MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

NAHDLATUL ULAMA CENTRAL BOARD
hereinafter referred to as “PBNU”

AND

CENTER FOR SHARED CIVILIZATIONAL VALUES
hereinafter referred to as “CSCV”

In the Name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Compassionate

CONSIDERING:

1. That Nahdlatul Ulama was established on 16 Rajab 1344/31 January 1926 in Surabaya, the Dutch East Indies.

2. That in a speech delivered at the inaugural meeting of the newly-created organization, the founding head of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council, Hadratus Shaykh Kyai Haji Hasyim As’yari, declared:

   As is universally acknowledged, human beings are inherently social creatures, mingling with others; for no one can fulfill his or her every need by acting
alone. Willing or not, every person must interact socially, interaction that should ideally contribute to the well-being of all other members of society while preserving them from danger. The unity of human hearts, and minds, as people help one another achieve a common goal, is the most important source of human happiness and the strongest factor inducing human beings to love one another.

Because of this principle, many nations have become prosperous. Slaves have become rulers, fostering widespread development. Nations have become advanced; the rule of law enforced; transportation networks constructed, enabling economic and cultural exchange to flourish. Countless other benefits arise from social unity, for social unity is the highest virtue and most powerful instrument for promoting the common good (Hadratus Shaykh Kyai Haji Hasyim As’yari, *Mukaddimah Qanun Asasi*, or *Introduction to the Fundamental Principles of Nahdlatul Ulama*).

3. That Nahdlatul Ulama’s founders were inspired by the historic role of the 15th/16th-century *Wali Songo* (“Nine Saints”) movement, whose wisdom, respect for pre-existing cultures and profoundly spiritual modes of *da’wah* (proselytism) precipitated the emergence of a great Islamic civilization in *Nusantara* (the Malay Archipelago), rooted in the principle of *rahmah* (universal love and compassion) and other noble values of religion;

4. That these saints’ legacy also inspired the founders of Indonesia to establish their newly-independent nation as a multi-religious state, rooted in the principles of *Pancasila* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, or “Oneness Amid Diversity”;

5. That the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia states: “Independence is the inalienable right of all people, and therefore every form of oppression and exploitation must be abolished throughout the world, as it conflicts with the principles of humanity and justice”;

6. That the primary message of Islam is reflected in the Qur’anic verse: “And We sent you [Muhammad] for no purpose other than to be a blessing for all creation” (Qur’an 21: 107);

7. That in 2014, Nahdlatul Ulama leaders established Bayt ar-Rahmah li ad-Da‘wa al-Islamiyah Rahmatan li al-‘Alamin in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA, in order to facilitate the expansion of Nahdlatul Ulama operations worldwide and disseminate the primary message of Islam as a source of universal love and compassion (*rahmah*)

8. That in 2015, Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahram* stated, “Nahdlatul Ulama is now poised to export its collective wisdom and experience throughout the world, for the benefit of humanity”;

9. That the 2016 *International Summit of Moderate Islamic Leaders (ISOMIL)* Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration states: “The Nahdlatul Ulama will strive to consolidate the global *ahlusunnah wal jamaah* (Sunni Muslim) community, in order to bring about a world in

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which Islam, and Muslims, are truly beneficent and contribute to the well-being of all humanity”;

10. That in 2017, Nahdlatul Ulama leaders established the Humanitarian Islam movement, in order to share the wisdom of Nusantara civilization with Muslims and non-Muslims throughout the world;

11. That in 2018, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor and Bayt ar-Rahmah jointly adopted and promulgated the Nusantara Manifesto, which established “a framework for the emergence of fiqh al-hadarah al-'alamiyah al-mutasahirah (Islamic jurisprudence for a global civilization, whose constituent elements retain their distinctive characteristics);

12. That points 87 – 91 of the Nusantara Manifesto state:

For thousands of years, Nusantara (the Malay Archipelago) has been a civilizational crossroads and home to a wide array of peoples, cultures and religious beliefs. In their collective wisdom, the inhabitants of these islands developed a unique civilization founded upon the principle of “unity amid diversity” (bhinneka tunggal ika), which inspired the creation of Indonesia as a multi-religious and pluralistic state.

