definition of terrorism. Terrorism has many forms, different motivations and diverse causes.

There should be no selective application of the international norms and standards against terrorism. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations – including state terrorism – has to be opposed without any discrimination.

To start with, there is the reality of state terrorism - which is the most deadly form of terrorism. Mostly, state terrorism targets people seeking freedom from foreign occupation – as in Palestine and Kashmir. Their oppression through State terrorism is all the more unacceptable because they were assured self-determination by no less than the UNSC.

There are also acts of violence and mass murder committed by individuals and groups. They kill innocent civilians and inflict havoc in our cities and towns. No ideology, no doctrine can justify their acts or condone their crimes.

The need to evolve a definition of terrorism has become more essential because those who are committing state terrorism against occupied peoples, often depict their legitimate movements for self-determination as terrorism. It is the UN’s responsibility to develop a definition of terrorism which clarifies that such movements for self-determination, recognized by the United Nations, are legitimate and cannot be equated with terrorism. Indeed, these freedom movements are, in essence, resisting the violators of United Nations resolutions.
The right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for self-determination has been sanctioned explicitly by the UN Security Council. Until India agrees to implement the Security Council resolutions, and while it persists in its violent suppression of the Kashmiris people, they have a legitimate right to resist Indian occupation. Equating their freedom struggle with terrorism is quite a travesty. The United Nations must promote a solution for Kashmir – as it did for East Timor – on the basis of the UN resolutions. And, the international community, which desires peace and security in South Asia, must persuade India to end its repression in Kashmir and resume a dialogue process with Pakistan. We are ready for dialogue. Now it is India's call. It should respond positively. It's not that we ask for a solution in favour of Pakistan. It should be a win-win solution, in favour of Pakistan, India and most of all Kashmiri people.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Most of the political disputes of our times afflict Islamic peoples and nations. Religious extremism and militancy have risen because these conflicts have been allowed to fester without solution. There is a feeling in the Muslim world that Islam is being targeted. In the West, misperceptions persist that Islam inspires or endorses extremism. Expressions such as “Islamic terror”, “Muslim rage”, “Islamic threat” and the “Crisis of Islam”, offer only very facile explanations. This widening gulf of perceptions between the West and the Islamic world has to be bridged. There is no such thing as “militant Islam”. There are only some “militant Muslims” – as there are militant Hindus, militant Christians and militant Jews.

The thesis of a clash of civilizations put forward by some influential Western intellectuals, and now increasingly embraced at the popular level, is a recipe for confrontation. We must advance an antithesis - of cohesion and understanding between civilizations. In this post-modern era, we must not go back to Medievalism. We, the world leaders, should dictate the global agenda, not allow the terrorists and extremists to do so.

The essence of Islam must be clearly understood.

· The scare in the West about the Shariah is misplaced. The Shariah is simply an Islamic way of life.

· There is no incompatibility between Islam and democracy. The early Islamic State was a model of democracy. And, the Holy Quran prescribes the promotion of human rights, social equality, freedom of speech and adoption of decisions through consultation and consensus – in short the practice of democracy in all walks of life.
The protection of minorities is an article of faith in Islam. Islam makes no discrimination on basis of color, caste, creed or religion. In this sense secularism is embedded in our Faith. We do not need to proclaim it.

Islam’s tenets provide for continuous renewal and adoption – through the process of Ijtihad (or consultation) and an emphasis on education and the acquisition of scientific and technical knowledge. Islam’s vision is not trapped in any one period of history, it is modern and futuristic.

Of course, the problem is that there is today a dichotomy between Islam’s principles and their actual practice in extremist quarters. The introduction of extremist laws or practices through a twisted representation of the Shariah by vested, misguided interests in no way reflect the tolerant spirit and tenets of Islam. Those who abuse the faith of Islam to propagate violence do not represent Muslims. They do not serve Islam. They are an aberration and a negation of the tenets of our faith. We need to marginalize and exclude them in our polity and society.

Mr. Prime Minister,

All nations must cooperate and contribute to ensure success in the long term strategy against terrorism. We must adopt a two pronged strategy.

The Muslim world, for its part, must shun militancy and extremism in favor of ‘Enlightened Moderation’. We must reform those Madrassahs which are preaching hatred, extremism and militancy. We must concentrate on emancipating ourselves through an emphasis on the social sector, raising the level of our education and health standards and pursuing social justice and poverty eradication.

Yet, this will be feasible only if the West joins us by helping to resolve all political disputes involving Muslims with justice. The resolution of the Palestinian and Kashmir disputes will inevitably marginalize extremist organizations - like Hamas, Jaish-e-Muhammad or Lashkar-e-Tayyaba. The advanced countries must also promote the development of human resources, investment and technology in the Muslim World to marginalize extremism.

Mr. Prime Minister,

This then is the complete recipe for success against the destructive forces of extremism and terrorism. There is no quick fix solution. Yet, we cannot opt for inaction. Inertia and lack of resoluteness on our part will only strengthen the extremists and weaken the moderates.
Terrorism has to be addressed in its entirety. A piecemeal or unifocal approach will only create distortion, diffusion and mistrust.

We, the leaders of the world, must ensure that the principles of humanity win. We have no choice but to prevail. We owe this to our future generations.

I thank you all.