



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

ISLAMSKA SKUPNOST V REPUBLIKI SLOVENIJI  
URAD MUFTIJA

**Speech of mufti dr. Nedžad Grabus on the occasion of laying the  
foundation stone for Islamic Cultural Centre  
in Ljubljana – Slovenia**

**Saturday, September 14, 2013**

Esteemed Minister of the State of Qatar, Your Excellency Dr. Gaith bin Mubarak Al Kuwari, esteemed President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia Mr. Janko Veber, esteemed President Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, esteemed former President of the Republic of Slovenia Dr. Danilo Turk, esteemed Reisu-l-ulema, Mr. Husein Kavazović MA, esteemed Ombudswoman Ms. Vlasta Nussdorfer, esteemed Mayor Mr. Zoran Janković.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, dear inhabitants of Ljubljana.

I would like to wholeheartedly welcome all of you who are attending the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the Islamic Cultural Centre and the mosque in Ljubljana. This is a grand day for the Islamic Community, Muslims, and Ljubljana.

We have lived through stressful years of hard work and expended huge amounts of energy on this endeavor.

Religious facilities have been built from the beginning of Man's existence on this planet. They were being built to express their respect for the transcendental force, God, the Creator of the Earth, and in addition they existed to allow people to perform their prayers and develop cultural and civilizational values. These are the residences of wisdom and spirituality. The religious facilities are an expression of maturity of the community of believers and their endeavours to retain dignity and harmony in the society in this world.

In the Islamic culture and civilization mosques play a central role in: sustaining the spirit of the community; promoting brotherhood between the believers through the performance of prayers; and participating in educational programmes and charitable activities for the members of the community. A community of Muslims without a mosque is unable to preserve either their spiritual potential or their social connectedness. A mosque is a religious charitable institution, a facility for the public good.

The application for building a mosque was filed on May 21, 1969. Man plans, God decides. Forty-four years after the first steps in conceiving of this idea we are here witnessing the launching of the mosque construction. Please allow me to express my thanks first to all the Muslims, men and women alike, who have taken part in the project with dignity and patience, who have always behaved in the most civilized manner, who

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have continued praying and – each in his or her own manner – contributed towards all of the activities relating to the mosque.

We have never lost hope in the mercy of God, since the word of the exalted God himself instructs us so: “Do not lose hope in the mercy of God!” Therefore, we are today grateful to the compassionate God that he endowed us with the gift of faith and grace. In recent weeks I have received a pile of letters and messages from my Slovenian friends, in which they conveyed their congratulations at the commencement of construction of the mosque. I would like to earnestly thank them all. We shall use our best efforts to behave in accordance with the Qur’anic message: “Help one another in goodness and awareness of the value of faith.”

In 2007, the Islamic Community in the Republic of Slovenia signed the agreement on its legal status with the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. With this Agreement, the Islamic Community *IC* was granted all the rights arising out of the Religious Freedom Act, and may thus independently and autonomously engage in its activities and pursue its mission.

The Slovenian legislation and legal system show a high degree of respect for diversity in society. This has opened up a number of opportunities for the Islamic Community to function in its full capacity. At the session of the municipal council of Ljubljana, held in May of this year, all the councillors voted in favour of the amendments of the detailed spatial plan relating to the area where the Islamic Cultural Centre is to be erected; the proposal was adopted by consensus and not a single councillor objected.

All of them deserve our respect. This was a clear sign that the values of respect for religious freedom have reached an enviable level. Politics and laws are interpreted and implemented by people. Therefore, please allow me to express my gratitude to the Mayor of Ljubljana, Mr. Zoran Janković, who handled this process with an abundance of patience and wisdom. Dear Mayor, thank you.

Surveys show that Ljubljana is a pleasant city to live. With the mosque as an added value it will likewise gain the quality of plurality, based on tolerance and respect for diversity. This openness and high degree of tolerance shall further enhance our joint cooperation, not merely in Ljubljana, but also all over Slovenia.

The Islamic Community in Slovenia is firmly determined to develop and promote civilizational values that will strengthen: the spirit of tolerance, competition-existence, cohabitation, and will sustain the life and honour of every individual. Throughout these years we have had ample opportunity to reveal several aspects of our spirituality and faith. We endeavoured to present our religion, Islam, and the role of the forthcoming cultural centre to Slovenian people through helpful media that were interested in activities of the Islamic Community and its goals.

The Islamic Cultural Centre will no doubt serve as a place where Islam is to cross paths with the majority Christian environment. Since there is great similarity between the ethical views of Muslims and Christians, and since we share the same living space, it is necessary to continuously develop inter-relations and solve the issues of general interest for society; at the same time we should learn about our differences too.

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We are convinced that construction of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Ljubljana will contribute towards the enhancement of interreligious dialogue and establishment of firm foundations for mutual cooperation in charitable and social work in the broader society. All of us together should strive to achieve a new paradigm of relations in the world and promote the role of religion both in the national and international domain.

When the Centre is built, we shall be able to take a more serious approach towards developing educational and cultural contents for children attending religious instruction, for pupils and students. We can see that in the contemporary world, the desire for easy-going life and work without responsibilities increasingly prevail. For that reason, the younger generations should be granted proper upbringing and education enabling them to confront the challenges of modern living. This will be one of the tasks of our work in the Islamic Cultural Centre.

The issue of construction of a mosque in Ljubljana also engaged the academic community and awoke their interest in various aspects of Islamic teachings. This went far deeper than merely political or legal interest.

From the time of purchasing the land, when the Islamic Community gained the status of a legal entity in this process, significant changes have taken place in all realms, and today we are satisfied that we finally got the building permit for a mosque in Ljubljana. The process was initiated by the former Mayor of Ljubljana, Ms. Danica Simšič, and was implemented by current Mayor Janković.