A key element of this ancient “civilizational wisdom” is the ability not only to grasp but also prioritize, individually and collectively, the spiritual essence of religion, rather than purely formal and dogmatic elements that readily lend themselves to weaponization and, in the wrong hands, foster conflict rather than social unity.

This distinguishing characteristic of Nusantara society — i.e., the impulse to position spiritual wisdom, rather than dogma, as the central pillar of socio-cultural, religious and political life — enabled Nusantara civilization to embrace the essence of newly arrived religions; neutralize their potentially divisive effects; and transform religious pluralism into a source of social unity and strength, by cultivating humility, compassion and respect for others, rather than fear and hatred. By fostering social harmony and peaceful co-existence among and between those of widely varying ethnicities, cultures and faiths, religion served Nusantara inhabitants as a path to attain spiritual nobility, rather than a pragmatic means to claim privilege and/or supremacy vis-à-vis others.

As heirs to this noble civilization, which is under siege by an array of powerful forces — including the globalization of culture, geo-political instability and the weaponization of religion for political purposes — it is time for Indonesians to awaken and reclaim our ancient heritage, not merely for ourselves but humanity at large. For the profound wisdom that lies at the heart of Nusantara civilization is desperately needed in a world where ethnic, political and religious differences so often lead to enmity and violence.

In a spirit of humility and respect for the wisdom that resides — all too often neglected — at the heart of every culture and religion, we invite people of

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goodwill of every faith and nation to join Indonesia in rejecting any and all forms of tyranny, and in fostering the emergence of a global civilization endowed with nobility of character.

13. That in 2019, the National Conference of Nahdlatul Ulama Religious Scholars ("2019 Munas") held in Banjar, West Java, ruled that:

The status of non-Muslims within a nation state is that of citizens (müwātin) who possess rights and responsibilities equal to those of the nation’s other citizens. They do not belong to any of the categories of infidel (kāfir) which exist within classical Islamic law, i.e., mu āḥad (infidels who are subjects of a non-Muslim ruler, who has signed a currently-valid peace treaty with Muslims); must'aman (infidels visiting or living in an Islamic state, for purposes of trade, diplomacy, etc., whose safety is guaranteed by a Muslim ruler); dhimmi (infidels who have submitted to Islamic rule, dwell within the borders of an Islamic state, pay an annual head tax and are governed by specific elements of Islamic law); and harbi (infidels engaged in war with Muslims, who may be killed on sight). These four categories were conceived within a context in which state and religion were absolutely fused together. Differences of opinion, and of religion, can no longer justify hostility between one person and another (Hasil-Hasil Musyawarah Nasional Alim-Ulama NU, or Findings of the 2019 National Conference of Nahdlatul Ulama Religious Scholars).

14. That in 2021, Nahdlatul Ulama leaders incorporated the Center for Shared Civilizational Values in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA, to diffuse the collective wisdom and experience of Nahdlatul Ulama throughout the world and establish a platform for systematic cooperation with non-Muslims, in order to preserve and strengthen a rules-based international order founded upon universal ethics and humanitarian values;

15. That Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri, former head of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council, co-founded the Center for Shared Civilizational Values (CSCV) and is the Chairman of its Board of Directors;

16. That Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board, co-founded the Center for Shared Civilizational Values and serves as its Deputy Chairman & President;

17. That the Honorable Yaqt Cholil Qoumas, the Republic of Indonesia’s Minister of Religious Affairs, co-founded the Center for Shared Civilizational Values and serves on its Board of Directors;

18. That C. Holland Taylor, who established LibForAll Foundation with former Nahdlatul Ulama Chairman and Indonesian president, H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid, co-founded the Center for Shared Civilizational Values and serves as its Deputy Chairman & CEO;

19. That philanthropist F. Borden Hanes, Jr. serves as a founding Board Member and Treasurer of the Center for Shared Civilizational Values;

