



Scottish Executive

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Dear Mr Walker

Thank you for your letter to the First Minister. I have been asked to respond on his behalf.

The First Minister would like to wish you every success for your forthcoming festival. The First Minister agrees that Scotland has a distinctive role to play in meeting the global challenge of religious cultural diversity, dialogue and shared understanding. The Scottish Executive is seen by many as progressive in this area and we will continue to build on any advances we may have made.

Attached are a few words from the First Minister, as requested, for inclusion in your festival programme.

Yours sincerely

OWEN KELLY
Principal Private Secretary



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FOREWORD FOR INCLUSION IN PROGRAMME

I would like to welcome everyone to Scotland for the 1st Annual Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace.

In Scotland we strongly encourage respect for diversity; we acknowledge the many differences in practices in religious belief; and accept the many common values we each hold. We should all strive to seek understanding of other traditions and, in Scotland today, we are conscious of the need for dialogue and co-operation between diverse faiths. Increasing awareness of the valuable contribution faith communities can make to wider society will hopefully result in neighbours living peaceably side by side; communities interacting for the greater good of society; and a growing respect between faiths as they each uphold their common values.

I hope all participants enjoy the Festival and gain greater understanding of the beliefs of others.

Rt Hon Jack McConnell MSP
First Minister of Scotland



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