When we were in the phase of establishing contacts and attempting to present our project to the potential donors, it was the former President of Republic of Slovenia Dr. Danilo Türk who kindly recommended us to His Highness El-Emir el-Walid Shaykh Hamed bin Khalifa Alu Thani. Mr. Türk, our heartfelt thanks.

We likewise owe genuine thanks to a great number of our friends from Slovenia, namely from political life, governmental institutions, high officials, academic communities, journalists, and individuals; we are thankful for your sincere work and assistance in the execution of this project. Naturally, we are also aware of the influence and importance of the Catholic Church in Slovenian society.

Bishop Uran and Archbishop Dr. Stress both heartily supported the idea of construction of a mosque in Ljubljana. We likewise wish to express our respect to Bishop Andrej Glavan and gratitude for your attendance at today's ceremony. We are of the opinion that inter-religious respect, cohabitation, and dialogue show that a given society has attained a high level of awareness. Therefore, I greet the Bishop of the Protestant Church Mr. Geza Erniša, the representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the representatives of the Jewish Community of Slovenia.

Activities of the Islamic Community in Slovenia are closely linked to the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The functioning of IC in Slovenia is highly integrated with the IC in BiH. Their Board of Leaders provided extensive assistance to our project. Dr. Mustafa Cerić, the former Reis-I-ulema, has likewise taken part in it for years.

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We are happy to see that today we also enjoy the company of Reis-ul-ulema, Mr. Husein Kavazović, MA, and my colleagues, Muftis from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the President of Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia, the President of Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Serbia – Sandžak, Reis of Mashihat of Montenegro, the President of Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Austria, the Mufti of Bosniak Community of Germany, Imams from Switzerland, and Imams from other countries.

The presence of Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, a member of the Presidency of BiH adds special value to our event. Slovenia and BiH share a large number of common interests. Our Center will further enhance these friendly and cultural ties between our people.

Our project has been assisted by Diyanet, the Directorate of Religious Affairs from Turkey, the Solidarity Fund of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation based in Jeddah, and the Secretary General of the OIC, Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. The most generous contribution, however, was provided by the country of Qatar; without which we would not be capable either of discharging the loan for the land or regulating the project design documentation for the Islamic Cultural Centre.

It took us a long time to pay off the land. On the occasion of the visit to the former president of Slovenia, Dr. Danilo Türk, His Highness El-Emir el-Walid Shaykh Hamed bin Khalifa Alu Thani promised to help.

Subsequently, His Excellency the Minister of External Affairs of Qatar, Dr. Khalid al-Atiyya, monitored the progress of the project and instructed Dr. Ahmed Al-Meraikhi – who, inter alia, was likewise a member of the Commission for the selection of the conceptual solution of the ICC – to visit Slovenia and confirm the official procedure related to construction at a meeting with responsible officials, in particular the Mayor of Ljubljana, Mr. Zoran Janković.

Without the assistance from the State of Qatar, our project would not continue to progress. It was on Thursday that I received a cable from the His Highness Emir of Qatar Shaykh Temim bin Hamed Alu Thani, saying that he congratulates us for our work and wishes us great success. I firmly believe that with this support we will master this challenge.

On behalf of His Highness, a delegation from the State of Qatar headed by His Excellency – the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Dr. Gaith bin Mubarak Al-Kuwari, is presently in attendance for this solemn laying of the foundation stone. Your Excellency, Minister Al-Kuwari, I am sincerely grateful that you are participating in this ceremony. Please be as kind as to forward our salaams and gratitude to His Highness Emir of State of Qatar Shaykh Temim bin Hamad Alu Thani and to His Highness El-Emir el-Walid Shaykh Hamed bin Khalifa Alu Thani.

We will put all of our effort into making the ICC a centre of wisdom and spirituality that will enhance the ties between Slovenia and Qatar. We hope that the Centre will be completed within the next three years, and will thus serve as a vivid proof of the benevolence and love of the exalted Allah and our Messenger, as well as the friendship between Qatar and Slovenia. This will be the first real Islamic centre in Slovenia featuring a mosque and the accompanying facilities.

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My cordial thanks also go out to the official delegation from the Ministry of Endowments from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, assistant deputy Minister Mr. Abdulrahman Al Ghannam, adviser for religious affairs from the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey Mr. Atli Hasan.

It is my pleasure to point out that the Ambassador of the United States of America in Ljubljana, Mr. Jozef Mussomelli, is likewise among us today. The embassy of the United States of America offered a great deal of support to the ICC project. I would like to thank the representatives of the diplomatic chorus in Slovenia, all the ambassadors, and all the representatives of the embassies for participation in the today's ceremony. We have developed a cordial relationship with the representatives of the diplomatic chorus and frequently discussed the ICC project with them over the past few years.

Our Islamic practices and experiences are rooted in the European environment. Most Muslims in Slovenia are of Bosniak and Albanian origin. This is why our experience of Islam and our religious life are ingrained in the environment in which we live.

Finally, please be so kind as to allow me to extend my sincerest thanks to all the donors and my co-workers from Slovenia who have participated in this project from the day of the purchase of this land in 2008. It was with their assistance that we have made it possible for the Islamic Community to take hold of the land as the owner. I believe that today all of you are proud and overjoyed. Thanks to all of you. We Pray to the Exalted Creator to assist us in construction of the mosque and to reward you all for your good deeds.

Thank you for your attention.

As-salamu alaikum - Peace be with you!

Ljubljana, September 14, 2013.

Nedžad Grabus, Mufti of Ljubljana - president of Mashihat of Islamic Community in Slovenia