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20. That political scientist Dr. Timothy Samuel Shah serves as a founding Board Member, Secretary, and Director of Strategic Initiatives of the Center for Shared Civilizational Values;

21. That the Center for Shared Civilizational Values works with a group of closely affiliated organizations, including Nahdlatul Ulama; Gerakan Pemuda An sor, the NU's 5-million-member young adults movement; Bayt ar-Rahmah; LibForAll Foundation; and the Humanitarian Islam movement;

22. That in October 2020, Gerakan Pemuda An sor, the Institute for Humanitarian Islam and the Movement for Shared Civilizational Values co-hosted U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo at a public event in Jakarta, Indonesia, titled: "Nurturing the Shared Civilizational Aspirations of Islam Rahmatan li al-'Alamin, the Republic of Indonesia and the United States of America";

23. That in July 2021 the Center for Shared Civilizational Values, together with the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission and the Institute for Humanitarian Islam, published a 228-page book titled God Needs No Defense: Reimagining Muslim-Christian Relations in the 21st Century, which was launched at The Nation's Mosque in Washington, DC;

24. That God Needs No Defense contains the first English translation, ever published, of KH. Hasyim As' yari's historic 1926 speech, Mukaddimah Qanun Asasi (Introduction to the Fundamental Principles of Nahdlatul Ulama), and features essays by H.E. KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, KH. A. Mustofa Bisri and KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf;

25. That the Center for Shared Civilizational Values drafted and facilitated the adoption and promulgation of The Nation's Mosque Statement in July 2021, in Washington, DC, which reads:

Spiritual leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama, the world's largest Muslim organization; the World Evangelical Alliance, which represents 600 million Protestants in 140 countries; and Masjid Muhammad, The Nation's Mosque, a community of the late Imam W. Deen Mohammed, in Washington, DC, the first mosque in the United States built by descendants of enslaved African Americans, call upon people of goodwill of every faith and nation to join in building a global alliance founded upon shared civilizational values.

This global alliance seeks to prevent the political weaponization of identity; curtail the spread of communal hatred; promote solidarity and respect among the diverse people, cultures and nations of the world; and foster the emergence of a truly just and harmonious world order, founded upon respect for the equal rights and dignity of every human being.

26. That international media, including Germany's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, have praised Nahdlatul Ulama and its cooperation with the World Evangelical Alliance, stating that "Indonesia is a model for the transition from an autocratic to a democratic system";

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27. That the Center for Shared Civilizational Values is coordinating outreach and engagement between Nahdlatul Ulama and India, resulting in the endorsement of Humanitarian Islam by major Hindu leaders and substantive discussions between Nahdlatul Ulama/Humanitarian Islam and the Government of India;

28. That the Center for Shared Civilizational Values has developed a socio-cultural and geopolitical strategy, known as the “Ashoka Approach,” which seeks to mobilize like-minded religious and political figures throughout South and Southeast Asia, in order to foster a renewed appreciation for the spirituality and respect for pluralism that were once defining features of the Indianized cultural sphere, and forge concrete avenues of cooperation between profoundly spiritual and humanitarian expressions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Their explicit goal is for South and Southeast Asia to re-emerge as a cohesive, vital, and proactive civilizational sphere, which functions as a powerful, independent pillar of support for a rules-based international order founded upon shared civilizational values (Timothy Shah and C. Holland Taylor, “The ‘Ashoka Approach’ and Indonesian Leadership in the Movement for a Pluralist Reawakening in South and Southeast Asia”).

29. That the Center for Shared Civilizational Values has developed an extensive strategy to leverage the “Group of 20” (G20), an annual gathering of the world’s most economically powerful nations, to ensure that religion in the 21st century functions as a genuine and dynamic source of solutions, rather than problems;

30. That in 2022, Nahdlatul Ulama established the G20 Religion Forum (“R20”), in cooperation with the Center for Shared Civilizational Values, in order to mobilize diverse religious, political and economic leaders, to foster a rules-based international order founded upon shared moral and spiritual values;

WHEREFORE THE PARTIES AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

1. That the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board (“PBNU”) and the Center for Shared Civilizational Values (“CSCV”) shall cooperate in the development of a framework for identifying shared values that may serve as the basis for harmonious coexistence between the diverse people, cultures, nations and religions of the world, and in the building of a global movement dedicated to overcoming any and all forms of tyranny;

2. That PBNU and CSCV shall jointly develop and expand this “Movement for Shared Civilizational Values” by attracting and mobilizing people of good will of every faith and nation — including opinion leaders, civil society institutions, and governments throughout the world — who wish to strengthen and support a rules-based international order founded upon universal ethics and humanitarian values, including respect for human dignity, justice, virtue and moral self-governance;
3. That PBNU and CSCV shall join people of good will of every faith and nation in a common effort to abolish the primordial cycle of hatred, tyranny and violence that has plagued humanity since time immemorial;

4. That PBNU and CSCV shall cooperate in developing and implementing a global strategy to block the political weaponization of identity within and between nations, and thereby avert a devastating clash of civilizations;

5. That PBNU and CSCV shall cooperate with people of good will of every faith and nation to establish conceptual “boundary markers” that enable human beings to readily distinguish between benevolent expressions of civilization and barbarism;

6. That benevolent expressions of civilization reflect the noblest aspirations of humanity and contribute to the flourishing of our common home, by promoting solidarity and respect among the diverse peoples, cultures, and nations of the world;

7. That barbarism reflects the innate human will to dominate others and may assume a wide variety of forms, ranging from primitive to economically, politically, technologically, and militarily advanced;

8. That PBNU and CSCV will cooperate in fulfilling Nahdlatul Ulama’s “civilizational mission,” as bequeathed by the Wali Songo, the “Nine Saints” who in the 15th and 16th centuries proselytized Islam Nusantara, rooted in the principle of rahmah (universal love and compassion); as described by Hadratus Shaykh Kyai Haji Hasyim As’yari in Mukaddimah Qamun Asasi (Introduction to the Fundamental Principles of Nahdlatul Ulama); and as expressed in the lives and vision of NU’s founders, including Kyai Haji Wahab Chasbullah;

9. That PBNU and CSCV will cooperate in realizing the civilizational vision of H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid, who inspired the birth of the global Humanitarian Islam movement;

10. That PBNU and CSCV will cooperate in fulfilling Indonesia’s “constitutional mandate,” as described in the Preamble to its 1945 Constitution (“UU-45”);

11. That cooperation between PBNU and CSCV shall be subject to the direct supervision of, and control by, the General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board and the Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Shared Civilizational Values;

12. That PBNU and CSCV shall develop and execute a geopolitical strategy designed to accomplish the objectives of this Memorandum of Understanding;

13. That PBNU and CSCV shall develop and execute programs and initiatives designed to accomplish the objectives of this Memorandum of Understanding;

14. That PBNU and CSCV shall develop and execute these programs and initiatives with appropriate partners and allies, including civil society actors and governments throughout the world;

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15. That PBNUs and CSCV shall produce and disseminate strategic communications — through a wide variety of media — designed to accomplish the objectives of this Memorandum of Understanding;

16. That PBNUs and CSCV shall cooperate to develop and ensure the success of the G20 Religion Forum (R20) and an associated "Council for Global Harmony," with CSCV serving as the Permanent Secretariat for both the R20 and the Council for Global Harmony.

DATE OF EFFECT, TERM, AND AMENDMENTS

This Memorandum of Understanding shall immediately come into effect upon its signing by authorized representatives of PBNUs and CSCV.

This MoU shall have an initial term of five (5) years and may be renewed through mutual agreement of the Parties.

Any amendments to this agreement shall be implemented by joint written accord, signed by both Parties.

Signed in: Jakarta
Date: 19 Shawal 1443 H
20 May 2022 CE

KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf  
General Chairman, Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board

KH. A. Mustofa Bisri  
Chairman, Center for Shared Civilizational Values  
Former Chairman, Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council

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